FILE NAME: .ŜŎKűŜf ó.9/ I ú

DATE: мфпф

DOC#: .9/ I лмф

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: ¢ℕJl·ŘŜ W2dzℕJyl·f ! ℕJűλŎfŜ π .ŜŎKűŜf .ℕJλŜŦă

June 7, 1949

ENGINEERS
CONSTRUCTORS

BECHTEL

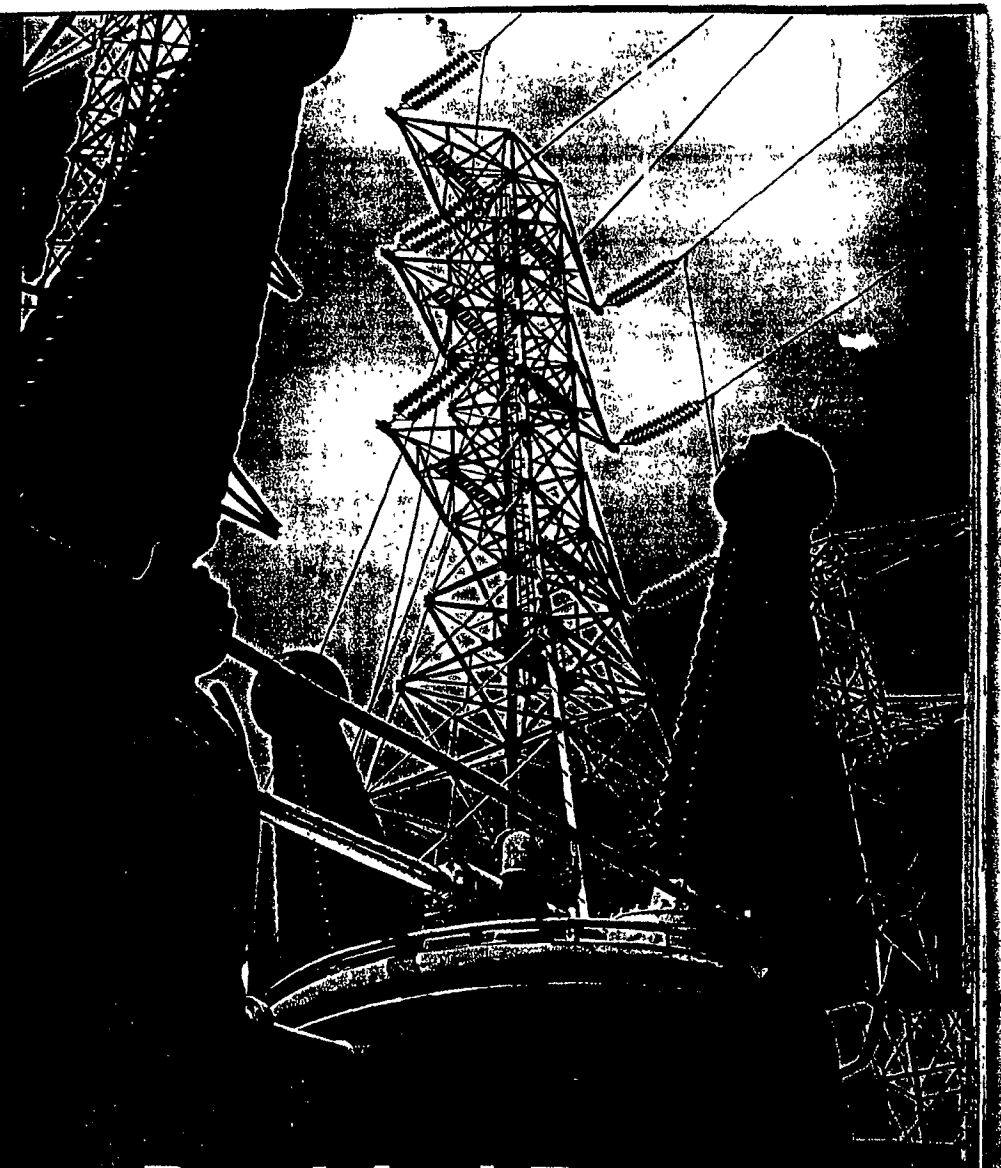
BUILDERS FOR INDUSTRY

Growing with American Industry—and helping American Industry to grow—Bechtel Corporation enters its second half century of outstanding engineering and construction service.

From modest beginnings concentrated in the west alone, expansion has been worldwide. Today, Bechtel planned, Bechtel designed and Bechtel built industrial units are in operation in every quarter of the globe.

Bechtel engineers and construction men are justly proud of their part in effective development of the nation's industrial and natural resources which have created American living standards—highest in world history. To sustain and enhance these standards—while improving the lot of free peoples everywhere—is the vital task to which our energies are dedicated.

LOS ANGELES NEW YORK



Bechtel Briefs

A BUILDER & HIS FAMILY

By ROBERT L. INGRAM

CHAPTER THREE

Young subcontractor nagged ill

Other men destined for long association with the Bechtel family came to the NWP camps—Justin Barber, Clarence "Pop" Thorne who recently retired from the Somastic Pipe Coating Division—and Al Berlander, that seasoned veteran still carrying the old tradition forward as Construction Manager of the Trans-Arabian pipe line. Berlander had taken a subcontract for concrete work. W. A. said the success of the entire railroad contract depended on getting the concrete structures finished ahead of grading. It meant bringing in many carloads of cement and storing them for use during the winter while the worksite was cut off from supplies. Berlander stuck on the job early and late right through the winter, matching wits with the weather. He managed to stay in front of the grading crews and finished up in good time. It turned out to be an early example of the initiative that enabled two Bechtel generations to rely on Al with complete confidence.

The chow stuck to a man's ribs

W. A., the old-timers point out, was a good feeder. His camp table was sure to be mentioned wherever construction workers got together. This was sound business policy, because men were easier to recruit and hold if the employer had a reputation for good food and plenty of it, and well fed men delivered a better day's work. But it also was characteristic of W. A. that he himself liked the best to eat, and would tolerate nothing less for employees. So he hired the finest cooks and bakers he could find and paid them top wages. He ate in camp mess halls with his crews consistently, he often paid surprise visits to his kitchens, and the cook who took liberties with quality or quantity got short shift indeed.

Once on the NWP job, however, he came a cropper. That was the time he altered purchase orders for spaghetti and high-topped boots. Like the cement, both items had to be ordered in quantities sufficient to carry the camp through the rainy season. The laborers were predominantly "eye-talians" who made known their preference for spaghetti as the staple item of diet. The question was—how much of it would they eat before spring? Earle Lloyd made his estimate—a carload of spaghetti. George Colley put in his order for hundreds of pairs of boots. Then W. A. checked, was amazed at the figures, and promptly cut both orders in half!

Winter closed in, and the north coast rains came. The work went on with no slackening of appetites. Down went the spaghetti supply, deeper and stickier grew the mud until access to the outside world was cut off. Then Lloyd discovered that the new Parcel Post, like the Pony Express, was committed to go through, come hell or high water. Scant days before a crisis developed, a new order was sent to San Francisco and before long the faithful Parcel Post began to arrive.

Spaghetti by mail

"I'll tell you it was a sight," he said, to watch those pack trains of Parcel Post mules come in, thirty to a string, covered with mud and piled high with spaghetti and boots. The men who had contracted with the Government for mail delivery had just cause to curse the day we landed in their territory, but we had one consolation. The other construction outfits along the railroad gave them even more trouble. They had neglected to stock enough of anything, and kept the poor postmen busy bringing in flour and the other necessities of life." After that, Lloyd recalls, "W. A. asked questions before he changed a food order."

Warren Bechtel was about fourteen years old when the NWP work started. Steve was twelve and Kenneth a youngster of eight. The boys retain bright memories of summer days spent at the NWP camps. They had been on earlier jobs but this project served as the best-remembered introduction to the construction business. And as companions they had George S. Colley, Jr., and his brother Wallace, who came up during the vacation months.

They called him "Dad"

The boys were beginning to share their father's enthusiasm for railroad building and becoming more and more his daily companions. At this time Alice Elizabeth was born to round out the family with a sister, so this is an appropriate place to bring in the affectionate nickname by which W. A. Bechtel became widely known. Years before, when Warren was born, Mrs. Bechtel—like young mothers everywhere—began to call her husband "Dad." Because in these years the family so often lived near the work, the name "Dad" soon caught on as a familiar greeting at the camps, and with passing time, it spread into general usage wherever W. A. Bechtel was known. The name took hold because it suited him to perfection—one short rich word that wrapped up a host of warmly human qualities: friendliness, consideration for others, amiability — but also judgment, leadership and respect.

Something new was added

Method-wise the NWP work marked the earliest use of automobile trucks to haul construction supplies. Dad Bechtel was the first contractor on this railroad to replace four-up freight teams with gasoline-powered trucks, and insofar as known, the first in the country. They were, son Warren recalls, 1912 model Packards and Alcos, with chain drives. Although the trucks of that time were not today's dependable vehicles and construction roads were little more than wide trails, a shop was equipped to keep the new machines running so that supplies were moved at a substantially faster rate. Later, at the Bechtel Utah San Leandro yard, Dad's men built dump bodies for the trucks, and thereby spearheaded a great advance in heavy materials transportation.



Home base during railroad construction days—on Perry Street in Oakland

EDITOR'S NOTE

BECHTEL BRIEFS is privileged to present in a series of installments "A Builder and His Family," written and copyrighted by Robert L. Ingram.

This yard, also, served the three sons as a school for the study of construction equipment. Like all small kids, they were delighted to play on the big shovels and wagons. Growing older, this interest changed to an attitude of inquiry—the whys and wherefores of machinery design and operation. The time was one in which sweeping advances were made in power tools, so the Bechtel boys acquired a thorough education in equipment while the equipment itself gradually was being evolved.

1914: Sewell's flivs

One of the young men who joined the outfit in 1914 was Frank Sewell. He came on at Bechtel Camp Six of the NWP as an office man—"even then a necessary evil on construction jobs," Frank used to say. He slept in a building used as an office and warehouse, which housed "three carloads of supplies and two carloads of fleas." After six Spartan months with these bedfellows, he quit and went south for the winter. But when spring came, he wired IF CONDITIONS CHANGED I WILL COME BACK. Earle Lloyd truthfully replied: CONDITIONS CHANGED, and Frank returned. I found them changed all right," he said, 'they were a damned sight worse!" But he stuck from then on.

Where a contractor's organization jelled

The Northwestern Pacific projects fall into position historically as the "coming of age" period for the Bechtel organization. At the time no single reason was sharply apparent, but looking back in the light of later developments it is plain that here the idea for the insurance business took root, that Dad Bechtel proved to his own satisfaction his readiness to expand operations, and the two older boys at least, cut their eye teeth on the realities of major construction. Kenneth Bechtel, too, learned the "feel" of a construction camp. Most important, Dad's team of top men jelled, and contacts with other outfits working along the NWP convinced them they could hold their own with the best.

The final 106-mile link through the canyon of the Eel was completed late in 1914, and the following year the line was opened to through traffic. That was in 1915, the gala year of the Panama Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco and a great year for Dad Bechtel. He had done his work well; when the time came to settle up with John Tyler, Assistant Treasurer of the Utah Construction Company Dad's share as subcontractor was a tidy sum. "I never expected to have that much money in a lifetime," he confided to a friend. He had come a long way from the section gang in Indian Territory.

From Perry Street to San Leandro

During the Northwestern Pacific construction, "home base" for the family was a two-story house on Perry Street in the Adams Point district of Oakland. It was a good home in a good residential section. But now that he was in comfortable circumstances, Dad's first thought turned to his family, and he looked for a larger place where the children would have "more room to grow." He found it on Estudillo Avenue in San Leandro, the city which adjoins Oakland to the east. This place generously satisfied the desire for more room by including a large house (which was remodeled and furnished with oriental exhibit rugs from the late Exposition), beautiful gardens, space for a tennis court, and some lands suitable for crop cultivation.

Perhaps Dad remembered his own youth on the farm. At least, he reasoned, it would be a good thing for the boys to work the adjoining piece and earn something for themselves. So an acre or [illegible] was plowed up and put into tomatoes; the boys toiled long and late, and were rewarded with a bumper crop. The quality was high, too. Dad had always been a stickler for good "housekeeping" out on his jobs—Tom Phillips said "he always finished his work in apple pie order"—and his sons proved to be chips off the old block. The three budding tomato growers bought boxes, and sorted and packed their product with the greatest of care until, as an eye-witness testified: "The full boxes looked as beautiful as a de luxe pack of Hood River apples."



Urged on by his son Warren, Dad sampled flying in his early stages. Pictured with Mrs. Bechtel and friends, after a 1917 hop.)

Tomatoes and lawn mowers

They were hauled to the commission merchant's and in due time a check came. The amount failed to cover the bare cost of the boxes. Whereupon the bottom fell out of the truck-gardening project and from then on tomatoes were free to friends and neighbors!

Younger sister Alice was very much in evidence at the San Leandro place, an active little towhead who was the special joy of her three "big brothers." And the big brothers, like other kids, were not enthusiastic about the household chores Dad laid out for them on the Estudillo Avenue property. "They didn't care particularly for mowing the big lawns and raking the leaves," Earle Lloyd says—perhaps because already they had flexed their muscles on the more stimulating tasks of heavy construction. The home, however, served Dad's purpose well during the formative years. Before it was sold to make way for San Leandro High School the family moved to the large apartment building overlooking Lake Merritt in Oakland, where Steve and his family still reside.

When Alice kicked the chandelier

W. A. Bechtel built this fine community apartment as his family's home and for owner occupancy by a group of fellow investors. Here on one occasion his daughter proved equal to one of Dad's clever twists. Alice then was a high school girl, at the stage where of all this world's treasures the most to be desired was a small car of her own. Her father listened patiently. "Perhaps when you're bigger," he said. It also happened that in the new apartment the dining room chandelier hung rather low, just clearing the taller heads. One evening, while Alice was particularly eloquent on the subject of a car, Dad glanced up at it and had an idea. "When you're big enough to kick that chandelier from the floor you'll be big enough to have your own automobile," he told her. At the time it sounded like the wisdom of a modern Solomon, but Alice had her commitment and she meant to capitalize on it. Day after day she stretched and practiced with more zeal than a ballerina. Long before Mother Nature added a single cubit to her height she triumphantly kicked the chandelier—and characteristically, Dad made good immediately!