



"Everyone was staring up openmouthed. Only the horse was calm."

Marmy, A Horse and Compressors

► "ALL HELL broke loose in the quiet little town of St. Mary's, Georgia, one July morning in 1916."

That's what our photographer, Criss Grube, and I heard when we walked into the large sparkling engine room of the Schaefer Brewing Co in Brooklyn recently. The familiar foghorn voice came from the center of a dozen or so operators gathered around the chief engineer's desk.

Yep, that voice could belong to only Marmaduke Surfaceblow, consulting engineer extraordinary and an ex-marine and stationary engineer who had poked into every corner of this old world in his long, eventful and checkered life.

Criss and I were there to take photos (see pp 106-113) while chief engineer John Wolf had his steam turbine open for overhaul. But we didn't expect to run into Marmaduke. Peering through the crowd, I saw that Marmy had this situation well under control. There he sat, leaning back in the swivel chair, his size-16 canals propped up on the chief's desk. And he had a perfect strangle hold on a quart mug of cool lager beer—as did some of his audience. Here was the natural setting for Marmy, and he was in his glory.

Evidently this was not the time to take pictures, so I moved closer and listened. Marmy hoisted the mug and ballasted his tanks until the mug was empty. Then he gave his old gray bowler a starboard list, hooked his

thumbs into the armpits of his checkered vest and blasted away.

"As I was saying, all hell broke loose that morning in St. Mary's, but let me tell you guys what I was doing in that dinky port in the first place. Three of us engineers from the SS Caribbean went ashore in Savannah one evening after pulling in from Havana. We burned up the town that night and next morning I awoke in the local hotel at St. Mary's. Don't ask me how I got there. All I know is that I was stone broke.

"Walking down to the water-front, I came to the Pratt Refrigeration Co. A native told me that Joshua Pratt was the big shot in town. Fishermen brought their shrimp to his place for icing and shipping. That guy owned half the town and drove two of the finest horses in those parts.

"Pratt was in his office and asked me what in hell I wanted. When I told him I was a marine engineer, he laughed, then motioned for me to follow him into the plant. There I saw three 30-ton horizontal CO₂ compressors running at full speed.

"You call yourself an engineer," he cackled. "Well, you got a job and we'll see how good you really are." Then he explained that usually one or two compressors would carry the load, but that lately all three had to run. Trouble was the condenser was coated with paraffin. Seemed that old Joshua had tried to

pinch pennies by using a paraffin-based oil in the compressors instead of the usual arctic oil.

"Pratt told me to hang up my coat and start rigging up a makeshift condenser from old piping so I could start cleaning the fouled up condenser soon as it was ready. His idea was to run the piping out into the bay and back. But I knew that was easier said than done.

"I'll get that gunk out of those tubes without shutting down, tearing down, building a new condenser or opening one piece of equipment," I promised.

"How?" asked Joshua, suddenly swallowing his adam's apple and staring blankly at me.

"By shutting off the cooling water to the condenser and getting the condenser so damn hot that all that paraffin will melt out," was my answer.

"Over my dead body," wheezed Pratt. "You ain't gonna burn up my expensive plant just to try a half-brained theory. Operating refrigeration equipment call for horse sense," he added. And that was that.

"So I spent the day going through the motions of sizing up the place for the jury-rig condenser and scouting around for tools and equipment. 'You can kill a hog without breaking his legs and letting him bleed to death,' I always said, and I was going to do that condenser the easy way. In the meantime,

(Continued on page 208)



*Straightforward
Service*

from Your **Nalco** REPRESENTATIVE

● Nalco Representatives make friends and permanent Nalco System users with a simple formula: honest water treatment service.

You can ask your Nalco Representative questions and get straightforward answers... And if you stump him; he—and you—can put the whole Nalco Laboratories' and Service staffs to work on a plain-language plan of action to get you better water treatment results, most economically.

If you are not already getting the security from water treatment troubles that regular calls from your Nalco Representative bring, call or write today for prompt action.

Nalco WATER TECHS

A paper on "A Laboratory Method for the Study of Steam Condensate Corrosion Inhibitors," presented at the 8th Annual Conference, National Association of Corrosion Engineers, has been reprinted by Nalco for distribution to men interested in this problem. Your copy will be sent free upon request.

NATIONAL ALUMINATE CORPORATION

6222 West 64th Place • Chicago 38, Illinois
In Canada: Alchem Limited, Burlington, Ontario

THE **Nalco**

SYSTEM . . . Serving Industry through Practical Applied Science

POWER • NOVEMBER 1953