

Doodlebugging

By Pete Clark

At the end of the 1956-1957 schoolyear I was hired by Geophysical Services Incorporated, generally known as GSI. I was a Seismometer Placement Technician, in the vernacular, a Jug Hustler. This was a totally new experience. The Party Chief had graduated third in his class at Colorado School of Mines. The Party Manager, who supervised the field operations, was a native of Medicine Hat, Alberta, and the Observer, who was in charge of the Dog House on the Recording Truck was married to a woman from Medicine Hat, who made delicious Dandelion Wine that would knock your socks off.

A week or so after I started the job, I was told to accompany a driller to Richfield, Utah to plug an illegal artesian well that was the result of an old shot-point. Between Shoshoni and Richfield, I taught myself to drive a truck with a two-speed axle. We were in Utah for two weeks as we had trouble getting through pea-gravel above the source of the water. While we were in Utah the crew, Party 325, moved to Kemmerer, Wyoming.

When we arrived in Kemmerer it was monsoon season in the high desert and there were clouds of mosquitos everywhere. Within a week or so after the rains stopped the mosquitos were gone. Once in a while I would stay behind in the morning when the trucks left for the field. I would help load dynamite into a van to resupply the powder locker for the line we were shooting. I liked to do that because when we were finished loading, I could crawl to the top of the stack of explosives and sleep on the way to the powder locker.

I totally enjoyed my time as a Doodlebugger. The work was hard, the pace was fast and I was tough enough to do whatever the job called for. The country around Kemmerer contains many of what geologists call Hot Beds. They are burnt out hot springs and are composed of a steep mound of bentonite with small sheets of mica spread through the clay. We had to climb Hot Beds to lay cable and microphones. In dry weather it was no problem. After a thunderstorm, the bentonite was slick, but stuck to everything. We went up those wet hills on all fours, sliding down one step for every two steps up. I would not trade my experience doodle bugging for anything.

I enjoyed the work and the diversity of the places where it happened. In three summers, I worked out of eleven towns in four states: Wyoming, Montana, Utah and Colorado. The group involved in oil exploration back in the fifties were among the best people I have known. They were like Gypsies, constantly on the move and they lived in trailers, so I get my back up when I hear the term 'trailer-trash.'

Doodlebug is another name for the Dung Beetle that rolls balls of manure across the ground and buries them. We rolled out cable and buried explosives and sometimes microphones. We were second cousins to the Dung Beetles.