

**The Civilian Conservation Corps at Colossal Cave, Vail, AZ  
The Boys at Work and at Play, 1934-1937 (Excerpt)**

**By Sharon E. Hunt**

*Presented by Sharon E. Hunt and Martie Maierhauser at the 2008 Arizona History Convention*

The tunneling and dynamiting crew was known as the “thrill gang.” According to the February 1936 camp newspaper:

Cecil Wilson and his crew worked on a tunneling project in Colossal Cave. They took dirt and rock out a bucketful at a time. Albert Price is a human mole. He gets inside of holes somehow and digs them from the inside out. Charley Hall directs the travel of the sand bucket along its cable and entertains the gang with songs and stories (you know the kind he tells). Vernon Clark, hoist boss, is continually crying out that he is tired of his life of ups and downs. Joe Martinez and Henry Schafer have, according to their estimation, dumped enough sand to salt all the spinach served in the CCC camps. They say that it takes a lot of grit to hold those tough jobs they have.

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The tension that must have existed between the men living in such close quarters was alleviated somewhat by camp newspaper jokes, anecdotes, and poems. This poem by an enrollee writing under the name of “The Desert Tattler” describes barracks life:

Now I lay me down to sleep / While CC boys around me creep, / May no other  
CC'er take / My shirt before I 'wake. / Dear Lord, grant me in my slumber, / That  
my bunk may not be torn asunder, / May no legs or springs give way / And smash  
my dome before I 'wake. / Keep me safely, Lord, in thy sight, / And grant no fire  
drill for to-night; / And in the morning let me awake / With fragrant smells of  
sirloin steak. / And if my bunk is not made right, / Lord, keep it from the  
Sergeant's sight; / For I have a date, and is she a beauty! / So, dear Lord, stop that  
extra duty!

...

And then there were the ladykillers. Being young and single, naturally the boys often had thoughts of girls on their minds. The camp newspaper expressed their longings in jokes, stories, and illustrations.

The soft-ball squad seems to have an especially bad case of the doldrums, probably due to such an attractive display of feminine pulchritude in the grand stands. For instance when a certain girl exclaims, "Hit the Ball Droopey," Earl Ezzell is a sure cinch to strike out.

According to an unofficial questionnaire, approximately 90% of the enrollees are interested in taking a course entitled "Love Making in the Movies Made Easy," taught by those two romantic shieks, "Clark Gable" Solarez and "Cary Grant" de la Garza. (Please address all their fan mail in care of the Caveman).