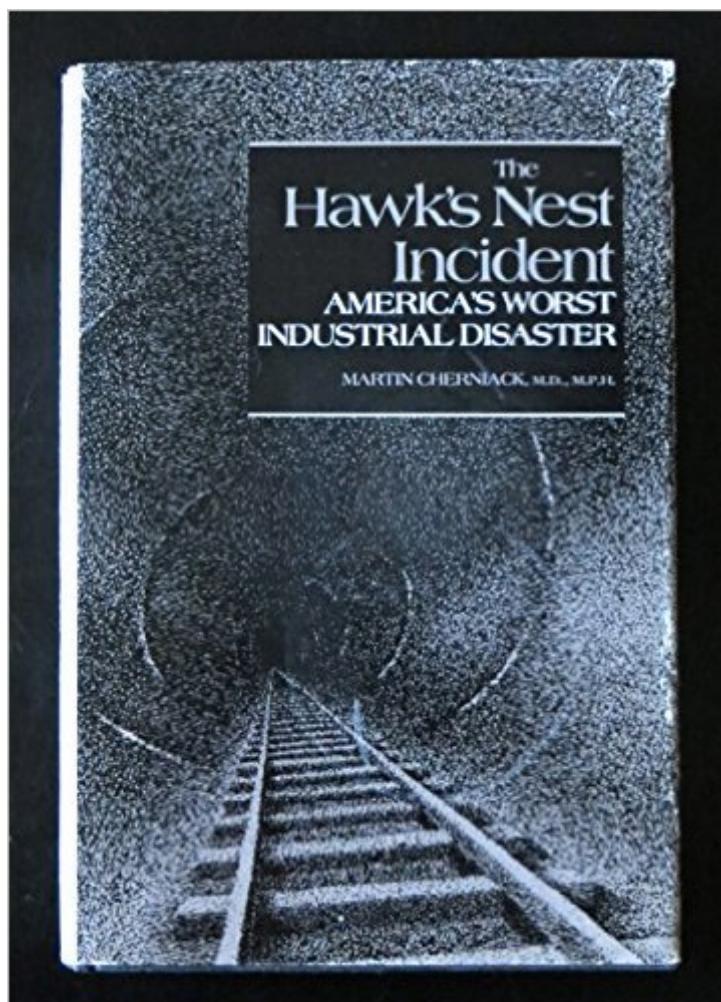


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The Hawk's Nest Incident: America's Worst Industrial Disaster



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Customer Reviews

A very in depth look, an industrial accident that occurred when industrial might, money, greed and the State of West Virginia's lax industrial monitoring created a horrific disaster that killed hundreds of men, mostly poor blacks from the south and mountaineers from West Virginia. The whole purpose of the project, to divert water from the New River for the powering of Union Carbide's plant just below Charleston on the Kanawha River. Amazingly enough, the tunnel is still in use, and about the only two ways to see it is to either kayak or raft the New River, or ride Amtrak's "Cardinal" and to know where to look for it. There is a monument to it at Hawk's Nest State Park, but the magnitude of the crime is yet hard to believe, much less understand, in some ways more related to Bhopal than to Charleston.

This book is superbly documented. A college student writing a research paper should find this a great resource. It is an excellent history of a catastrophe in national, business, labor, and public health. The interviews of survivors of those hard Depression years are priceless. This book deserves to be in the National Archives. The book also chronicles the author's search for documentation and his discovery that Union Carbide records had mostly gone missing, plus county records of deaths that did not exist shows a deliberate effort to hide the number of dead, and even their identities. Great antidote to amnesia of a horrible death by silicosis of hundreds of men.

Until visiting Hawk's Nest State Park, I had never heard of the Hawk's Nest Tunnel or the disaster

accompanying its construction. Because we had seen the area, and indeed played golf on the site of one of the work camps, I found the book fascinating. But unless you are a student of industrial relations or complex construction projects, you might find the book slow-going. The author presents an objective review of the facts and draws conclusions about how many men died as a result of the construction. It seems remarkable that some 50+ years after the tunnel was dug, and after a US congressional investigation, such basic information as how many died was open to such widely varying estimates. If you have visited or will visit Hawk's Nest, by all means read the book.

This comprehensive work is invaluable to those interested in the true story of this major industrial tragedy. It is easy to read and meticulously researched.

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