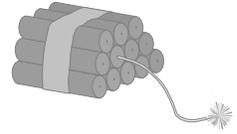


The Primer



Newsletter of the Golden West Chapter, International Society of Explosives Engineers
23633 Brewster Drive, Columbia, CA 95310

Volume 21

Winter 2010

Issue 4

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Editor's Notes...

Well, we've reached the end of the year and again it seems to have come much too quickly. The economy is showing signs of wanting to come back, but I know that a lot of you are still hurting. Hang in there, it's got to get better.

With the New Year comes our annual Chapter dinner meeting. This year it will be held at Marie Callender's restaurant in Stockton. More information is contained in the flyer on page 5 and on our website. Please try to attend. You'll miss out on a really interesting presentation on blasting for wildlife enhancement if you don't show. (No, flyrock is not considered "wild life".) You can expect that a member of the Board will be contacting you to encourage your attendance. Are you sure you shouldn't be taking your wife out to dinner? This might be a good chance.

There will be a Chapter Board meeting just prior to the dinner meeting.

You should also be making plans to attend the ISEE annual conference in February. It's being held in San Diego this year, so travel expense shouldn't be a problem. More information is available on the ISEE website. You can find a link to it on the front page of our website.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous
New Year.

Wes Bender

The Primer

Too Much and Too Fast....

by Wes Bender

Those of you who may have attended any of the blasting seminars and training sessions where I've had the pleasure of making a presentation have heard me say that, in my investigation of blasting problems, most have been the result of either (1) shooting the material too hard or (2) shooting it too fast. There are guidelines that most blasters use to determine the range of powder factors for a particular type of rock. It's understandable that the loading may have to change as the rock varies. It's equally important to use an initiation timing scheme that is neither too fast, nor too slow. Too fast and you have excessive heave and possible flyrock. Too slow and you start to experience cutoffs in the initiation system and/or the powder column.

It isn't often that you encounter both of these causes at the same problem site, but here is a case history where that happened. As usual, the names and places aren't disclosed. The lessons learned are more important than affixing blame. The open pit gold mining operation in question was operating two pits simultaneously. The ore in each pit occurred in narrow meandering bands. The actual drilling and blasting was being conducted by a contract mining company. The contract mining company was only interested in achieving adequate fragmentation so that they could dig the material and haul it either to the leach pads or the waste dump. On the other hand, the mine owner did not want the ore bands to be intermixed with the surrounding waste material. Too much dilution meant that the whole lot would have to be dumped as waste because it wasn't economical to leach it. Exacerbating the problem a bit was that one pit contained relatively hard material, while the other pit could be shot rather easily.

I was asked to visit the site and recommend corrective measures. I obtained blast diagrams and videotaped several blasts. They were using 6-1/2" diameter holes, 23 feet deep on a 16 ft x 16 ft square pattern. The first thing that was apparent was that the pattern was a bit large considering the narrowness of the ore bands, although it could have been made to work, just not as easily as a tighter pattern. They loaded a 50/50 mixture of ANFO and emulsion to a column height of 13 feet and stemmed the top 10 feet. The initiation timing, using down-hole delays and Noiseless Trunkline Delays (NTDs), was 17 ms between holes in a row and 42 ms between rows. The videotaped blasts were rather violent and badly mixed the good ore with the waste. The pin flags that were used to delineate the ore bands were either missing or badly scattered. The swell in the center of the shot was 10 to 12 feet above original ground (for holes only 23 feet deep). Numerous holes 'rifled', blowing out the stemming.

I calculated the powder factor for some blasts as as high as 1.24 lbs. per cubic yard while others were between 1.05 to 1.10 lbs. per cubic yard, considerably higher than should have been required. In addition, the timing of 17 ms by 42 ms was far too fast for a 16 ft by 16 ft pattern, especially when the goal should have been to minimize ore movement and heave.

(continued on the next page)

Too Much and Too Fast (continued)...

When I questioned the blasters as to why they were using that particular timing pattern, they indicated that a representative of the explosive manufacturer (not the detonator manufacturer) had advised them that, for safety purposes, they should strive to have all, or as many as possible, of the detonators 'lit' before the first hole detonated. I pointed out that, while that might be achieved on small blasts with short burdens and spacing, it resulted in timing that was much too fast for their large blasts. Their timing between holes in a row was just over 1 ms per foot of burden. This was at the extreme lower end and conventional wisdom holds that it should be somewhere near 2 - 3 ms per foot which, for a 16 ft burden would be 32 to 48 ms between holes. While 42 ms delay time between rows related well to the 17 ms hole times, it was also too fast for the pattern. Both times would need to be increased. See figure 1 on page 3 for a depiction of their original timing scheme.

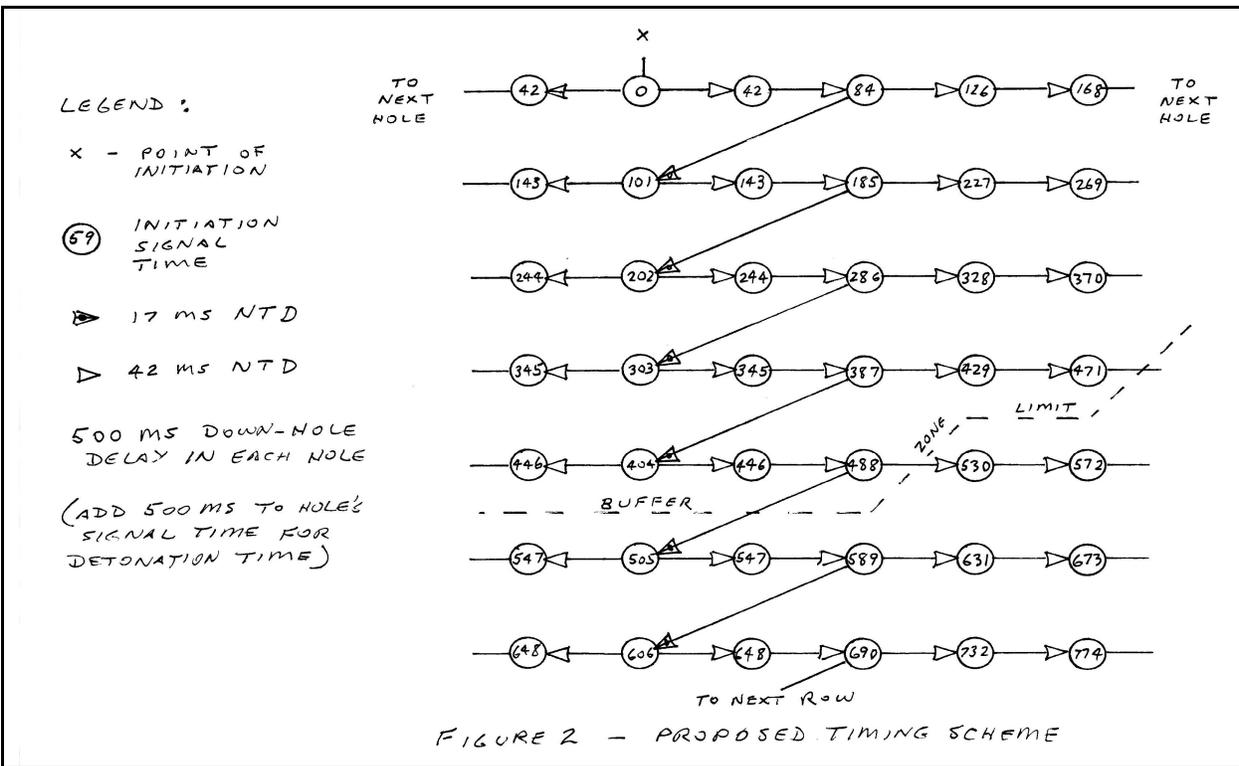
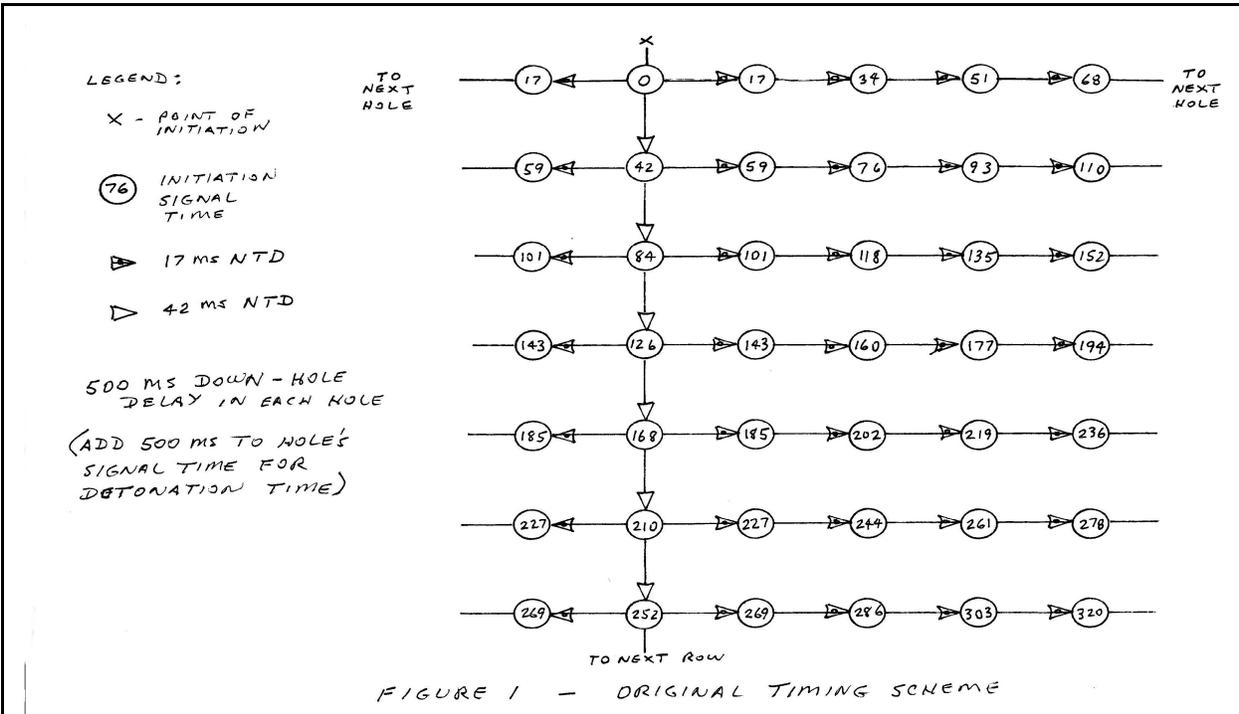
I suggested that, as long as the blasts were adequately diagrammed with timing information and the actual detonating times compared to the 'lighting' times, a four hole buffer between a detonating hole and one that has not seen the initiation signal would be sufficient to prevent cutoffs. This could be accomplished by obtaining different delays or, with the product on hand, by merely substituting the 42 ms NTDs for the 17s and shifting the connection point for the succeeding rows. I carefully diagrammed the proposed timing for them and showed them how to verify the buffer zone. See figure 2 on page 3 for my suggested timing. Note: For those who do this sort of blast design on a regular basis, this may seem extraordinarily basic, but it was totally new to them.

The easiest way to reduce the powder factor would have been to reduce the hole diameter. With the same pattern, but reducing the hole to 6" and leaving the powder column at 13 feet would reduce the powder factor from 1.05 to 0.88 lbs. per cubic yard. Lowering the top of the powder column to 11 feet would have further reduced the powder factor to 0.76 lbs. per cubic yard. On the chance that some oversize material would result from the lowered column, I suggested that smaller satellite holes might have to be incorporated in the middle of the square pattern. Of course, a total redesign of the blasting scheme, with smaller holes, burden and spacing would have been the best solution, but the contract between the owner and the operator precluded mandating that.

They used the proposed pattern and timing for a period of time, apparently with good results. For whatever reason though, at some point the contract mining company went back to their previous blast designs. I was contacted again by the owner six months later to come and investigate a failed blast in one of the pits. (Said investigation is an interesting story in itself, but is best left to another time.) I found that blasts in the pit with the harder rock were now being shot with powder factors as high as 1.6 to 2.2 lbs. per cubic yard. Undoubtedly, the companies supplying the explosives were overjoyed with the mine's consumption. Their delight was short lived however, when the mine closed. The primary reason: They were unable to maintain sufficient ore/waste separation to make it a profitable operation. The contract between the owner and the contract mining company didn't provide sufficient control over the latter's procedures and processes. The contract mining company cost itself a project, caused the closing of a potentially viable mine, eliminating a decent explosives consumer, mostly by following a powder company representative's poor blast design advice.

The Primer

Too Much and Too Fast (continued)...



**The International Society of Explosives Engineers,
Golden West Chapter
Announces its
Annual Business Meeting**

When: **Saturday, January 15, 2011**
No Host Bar and socializing - 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Dinner at 6:00 p.m. - Meeting to follow

**Special Presentation: Klamath Marsh NWR Wetland Enhancement
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tea, or coffee. The meals also offer a slice of apple, chocolate cream,
or lemon meringue pie.

Cost: •2010 Chapter Member: \$15.00/ person
•Non-Members and additional Member's guests: \$20.00/person
•New Members joining the Chapter prior to dinner: **No Charge.**
(\$25.00 dues payable on joining.)

Registration: Please RSVP on or before Monday, January 3rd, 2011 to:

Carey Haughy at (209)533-0127, ext 23 or carey@bluemtnmin.com

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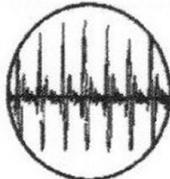


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Shakin' It Up...

with Wes Bender

In a recent issue of *The Primer*, the disposal of explosives at an underground mine near Silver Peak, Nevada was discussed. While some parts of the story might have been considered merely interesting, there were also some very important safety lessons too. To further investigate the subject of disposing of old explosives, let's look at a couple of incidents that seriously point out some of the hazards.

Many years ago, it was common for explosives distributors to offer the service of picking up and returning all unused explosives at the conclusion of construction projects. Usually credit would not be issued for broken stock (cartons on which the seals had been broken), but they would be brought back for proper disposal. The usual method of disposal was to burn the dynamite, once again, a process involving very explicit safety procedures. Most distributors had sufficient experience in the disposal of old explosives and could do the job safely. **(A word of caution: It isn't a simple process. Do not try it yourself. Failure to take the necessary precautions will result in the explosives detonating.)**

When one particular tunnel project was nearing completion, the distributor was asked to come pick up the magazines and the unused explosives and detonators. On the site were a cap magazine, a powder magazine and a magazine used as a primer make-up house. Tunnel projects were the only projects where cartridges could be primed with detonators ahead of time, with the various delay primers categorized and stored in the primer make-up house. The reason for this procedure was to provide for properly made up primers. If the primers had been made up at the tunnel heading, which is what you might have expected, a certain amount of quality control was lost with some miners doing a better job of it than others.

(continued on the next page)

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Shakin' It Up (continued)...

The result was occasional misfires, hence it was thought to be better to have one well trained individual making the primers. These were then delivered to the tunnel headings as needed. This also knocked a few minutes off of their "cycle" time. If I remember correctly, the total allowed to be stored at any one time was no more than one shift's worth.

The distributor sent three trucks up to the site. One for the dynamite, one for the electric caps and a magazine hauler to start bringing the magazines back. After the explosives and caps were back at the plant, the cartons were inspected to see that the seals were intact, proper credit was issued and the broken stock was set aside. The broken stock would be destroyed later when weather conditions were right. The broken stock electric caps were inventoried and placed in a special storage location. This was a regular customer, so the distributor tagged them with his name and stored them for his first order on the next job. Otherwise, they were available for sale to any customer who might need only a few detonators of certain delays to accomplish some particular job.

As soon as weather conditions were right, the distributor's plant manager set about to destroy the broken stock. There was a spot within a bunker on the plant site where the dynamite could be safely burned. In these situations, you always assume that there could be a detonation, so it was important that there was nothing in the vicinity that could be damaged. Usually, only 50 pounds or so was burned at one time. After the fire for the first batch was lit, the plant manager moved around to the other side of the bunker, lit a cigarette and sat down to wait until the explosive had been completely consumed. About five minutes after sitting down, he was startled by a huge explosion. He waited a prudent amount of time before cautiously walking a bit farther away and then around to where he could see the location where the fire had been. The entire lot had apparently detonated. Nothing remained except for several smallish craters where the cartridges had been laid out.

He got on the phone to the main office to advise them as to what had just happened. It concerned him because he had done this numerous times and had never before had a detonation. He always made sure that, if there was an accidental detonation, it wouldn't damage anything, but having this lot detonate surprised him and he was trying to figure out what he could have done wrong.

Before trying to destroy any more of the dynamite, he felt it would be prudent to find out just why there was a detonation so he proceeded to investigate. He opened up another of the cases with the broken seals and carefully examined the cartridges inside, and was astounded by what he found. Each cartridge in the case had an electric blasting cap inserted in one end and THE WIRES HAD BEEN CUT OFF FLUSH. They were only visible if you looked very carefully. Now this alone was cause for great concern because he was now in possession of an unknown number of primed cartridges with detonators that were not shunted. Until the rest of the broken cases had been inspected, he had to assume they were all like that.

(continued on the next page)

Shakin' It Up (continued)...

Then an equally scary scenario flashed through his mind. These cases and their extremely hazardous contents had been transported over the highway from the construction site to the plant along with quite a few otherwise intact cases of dynamite. If one of those unshunted detonators had been energized by a nearby radio, static electricity, etc., the results could have been catastrophic. It was obvious that, when the made-up primers were no longer needed, whoever had the job of dismantling them instead just clipped the wires off flush and placed the cartridges into empty cases. These were then put in the magazine with the sealed cases.

Back at the distributor's plant, the detonators were carefully removed from each cartridge, shunted and then destroyed separately. The plant manager then resumed the destruction of the broken stock. Needless to say, a policy was immediately adopted by this particular company that they would no longer transport any broken stock from anyone, period.

The foregoing situation shows how even well-qualified people can encounter problems with the destruction of old or un-needed explosives. In another instance in Nevada, there was an attempt to destroy some old explosives that resulted in injuries to several individuals. I was asked to assist a plaintiff's attorney in one of the resulting lawsuits. I don't know how the case concluded and disclosing the actual names and organizations and the location involved would serve no useful purpose, but I can give you enough information to show you how accidents can happen. As you learn some of the details, you will see how, if any one of several things had been done differently, the outcome would have been far different.

At an abandoned mine, a part case of dynamite had been left behind by some previous mining operation. The dynamite was visible from the portal area, but for some reason had not been disturbed by anyone for quite some time. When someone did decide that something should be done about it, they contacted the local sheriff's department. The sheriff's department didn't have anyone qualified to handle the explosives, so they contacted authorities at the state level. These people took two actions. First, they contacted the nearest EOD team, the members of which were from a fire department and had received federal training in bomb disposal and handling dangerous explosives. Second, because they felt that other similar situations could possibly exist in other abandoned mines in the state, they contacted a local newspaper and suggested that a reporter be sent out with the EOD team and that he write a story to publicize the hazard.

So far so good, except that I'm not sure about the advisability of inviting anyone along other than the minimum number of people absolutely necessary to the operation. Of course, the obvious problem is that somebody abandoned the explosives in the first place.

The EOD team members, accompanied by the reporter and at least one sheriff's deputy went out to the abandoned mine to survey the situation and to destroy the explosives. As mentioned before, the part case of dynamite was visible from the portal. It was resting on a small wooden stand (that appeared to be made up of parts of old wooden powder boxes).

(continued on the next page)

The Primer

Shakin' It Up (continued)...

Members of the EOD team went in and looked at the dynamite and reached the decision that it was unsafe to even touch. They decided that the best way to destroy it was to place a C4 charge as close as possible to it and detonate it. Unfortunately, they were too concerned about the sensitivity of the dynamite to actually place the C4 in the case with the dynamite, instead opting to place it under the wooden stand. They then connected a short length of detonating cord to the C4 and strung the cord outside the portal and around to where they would attach a detonator. For safety purposes, they also used a radio-type blasting device to initiate the detonator. When everyone was safely positioned around the hill from the drift, they detonated the charge. The sound of the detonation wasn't as loud as they might have expected, but it's pretty hard to determine just how loud it should sound unless you have experience in doing this sort of thing. Rather than waiting a half hour or more to see if anything else might transpire, the group walked back around the hill and peered into the portal. There was some smoke coming out of the portal and there was fire visible inside. One of the EOD members stated that he thought the fire was evidence that the explosives had been successfully destroyed.

As they were gathering up equipment and talking about the success of the operation, the reporter moved closer to the portal to get a better picture of the flames. As he was looking through the viewfinder and focusing the camera, there was an explosion inside the drift. The camera was slammed into his face and he was thrown backwards approximately 40 feet or so into the brush. Other members of the party were also thrown to the ground or tossed some distance. Although nearly everyone had ruptured eardrums along with cuts and bruises, the reporter was quite badly injured. It took many hours of surgery and painful recuperation to try to restore his face. Unfortunately, he will never be the same.

Okay, what can we learn from this very unfortunate accident? First, it is absolutely criminal to just abandon explosives. You and I know that, but someone else evidently didn't.

Second, it is never a good idea to involve more personnel than are absolutely necessary in any blasting situation. That is absolutely essential in hazardous tasks such as removing explosives from loaded holes or destroying explosives. **Minimize the impact if an explosion were to occur.**

Third, unless you are properly trained and certified to do such work, do not, under any circumstances undertake to try to destroy old explosives. If in doubt as to their condition, bring in an expert. I don't know the exact training that the EOD people in the above scenario received, but it was either lacking in basic safety issues, or the persons taking the course ignored that aspect of the training. The C4 wasn't positioned where it would reliably detonate the explosives. They also should have realized that the sound they heard was merely the detonating cord and C4 going off. It should have been apparent from the smoke and flames that something was still going on inside the drift. The failure to properly conduct explosive destruction procedures badly maimed an innocent individual.

Stay Safe. Keep those around you safe too. We need to keep all the readers we've got.

How Come????

A lawyer gets on a flight in New Orleans. He has a box of frozen crabs and gives them to the blonde flight attendant and says, "I'm holding you responsible for these crabs. If they're not frozen when we land, I will sue you." So the Blonde stows the box of frozen crabs in the freezer compartment. Upon landing, she gets on the loud speaker and says, "Will the lawyer that gave me crabs in New Orleans please raise his hand."

There are two morals to this story: (1) not all lawyers are as smart as you think they are, and (2) not all blondes are as dumb as you might think.

* * * * *

Last issue we announced that we were looking for limericks. Here is a sampling of the better ones we received:

From Mike Chiurato:

I once knew a blaster,
He just had to go faster,
Until one day,
to his dismay,
he tripped off the high wall - a disaster!

From Ranger Rick (The Red Green show):

One night a girl had an affair
With a fellow all covered with hair.
Then she picked up his hat
And realized that
She'd been had by Smoky the Bear.

From 'Legs' Akimbo, Las Vegas showgirl:

A young ballerina named Ann
Danced like a soft feathery fan;
But when she leaped and rose
She'd land, not on her toes,
But smack on her pink tutued can!

From a TV traffic helicopter jockey:

One day when a lady named Anne,
Went up to the sun-roof to tan,
A gent in a 'copter
Flew over and dropped her
Some ads for a crash-diet plan.

From a lingerie salesman:

There was a young woman named Astor,
Whose clothes fit her tight as a plaster.
When she happened to sneeze,
She felt a cold breeze,
And knew she had met with disaster.

From Al A. Bam, AKA the Oklahoma kid:

A bow-legged cowgirl named Heather,
rode the range in all kinds of weather.
She rode day and night,
but try as she might,
she just couldn't keep her calves together.

From Buster the Blaster:

There once was a blaster named Faller,
Whose drill bit lost gauge and got smaller.
It at last grew so small,
He drilled nothing at all;
And that totally pissed his ore hauler.

From an anonymous Board Member:

Jim, the blaster, sat down to eat lunch.
Of hunger, he had him a bunch.
But he realized again
as he felt a sharp pain,
he'd sat on his own powder punch.

From Farmer John:

A rooster became quite dismayed,
with an orange in a nest, well displayed.
He called to his chicks,
"Mom's up to her tricks!
Look at the orange 'marma-laid'."

.. and my favorite of the lot:

Slim, the blaster, went into cahoots,
with a girl blaster to indulge in pursuits
unchaste and clandestine
which began by divestin'
themselves of their red union suits.

You know, some days it just isn't worth the hassle of chewing through the restraints.....