High Scalers Provided Color
By John F. Cahlan

High scalers! For a majority of residents of this area, those two words probably connotate the people who are in the upper income brackets and have to shell out large lettuce to Uncle Sam every time March 15 comes around.

But to those who were here during Boulder-dam days, the words bring back the romance of the early construction days when a high-scaler was the fellow who worked on the face of the canyon with nothing but a small piece of board and a heavy rope between him and eternity.

The high-scalers were the boys who swung over the sides of the rim of the canyon on bos'n seats, attached to the top of the cliff by a heavy rope, and worked on the face of the sheer walls to cut away all the loose rock so there would be no chance of rockslides either during the time the dam was being erected or after it had been finished.

When you visit the dam and see the finely chiselled walls of the canyon around the structure, then you are looking at the handiwork of these human flies who did everything a steeple-jack can do, only did it better.

The high-scalers were a motley crew. They were former acrobatic stars of circuses, they were former steeple-jacks and they were just plain Joe Doakes who had a yen for danger and loved the spectacular part of the work they did. They all had plenty of what is politely known as intestinal fortitude, and they displayed it on many, many occasions.

The riggers and the high-scalers on the "big job" had the toughest jobs of any of the early day workmen on the dam. They were just like a batch of high trapeze artists working in the heights without a safety net below. One drop and the end of the trail!

They came in early and stayed fairly late for their job was not completed until the last loose rock had been scraped off the face of the canyon. And if you think those "coyotes" - the big dynamite shots which ripped away half a hillside in a single blow - were the work of human flies who came from the east dreamed up a few phonies, but for the most part the heroics as performed by those Boulder dam workmen were the real McCoy.

The reason the eastern newspapermen had to dream stories was because they were sent to Boulder to cover the story and when they arrived the thing was so immense it awed them. They couldn't find anything to write about and played the main part in the dramatic battle with the riggers and the high-scalers on the "big job".

There were many stories of "Acrobatics of a type never dreamed of by the high trapeze performers of Las Vegas" that were dreamed up in Black canyon. Some of the "big shot" part in a dramatic battle with the riggers and the high-scalers on the "big job".

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One drop and the end of the trail! on a pay day, the ordinary people who were just like a batch of high trapeze artists working in the heights without a safety net below. One drop and the end of the trail!

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held him in position as he labor-
ed. He gambled and won!

"No wartime act of heroism ever surpassed that of this hardy-
fisted son of toil, who literally
pushed himself into eternity, and
brought back to the land of the
living a man whose brain was
burning with the tragic thought—
this is the end.'

"Rutledge, high scaling inspec-
tor for Six Companies builders of
Boulder dam, was working on
Lookout Point, on the rim of the
canyon, where a valve-house was
being painted yesterday at about
10 AM. One of his hands had been
slightly injured previously, and
it is believed this injury caused
the near-tragedy. The weakened
hand was believed to have been
un able properly to grasp the rope
which protected his life, and he
started to slide over the side.

"Rutledge went over the cliff
and started to plunge toward the
bottom, head-first.

"Cowan, who is known among
his fellow workers as 'Loud
Speaker,' was sitting in his
swinging 'bos'n's chair' about 25
feet below the rim of the can-
yon. He looked up and saw the
man start to fall from above and
knew that he would fall out of his
reach.

"Timing himself with the pre-
cision of a veteran high trapeze
artist, he gave himself a push,
away from the canyon wall, with
his feet, at just the right mo-
tent, swinging clear of the can-
yon and placing himself immedi-
ately in the path of the falling
man.

"He seized Rutledge by one leg,
as the man fell past him, and,
with a terrific jerk, Rutledge's
body came to a halt. The sudden
weight on the ropes which held
the bos'n's chair in position was
not sufficient to snap the strands
and together the two men swung
back to the canyon wall.

"Arnold Parks, scaling boss
who was in the area and saw the
whole heroic deed, seized Rut-
ledge around the neck and, to-
gether with Cowan, held him
suspended until he was able to
get hold of the rope and clamber
back to safety.

"Rutledge did not appear ner-
vous at all, at first, but after he
got back onto solid ground up
there at the top of the cliff, con-
templating his experience, he be-
came shaky as a leaf, according
to witnesses, when the full real-
ization of his close call finally hit
him.

"I didn't feel excited at all
while I was falling,' Rutledge
told B. A. Peters, another worker
who was on the cliff. 'I just
thought it was the end and had
no feeling even hardly to fright.
It was after I had gotten on top
again that I got scared, think-
ing of those rocks away down
there below on the bottom of the
canyon.'

"A year ago Frank T. Crowe,
superintendent for Six Compan-
ies, remarked that he had about
75 former acrobats working for
him down in the canyon, and
yesterday one of Crowe's train-
ed scalers, almost nonchalantly,
throw himself out into space,
grabbed a doomed man, saved
his life and figured it all was
in a day's work."