

ONE OF "BOYS OF BOULDER DAM"

* * * * *

Interesting Volumes Could Be Written On The Lives, Experiences of Hoover Dam Workers; Here Is One of a Series of Modest "Samples":

HE WORKS UNDER WATER

By Elton Garrett

A diver came to the desert to work.

He formerly was a member of the United States navy. And now he has high hopes of becoming a member of the submarine navy of Six Companies Inc., thus helping to build Hoover dam.

He's George Stringham, and he's had a string of unique experiences a mile yard long and a yard wide, from Borneo to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the surface of the sea to its barnacled bottom.

Now he's working in one of the tunnels awaiting the time when he can add to his "string" the experience of having battled the Colorado river's treacherous water in building of the cofferdams.

The diver is not running from danger; he is courting it, looking forward to it.

For sea diving is a Sunday school picnic in comparison to fighting a river current beneath its tossing surface.

And how well does he know the difference. For he breasted the Yangtse Kiang river in China, working under its surface to help raise the government tug "Pisquaticia." That was in 1914.

It was in Longpool, Phillippine Islands, that this thick-chested, short man saw a Guam negro with whom he was working done to death by the salt water when the line blocks of the engine accidentally cut the hose that sent him air to sustain life. That was in 1912.

"Couldn't get the helmet off to come to the top, so he suffocated down there," says Stringham. "As a rule a man can kick off his navy shoes and get the helmet off and swim to the surface in time."

It was in 1915 that our Boulder City river diver worked with other divers in Hawaii, seeking in vain to find the F-4, lost submarine of the United States government. That was during one of his four four-year terms in the navy, where he rated chief petty officer.

"It was there that an Italian diver named Berta set a world record by going down 235 feet," said Stringham. "He's in a government hospital now with the 'benders.' That's something some divers get when they've gone deep under great pressure. Like being punch drunk. A fellow loses a lot of his control of his muscles. Head flops over on its side sometimes, and he can't help it."

Stringham has worked in the Colorado river before, diving to retrieve lost bridge steel below Needles some years ago. So he knows what the Colorado is like. He knows what he must face when he dons helmet and boots to go to the bottom of Black canyon to work.

He has worked in the Phillipines, China, Hawaii, Borneo and the Gulf of Mexico. And now he's living in room 346, dormitory 6, Boulder City, whiling away his time as a tunnel worker until the "submarine" work shall commence.