

EYEWITNESS REPORT OF DYNAMITEACCIDENT

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It was Wednesday afternoon, April 23, 1958. The HIGHACRES CAMPUS was deserted except for three afternoon lab sessions. On the campus lawn two rabbits were scampering around. Spring was really in the air. The construction work on the new Student Union building had stopped for the day. And, except for one man, the location was a scene of tranquility.

I finished my chem lab experiment early and decided to spend a few minutes looking over the progress of the work crew. Within several minutes three other students joined me.

The work man was charging pre-drilled holes with dynamite. This was being done not more than five feet away from the position where we were standing. One of the students remarked that it was extremely dangerous to tamp the charges with a stick as was being done. The others laughed and termed it nonsense.

The workman finished his work near us. Then he seemingly remembered one more hole which was located approximately twenty-five feet from where we were standing. It was the last hole to be charged before detonation. The four of us watched him intently as he completed his fascinating task. It was now approximately 4:25 PM. He placed a half-stick of dynamite in the hole. On top of this he placed a whole stick containing the detonating cap. He pushed this to the bottom of the hole with the wooden stick he held in his hand. Then, after placing some soil in the hole, he leaned over it and tamped it.....once.....twice. There was a resounding explosion resembling thunder overhead. A conical blast of smoke and dirt came flying from the hole. The stick he held in his hand seemed to disappear.

Before I fully realized what had happened, Angelo Lorenzoni, one of the on-lookers made a dash for the main building to summon an ambulance. The stricken man was bending over the hole with his hands covering his face. Then we heard him moan as the three of us remaining on the scene dashed simultaneously toward him.

As we reached him he recovered some of his senses and started stumbling toward the road. I could see a trail of blood, but I did not yet know the extent of his injuries. He stumbled and leaned on a rock at the edge of the road. Then he turned over on his back and we could see his injuries. His neck was torn and full of fragments from the blast. Powder covered his entire head and, to our shock, his chin was almost completely amputated. He started rolling in the dead leaves, losing great quantities of blood. We turned him on his back and told him to remain that way, thus retarding the flow of blood. It calmed him a bit to discover that an ambulance was on the way.