

NUGGETS OF BOULDER COLOR

By Elton Garrett

BLASTING CAPE HORN

The big blast today, perhaps the last spectacular big blast on the dam project, recalls to the minds of old timers the blasting off of Cape Horn on October 4, 1931, a year and a half ago. The account we wrote of this blast follows:

"Sound movie cameras start grinding at the bottom of Black canyon!

"We are going to blast off the entire side of the canyon wall at Cape Horn, to make way for the railway which will carry materials half a mile down the bottom of the canyon where Hoover dam will be built. About 20 tons of powder will be used in the blast."

"It is the voice of Bert Good-enough, Six Companies' engineer, whose brief dialogue before the cameras with Norman Gallison, director of public and press relations, explaining for Paramount patrons what they 'are about to see' when they view this picture.

"Men are 'scramming' from the upper recesses of the precipitous wall, letting themselves down ropes, and hurrying away, leaving

dozens of empty powder boxes up behind, discernible even a quarter of a mile away, from the vantage point of the cameras on the Arizona side of the river, downstream.

"They've finished their preparations, the wires all are in place. All that's necessary now is to pull the switch!

"There's painful wait while the last checkup man goes around the rocky road at the foot of the cliff to see that there's nobody there.

"B. A. Peters, head powder man, who has been in charge of the loading of the 'biggest shot on the entire dam project' is crossing by boat. Soon he stands, a huge white rag in his hand, between the movie cameras.

"'All ready?' he asks. 'Yes.' The cameras all are set. They commence grinding once more, while a dozen other camera men watch the cape intently through their viewfinders.

"Peters waves the white rag in the air. Two seconds pass and—BOOM!

"Spurts of rock, smoke and dust in a mass 300 feet high! Clatter

of rocks and grinding of rock masses as the great smoke-masked body of cliffside crashed to the rocky slope at the foot of the fall.

"Sound of rock masses hitting the water.

"A body of smoke soon fills the entire canyon, thick and dark brown-opaque billows floating outward and upward. Soon there's a round column of smoke reaching slightly above the high canyon wall top.

"For an unusual time the rocks continue pelting into the river, some that went sailing high, high into the ozone on the wings of that mighty blast.

"The movie cameras continue to grind, as the smoke and dust gradually recede from the Nevada side, revealing hazily to their view the raw, emaciated, smoking, jagged cliff from which hundreds of tons of rock have been wrested by tons of loose powder.

"A gas shovel already was planted on the lower side of the blast site, ready to begin clearing out the muck so the road can be used again. As the photograph party

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would it make? No
around asking how much

boated back up to Cashman's landing, it was seen that the river camp mess hall, barely 150 from the edge of the blast, was not even touched by a rock, so accurate was the control exercised by the company's powder men in loading their giant charge of loose powder in nearly 500 holes, each 24 feet or so in depth.

"Supt. Frank T. Crowe was in the bottom of the canyon to see the shot, but wouldn't consent to stand before the 'talkie' machine for the preliminary dialogue. 'It might make me blush,' he had joked.