

NUGGETS OF BOULDER COLOR

By Elton Garrett

THE CAVE MYSTERY

"I see a pair of eyes back there. Must've been an animal made that
"Sounded like a piece of timber being thumped around or kicked or something."

Three men stood in an old mine tunnel, suddenly aware that the presumably deserted tunnel was occupied by some creature or other. They were graveyard shift truck drivers on Hoover dam, out prospecting a bit in midday in the mountain to the southwest of the gravel plant.

"I'm sure it was a pair of eyes," said Al Terry. And William Campbell and Robert Thomas agreed with him it would be wise to leave the darkness of the cave until they had a better light than that provided by lighting matches.

At the mouth of the cave Thomas and Terry sat while Campbell drove up to Boulder City and got a flashlight from his dormitory room. No creature left or entered the cave in the interim. They armed themselves with clubs and with a flashlight the three men entered the tunnel. They walked in

and in—about 400 feet to the point whence they had previously heard the sound. They went on, another hundred feet, and at the end of the tunnel found a four by four timber which probably had been used in the old mining operation. Had this timber been moved, making that noise?

Mystery! Where was the animal?

The men retraced their steps, examining the cave until they reached the entrance. They were about to give up the search when: "Look!" said one of them, "I saw a man's feet in a cloud of dust there at the roof of the tunnel."

The trio again entered the cave. A short distance in from the mouth, they found a small cavern in the roof, a sort of room connected with an open hole from the tunnel.

Training the light there, they found, crouching behind a sort of dirt pile, a man, eyes fearful and staring right into the flashlight.

One of the men talked to him. No answer.

"Come on down." No answer.

"Done something?"

Hiding from the cops?" Again a negative shake.

One of the men attempted to crawl up with the man.

"Cigaret?" He took the cigaret, and at last lighted it. But he smoked only a few puffs. His mouth was too dry. Needed a drink.

"Thirsty?" A positive shake.

"What are you doing here? Why won't you come down." A stare was the only answer.

"Well, you must be love sick or something." This brought tears to the man's eyes. "Shall we go get the police and help you down?" This met with disapproval at first, but at last the men persuaded him they should get official aid for him. This they did.

The officers came and helped him down and took him to the station, where it was found he had suffered complete lapse of memory. He was recognized, however, as a welder on the dam project, and later was released to Harry Eck, a friend, pending recovery.

Distraction over the marriage