

Fifty years later, veterans of Hoover Dam still get together to swap stories and share memories of a very special time. Seldom, they say, has a project so completely captured the spirit of a time; rarely has a single endeavor so clearly shaped the future of an organization.

For Bechtel and the thousands of people who were there, Hoover Dam was a turning point, a daring escapade that challenged the impossible and won.

It was 1931 and the U.S. economy was being choked by the Great Depression. At \$49 million, the fixed-price bid for Hoover Dam was perilously low. Some competitors swore Dad Bechtel would lose his shirt. Even supporters wondered whether he would survive.

Over the next five years, Hoover Dam would test the skills, the technology, the sheer grit of the construction world's greatest talents.

Old-timers say it marked the beginning of a special company spirit, a pull-together, "we can do anything" anxiousness to challenge the impossible—and win—at Tapline, Canol, Bougainville; today at Jubail, James Bay and Ok Tedi; and for all the jobs yet to come.

The stories that follow are among the spirited tales those veterans will be telling when they, as members of "31ers Club"—the men, women and children who were there from 1931 on—hold their next meeting in Boulder City this spring.