

The BIG IDEA

By JOHN D. WEAVER

Wilson was a bright young man with big ideas—and they all backfired. Doris was just a pretty little thing, but her idea was the biggest of all

BEFORE young Wilson's transfer from the Phoenix office, no one had ever questioned, certainly never challenged, the established order in the West Coast branch of Hollowell Enterprises. Mr. Griggs, as office manager, operated on the lofty level policy, and Miss Bagley, as head of Administration & Personnel, served as his prime minister. She had charge of stamps, petty cash, sick leave and annual vacations, each of which helped sustain her power, which was reflected in the deference of other department heads, who looked to her for new office furniture, and in the subservience of the stenographic pool, who depended upon her good will for promotions and petty favors.

"He won't get far," the wiseacres predicted when Wilson appeared on the scene as Mr. Griggs's executive assistant, but the young man had not been in the office a week before he had quietly reorganized Miss Bagley's system of mail routing, then diverted the dispensing of petty cash from her hands to his. He introduced the time sheet and a new production chart, and, striking his most telling blow at the Bagley ministry, he rewrote her personnel interview form.

"I'm going to resign," Miss Bagley kept saying, but she didn't.

Mr. Griggs sent Wilson's revised 487-A to the Home Office in New York, and it was adopted for use in all the Hollowell Enterprises branches. Wilson even received a personal letter of commendation from the president, Mr. Hollowell.

"He'd better be careful," Miss Bagley began to say, trying to stem the rising spirit of revolution which gripped the office. "I've been here a long time. I've seen them come, and I've seen them go."

Wilson was moved to larger quarters and given a set of office keys, the badge of an H. E. executive. "You're helping pull your share of the load, son," Mr. Griggs said, and suggested a round of golf some afternoon. The department heads, to the delight of their wives, who found the young man most attractive, invited Wilson out to their houses for dinner, and Mr. Hendrix, who was in charge of Claims & Adjustments, put him up for membership in the University Club.

"I was nearly twice your age before I got my office keys," Mr. Hendrix said, with wonder and admiration.

Miss Bagley developed a distressing stomach condition, and the unmarried girls in the steno-



"Mr. Hollowell's been asking for you," she said, and although it sounded

graphic pool noted, with disappointment, that young Wilson had eyes for no one except Miss Doris Trinkle, the junior secretary in Legal. His relations with Miss Trinkle were quite formal, almost too formal, but the stenographers, versed in the minutiae of office romance, caught the meaning of his absent glances toward Legal.

"I just don't have time to write every day," Wilson complained in one of his now infrequent letters to Selma Boyce of the Phoenix office. Like most men who survive unmarried into their late twenties, Wilson had developed a certain wariness toward young women who seemed aggressively bent on marriage, and Selma, now that he could look back objectively, had been rather forward, particu-

larly during his last week in Phoenix. Miss Trinkle, on the other hand, seemed shy, not at all pushy, and although she never did, she could have worn Selma's skintight sweaters.

"I'm sorry you feel that way about it," Wilson wrote Selma one night, and next morning (Miss Trinkle was wearing that lovely green, knitted dress) he finished his fateful memorandum. He didn't consult anyone, especially not Miss Bagley, and when the memorandum had been typed in quadruplicate, he took it personally to Mr. Griggs and suggested it be forwarded to the Home Office.

"Glad to," Mr. Griggs shook Wilson's hand and told him, "New York's watching you, son. They've got an eye on you."

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improbable, he let her lead him through the crowd to the bar, where Miss Bagley was hovering over Mr. Hollowell and old Mr. Pruitt

Miss Laidlaw, a stenographer with senior-secretary ambitions, sneaked a copy of the memorandum from the files and rushed it to Miss Bagley. "I figured it was something you oughta know about," Miss Laidlaw said, risking her future on Miss Bagley's return to power. Miss Bagley, after a few grateful words on loyalty, read the memorandum with rage and then, on reflection, reread it with delight. She leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes, seeing the memorandum as a noose which Wilson had carefully fitted around his neck. The memorandum (Re: Telephone Savings) pointed out that much of the company's business was conducted through long-distance calls. Wilson suggested the mass purchase of Sav-O-Fones, small,

clocklike devices which would be placed beside every Hollowell Enterprise telephone. The Sav-O-Fone would be turned on at the beginning of a long-distance call, its clicking sound a thrifty warning of the mounting cost, and at the end of a three-minute call a bell would ring. Because Hollowell Enterprises had so many telephones, approximately twenty-five hundred throughout the country, the manufacturers had agreed to deliver the Sav-O-Fones at the special price of \$1.87 per unit, as compared to the retail price of \$3.95. "Savings in the first year alone," Wilson had concluded, "should more than pay for the units."

Mr. Hollowell, who, as president of a nation-

wide corporation, could not be expected to read memorandums, glanced over that part which dealt with the amount of money the company would save, then telephoned Mr. Griggs from New York and told him to go ahead with the plan. Mr. Hollowell said he wished every employee were as economy-minded as Wilson. "We could reduce our phone bills 30 per cent on the national level," Mr. Hollowell said, and Mr. Griggs agreed. Mr. Hollowell then asked about Mrs. Griggs, and Mr. Griggs asked about Mrs. Hollowell. Mr. Hollowell asked about the Griggs children, and Mr. Griggs asked about the Hollowell children. "Discovered a new steak place in the Village last night," Mr. Hollowell said, (Continued on page 44)

Harvey Slocum Builds Our

This hard-bitten, hard-working, hard-cussing construction boss taught himself all he knows—and it's plenty. To the experts, he's the best dam man in the country

By **BOOTON HERNDON**

ONE day last spring, when the melting snows in the Washington State mountains were sending torrents of water down the mighty Columbia River, a little man walked out on the roof of the powerhouse that nestles under the mammoth Grand Coulee Dam. He gazed up at the massive wall to the tons of water roaring over the spillway—twice as much water as pours over Niagara Falls—and he shook his head in wonderment. Then he exploded. "The tomfool temerity of man, even to think of puttin' up a thing like that! Who the hell do we think we are, anyway?"

The speaker could be considered an expert on tomfool temerity. He was Harvey Slocum, the man who built the Grand Coulee Dam.

Mankind, according to Slocum, is the most ornery critter in the world. "He comes to a mountain, and he says, 'You can't stop me,' and he drives a tunnel through it. He comes to a deep gorge, and he says, 'I'll step over you!' and he throws a bridge across it. He comes to a great ugly river, and he says, 'You're dangerous and I'm gonna plug you up.' An', by God, he does it!"

Dams are among the biggest things that man builds, and Slocum, a tough-talking, hard-driving man of sixty-three who could whip most men half his age, has built the biggest.

He estimated the cost of Grand Coulee and then, as general superintendent in complete charge of construction, he built it. He estimated the cost of California's Shasta, the world's second highest dam,

with one hand figuratively tied behind his back: at the time, he was in a sanatorium getting over what he now refers to as the world's biggest drunk. He built Madden Dam in the Panama Canal Zone and Friant Dam in California, he's finishing up the big Bull Shoals Dam in Arkansas now, and his next job will probably be the colossal Bhakra Dam in India. He's the best dam man in the world, and he knows it. And still, under that cocksure confidence, Harvey Slocum is a man of great humility.

"Hell, I don't build a damn' thing," he says. "It's the stiff with the picks and shovels who build 'em, and it's the big contractors who make 'em possible, by putting up millions of dollars of their own money on the say-so of an old beat-up stumble-bum like me. Those dams would be there if the world had never heard of Harvey Slocum."

Though he is solely and directly responsible for the execution of a \$78,000,000 job, Slocum puts on about as much front as the proprietor of the general store in Paducah. With a khaki hat on the back of his head, he sits at a secondhand desk in one corner of a barren, concrete-floored office. In front of him is a dusty window looking out on nothing. On his right hand is the oil stove which heats the place, and behind him is his secretary. The phone is on her desk, but 9 times out of 10 he whirls around in his squeaking secondhand chair to answer it.

Slocum has two faces. When he's cussing somebody out, his jaw shoots forward, his little blue-

gray eyes glare balefully, the lines on his face seem to deepen and he looks like what he is—a cantankerous old man getting a big job done. When the storm blows over, however, the lines on his face seem to disappear, his jaw drops back to normal, his eyes squint up with laughter, his shoulders shake and he's a warm little guy telling you about the time he and a whole passel of chorus girls got plastered in Panama.

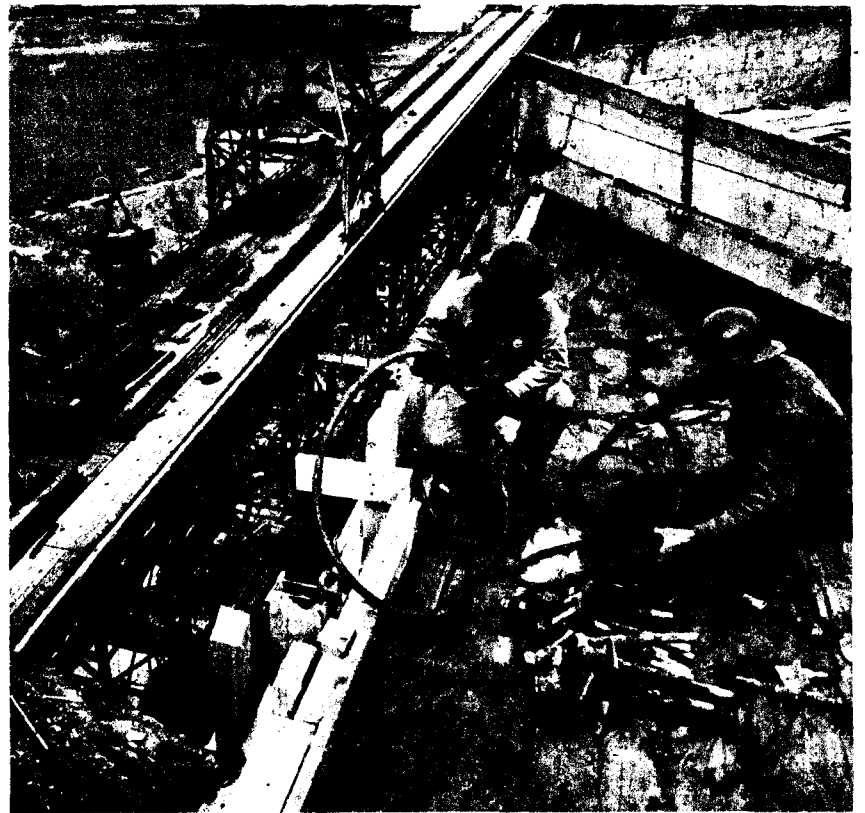
That was back in the old days, before he won his greatest victory. Slocum has fought—and whipped—floods and storms, rivers and oceans, but the toughest opponent of them all was his own hard-drinking self.

"I've always been a goldanged fool," Slocum says. "I've done every silly, stupid thing a man could do. Any worth-while thing I've ever done has been in spite of myself."

He has licked his personal problems so successfully that nowadays he goes out of his way to pick fights with himself. A couple of Christmases ago he looked at the pile of boxes of expensive cigars his friends had given him, said, "Oh, to hell with 'em," and hasn't smoked since. His charming wife would follow him anywhere, but he insists that she stay in their comfortable home in Los Angeles while he lives a monastic existence on the job. He cooks his own meals. One morning recently he broke his glass coffeepot, and got so mad at his own clumsiness that he quit drinking coffee for breakfast. "To hell with it," he explained.



Forced to go seven miles to get rock for Bull Shoals Dam, Slocum had monster conveyor belt erected. It moved whole mountain in two years



Workers atop Bull Shoals project, Mountain Home, Ark. Note the sign in background. Slocum has one of best safety records in the business

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