

**Cableway put
to the test
at Hoover Dam**

Roy Theiss

Boulder City News Editor

Touted as one of the engineering marvels in the world during its creation, the support system for Hoover Dam is still considered unmatched in the world.

"This is one of the largest in the world, if not the largest. It is not the average cableway," said Don Bader, field engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Engineers conducted stress tests during the first week of April on the cableway that stretches between the walls of the Black Canyon walls.

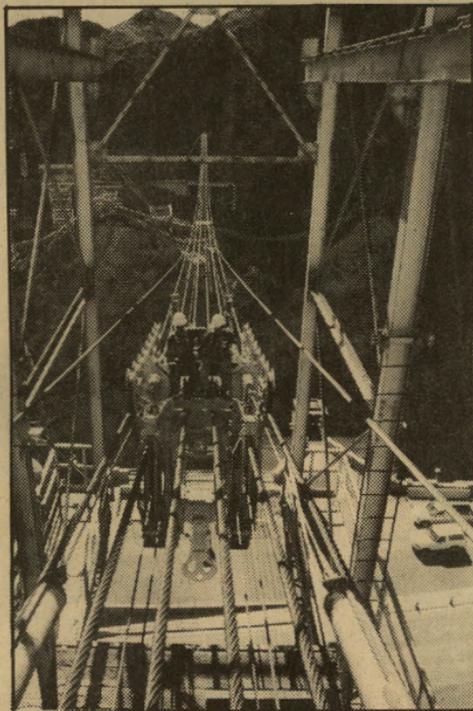
In 1932, the engineers recognized a need for the cableway to lower equipment to the base of the dam.

Generators were installed in 1935 after the dam was built and the only way to get massive equipment down to the dam was—and still is—by cableway.

The lower Portal Road used to bring supplies to the dam twists and turns too often and the tunnel is too tight for some of the equipment, Bader said. Some pieces are as large as houses.

The cableway beneath the dam is used approximately once a month, Bader said, to lower 18-wheel oil tankers and other equipment. Recently, the cableway was put to the test when it hauled a 150-ton transformer.

The cableway's rated capacity is 150 tons.



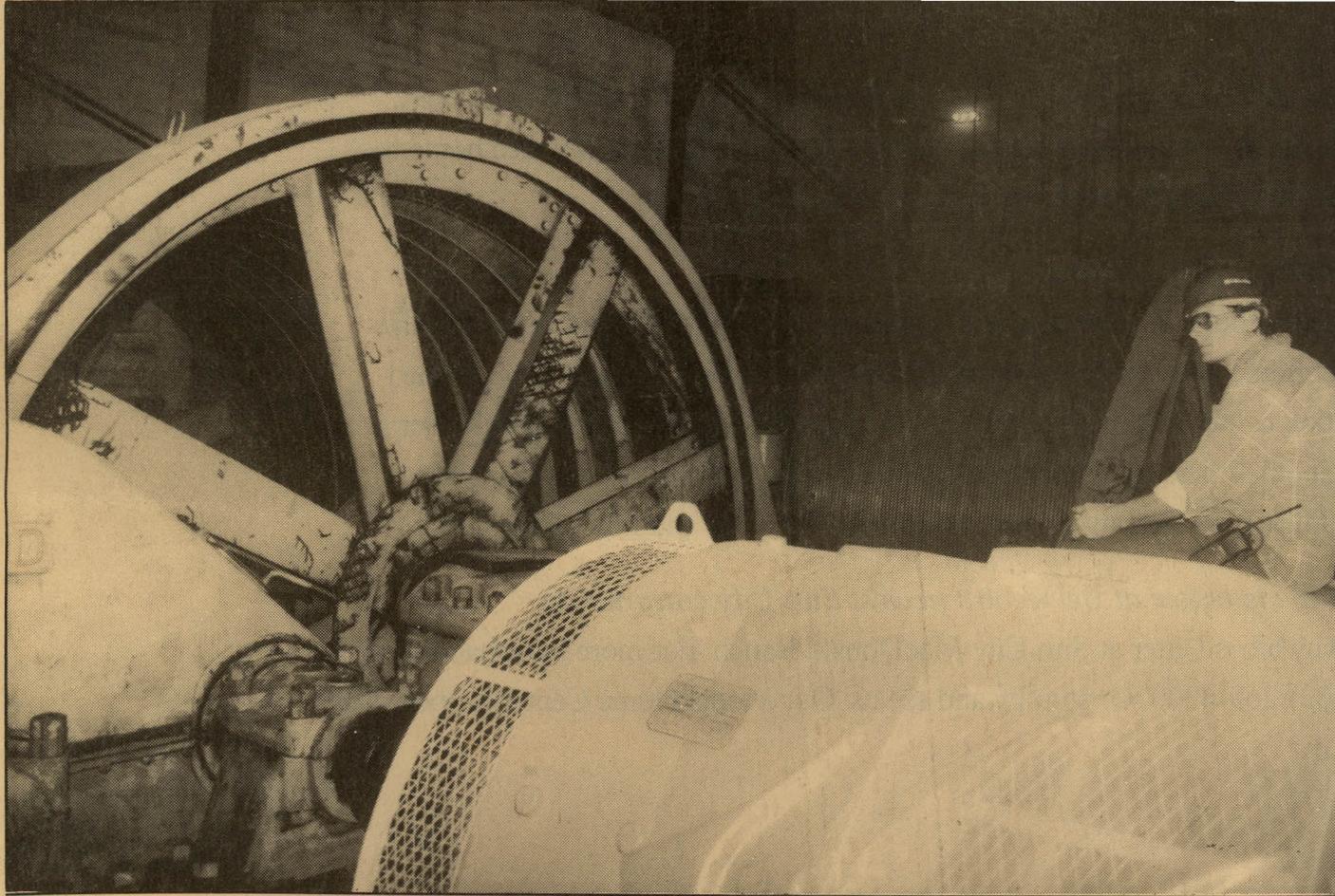
CARRIAGE RIDE — Six hundred feet above the Colorado River, workers finish testing the carriage for the cableway.

During the load testing at the beginning of April, slabs of concrete weighing as much as 20 tons were stacked on a cradle and dangled over the Colorado River.

The first load test was 25%, then 50%, then 100% and finally 125% of the rated capacity. The cableway successfully supported 187 tons.

The last load test was three years ago, Bader said, when the new control system for the operation of the cableway was put in place.

Photos by Andy Pernick, regional photographer for the Bureau of Reclamation, and Rob Weidenfeld, News staff.



ABOVE — Rick Oltrogge controls the flow of cable from the huge spools at left, as it is released to span the 1,200-foot width of Black Canyon.

RIGHT — Construction inspector Bob Moore stands at the instrument panel in the cableway control station.

FAR RIGHT — Workers prepare a slab of concrete weighing close to 20-tons for a load test.

