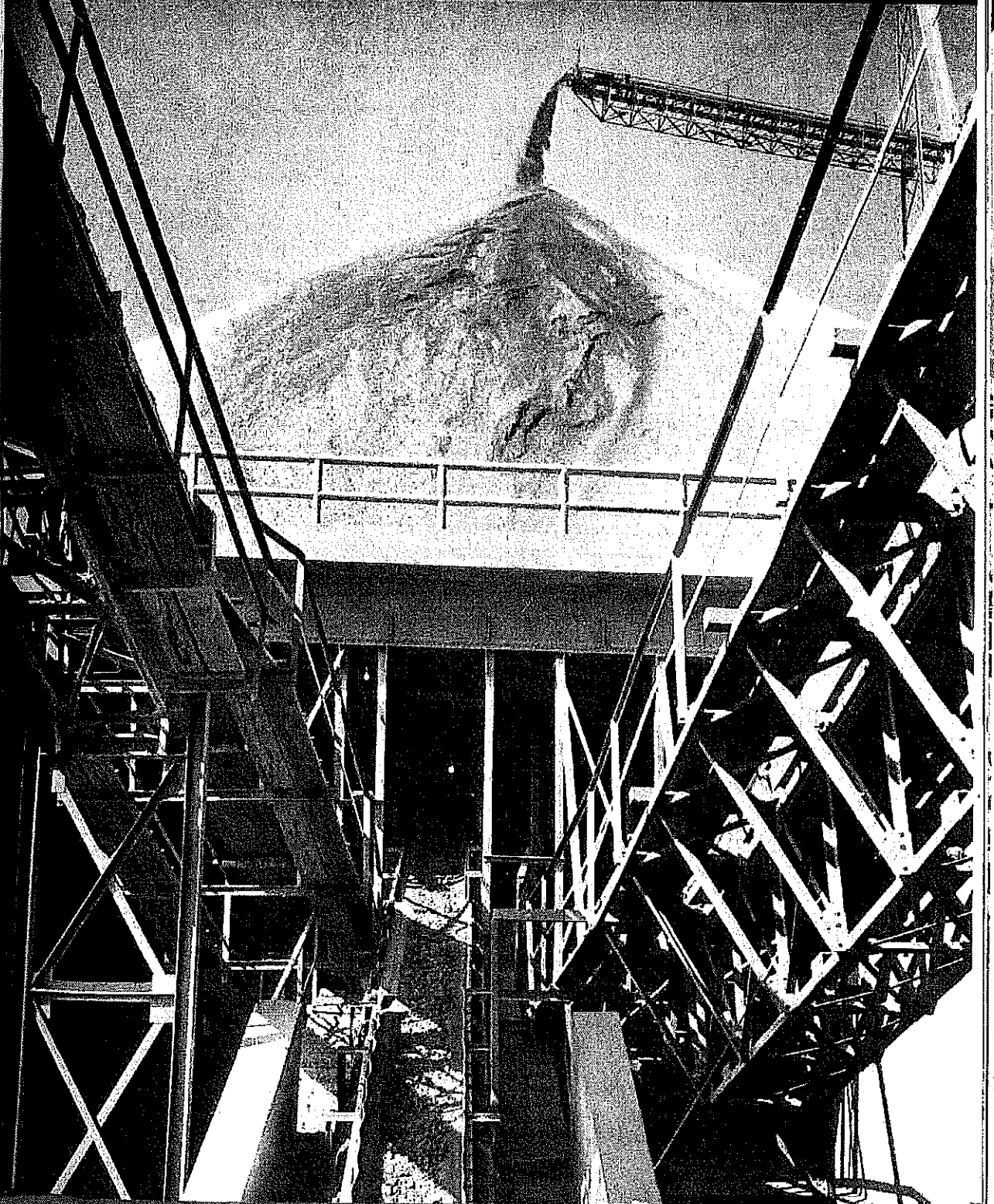


KEEPING

The Permanente News

PUBLISHED FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF PERMANENTE



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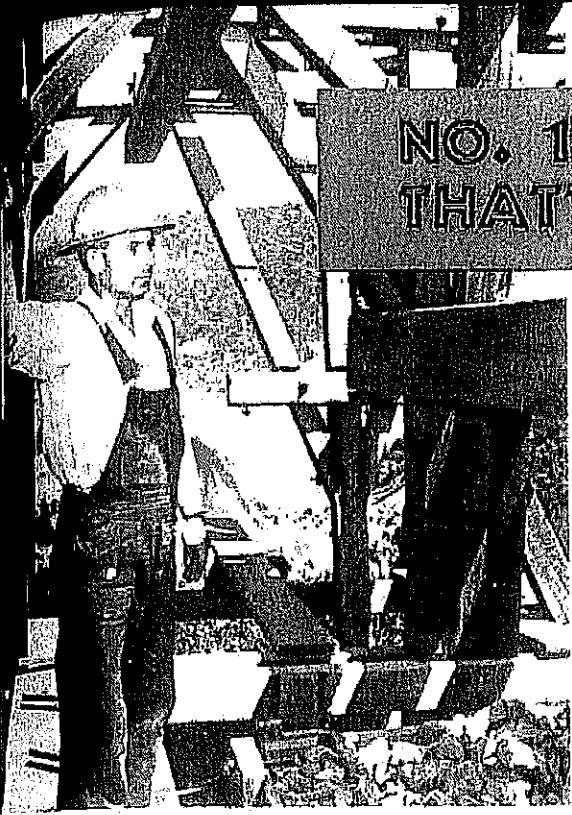
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NEWS



NO. 1 OLD-TIMER THAT'S JOE PEABODY

Joe Peabody inspects the massive timbers of a tension station on the old bucket line that once brought sugar rock out of the upper quarry. The box of rock at Joe's feet acted as a weight on the cable.

This month THE PERMANENTE NEWS started out to find the company's oldest employee, in point of service, and we believe we have found the hands-down winner in Joe Peabody.

Joe Peabody, brakeman on the packhouse switching yard, has worked at Permanente for ten years. That's right—he started just ten years ago this month in August 1933. At that time there were no Permanente enterprises as we know them today, of course, but the creek was called Permanente and a firm known as the Santa Clara Holding Company was taking sugar rock from Bald Mountain by means of a bucket line. Joe worked for the holding company from 1933 to 1939, when the Kaiser interests took over to develop the cement plant. Then he switched to the Kaiser payroll and he's been on it ever since.

Brush and rattlesnakes were the principal products of Permanente canyon in 1933. The holding company was working a limestone deposit near the present lower quarry. Workmen, Joe among them, were breaking the rock with sledges and pushing it in cars to a bunkie where it was loaded into trucks. (Contrast this with the system of crushers and conveyor belts of the modern Permanente!)

In 1934 the holding company unearthed a better grade of sugar rock in the vicinity of our upper quarry. (Permanente now gets all its sugar rock,

which sugar companies burn in their refineries, from the upper quarry.) The holding company then installed a crusher and built the bucket line that is well remembered by many men who worked on construction of the cement plant.

The cable of the old bucket line stretched from the upper quarry to a terminal across Permanente Creek on the other side of the old county road. Framework of the lower terminal may still be seen on the side of the canyon across from the mag plant and several of the wooden towers that supported the cable are still standing.

Joe Peabody drove the pair of mules that pulled the lumber on a sledge to the tower sites. Later, the same mules pulled out the cable.

Buckets loaded with rock were clamped on to the cable at the upper quarry. All movement was by gravity; the loaded buckets pulled the empties back up the hill. Joe, working on maintenance, often rode an empty bucket across the ravines from one tower to another.

It was on a day of heavy rain in December 1938 that Joe admitted at the gate a car carrying Henry J. Kaiser, E. E. Trefethen, Jr., H. V. (Lindy) Lindbergh, D. A. (Dusly) Rhoades, and a representative of the Santa Clara Holding Company.

Mr. Kaiser was making his first trip to Permanente. In June he secured the contract to supply all of the cement for Shasta Dam, and overnight Permanente Canyon became alive with hundreds of men. They excavated, laid foundations, threw up walls, and installed machinery. The bucket line fell in the path of construction.

The plant ground out its first bag of cement Christmas Day, 1939. Joe moved onto the silos and then was packhouse foreman. He was loading bulk cars when a pipe fell on his hip and laid him up for six weeks. Those days were the first he had missed since he started in 1933!

For a number of years Joe lived in a house along Permanente Creek, about where the overpass at the entrance of the plant is now located. When the overpass project was decided on, the company said, "Joe, you can have the house, but you'll have to get it out of here." So Joe knocked the house down and carted it away. In back of his present home in Monte Vista he has a room built of the old lumber, a reminder of the days before Permanente became a famous industrial center.

Editor's note: There are other old-timers at Permanente, men who were here before the first grader arrived. Watch for their stories in issues to come.