

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

Coquitlam Herald 28 July
1960

ANOTHER SACRIFICE ON THE ALTAR OF GOLD

The legendary Pitt Lake Gold Mine claimed another victim on Wednesday, July 20th, when Lewis Earl, 49, of Bremer-ton Wash., collapsed and died at about the 3300 ft. level of a ridge, approximately seven miles north-east of Widgeon Lake. Mr. Hagbo entered the area that morning with his brother-in-law Fred Uno Mattson of Bainbridge Island, Wash., intent on locating the mythical mine from which the Indian Slumach claimed to have obtained his gold.

The heat, the unaccustomed exertion of packing and climbing and an inherit "heart condition," brought about a massive thrombosis, apparently resulting in instant death. Mr. Hagbo fell in an area deceptively gentle in appearance but fantastically rough in reality. Recovery of Hagbo taxed to the limit the resources of the several civilians and police members who laboured unto the evening of July 22, to get his body out.

Mr. Hagbo is only the latest of 23 who have sacrificed their lives in pursuit of an illusion Slumach, in the 80s, was a particularly useless member of a race not noted for either ambition or initiative. His only genuine claim to notoriety stemmed from his capacity for firewater, and yet, periodically Slumach showed up in New Westminster with handfuls of gold, obtained, he said, from his secret mine in the Pitt Lake area. Many were the efforts made to follow Slumach when he left town to go to the mine. None were successful, and Slumach eventually went to his death by hanging for murder—with his secret undisclosed.

Why the myth of a "secret mine" should have prevailed is not very clear, particularly when the true state of affairs was known, even in Slumach's day. For that was the time of gold in the Bridge River country, when miners coming and going actually did have pokes with handfuls of gold.

Many of them on their way outside came overland to the head of Pitt Lake where Slumach lay by the trail, his rifle at the ready to dispatch the unwary so that Slumach in a day or two could flash raw gold in the dives of New Westminster. Many are the skeletons resting under the leaves in the upper Pitt River country, skeletons of miners never missed in the hurly-burly of a boom era when communications were crude or non-existent and the disappearance of a miner now and then was never a cause for comment.

The body of Mr. Hagbo was returned to his home on Saturday, July 23rd. In this undertaking the police had only the very highest praise for the efforts of the several civilians

Another sacrifice on the altar of gold

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

who assisted them. M.K. Smith, Bob Gillespie, Dr. A. Jones, Clarke MacDonald, Douglas Bennie, Thomas A. Graham, John Anderson, Thomas Galow and Harold Bradford—everyone expended Herculean effort and each displayed a spirit of cheerful cooperation which was a pleasure to behold.