

High Country News

November 2, 1992

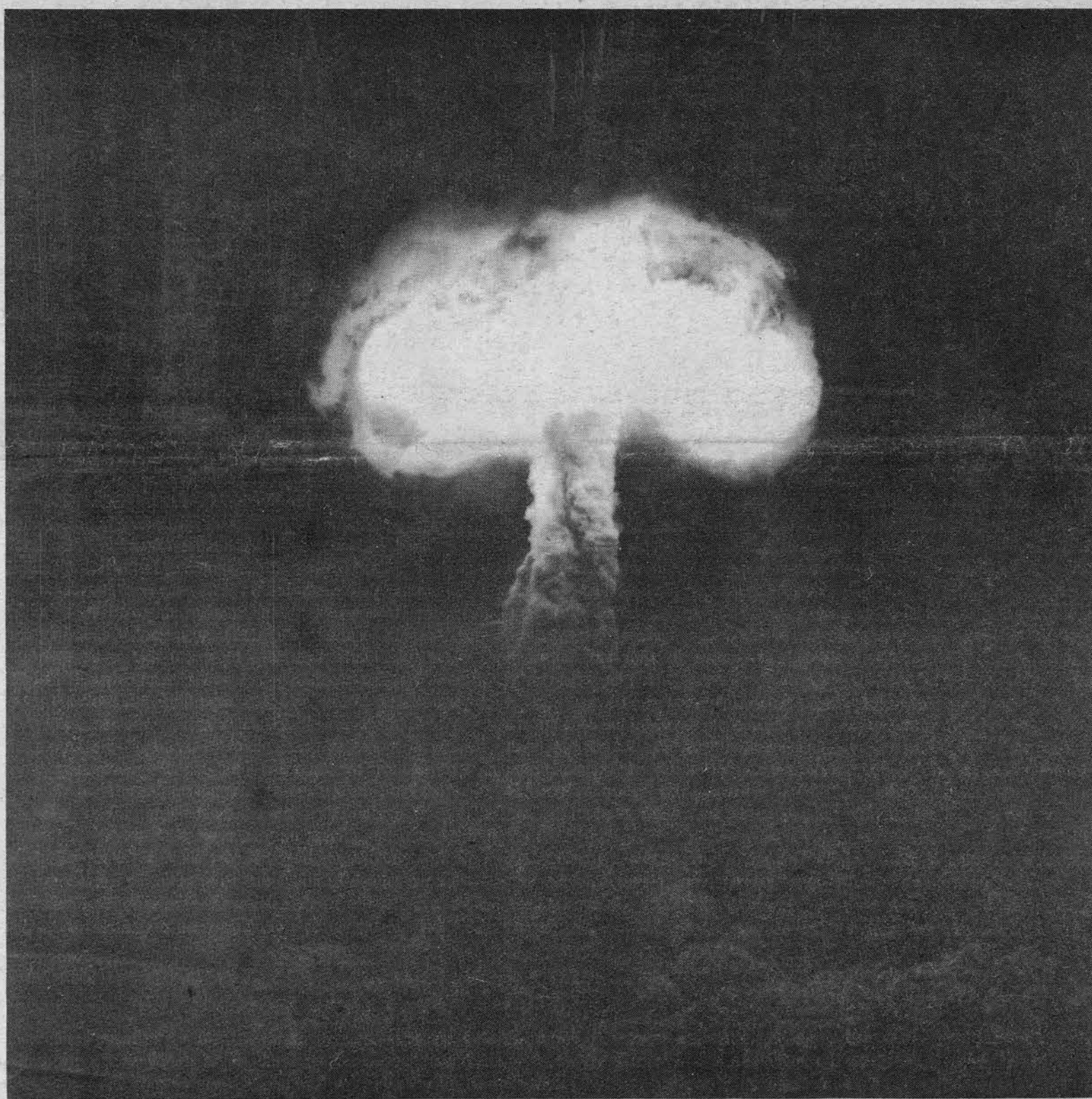
Vol. 24 No. 20

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar and fifty cents

THE NUCLEAR AGE

1945: THE BEGINNING
1992: THE BEGINNING OF THE END



Atom bomb explodes in the Nevada desert during one of the 1950s tests in the atmosphere

Las Vegas News Bureau

The atomic age began with a big bang. The buildup to the Cold War took place in a few short years. But the struggle over its legacy and lessons for humanity have just begun.

by Jon Christensen

For 41 years atomic explosions have rocked the southern Nevada desert, signaling the relentless progress of the nuclear arms race. Now, quiet has settled over the nation's atomic proving ground. A moratorium on nuclear weapons testing signed in October has silenced the Nevada Test Site for at least nine months and perhaps forever.

continued on page 8



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Dear friends,

Voice of the Great Basin

Jon Christensen begins his stint as this paper's Great Basin regional editor not with a bang, but with a whimper — a report on the end of nuclear bomb testing at the Nevada Test Site. To Jon, the end of testing is a historic, illuminating moment that grew out of the way in which nuclear energy has been developed in the West.

He tells the story with the background he has gained from several years of writing about the Great Basin for numerous publications.

Jon, who often works with his spouse, photographer Kit Miller, invites readers with story suggestions about the Great Basin to contact him at 6185 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704; 702/885-2023. In addition to writing about the Great Basin, Jon will also recruit other writers, photographers and essayists to help him out.

The 18-month-long Great Basin project is intended to improve *HCN's* coverage of this little-known part of the West. It is financed by gifts and grants from several individuals and foundations with an interest in the Great Basin.

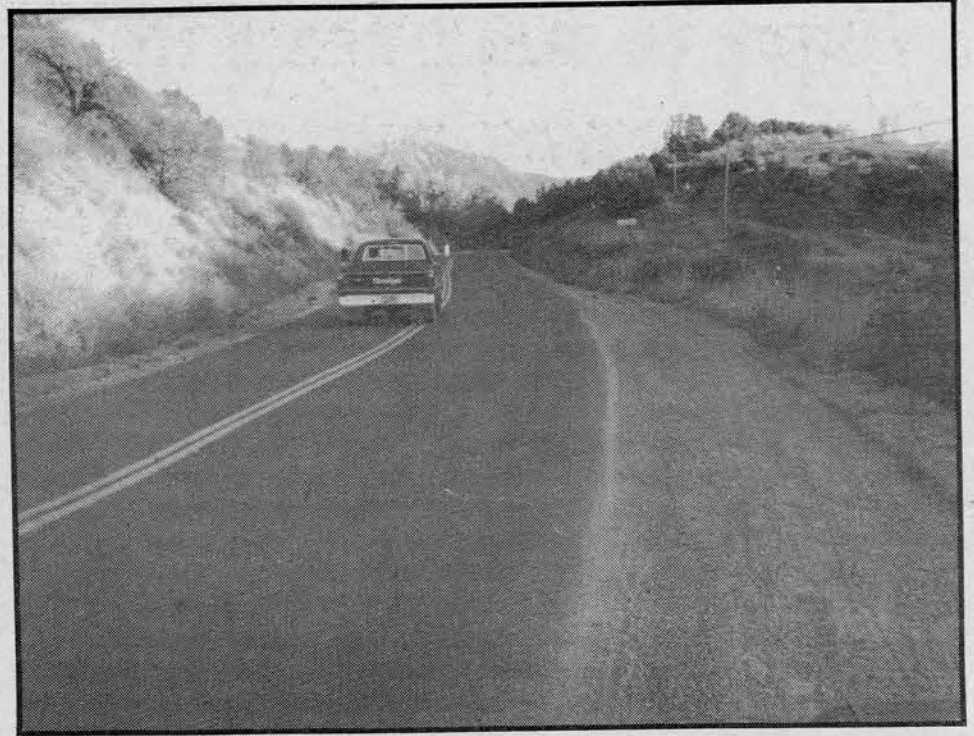
Speaking of whimpers, Jon and Kit are the proud parents of a baby girl, named Lucille Rachel, and weighing 6 pounds 15 1/2 ounces. She arrived Oct. 22.

From coast to coast

Subscriber Joyce Weldon of Smithtown, N.Y., has convinced us that the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone is inevitable. Joyce, a teacher at Dogwood Elementary School, organized a project that resulted in the adoption of a wolf by the students, and the submission of letters and petitions to various officials seeking protection of wolves.

The high point of the project came when representatives from the Audubon Society brought two wolves to a student assembly. According to a news story, "The wolves walked around the auditorium, sniffing the children and curiously eyeing them."

Thus far, the children's efforts have brought them a letter of commendation from their congressman, a United States



Ed Marston

The driver of this pickup isn't about to let a new-fangled stripe tell him where to drive

flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol in their honor, designation as the Environmental School of Suffolk County, and, Joyce writes, a goal:

"They want to visit Yellowstone and hear wolves howling."

They should start saving their money for the trip now.

Subscriber E.T. Collinsworth, III, of Gila Hot Springs, N.M., sent us a letter showing a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff, in full uniform, backed by what look like helmeted national guardsmen, pointing out an article in the April 20, 1992, issue of *High Country News* to a fellow officer. E.T.'s accompanying letter says:

"Though this photo may appear somewhat incongruous, knowing my brother, it is not all that unusual to see him sharing what can be learned from your articles, even under the most extreme of urban circumstances."

Mike Kustudia, who was an intern here in 1986 or so, wrote from his Peace Corps post in the Dominican Republic, as he awaited the coming of Hurricane Andrew, to say that the mainstream corporate variety of journalism doesn't interest him. He wants to be more than "just a professional bystander." We guess that means his internship didn't take.

It's an election year

On the national level, incumbent presidents and congresspeople distribute largesse in the form of licenses to export weapons, millions of dams, and the Superconducting Super Colliders, and generous price supports for corn and wheat. Here in Delta County, residents of Lamborn Mesa, located just above Paonia, got their county road striped for the first time in the history of the county.

Visitors

Subscriber Sharon Manhart of Montrose, Colo., came by the office to do some early Christmas shopping — an *HCN* gift subscription to a friend.

Photographer David Barnes and freelance writer Helen Robertson visited. They are touring the West after 18 months in Paris. Mitch Rollings of Albuquerque, N.M., stopped by. He was in the neighborhood inspecting a coal mine for the U.S. Office of Surface Mining.

Subscribers Bert and Barbara Cohn and David Caplan, all of New York City, stopped by on their way to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and a week-long tour of southeastern Utah.

Calling all Phoenixians

Subscriber Erick Sorensen writes from Phoenix to say that he would like to organize a potluck dinner and talk for area readers of *High Country News*. If you live in the Phoenix area, and would be interested in such an event, contact Erick at 4140 E. Cambridge, Phoenix, AZ 85008; 602/468-0659.

— Ed Marston
for the staff



Darwin Morgan/DOE

Jon Christensen stands in front of the huge Sedan Crater at the Nevada Test Site

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Congress sends two big bills to Bush

The 102nd Congress will probably not go down in history as the "environmental Congress," according to observers on both sides of the issue. "The real victory in the 102nd Congress is the bad things we kept from happening," says Debbie Sease, public lands director for Sierra Club, noting that environmentalists squelched attempts to weaken the Endangered Species Act and drill for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The traditional political powers in the West — the oil and gas, coal, grazing and hard-rock mining industries — characterize the session much the same way. They narrowly staved off major reform legislation and new wilderness bills. Efforts to reform the 1872 Mining Law failed, though for the first time ever a bill made it through the traditionally pro-industry House Interior Committee. And dirt-cheap grazing fees for public lands were left unchanged when Senate-House negotiators rejected for the third year in a row an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill that would have boosted the fee. This latest attempt would have taken it from \$1.92 per animal unit month (AUM) to \$2.56 per AUM.

"We won a holding pattern," Pam Neal, executive director of the National Cattlemen's Association told the *Albuquerque Journal*. "But it beats the hell out of losing." In exchange for dropping the grazing fee amendment, House negotiators were able to include a \$100 fee to be charged to miners who operate claims on public lands.

On the wilderness front, a bill that would have set aside 582,000 acres of wilderness in Colorado died at the hands of an angry California congressman, William Dannemeyer, who stopped about 58 bills in the closing minutes of the session.

A compromise Montana wilderness bill never made it to Dannemeyer's legislative graveyard. It withered in the Senate, where Western Republicans, including the state's Republican senator, Conrad Burns, rejected Sen. Max Baucus' and Rep. Pat Williams' last-ditch bid to protect 1.3 million acres. Environmentalists in the state were split over the measure, with some, like the Alliance For The Wild Rockies, adamantly opposed, and others, like the Montana Wilderness Association, mildly supportive.

Legislation to protect the ancient forests of the Northwest also faltered. House Majority Leader Tom Foley, D-Wash., stopped a bill in the House Interior Committee this summer that would have created an ancient forest reserve system in Washington, Oregon and northern California. In the Senate, environmentalists finally squelched a bill backed by the Bush administration and the timber industry that would have allowed timber cutting in much of the remaining northern spotted owl habitat. It would also have set non-negotiable timber-harvest levels on national forests throughout the country, even if they violated the Endangered Species Act and other federal laws.

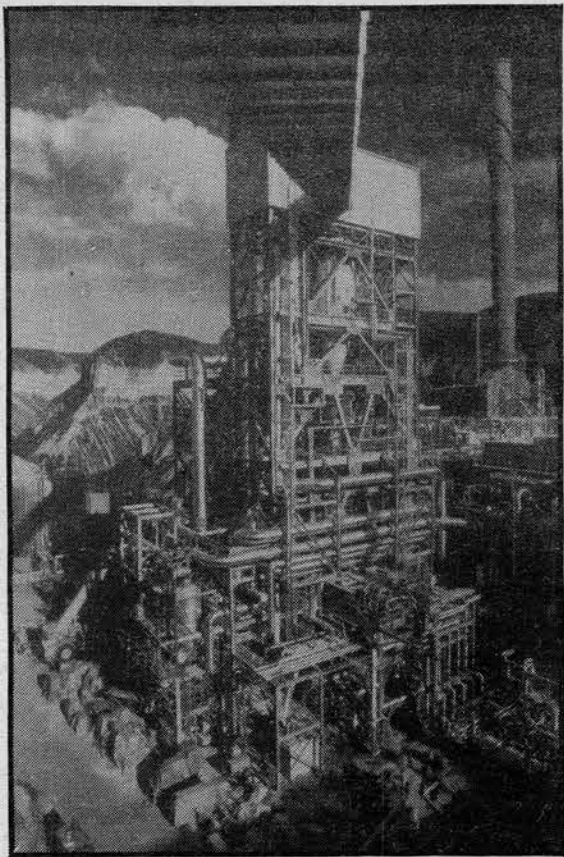
Some bills did get to the president's desk.

President Bush is expected to sign The

Energy Policy Act of 1992, the first comprehensive energy legislation to emerge from Congress since 1978. The wide-ranging bill bears only slight resemblance to the National Energy Strategy released in 1990 by the Bush administration amidst the Persian Gulf war, and is as notable for what it lacks as for what it includes.

The 1,300-page bill does not include drilling access to the oil and gas industry's most coveted plum, Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and avoids controversial regulations increasing the fuel efficiency of America's automobiles (*HCN*, 11/18/91).

Although some members of Congress declared the bill a "historic" achievement, most environmentalists withdrew their support following a frenetic "midnight massacre" by members of a House-Senate conference committee. The committee cut out an entire title banning off-shore oil



This retort, at Union Oil Co.'s Parachute, Colorado, plant, once produced 10,000 barrels a day of raw shale oil

drilling and an amendment prohibiting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) from building dams on state-protected rivers.

But the conferees left intact a measure making it easier for the federal government to designate Yucca Mountain, Nev., the nation's only federal facility intended to handle radioactive waste from commercial nuclear reactors. In the waning hours of the session, Nevada's two senators, Richard Bryan and Harry Reid, mounted a spirited but unsuccessful filibuster of the bill over that provision, which allows the EPA to set a site-specific radiation standard. "This is another attempt to shaft Nevada," Bryan told the *Reno Gazette*.

Among other things, the energy bill:

- Gives the ailing nuclear power industry a boost by creating a streamlined, one-step licensing process for construction and operation of new nuclear power plants;

- Transfers ownership of the land surrounding the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) in New Mexico from the Department of Interior to the Department of Energy, setting the stage for nuclear waste to be brought in for a test phase;

- Establishes new energy efficiency standards for lights, electric motors, and commercial heating and cooling systems;

- Ends the long-standing practice of selling federal oil-shale lands in Western states for as little as \$2.50 an acre. However, the bill provides \$4 million for a small-scale oil shale field test, keeping alive industry hopes that oil can someday be produced economically from oil-bearing rock;

- Requires government and private fleets to buy vehicles that run on fuels other than gasoline;

- Allows independent power producers to compete with utilities in the wholesale production of electricity;

- Provides funding for the Department of Energy's 42 clean coal technology projects; and

- Gives independent oil and gas producers a \$1.1 billion tax break over five years to encourage more domestic production.

Legislators also managed to push through a \$2.4 billion omnibus water bill, which includes funding for water projects across 17 states. California Sen. John Seymour, who is running for re-election, Gov. Pete Wilson and California growers opposed a measure in the bill which forces the Bureau of Reclamation to shift water from its massive Central Valley Project (CVP) in California away from agriculture and to urban areas and fish and wildlife habitat. The CVP section, by itself, is a historic step, marking the end of 40 years of agricultural domination of cheap, federal water in California. It is supported by California cities and environmentalists. Other important measures in the water bill include:

- The Central Utah Project: the bill would provide \$900 million to complete the massive, \$2 billion dam project, which would provide enough water to allow the thirsty Salt Lake City area to grow 30 percent over the next three decades. Environmentalists, while not ecstatic over the entire project, are happy that more than \$125 million will go toward mitigating environmental damage.

- The Grand Canyon Protection Act: the bill turns into law interim release standards for Glen Canyon Dam set last year by the Department of Interior. The goal is to protect the riparian corridor of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park from wildly fluctuating water levels (*HCN*, 8/26/91). It also mandates that the Bureau of Reclamation complete its environmental impact statement (EIS) on Glen Canyon Dam operations within three years and authorizes an ongoing resource monitoring program to ensure protection of canyon resources. Under an amendment to the bill that upset Arizona Sen. John McCain and environmentalists, U.S. taxpayers — not Glen Canyon electricity users — will pay the bill for the EIS and the monitoring program.

Seymour, Wilson and the growers fought hard to convince Bush to veto the bill. At the same time, other members of the traditional Republican coalition — especially the state of Utah — fought hard to convince him to sign it. As of this writing, the bill still lay on the president's desk.

The president also signed a bill that makes the nation's nuclear weapons facilities subject to the same pollution laws heeded by private industry.

Although characterized in an editorial by the *Denver Post* as "akin to closing the barn door after the horses have escaped," the law gives states the right to fine the Department of Energy for violating hazardous waste laws at facilities such as Rocky Flats, Colo., and Hanford, Wash.

— Paul Larmer

HOTLINE



Lorraine Mintzmyer

Mintzmyer comes out slugging

Lorraine Mintzmyer, former Rocky Mountain director of the National Park Service, has filed a civil suit against top Bush appointees. She charges they transferred her to a Philadelphia post as a political reprimand for her views on protecting Yellowstone National Park. Mintzmyer, who resigned in April, said in a mid-October press conference that her suit against Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan and National Park Service Director James Ridenour seeks a jury trial and reinstatement to her former Denver post with back pay. She said her work to protect Yellowstone was "altered for strictly political reasons to meet the needs of special interests," and that she was punitively transferred. Retiring Sen. Tim Wirth, D-Colo., currently campaigning for the Clinton-Gore ticket, said at the press conference that he supported Mintzmyer's charges and hinted that she may be in line for a high post in a Clinton administration.

New road to ruin

Until now, if you wanted to check out the post-eruption ecological recovery process on Mount St. Helens, you had to work for it. The Washington volcano's 1980 eruption devastated its surroundings and limited access to the area. That changed on Oct. 16, when the state completed a new, 23-mile road into the heart of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. The "Spirit Lake Memorial Highway," which may bring as many as 1 million additional visitors to the monument, is part of a public education campaign that will include a new visitor center, paved trails and a geological observatory in front of the crater. The final section of highway is due for completion in 1995, but many of the facilities won't be completed until later, raising concerns that unregulated visitor traffic will lead to ecological damage. "The unknown is how much people will cooperate," said monument scientist Peter Frenzen, who hopes visitors won't stray from the trails into working research areas.

HOTLINE

From Navajo to Dineh

The Navajo Nation may soon be no more. A resolution sponsored by tribal President Peterson Zah to change the tribe's name to Dineh, which means The People, is working its way through the tribal government network on the vast reservation in Arizona and New Mexico. Zah, who calls the name change "an exercise in sovereignty," said he wants consensus from the tribe's people before submitting the resolution to the Navajo Nation Council for final approval. The word "navajo," which means "cultivators of the fields," among other translations, may have come from a New Mexican tribe and was wrongly applied to Navajos by the Spanish, AP reports.

Buying out public-land ranchers

If opponents of grazing on public lands want to get livestock off the land, perhaps they should compensate ranchers. The Oregon Natural Desert Association has a proposal that would do just that, Bill Marlett of Bend, Ore., told a gathering of anti-grazing activists at a two-day "Rest the West" conference held at Boise State University. Marlett said his organization has a proposal for legislation that would compensate affected counties by a \$50 per animal-unit-month (AUM) transition fund. An AUM is the amount of forage eaten by one cow and calf, one bull, one horse or five sheep in one month. The transition money is meant to help counties and communities convert to other economic bases, such as tourism, recreation and retirement. Under the proposal, grazing would end within two years in national parks, wilderness, wildlife refuges, and any area heavily damaged by grazing or inhabited by threatened or endangered species. All other grazing allotments would be phased out over 10 years, said Marlett. He estimated the cost of buying out the approximately 30 million AUMs in the West at \$1.5 billion.

Tribe, Vatican clash over Mt. Graham

An anti-Semitic remark by a Jesuit priest has angered the San Carlos Apache Tribe and inflamed the fight over a seven-telescope observatory on top of Mount Graham.

Rev. Charles Polzer called Apache charges that the telescopes will desecrate a mountain the Indians call sacred "part of a Jewish conspiracy ... to undermine and to destroy the Catholic Church."

The tribe is suing the Forest Service to block construction of the \$200 million observatory. Polzer submitted a Vatican-approved affidavit to the Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco, claiming Indians never cared about the mountain and never considered it sacred, reports *The Phoenix Gazette*. The affidavit is consistent with an earlier statement from the Vatican, which has been attacked by anthropologists (*HCN*, 5/4/92).

Polzer, who works as the curator of ethnohistory at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, has since apologized for his statement, but the Apaches are not satisfied. Tribal member Ernest Victor Jr., says he fears the court may have accepted Polzer's view that the tribe is anti-Catholic.

Complicating the issue, Victor adds, is recently ousted Tribal Chairman Buck Kitcheyan, who was accused of embezzlement. In retaliation, Kitcheyan and a small group of his relatives and supporters formed the People's Rights Coalition to support the astronomy center, even though the San Carlos Tribal Council unanimously opposes the observatory. Coalition members traveled to Germany, where they told Vatican and Institute officials that Apaches approved the construction on top of Mount Graham.

The trip to Europe was supported by the university and the town of Safford, Arizona's chamber of commerce. A private donor in Tucson paid travel expenses, and the chamber's executive director, Dee Jaksich, accompanied Kitcheyan's coalition, says chamber president Jack Hyde.

The People's Rights Coalition probably did little damage in Germany, where they "just confused elected officials," says Victor. But Interim Tribal Chairman Raleigh Thompson fears they may have influenced the University of Arizona against Apache religious claims. In a letter to the tribe written in May, University President Dr. Manuel Pacheco said that observatory construction began "only



Lori Stiles/University of Arizona

A telescope enclosure under construction on Mount Graham

with the explicit assurance of elected tribal leadership that the project posed no concerns for their people."

Victor says the council met with Pacheco to confront him with the truth and demand an apology for spreading misinformation, but Pacheco "just got real mad."

While waiting for the court's decision and watching concrete structures emerge on Mount Graham, the tribe is seeking sponsors for a bill that would require a

study of the peak's cultural and environmental resources before observatory construction begins, says Victor. For more information, write the San Carlos Apache Tribe, P.O. Box O, San Carlos, AZ 85550, or the Office of Public Information, University of Arizona, Sun Building Room 121, Tucson, AZ 85721.

— Mark Dooley

Mark Dooley is a former *HCN* intern.

Logging in Upper Yaak Valley draws lawsuit

The Kootenai National Forest is one of Montana's most remote, productive — and litigious — national forests.

Now, environmentalists have filed suit in federal court to halt a federal logging plan they say runs a bulldozer over water quality, threatened grizzly bears and small loggers.

The environmentalists charge the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service succumbed to pressure from three Western senators who wanted more timber out of the valley.

The battleground is the Upper Yaak Valley, a remote, sparsely populated drainage tucked between Glacier National Park, Canada and Idaho. Four groups: Montana Ecosystems Defense Council, the Cabinet Resource Group, Montana Wilderness Association and the Save the Yaak Committee filed suit against the two federal agencies in September.

Under pressure from that suit, forest officials agreed to halt logging in the Upper Yaak for six months.

Their target is a four-year logging plan to cut 90 million board-feet of timber in the Upper Yaak.

An earlier plan would have better protected wildlife, the suit alleges. The rejected plan allowed for 65 mmbf to be cut, triggered protection for bears and called for smaller logging projects. The 25-mmbf difference between the plans is enough to fill 5,000 log trucks.

Keith Hammer of the Montana Ecosystems Defense Council says he has obtained documents through the Freedom of Information Act that reveal "secret and surreptitious meetings" leading to selection of 90 mmbf. The Forest Service proposed the larger plan, Hammer says, but the Fish and Wildlife Service threatened to veto it, citing harm to the bear.

Then in the spring of 1990, representatives of Republican Sens. Steve Symms, Jim McClure, both of Idaho, and Conrad Burns of Montana, met with Fish and Wildlife officials.

The Senate staffers pressured them to approve the larger timber cut, Hammer says. Following those meetings, the 90 mmbf logging plan was approved by both agencies.

"In bowing to pressure from the timber industry, the Forest Service knowingly abandoned (its) only legal alternative," Hammer says. "The thanks for this lawsuit goes to people like (Montana timber lobbyist) Bruce Vincent, and Sens. McClure and Symms."

The suit asks that logging cease until a revised logging and road-building plan meets federal standards. It also demands earmarking 20 percent of logging in the area for gyppos and other small loggers.

Bryce Dustman, spokesman for Sen. Burns, denied allegations of inappropriate involvement. Burns makes no secret of supporting timber industry and workers and keeping tabs on the Forest Service, Dustman said. The Forest Service has a duty to supply reasonable amounts of timber, he added, and environmentalists who go to

court are "extremists" set to break down the logging industry on the Kootenai.

Federal lawsuits are nothing new to the Kootenai and the Yaak. In 1988, a panel of federal judges stopped Forest Service logging on the Yaak, saying logging and road-building ran counter to federal law, including the Endangered Species Act.

On the other side of the fence, the Mountain States Legal Foundation, a pro-industry group supported in part by former Interior Secretary James Watt, is suing the federal government on behalf of local governments who want more logging.

For more information, call the Kootenai National Forest, 406/293-6211, or the Montana Ecosystems Defense Council, 406/755-1379.

— Ben Long

Ben Long is an environmental journalist in Kalispell, Montana.

Man-grizzly encounter kills all four

It was every hiker's worst nightmare. Tracking a trail of blood, a boot and a watch through dense underbrush in Glacier National Park, wildlife photographer Buck Wilde discovered the still-warm, mangled and partially eaten body of John Petranyi.

Petranyi, an experienced outdoorsman from Wisconsin knowledgeable about grizzly bears, was Glacier's ninth visitor killed by a grizzly bear and the first in five years. He was mauled Oct. 3 near Granite Park Chalet, a month after the backcountry resort had closed for the season.

Wilde, of Ketchum, Idaho, believes the mauling of Petranyi by a sow with two cubs was a defensive reaction to a surprise encounter along a brushy trail. Park biologists agree it was a defensive attack, but they decided to kill all three bears because they fed on Petranyi's body.

For many long-time bear advocates, the mauling and a record number of other human-bear conflicts this year are warnings that bears are being squeezed in northwest Montana.

The decision to kill the man-eating bears drew angry reactions from some residents of the Flathead Valley. While rangers combed the woods, park headquarters was flooded with calls from irate citizens who, in essence, demanded that the park allow bears to reign king in the national park.

Seven days after Petranyi's death, the bears were located by helicopter and shot by rangers on the ground. "That park was set aside for the animals," says William Fish, 79, a long-time resident of the gateway community of Columbia Falls. "It's the same in the (nearby Bob Marshall) wilderness. If we go there, we're infringing on their land and we have to be prepared to take the consequences."

"It's like a lion in a cage," says the retired tavern owner. "If you fall in the cage and get eaten, whose fault is that?" Fish says that most of the people he talks to in this conservative, blue-collar community share his anger about the three grizzlies' deaths.

Petranyi's death culminated a summer full of bear-human conflicts in northwest Montana, which biologists blame primarily on a poor huckleberry crop that forced bears to range widely for food. Ironically, the highly publicized fatality appears to be unrelated to the berry failure.

But the food shortage and the fatal mauling both have focused attention on the steady encroachment of humans onto traditional bear habitat.

The number of visitors to Glacier has increased steadily since the mid-1980s, particularly in the "shoulder" seasons of spring and fall. More than 2.2 million visitors are expected to pass through the park by the end of 1992, a park record. Even when bears avoid violent confrontation, increasing human-bear interactions chase bears from preferred habitat.

Park spokeswoman Amy Vanderbilt says park officials this winter will evaluate the possibility of adding seasonal trail closures in fall bear range to reduce conflicts. The park also may restrict solo hiking because the victims of the last four fatal maulings in Glacier were all hiking alone.

However, bear advocates are even more concerned about the loss of habitat outside Glacier. As confrontations increase, the larger question is whether it's humans that need to be protected from bears, or vice-versa.

"This is by far the worst year I've ever seen for problem bears," says retired Montana state game warden Dave Wedum, who continues to trap and relocate bears on contract with the state. Bears don't have to cause trouble to receive a "problem bear" label, he says. They just have to be someplace that humans consider inappropriate.

And the areas that humans consider inappropriate for bears expand every year, Wedum says.

In 1992, Wedum estimates he trapped about 50 bears, including 13 grizzlies. Throughout northwest Montana, state wardens trapped, relocated or killed at least 150 black and grizzly bears, he says. Few of

those bears actually caused property damage or directly threatened humans.

Wedum says the poor berry crop demonstrates that bears periodically must cover a lot of ground to meet their dietary needs. Bears' biggest problem is not natural variation in forage but the permanent, piecemeal loss of habitat to human development, he says. Rural subdivisions and ranchettes, increasing off-road motor recreation, new logging roads and clearcuts all diminish effective habitat, particularly in low elevations.

"So much of the land that provides important habitat is private, and eventually it'll be developed and people will be there," says Wedum, frustrated by rapid population growth in the Flathead Valley, south and west of Glacier. "Intelligent zoning is important so we don't have unplanned, uncontrolled development. But so far (in northwest Montana), all attempts at planning and zoning have been an utter failure."

An attempt by Flathead County commissioners to rewrite the county comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances stalled this year after real estate agents and developers launched an aggressive, successful campaign to kill interim zoning.

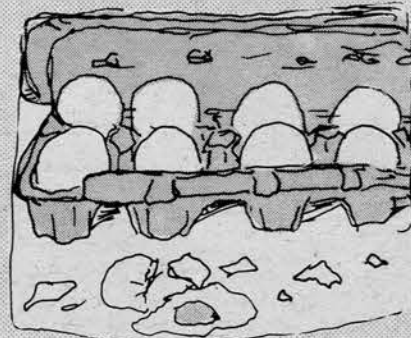
Environmentalists say federal agencies also are failing to protect the threatened grizzly bear on federal, non-park land, despite the requirements to do so under the Endangered Species Act. Keith Hammer, co-chair of the Montana Ecosystem Defense Council, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has failed to designate adequate grizzly bear habitat in its recovery plan.

"The habitat requirements of the bear should be determined by their needs during cycles of stress, not by years when huckleberries are plentiful," Hammer says.

— Steve Thompson

Steve Thompson is a free-lancer in Kalispell, Montana, and works for the Montana Wilderness Association.

HOTLINE



A new Dirty Dozen

Environmental Action, the Washington, D.C.-based group, has named a new congressional "Dirty Dozen," and also handed out its second-only lifetime achievement award to Dan Quayle. The first went to Jesse Helms in 1990. Of 12 elected officials singled out for their anti-environmental records, four hail from the West. Colorado's Republican Rep. Wayne Allard was selected for his last-ditch efforts to salvage the Two Forks dam on Colorado's South Platte River. Utah Republican Rep. James Hansen made the list for trying to attach a "Human Protection" amendment to the Endangered Species Act, an amendment that would have gutted it. Another Republican, Rep. Bob Stump from Arizona, was selected for voting against almost all environmental legislation to come before the House, including the Arizona Desert Act supported by the state's three other Republican congressmen. Republican Rep. Ron Marlenee from Montana made the list for his support of the wise-use movement and his efforts to block passage of a Montana wilderness bill.



Coloradans to decide spring bear hunt

Colorado voters will decide Nov. 3 whether to follow Utah's lead and ban bear hunting in spring, when the animals emerge from hibernation with their young. Amendment 10, which was initiated by Coloradans United for Bears (CUB), seeks to end the spring bear season as well as bear baiting and hunting with dogs. CUB says that bears just coming out of hibernation are no match for hunters and dogs, and that there's "nothing sporting" about spreading food around and waiting for bears to arrive. The statute is opposed by Coloradans for Wildlife Conservation, a coalition of sportsmen's organizations. It warns that a ban will set a precedent for "wildlife regulations based on advertising campaigns and voter emotions, rather than sound biological data." The Colorado Division of Wildlife last year recommended ending the spring hunt; the Colorado Wildlife Commission overruled that proposal. In Utah last summer, the state's Wildlife Board eliminated its spring bear hunt, an act cheered by environmentalists in the state.



Karen Nichols

This female yearling grizzly was used to trap its mother. Both were moved out of rural Flathead County after they wandered too close to homes.

HOTLINE

Graffiti isn't new

What started as a Utah slickrock scandal earlier this summer has become a moral lesson, of sorts. It all began when the Bureau of Land Management announced that someone named H.J. Hogan chipped his name and a date, 4/1/92, into a pictograph panel. The panel is on a protected overhang located on BLM land near the confluence of Horseshoe Canyon's Barrier Creek and the Green River. Local reaction to the graffiti was angry and swift. The BLM and area residents offered a \$2,000 reward to anyone providing information on the culprit. Now, in the face of investigation by a number of historical experts working with the BLM, another story has emerged. If still living, H.J. Hogan would be over 100 years old, for he carved his name in slickrock in the year 1892. But Bruce Louthan, a staffer with the Moab BLM office, says the positive public involvement may have been worth the error in dating the graffiti. "There are still people out there who don't realize what an incredible resource this is and how easily it can be destroyed," Louthan said.

A deadly shortcut

An electronic device used to extract worms from the ground is exacting a toll on its users. "Worm Gett'rs," marketed by P&M Enterprises in Caldwell, Idaho, is advertised as a "worm probe" perfect for fishermen. On paper, the device safely sends a charge of up to 120 volts through a wire into a steel shaft embedded in the ground. In practice, at least 28 people have been electrocuted by it, most of them children. The federal Consumer Product Safety Commission is now urging the approximately 30,000 owners of P&M Worm Gett'rs to destroy their probes. The company is bankrupt and is not recalling its product. For more information, call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800/638-2772.

Wyoming's disappearing wildlife

Wyoming's non-game wildlife is being taken for a ride, and the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish can't do anything about it. Not protected by permit systems or trapping limits, animals such as snakes, foxes and some rodents are easy pickings for trappers from the East, who remove huge numbers for sale to pet stores or hunt masters. Recently, an Indiana trapper collected 200 juvenile red foxes for later sale to Eastern hunting clubs, reports the *Casper Star-Tribune*. "They've depleted a lot of the states back East, so they're coming here," says Russ Pollard, a state wildlife law enforcement officer. "Without regulations governing the take, we can't get on it." Pollard says Wyoming's Game and Fish department is drafting a regulation prohibiting the commercially motivated removal of non-game species, but it won't cover predators listed in state statutes designed to protect livestock. That means foxes will remain at risk, since Wyoming law views them as predators that can be legally taken at any time.

In Utah, pavers hit speed bump

In yet another chapter of the Sagebrush Rebellion in southeastern Utah, two rural counties are trying to force the federal government to allow construction of a new two-lane highway across some of the state's wildest and most remote terrain.

The proposed Book Cliffs Highway would run 83 miles from the town of Ouray in Uintah County south to Cisco, near Moab, in Grand County. It would be expensive — between \$50 million and \$100 million — but promoters say it is the perfect answer to the region's economic doldrums.

The Grand and Uintah County Special Road Districts, which are backing the project, say it would shorten the trip from Ouray to Cisco by 37 miles, and increase tourist traffic to Moab's famous canyon country. But in a recent environmental impact statement on the highway, the district states its primary goal is to revive the counties' old industrial base by opening new access to the Book Cliffs' thick tar sands, oil shale deposits and vast oil and gas reserves.

Despite the conflicting goals, the project initially enjoyed widespread community support, due in part to a well-organized campaign and initially low cost estimates. But recently, despite a generous advertising budget, road proponents have begun to lose ground.

In a draft EIS released this fall, the Bureau of Land Management rejected the highway proposal and said it preferred to upgrade and pave existing gravel roads. Among other reasons, the agency cited the presence of two alternative routes — Colorado Highway 139 and U.S. Highway 191 in Utah; the inability of state or federal road agencies to allocate funds to pave or even maintain the road; and the oil and gas industry's withdrawal of support for the road in favor of improving general maintenance of existing roads.

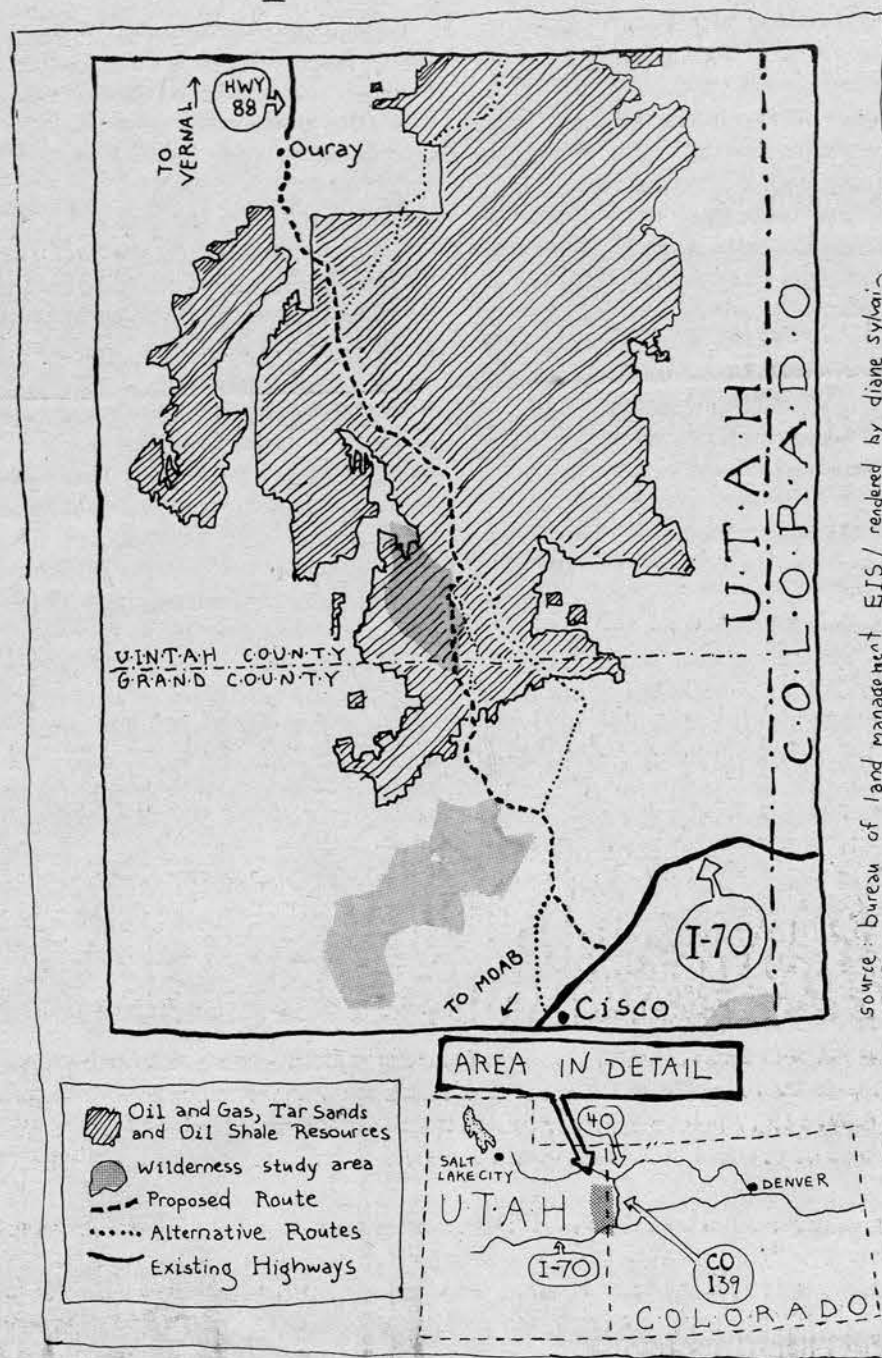
Utah environmental groups, led by the Uintah Mountain Club in Vernal and Ouray, have attacked the project because it would bisect one of the largest areas in the West without paved roads, wreck two wilderness study areas and degrade one of the best hunting areas in the state. According to the draft EIS, the highway would destroy thousands of acres of habitat for Utah's largest deer and antelope herds and cost the state \$540,000 a year from roadkills alone.

Will Durant of Vernal, head of the Uintah Mountain Club's natural resources committee, says the road would cross the unstable Douglas Creek geologic layer of the Green River Formation. Durant worries that road construction would trigger massive landslides, much like those on Douglas Pass on Colorado 139, which goes through the same geologic structure. Durant says the resulting erosion could destroy the area's priceless springs, creeks and riparian habitat.

The project is also attacked as an economic boondoggle. The Moab City Council voted for the project in 1989, when it was estimated that Grand County's share would be \$6 million. It recently withdrew its support after reports estimated the county's share could be two to three times that. The total project is estimated by some at \$100 million.

"Agencies such as the (Utah Department of Transportation) rank this project right at the bottom of their list. Throughout the county there is a general feeling that it really isn't a good idea," says councilman Dave Sakrison. "Even the oil and gas companies that operate in the Book Cliffs area don't seem to want it."

Some critics of the project charge that the highway is simply a political power play and that the road districts have



hijacked public funds needed for education and other uses in southeastern Utah. The area is one of the nation's poorer regions.

The project's genesis goes back to the fall of 1988, when Moab and Grand County became embroiled in a heated political battle over the county commissioner's proposal to bring a hazardous waste incinerator to Cisco. Commissioners argued that the incinerator would be the first step in building a new industrial economy to rival the old uranium days. In the elections that fall, however, they lost to proponents of the growing tourism and recreation industry, which is dependent on careful environmental stewardship. The incinerator was vetoed by referendum, and two of the three commissioners were removed from office (*HCN*, 1/2/89).

As the victors celebrated, lame duck commissioners Jimmy Walker and Dutch Zimmerman, and third board member David Knutson — all celebrated proponents of the Sagebrush Rebellion — created the Grand County Special Road District. They then appointed Zimmerman and David Knutson's father Ollie Knutson to the district's board of governors.

Commissioner Jimmy Walker was named district administrator, with a higher salary and health and retirement benefits.

That same year the state Legislature also granted special county districts the right to use their county's share of federal mineral lease revenues. Although the district can legally spend its independent income on anything from sewage treatment to hospitals, the Grand County board has focused solely on the Book Cliffs Highway. From the start they have found a willing partner in the Uintah road district. Now, after spending over half a million dollars on the EIS, the two districts are furious with the BLM for rejecting the proposal.

At a recent meeting, officials from the Grand County and Uintah County commissions and representatives from both counties' road districts complained that the BLM ignored safety concerns, disregarded the potential economic impact, and unfairly favored a competing federal-state plan to create a vast wildlife reserve in the Book Cliffs.

While the road district threatens lawsuits and appeals, local groups are taking advantage of the EIS and upcoming public hearings. They aim both to try to kill the project and change the road-building mission of Grand County and Uintah County.

"Environmental issues alone could condemn this project, but our opposition goes beyond that, to the question of how our scarce public funds are used, and the legitimacy of the existing power structure in our community," says Durant, who hopes to see the funds now earmarked for the road used to improve education and existing county infrastructure.

Public comments will be accepted until Dec. 10, and can be sent to Daryl Trotter, BLM, Moab District, P.O. Box 970, Moab, UT 84532.

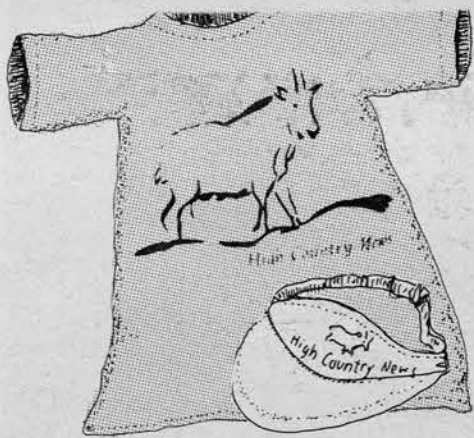
Public hearings will be held at 7 p.m. at: Salt Lake City: Nov. 4; Utah Department of Natural Resources, 1636 West North Temple;

Vernal: Nov. 5; Western Park, 302 East 200 South;

Moab: Nov. 17; BLM District Office, 82 East Dogwood.

— Steve Hinchman and Jim Stiles

A longer version of this article, written by Jim Stiles, appeared in the October 1992 issue of *The Canyon Zephyr*, accompanied by transcripts of interviews with the principals. The *Zephyr* can be reached at P.O. Box 327, Moab, UT 84532 (801/259-7773).



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The Colorado Air National Guard will try to establish a Military Operation Area (MOA) over the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range and the Great Sand Dunes National Monument. They want to run thousands of fighters, per year, day and night. They plan to make this area a national jet air combat training facility. If we don't stop them now, some of the best Colorado wilderness will be lost to future generations forever.

Please don't let them steal our wilderness right out from under our noses. Write or call and voice your opposition to this environmental disaster. Contact Governor Roy Romer: State Capitol Building, Denver, CO 80203; 1-800-332-1716 and/or Major General John France, the leader of the military team responsible for trying to get this (MOA) approved: 6848 S. Revere Parkway, Englewood, CO 80112; 1-303-397-3028.

We need local volunteers all across Colorado as well as contributions to help fight the military. For more information regarding MOA's and to volunteer your time and/or send your monetary contribution, call 1-800-892-0135. For every minute you wait, Colorado will lose more of its wilderness. **SAY NO WAY MOA!**

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THE WEST'S NUCLEAR LEGACY ...

continued from page 1

The halt in atomic weapons testing has brought the development of nuclear energy, both for war and for peace, to a virtual standstill. It is too early to tell if this is simply a pause before the explosions and power plant construction start again, or the beginning of the end for a technology that paradoxically promised boundless energy for humanity and threatened to annihilate life on earth.

Of course, the nuclear genie is permanently out of the bottle. Radioactive debris left by barely half a century of nuclear pursuits will preoccupy society virtually forever on a human time scale.

In addition, the nuclear energy industry and weapons makers are planning a comeback. They have won some important battles lately, including passage of the National Energy Strategy Act, which provides subsidies and streamlined licensing of new reactors, and which entrusts the Department of Energy with physically guarding radioactive waste for 10,000 years.

But taken as a whole, sweeping developments in recent years — the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, the shutdown of the U.S. nuclear weapons production complex, military budget cutbacks, an out-of-control federal deficit, the dismal economic performance of nuclear power, and the challenge of how to isolate radioactive wastes from the environment for thousands of years — portend a bleak future for nuclear technology.

"This is the beginning of the end," predicted political scientist and Nevada State Sen. Dina Titus, author of *Bombs in the Backyard: Atomic Testing and American Politics*. "The impact may not hit us like the first mushroom cloud did. But we're living in a historic moment."

Changes in nuclear fortunes are having an especially heavy impact on the West, where the atomic age began with the explosion of the first atom bomb, named "Trinity" by its awestruck inventors, near Alamogordo, N.M., in 1945. The decline was felt early and hard here at the Nevada Test Site, where what might have been the last U.S. nuclear weapons tests were conducted in late September, just as Congress put the finishing touches to the current testing moratorium.

The end may be near

Deep in a warren of tunnels under a scrub-covered escarpment in Area 12 at the north end of the Nevada Test Site, dozens of excavators, engineers, masons, carpenters, electricians, ironworkers and soldiers toiled for nearly two years preparing what may have been one of the last nuclear tests of the Cold War era, a Star Wars "weapons effects" experiment code-named Hunters Trophy.

During our visit, a jackhammer resounded against the rock walls. The arc of a welder cast an eerie light around the dank N-tunnel as Major Phil Arnold, the Defense Nuclear Agency officer in charge, surveyed ground zero before the blast.

"This is where it all starts," he said,

standing in a cavern the size of a small room at the end of a mine shaft bored two miles into Ranier Mesa. "That's about as close as you'll get. This whole area will be vaporized. We don't ever come back in here."

With a charge of less than 20 kilotons, roughly the same as the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Hunters Trophy was detonated the same day the U.S. Senate passed the nuclear testing moratorium. A week later, as House and Senate conferees wrangled over the bill's final form, the last bomb test, code-named Divider, exploded in a vertical hole 1,000 feet below Yucca Flat. Above, four Dutch protesters rode mountain bikes across the windswept playa pockmarked with craters from hundreds of previous nuclear blasts.

President George Bush had threatened to veto the moratorium. But Congress attached the measure to the massive 1993 energy and water development appropriations bill. The bill contained funding for the \$8 billion Superconducting Super Collider, a high-tech barrel of pork bound for Texas, a crucial state in the Electoral College. The moratorium went into effect Oct. 2, the day the bill was signed at a White House ceremony.

Hatfield hails moratorium

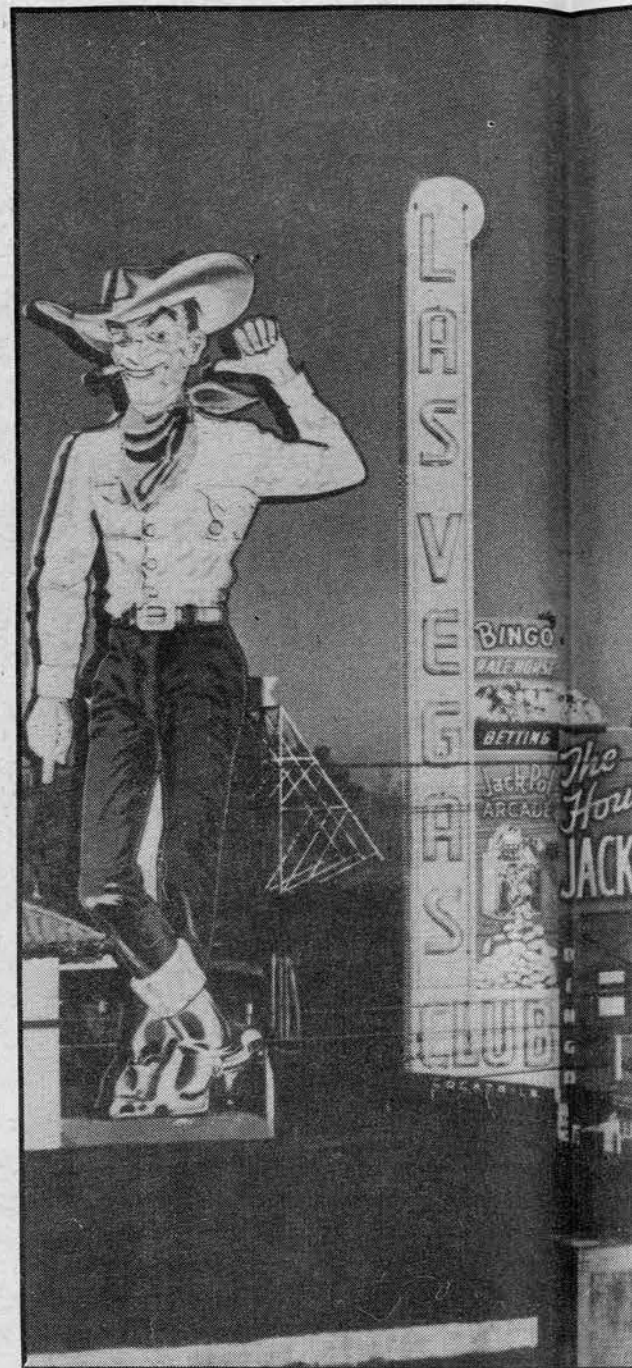
After nearly 50 years of living in the shadow of the bomb, one might have expected a U.S. nuclear testing moratorium to be big news. But it was almost lost to view in a flood of last-minute legislation and election-year politics.

The roots of this moment can be traced back to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the only places the atom bomb was used for its intended purpose. Among the first U.S. soldiers to arrive in those devastated cities in the aftermath of World War II was Navy Lt. j.g. Mark Hatfield. He saw what the bomb did, and 47 years later he led the fight in Congress to end nuclear testing.

"This is a great day," Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., said when the moratorium went into effect. "This sends a clear message to the weapons laboratories that a new generation of the most dangerous weapons known to mankind will not be built. While we may never rid the earth of a nuclear threat, we have taken a bold step toward reducing the threat."

In a display of Nevada's increasing nuclear schizophrenia, the state's congressional delegation voted against the moratorium because of the jobs that will be lost at the site. Later, the same Nevadans fought — again in vain — against amendments to the National Energy Strategy Act that will make it easier for the government to establish the nation's only high-level nuclear waste dump under Yucca Mountain, a barren ridge on the western border of the Nevada Test Site. In that battle, too, they were defeated by an overwhelming majority that included many moratorium supporters.

While some anti-nuclear activists in Nevada and elsewhere greeted the moratorium with victory celebrations, others saw "depressing defeats" in the energy bill amendments — dubbed Screw Neva-



That puff of smoke (to the left of the "P" in Pioneer)

da III — and in a bill to pave the way for storing transuranic radioactive waste from the federal weapons complex at the Waste Isolation Pilot Project near Carlsbad, N.M. Over the Columbus Day weekend, protesters converged on the Nevada Test Site for another of the now ritual-like demonstrations against nuclear testing. Few believed it would be the last.

"I don't think we should delude ourselves. It's not over," said Preston Truman, who was born in Enterprise, Utah, in 1951, the year nuclear testing began in Nevada. Truman went on to found Downwinders, a group of people affected by atmospheric testing. In 1963, nuclear bomb tests went underground after President Kennedy signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty.

"We're not celebrating yet," agreed David Solnit, an organizer of the "Healing Global Wounds" events, which brought 2,000 people from around the world to the Columbus Day protests. "We have a tough fight ahead to get a test ban."

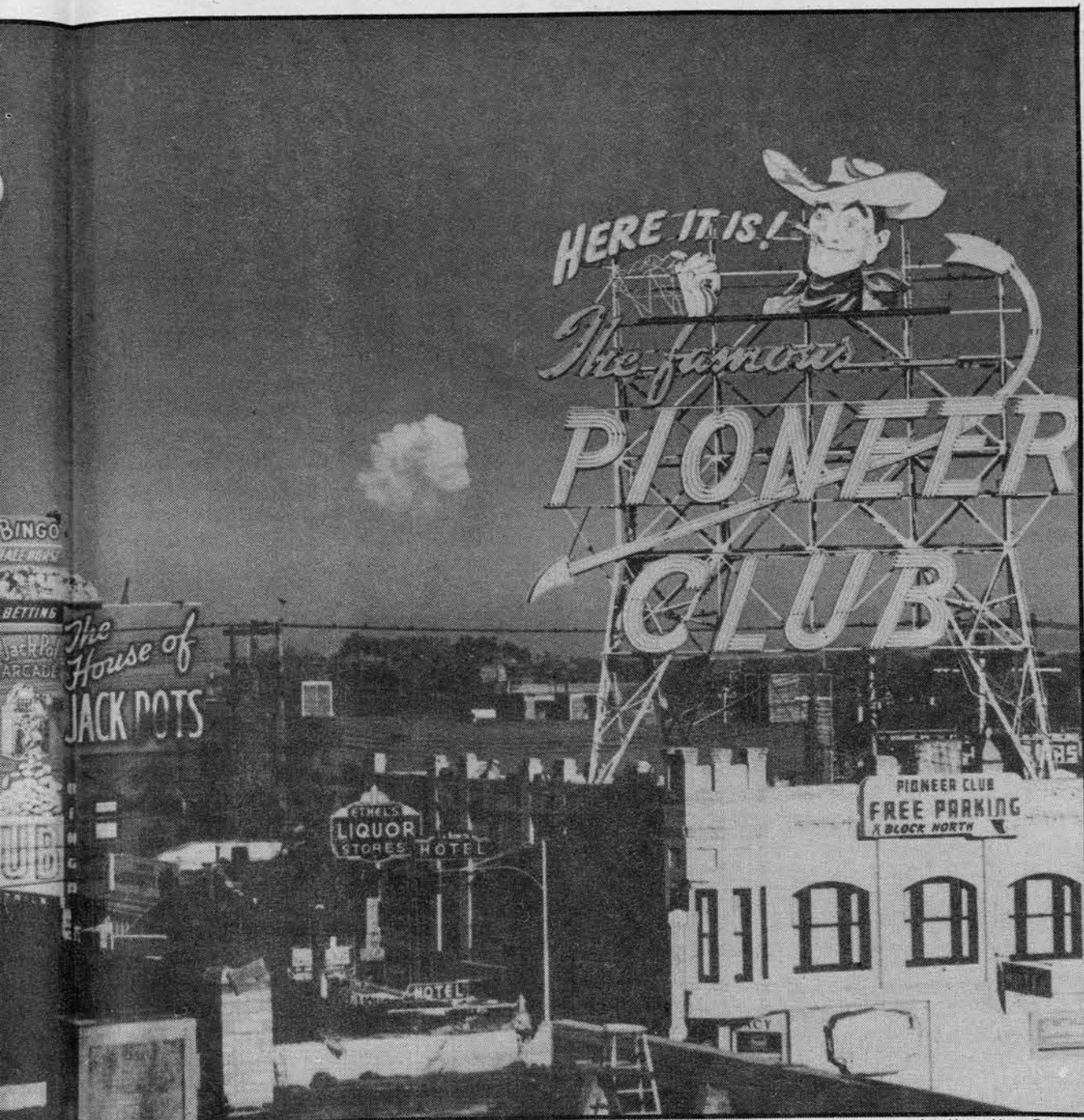
Over the last decade, grass-roots agitation at the Nevada Test Site and other nuclear facilities and lobbying on Capitol Hill have helped change the nation's attitudes toward nuclear weapons. But by itself, the popular pressure could never have led to the limited moratorium on nuclear testing. It took the collapse of Communism and the Soviet Union to achieve that.

The U.S. nuclear weapons complex could still be resuscitated if international politics turn sour. This was made clear when China exploded a nuclear weapon in the Gobi Desert shortly before the moratorium went into effect. Neither the Bush Administration, which had extended China's "most favored nation" trade status, nor anti-nuclear activists, who

"This is the beginning of the end. The impact may not hit us like the first mushroom cloud did. But we're living in a historic moment."

— Dina Titus,
Nevada state senator
and historian





Las Vegas News Bureau

“P” in Pioneer) is from one of many atomic tests conducted 65 miles from Las Vegas during the 1950s.

feared it would jeopardize the moratorium, wanted the blast publicized and it went largely unnoticed.

But the firing of another nuclear weapon by any nation could end the present moratorium and trigger resumption of American nuclear testing.

Cold Warriors seek work

The Nevada Test Site still buzzes with activity as workers go about their business like busy Lilliputians in a landscape of awesome destruction. Preparations are under way for the limited series of up to 15 “safety and reliability” tests that could be authorized under the moratorium law. The tests would take place between the end of the nine-month moratorium on July 1, 1993, and the complete cessation of nuclear testing scheduled for Dec. 31, 1996.

Work is also proceeding on monitoring and containing radioactive debris and contaminated water at the test site. Crews are drilling wells around the sites of explosions to track the movement of contaminated groundwater. And a little-known radioactive waste dump at Frenchman Flat on the Nevada Test Site continues to receive shipments of up to 1 million cubic-feet a year of low-level and transuranic waste from other federal weapons facilities.

But with the site’s primary mission now in doubt, “morale is low” among workers, admitted Peter Zavatarro, an engineer with EG&G, which analyzes data from weapons tests. “People like myself have been doing this most of our lives,” he said. “It’s hard for us to understand the change in philosophy.”

Workers at the test site are proud of the role they played in a “defense posture that kept us free and brought down the Iron Curtain,” said Troy Wade, a spokesman for the Nevada Test Site con-

tractors association. While they are pleased by the reduction in nuclear tensions, Wade said, contractors do not agree that testing should be eliminated.

But these Cold War veterans find themselves increasingly isolated in a changing world. In the early 1950s, Las Vegas embraced the atom bomb, brashly incorporating the mushroom cloud into its glitzy promotional culture, much like other rural towns or cities chosen to host federal nuclear projects.

Patriotism and economic self-interest came together, and numerous places in the West became bastions of support for nuclear endeavors. In return, they received an infusion of federal spending and stable, high-wage jobs for everyone from blue-collar union labor to university-trained scientists.

The 50-year-long boom started with the Manhattan Project, which employed 150,000 workers and spent \$2 billion to build the first few atomic bombs. Federal spending on nuclear weapons climbed steadily since then, and then spurted during the 1980s, when the portion of the Department of Energy budget devoted to weapons went from around 32 percent to 68 percent.

Despite the end of the Cold War, employment has remained relatively constant with only a slight drop in recent years. National laboratories in Los Alamos and Albuquerque, N.M., and Livermore, Calif., spend more than \$3 billion a year and employ 27,000 workers, although not all of their work is on nuclear weapons research.

Reactors and nuclear processing plants in Hanford, Wash., the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory near

Idaho Falls, Rocky Flats near Denver, and the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas, cost \$3.7 billion annually and employ 38,000 workers. Roughly \$1 billion a year was spent on nuclear testing at its peak in the early 1980s, keeping up to 18,000 workers busy blowing up bombs at the Nevada Test Site.

A steady decline

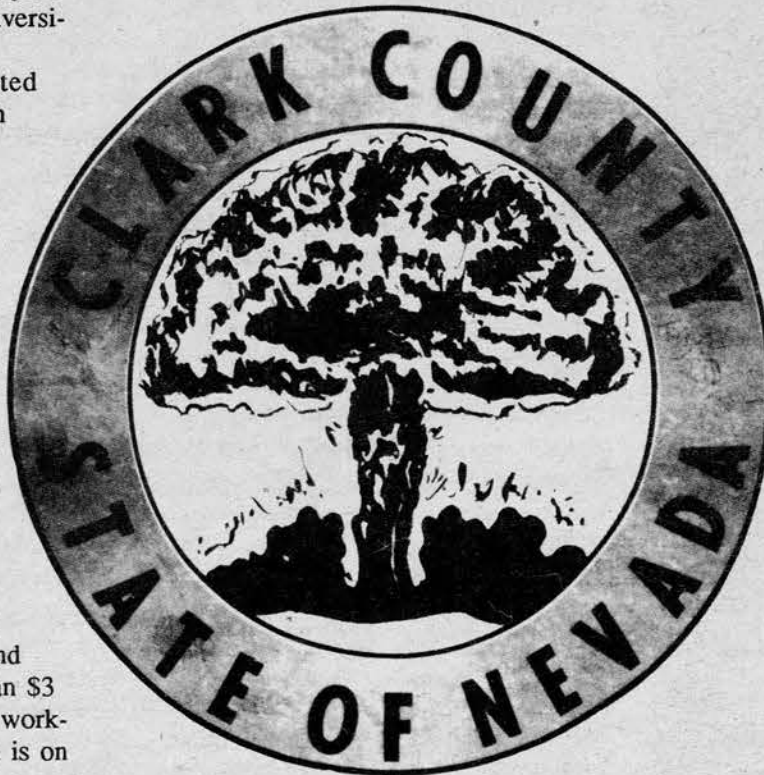
The local economic importance of these numbers has declined somewhat over the years as the towns and cities have grown and diversified. Emotionally, support for nuclear energy and weapons is still strong in these places, but not as strong as it once was. In recent years, a slow, steady erosion has occurred as it became increasingly clear that the professionally trained scientists, doctors and administrators in charge of the weapons complex had betrayed those who most

believed in them and their nuclear mission.

Workers, soldiers and downwinders exposed to radiation from the production and testing of nuclear weapons have had to fight in court and in Congress for compensation. They continue to fight for recognition of the wrongs committed against Americans at home in the pursuit of national security.

Under pressure from victims and watchdog groups that have formed around federal nuclear facilities, the government grudgingly has released records revealing that the standard safety assurances of the past concealed grave health

continued on next page



Clark County’s official seal during the 1950s reflected the importance of atomic testing

China is the unknown

Both Russia and France suspended nuclear testing into 1993, contingent on U.S. moves. Since Britain tests nuclear weapons at the Nevada Test Site, China remains the only holdout among the five major nuclear powers that have regularly tested atomic weapons.

Proponents of a comprehensive test ban view the U.S. moratorium as a cooling-off period, useful both for persuading China to halt testing and for pursuing further arms reduction agreements with the former Soviet republics.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the first-ever agreement to reduce nuclear arsenals rather than merely limit their growth, calls for the elimination of nearly a third of all U.S. and Russian warheads. An agreement reached this summer and currently being translated into treaty language would cut another third of the warheads, leaving the United States with 3,500 and Russia with 3,000.

The START treaty also mandates that the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear states, meaning that they must give up nuclear weapons and promise never to build more. The non-proliferation treaty, which is up for renewal in 1995, calls on nuclear states to pursue arms control, reduction agreements and a halt in nuclear testing in exchange for non-nuclear states agreeing not to develop nuclear weapons.

While President Bush consistently opposed the testing moratorium before signing it, his opponent, Gov. Bill Clinton, endorsed a test ban at a labor convention campaign stop in Las Vegas this summer. Clinton suggested that workers at the Nevada Test Site begin retraining for other jobs.

—J.C.

THE WEST'S NUCLEAR LEGACY ...

continued from previous page

and safety threats. Citizen groups such as the Hanford Education Action League continue to press for the truth by filing numerous — and expensive — Freedom of Information Act requests.

This change in public perception is clearly visible in Nevada. Ten years ago jobs at the Nevada Test Site supported almost 10 percent of the population in southern Nevada, and a majority in opinion polls supported nuclear testing. Today, the testing program accounts for just 2 percent of the area's employment. And in a poll taken last year, a 58 percent majority disagreed with the statement that nuclear testing should continue.

Even before last month's moratorium, testing was in decline. Nuclear blasts at the Nevada Test Site steadily dropped from a peak of 96 tests — 39

above ground and 57 underground — in 1962 to the eight shots scheduled for this year. One of those experiments, a test of a Star Wars laser weapon, was abruptly canceled this summer when its budget was eliminated.

More than 1,000 test site workers were laid off in the year before the moratorium went into effect. The Energy Department and test-site contractors estimate that the nine-month moratorium will cause another 500 to 1,000 layoffs. A complete ban could slash the current staff of 8,000 in half. The surviving workforce would deal with the site's contamination and would keep the facility open should Congress vote to resume testing.

Leaders who don't lead

Nevada's political leaders have yet to play a helpful role in the rapidly developing events. They steadfastly

resisted all efforts to curtail nuclear testing, and until recently dismissed the proposed moratorium as a meaningless congressional "rite of spring."

At the same time, state officials have fought furiously against expansion of DOE studies aimed at building the nation's high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

Only recently have state officials realized that they may be fighting two doomed battles. They are now seeking to salvage some economic activity at the Nevada Test Site. But this has thrown Nevada onto the horns of a nuclear dilemma.

The future may be waste

Many would like Nevada to put the atomic age in its past. But others look at the vast contaminated grounds of the nuclear proving ground and see only one possible future: as a remote location for dangerous projects.

"The test site is a great national asset in at least two ways," argued Troy Wade of the test site contractors' association, which is courting new federal projects. "One is the highly trained, capable staff. The other is the geography itself. The test site is a place where one can research hazardous, risky things" with zero risk to the general public.

"The hard part is convincing the people who have the money — mostly the military — that this is the right place to come," conceded Peter Zavatarro, chairman of the contractors' group.

The test site sprawls over 1,350 square miles some 60 miles northwest of Las Vegas. It includes hundreds of miles of roads, dozens of buildings and miles of tunnels. All of it is geared to one thing: blowing up atomic bombs. This specialization hurts. The rest of the nation's nuclear weapons complex is also being scaled back, and the test site must compete for new projects with other overstaffed federal facilities, with nothing to recommend it but remoteness.

But there is one large, eternal project that is seeking a home in southern Nevada. The DOE and its powerful allies in Congress, most notably the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., are maneuvering to make a nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain the next big project for the test site. So are the local union officials who traveled to Washington this summer to lobby for the work.

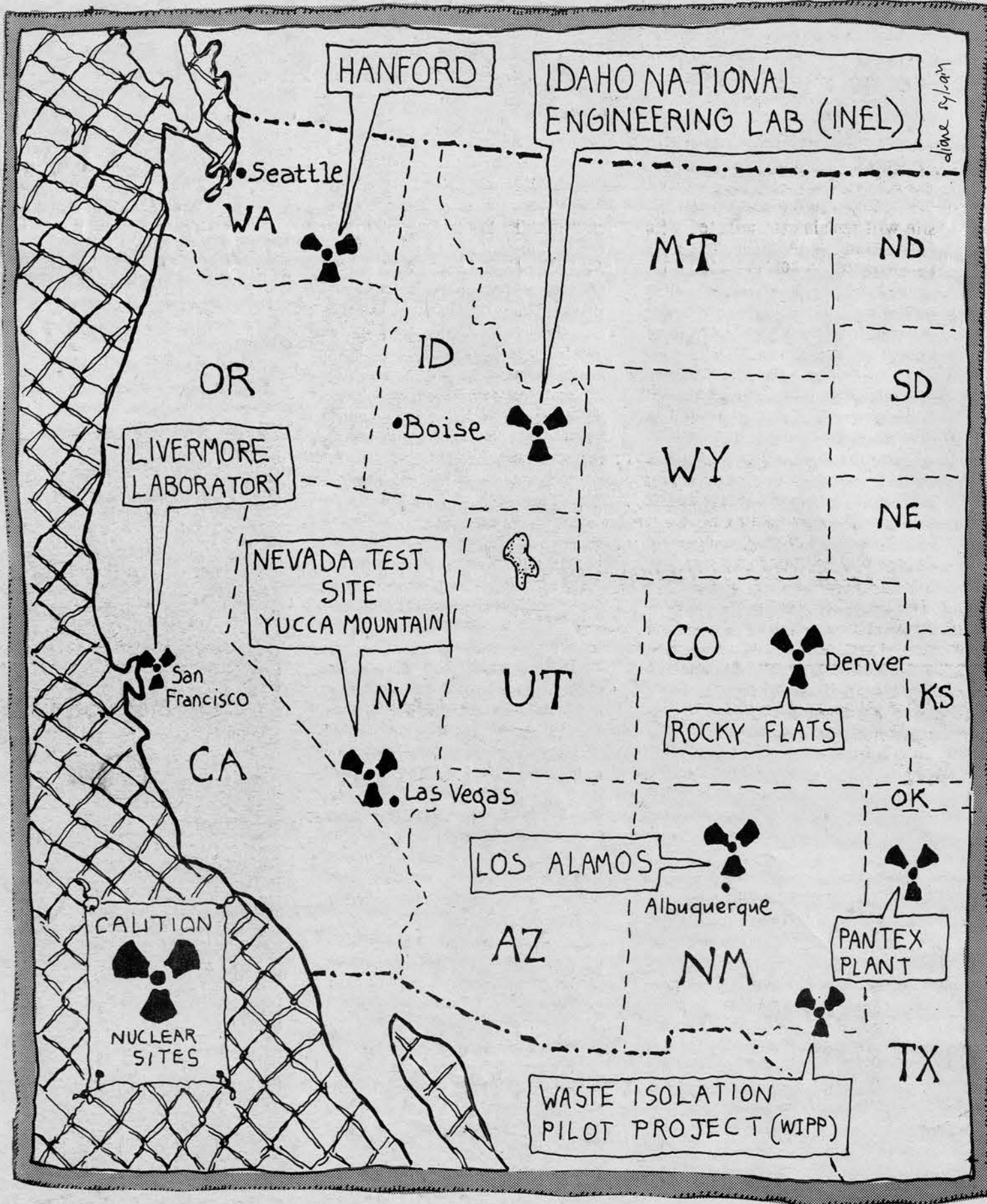
"We're going to lose a lot of jobs," said Frank Caine, president of the Southern Nevada Building Trades Council, which represents some 3,800 workers at the Nevada Test Site. "Yucca Mountain would create hundreds of jobs and take up a big part of the slack, if they would just get on with construction."

Providing a timely indication of things to come, Congress shifted \$100 million from the nuclear weapons testing program to boost the Yucca Mountain budget to \$375 million next year. The nuclear testing program will receive \$429 million next year, down \$50 million from last year.

In this charged atmosphere, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., recently convened a "blue ribbon panel" of 38 experts, including DOE contractors, union officials, and scientists from the national

"I don't think we should delude ourselves. It's not over."

Preston Truman.
Downwinders



nuclear labs to explore alternatives for the Nevada Test Site. Their recommendations ranged from far-out proposals for utility-scale solar and hydrogen energy projects that Reid said could "fuel the world," to expansion of existing programs such as testing techniques for cleaning up hazardous spills. Other programs proposed using electron-beam accelerators to simulate the effects of nuclear blasts on military equipment, testing high explosives, and dismantling and assembling nuclear weapons.

Reid also supported an Air Force proposal to test a nuclear-powered rocket at the test site. Later he garnered funding for underground disposal of used rockets at the site. His colleague, Sen. Richard Bryan, D-Nev., secured passage of a bill requiring the DOE to study the potential for solar power there. According to a report by Sandia Labs, the test site receives more sunlight each year than anywhere else in the country.

Southern Nevada may not face the prospect of starving physicists and technicians peddling their nuclear knowledge and wares on the open market. But like Russia and the new republics of Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine, the United States has its nuclear-dependent centers. Some, such as Hanford, Wash., Los Alamos, N.M., Amarillo, Texas, and Idaho Falls, are more closely tied to nuclear fortunes than Las Vegas, which attracts tourists.

Even the harshest critics of the federal nuclear empire recognize that the future of these places and of the nuclear moratorium will be easier if economic transitions can be found. There is a growing consensus supporting federally funded alternatives for the Nevada Test Site and its workers, as well as for other weapons facilities. This year, Congress agreed to fund numerous conversion studies, worker retraining, and assistance to communities affected by shrinking nuclear-weapons work.

Congress also moved on the humanitarian measure of insuring workers injured by radiation exposure. Beyond that, the simplest, cheapest solution for displaced workers could be a year's severance pay. But no one suggests that it would make more sense to experience the trauma now, rather than patch together another federally subsidized arrangement to save the DOE, its workers and the facilities.

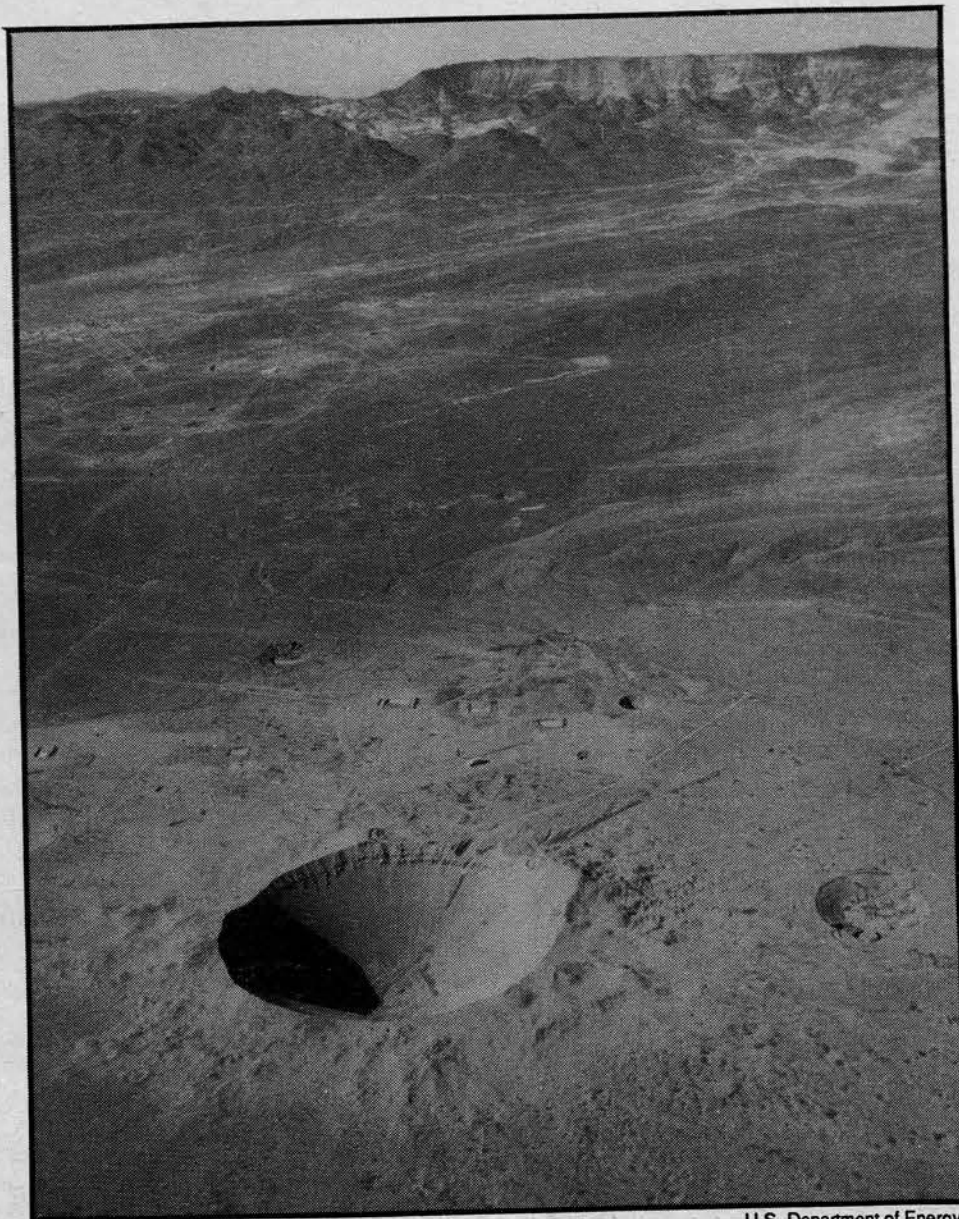
Cleaning up DOE

Cleanup and containment is the one program that will survive the emerging battle over the future of the federal nuclear facilities.

"There is a lot of nuclear work that needs to be done just to clean up the mess," said Marla Painter of the Rural Alliance for Military Accountability, a coalition of grass-roots groups. "That's where compromise would be possible. It



"Do not look toward the test site at shot time unless you are wearing dark glasses," warned the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's 1957 book, *Atomic Tests in Nevada*.



U.S. Department of Energy

The 320-foot deep Sedan Crater was formed in 1962, in an experiment that exploded a 100-kiloton bomb. Its purpose was to show how nuclear weapons could also be used for massive earth excavations. The bomb sent 12 million tons of Nevada desert into the air.

serves the interest of environmentalists and labor."

When it comes to the Nevada Test Site, "cleanup" is an overstatement. The site will remain contaminated with radioactivity for millennia. The main work is to identify and monitor the damage and prevent it from spreading, where possible.

As for the results of hundreds of underground explosions, "There's not much we can do about contamination underground," said test site spokesman Derek Scammell. "There's nowhere to put it anyway."

The cost of monitoring and cleanup at the Nevada Test Site over the next five years has been estimated by the DOE at \$578 million.

The area hosted the most dramatic aspect of the U.S. nuclear weapons program, but it is only one of the country's 17 major nuclear weapons facilities contaminated by radiation. It is an awesome testimony to the nuclear weapons crisis that problems at the Nevada Test Site can seem small by comparison.

At present, the entire DOE weapons complex employs more than 100,000 people in 13 states at an annual cost of about \$11 billion. Almost half of the \$11 billion now goes toward cleanup. By some estimates, this task could cost well over \$100 billion and take 30 years to complete, although the legacy will most likely last longer and the costs rise higher.

Many observers worry that cleanup already has become the next big pork barrel for the DOE and its contractors. A study last year by Heart of America

Northwest, a Hanford watchdog group, warned that "hundreds of millions of cleanup dollars are being spent to warehouse former defense production workers in facilities that no longer have missions and are not actively being decommissioned or decontaminated."

"There is a tremendous amount of waste and fraud," said Steve Schwartz of the Military Production Network, an oddly named coalition of grass-roots groups monitoring nuclear facilities around the country. "And if we don't get the budget waste cleaned up, Congress will balk at spending more where it is really needed."

The fight over cleanup and waste gets to the heart of the current crisis in the nation's nuclear weapons complex. Despite strong efforts in recent years by Secretary James Watkins, a former Navy admiral, to reform the Energy Department, it is still far from trusted by the public and grass-roots groups that have organized in recent years around nuclear facilities.

DOE's accountability always rises to the top in debates about the future of the nation's nuclear weapons complex. The Atomic Energy Commission was established in 1946, and was reorganized as the Department of Energy in 1977. For those 46 years, the agency has been responsible for everything from bomb production to testing to disposal of nuclear weapons. Throughout its history, the agency has been dominated by the military, and its hallmark has been decision-making in secret.

Essentially charged with regulating itself, the agency again and again has proved to be "a wolf in sheep's clothing," said historian Dina Titus.

A banquet of opportunities?

Last year, after Watkins promised to "change the culture" of the DOE, the agency began a protracted process of public consultations called "program-

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"There is a lot of nuclear work that needs to be done just to clean up the mess. That's where compromise would be possible. It serves the interest of environmentalists and labor."

Marla Painter
Rural Alliance for
Military Accountability



THE WEST'S NUCLEAR LEGACY ...

continued from previous page

matic environmental impact statements" (PEIS) on "reconfiguration," environmental restoration, and waste management at more than 100 facilities across the country.

Daryl Kimball, a lobbyist with Physicians for Social Responsibility, says the PEIS process, which will continue over the next two years, "has become a useful organizing and media tool for grass-roots groups."

But the Nevada environmental group, Citizen Alert, branded the PEIS hearings "an event worth missing" and urged supporters not to participate. "You'll only encourage them," said Chris Brown, a Citizen Alert activist.

"Unfortunately, what appears on the surface to be a banquet of opportunities for public involvement is in reality a confusing, laborious and redundant series of meetings that ultimately exhaust and frustrate the public," Brown charged. "Blurred in the abundance of opportunities is the fact that no process yet exists that allows citizens to participate or even be represented on the front end of the decision-making process."

Brown and others in the Military Production Network have called for local oversight committees at each of the nation's weapons facilities. A similar proposal was made by the Office of Technology Assessment and the independent federal Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board.

At other DOE facilities, community activists have fought for the creation of such oversight groups and forced their way on them. But so far, environmentalists, anti-nuclear activists and concerned citizens have been left out of planning for the future at the Nevada Test Site, even though they were the first to call for conversion years ago.

Despite a pledge by Sen. Reid to include environmentalists in the deliberations he sponsored, none who fought underground testing were invited to participate. Activists complain that the process once again has started out on the wrong foot.

"Sen. Reid got only one side of the debate," said Chris Brown. "The only

Public interest and involvement is key. "If the Energy Department thinks you're not watching, there's no telling what they'll do. They do a lot even when you are watching."

*Dina Titus,
Nevada state senator
and historian*



Bob Perillo

The Nevada Test Site drew thousands of protesters in 1987.

people he involved in questioning what to do with the test site were those who were involved in nuclear testing."

While Brown believes Nevada has the opportunity now to choose "between a nuclear future and a non-nuclear future," the real choice appears less clear. As layoffs continue at the Nevada Test Site, pressure is likely to mount inside the state to proceed with plans to store nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. Pressure from outside the state is already at a peak.

Because radioactive waste is already stored at the test site, the issue here, as in the rest of the nation's nuclear facilities, is not whether the future will be nuclear or non-nuclear but how to deal with the legacy of a nuclear past and present.

"We need complete openness now, unlike when the test site was created," said Steve Schwartz. "The public needs to be involved. All the options, whether nuclear or not, need to be aboveboard. It's the only way for the DOE to regain credibility."

Bomb builders: more exotic than headhunters

An anthropologist in search of an exotic and inaccessible way of life to study chose the scientists who build nuclear warheads at the Department of Energy's Livermore Laboratory in northern California.

Hugh Gusterson, writing in the May/June 1992 issue of *The Sciences*, says the culture he discovered was stranger than the headhunters his graduate adviser studied in the Philippine jungles.

"I soon came to think of the world as a kind of high-tech, ritual secret society, one in which members wear badges and spend most of their working hours sealed off from the rest of the world by armed guards and barbed wire fences; in which trash cans have locks on them for the safe disposal of secret documents; in which visitors must be escorted into the bathroom ('Uncleared person coming

in!' the escort shouts to those within); in which secretaries must lock up their typewriter ribbons during coffee breaks for fear that spies will steal the ribbons and reconstruct classified data."

He also found that the scientists are likely to be liberal (over half voted for Michael Dukakis in 1988), belong to environmental groups, and are completely unafraid of nuclear war. In part, Gusterson writes, that is because the bomb is not mysterious to them.

They are unafraid because of "the sense of mastery that Livermore scientists gain by conducting nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site." Such tests, he writes, give them great technical confidence in their work.

Just as important, the tests "also share some of the characteristics of more traditional rituals ... such rituals are staged as a means of dealing with anxiety,

especially anxiety about death, by simulating human knowledge and control over events that otherwise seem mysterious and uncontrollable.

"In this light, nuclear tests can be seen as providing an arena in which weapons designers can tame their fears of mass destruction. And more telling, they can also be viewed as rites of passage whereby new scientists are initiated into a community, namely the community to which nuclear weapons are 'no more strange than a vacuum cleaner.'"

The anthropologist also discusses the character of nuclear scientists he studied and their prospects for the future. Gusterson says that the scientists work on bombs not because they are Dr. Strangeloves or are too incompetent to get other jobs. Instead, the bomb laboratories attract scientists looking for a low-stress, comfortable, but technically chal-

lenging place to work.

DOE labs meet that need. Building bombs is fascinating, they are surrounded by highly skilled colleagues, use top-of-the-line equipment, and no one expects them to contribute to a corporation's bottom line, publish a scholarly paper or snare a grant.

Gusterson's paper makes Livermore Laboratory sound like more of an ivory tower than a university. His paper also makes one wonder how these cloistered and cushioned scientists will fare in the free and competitive environment they will encounter if forced to leave the DOE laboratories.

— Ed Marston

The Sciences is published by the New York Academy of Sciences at 622 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Public interest and involvement is key, agreed historian Dina Titus. "If they think you're not watching, there's no telling what they'll do," she said. "They do a lot even when you are watching."

It may be difficult, however, Titus acknowledged, to sustain public interest in the dilemmas posed by the legacy of contamination and today's shrinking budgets and looming layoffs. Waste and cleanup are "boring and hard to symbolize," she said, "so we don't relate to them as much. The mushroom cloud was so easily adapted to popular culture, in songs, movies, even hairdos. And testing was seen as positive. It was something legitimate for an illegitimate town. Waste is just negative."

Some critics argue that the DOE should be removed altogether from the next phase of the atomic age, with cleanup, restoration and radioactive waste entrusted to a new agency. Destroying the DOE has become a top

priority for some activists, who have spent much of their lives butting heads with government insiders. The history of the agency, however, seems to show that even if it is reorganized, as in the 1970s, or its duties transferred to another agency, the key players and their agendas will stay the same.

Nonetheless, it is inevitable that the DOE will change. In a world no longer divided into two mighty camps that hold the fate of the earth in the balance, the meaning of security has moved beyond strength through force and deterrence, to assuring the long-term survival of people and communities. All face daunting economic deficits and environmental challenges.

The atomic age began with a big bang. The buildup to the Cold War took place in a few short years. But the struggle over its legacy has just begun. ■

Jon Christensen is *High Country News'* new Great Basin regional editor.



"(Reports about) Geiger counters ... going crazy ... may worry people unnecessarily. Don't let them bother you." (from the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's 1957 book, *Atomic Tests in Nevada*.)

Cover-up charged at Rocky Flats

On a recent campaign swing through Colorado for President Bush, Energy Secretary James Watkins paid a visit to the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant outside of Denver.

His message to the media and politicians of the state: Stop focusing on the problems of the contaminated plutonium trigger factory because "negativism" hurts future business potential of the site.

But the bad news at Rocky Flats just won't go away. Allegations that the Department of Justice stymied a special Rocky Flats grand jury investigation are keeping the facility and its history of environmental denial and coverup in the public eye.

The controversy centers on U.S. Attorney Mike Norton, who cut a deal in May with Rockwell International, the former plant operator, after a federal grand jury had worked two and a half years gathering evidence of criminal activity at Rocky Flats. Under the plea bargain agreement, Rockwell pleaded guilty to 10 environmental crimes and

paid an \$18.5 million fine, but no individuals were indicted.

Members of the grand jury, speaking under the condition of anonymity, later told the *Rocky Mountain News* that the Justice Department ignored the panel's recommendation to indict several Department of Energy and Rockwell officials, who allegedly condoned the illegal practices.

The controversy intensified when the Justice Department ordered Norton and several other federal employees not to answer sensitive questions asked at closed-door hearings held by the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. This set off an uproar from the environmental community and some members of Congress, including Colorado Rep. Pat Schroeder, who wrote a letter to the Office of Professional Responsibility calling for an investigation of Norton for obstructing the work of the grand jury, reports the *Denver Post*.

Howard Wolpe, D-Mich., who presided over the congressional hear-

ings, said he found it "a little startling" that no Rockwell or DOE employees were indicted for criminal conduct. Wolpe said the Justice Department defended its decision not to indict individuals by blaming criminal activity on a "DOE culture" that emphasizes weapons production over environmental, health and safety concerns and expects employees to deliberately defy federal pollution laws.

The public may soon know more of the facts behind the settlement. On Oct. 5, one hour before members of the House Science Committee's investigations subcommittee were to vote on contempt of Congress charges against Norton, the Justice Department lifted the gag order on the witnesses after reaching an agreement with Wolpe.

The agreement calls for additional one-on-one interviews with the witnesses and a public airing of the findings, either in the form of a public hearing or report.

— Paul Larmer

Tracking change in nuclear Nevada

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., Washington, DC 20410 (202/224-3542). He leads the effort to attract new projects to the Nevada Test Site.

Nevada Test Site Contractors Association, c/o EG&G Communications Office, P.O. Box 1912, Mail Stop C1-14, Las Vegas, NV 89125 (702/295-2509). This group of DOE contractors seeks new work at the test site.

DOE Nevada Operations Office, External Affairs, P.O. Box 98518, Las Vegas, NV 89193-8518 (702/295-3521). It runs the Nevada Test Site.

DOE Yucca Mountain Project, P.O. Box 98608, Las Vegas, NV 89193-8608 (702/794-7900). It directs suitability studies for a high-level nuclear waste repository.

Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, Nuclear Waste Project Office, Capitol Complex, Carson City, NV 89710 (702/687-3744). This state agency watchdogs DOE projects in Nevada.

Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee, 316 Bridger Ave., Ste. 222, Las Vegas, NV 89101 (702/791-6972). The group favors studying Yucca Mountain for a nuclear waste dump.

Citizen Alert, P.O. Box 1681, Las Vegas, NV 89125 (702/648-8982). This statewide environmental group closely follows activities of the military.

American Peace Test, P.O. Box 26725, Las Vegas, NV 89126 (702/386-9834). The group coordinates protests at the Nevada Test Site.

Downwinders, 966 E. Wilson Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84105 (801/467-3238). Downwinders represents people affected by fallout from nuclear tests.

Military Production Network, c/o Nuclear Safety Campaign, 1914 N. 34th St. #407, Seattle, WA 98103 (206/547-3175). This coalition of groups produced the report *Facing Reality: The Future of the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Complex*.

— J.C.



Rocky Flats near Denver, Colorado

EG & G

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Unfortunately, the atomic West's legacy lacks charm

by Betsy Marston

A conference called "The Atomic West" drew historians to Seattle from around the country Sept. 25-27. They came to read papers about research into Western communities' close and often secret relationship with the federal government. Journalists and members of citizen groups also took part as the symposium progressed with few breaks and sometimes intense discussion.

A few papers covered topics that only another historian could love. But many penetrated to the darker themes of our country's involvement with atom-splitting and manufacturing nuclear bombs — themes such as arrogance and class bias, callous betrayal, economic seduction, suffering, death and a poisoned landscape.

These aren't cheery topics. Keynote speaker Patricia Nelson Limerick, the University of Colorado historian who leads a revisionist re-evaluation of the West, tried to inject some humor into the meetings, which were all held in spartan classrooms at the University of Washington.

Limerick's metaphor for the vast region's 50-year involvement with things nuclear came from shoot 'em up Hollywood movies, the kind where cowboys rode into town, drank hard and punched each other out in the saloon, then rode off again. As a teen-ager, Limerick recalled, she always wondered why "the boys" didn't ride back to town and clean up all the broken glass they'd left shattered on the barroom floor. The mess left in the West, she said, confronts all of us these days; what's worse is that "cleanup lacks charm."

Nuclear cleanup doesn't loom large in our Western myths and may make newspaper readers nod off. But Limerick called it the continuing story of the region — its true legacy of conquest — and she urged her fellow historians to explore, and put into political context, contemporary Western history.

University of Alaska historian Dan O'Neill filled that bill admirably. He recounted how government physicist Edward Teller attempted to blast a harbor on the Alaska coast using six atomic bombs as his shovel. Teller's plan was cancelled in 1962, but not before two of his critics at the University of Alaska were fired, then hounded from other jobs by officials at the Atomic Energy Commission, forerunner of today's Department of Energy.

O'Neill recalled Teller's stunning arrogance. He promised Eskimos on Alaska's northwest coast: "If your mountain is not in the right place, just drop us a card."

The upshot of Teller's bullying was a surge of activism that eventually led to pressure for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, passed in 1971. O'Neill says local people including Eskimos, college professors, two former World War II pilots — both women — and others came together to stave off what Teller called Project Chariot. They attracted national groups to their cause, including The Wilderness Society and Barry Commoner's Committee for Nuclear Information, and they defended their hunting and fishing way of life with a new concept: ecological integrity.

O'Neill's paper showed that a rural David could lick a mighty, federally funded Goliath. Most of the other 25 papers — and I had read all of them — did not.

Uranium workers routinely wore their overalls home for lunch, sharing radioactive dust with the whole family. Was official ignorance of radioactive contamination an excuse? No, said University of Kansas historian Peter Schmitz. Federal officials knew during the 1940s that radioactive material could kill.

One paper dealt with fallout and our government's continuing effort to suppress knowledge about its hazards. The subject was the infamous Upshot-Knothole atmospheric test in Nevada in 1953. Fallout apparently killed both cattle and horses, recalled historian Bart Hacker, who works for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

He described the patient inquiry of Utah ranchers as they asked federal officials to define their use of the word "hot." Puzzled, one rancher asked what a federal official meant when he said that one sheep was "hotter than a \$2 pistol." Ranchers never got a straight answer, and two local veterinarians who concluded that drought

and malnutrition did not kill the animals found their dissent suppressed.

Often, the pattern that took shape that weekend in Seattle came from members of the audience. Dan Peterson, who works as a historian at a Seattle community college, quietly injected a personal footnote after hearing a panel discussion on "the atom's opponents."

While sounds of students playing touch football filtered into the classroom, Peterson told us that his son Scott, 22, died in his arms, a victim of cancer. Scott was born near the Hanford plutonium facility; he began to drink cow's milk as a 2-year-old just at the time Hanford secretly belched out plumes of radioactivity.

Scott may have been a "downwinder," his father said, adding, "I would like an apology, not a legacy of lies."

Another family story came from Seattle poet Bill Witherup, author of *Men at Work* and *Dancing with the Radon Daughters*. Witherup said his father, who worked more than 30 years at Hanford's engineering plant, died in 1988 of cancer.

One of his poems begins: "Nearing the end/Father was all bones and pain./The cancer had eaten him/Down to the rind." Witherup called the conference helpful because it showed the "whole gestalt" of the nuclear buildup in America and its unwanted effects.

One element of the gestalt that emerged in several papers was secrecy, which persists today, even as the bomb plants begin shifting from production to contain-

"The boys made a mess."

ment or cleanup of radioactive wastes. Three federal archivists explained that some of the complications researchers complain about result from records stored in multiple places. And when the records are located, most have not been scheduled for declassification. The process of vetting and clearing records for public access can take many years.

A clearly frustrated Stanley Goldberg, a historian at the University of Maryland who is writing a history of General Leslie Groves and the Manhattan Project, urged immediate steps to make public now-classified federal records.

"None of this is secret to any of us except those of us trying to do research," he pointed out.

Later, Jim Thomas, a researcher with the citizens' group, the Hanford Education Action League (HEAL), and reporter Karen Dom Steele talked about the expense and years of effort it took to get the Department of Energy to release some Hanford documents. Steele, who is working on a book about Hanford, noted that outsiders working at Energy Department archives always feel slightly peculiar. She was not, she explained, allowed to go to the bathroom without an escort.

Steele, who is on leave from the Spokane *Spokesman-Review*, talked briefly about her descent into "instant history." After seven years of asking the Energy Department about radioactive emissions tests at Hanford in the late 1940s, the agency complied in 1986, releasing some 20,000 pages of records. Using Freedom of Information Act requests, Steele and HEAL's Thomas pressed for more federal documents to learn more about an ominous test called "Green Run."

The paper trail they uncovered led to a bitter lesson for Native Americans, Hanford workers and others living near the plant. For Green Run was the code name for the nighttime release of highly radioactive iodine-131. It was designed to test monitoring equipment the United States was developing to collect information on the Soviet nuclear programs.

The release was 300 times more radioactive than what Three Mile Island spewed, Steele said, affecting an area 200 miles around the plant in south-central Washington.

How did the government justify tests that put Americans at risk? A panel of Washington state journalists attempted to answer that question in part, by putting the nuclear industry's role — and their own — in the context of the times.

Hill Williams, a former reporter for the *Tri-City Times*, near Hanford, recalled the patriotism and pride that accompanied the speedy construction of the bomb plant in the early 1940s. That attitude persisted during the Cold War and well into the 1970s, he said, until safety doubts and nuclear waste questions emerged.

Then, when Hanford was examined as a potential burial ground for the nation's first high-level nuclear repository — an honor currently accorded to Nevada's Yucca Mountain — Williams said anti-nuclear activism began to grow, from the ground up.

Eloise Schumacher, a reporter for the *Seattle Times*, recalled that she wrote some 500 stories during one period of the 1980s, thanks to whistleblower leaks and Freedom of Information Act requests that lifted the veil of secrecy. Her paper no longer covers Hanford like a blanket, but she noted that the Department of Energy continues to expend a lot of effort on public relations rather than public involvement.

But journalists couldn't fully explain how scientists and bureaucrats justified using Americans as guinea pigs for nuclear tests. University of New Mexico historian Gerald Nash suggested one path to an answer. He told his colleagues that American life in the nuclear West came to incorporate nothing less than self-delusion, myth and even witchcraft.

The nuclear-wasted West, Nash said, was part of the military-industrial complex, and he asked rhetorically whether scientists at large national labs had "prostituted themselves" since 1945, when their work became big science dependent on federal money and direction.

At the close of the gathering, Patricia Limerick, who is always alive to the telling phrase, told the group about her chance encounter with a TV evangelist's show that Sunday morning. An announcer had interrupted: "Guilt and repentance, back in a moment." The phrase seemed fitting, particularly because Hanford will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

Journalist Karen Steele wondered if the celebration will prompt the Department of Energy to inaugurate a new policy of openness and public accountability. Or would federal officials assume that any attitude of criticism meant "bashing?" What she asked was not whether we had learned anything in 50 years, but whether we could face even more painful revelations.

Perhaps one already occurred, and at the conference. It came when Stanley Goldberg previewed his General Groves biography with the news that Hanford's plutonium did not win the war by destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Goldberg argued that Groves' biggest fear was that the war would end before he could test atomic bombs and justify their existence. A half-million people and \$2 billion had been poured into the making of the bomb, Goldberg said, and Groves needed to justify the effort in public.

As evidence he points to a speedup in processing plutonium, a dangerous step that dropped production time from 120 to 19 days. Goldberg's comments were provocative, but as one member of the audience noted, not going to be well received by people who worked hard at Hanford and believed in their work.

Perhaps that's why Patty Limerick looks so hard to find upbeat moments. The news is always bad, the damage worse than we could have dreamed as we learn again that popular myths of the West are just that — stories we tell ourselves.

"The boys made a mess," and now we all face the joyless prospect of living with it, while we clean it up as best as we can. ■

Historians John Findlay and Bruce Hevly, who organized The Atomic West, can be reached at the University of Washington, Dept. of History, DP0-20, Seattle WA 98195. The Hanford Education Action League, which has 300 members, can be reached at 1720 N. Ash, Spokane, WA 99205 (509/326-3370).

ESSAY

The West's nuclear Mandarins have reaped what they sowed

by Ed Marston

Because we are a free people with a free press, we generally are able to turn out our failed or tired leaders in a low-key way. And over a period of years or decades we quietly dismantle corrupt and dictatorial systems.

The latest piece of constructive destruction came a few weeks ago, when Congress and the president agreed to a moratorium on nuclear testing. For the first time in most Americans' lifetimes, the United States will not be exploding nuclear bombs.

People in their twenties or thirties won't be surprised to see the nuclear age take another hit. While they grew up hearing about electricity "too cheap to meter" and the weapon that would beat the Russians, their consciousness was dominated by Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and revelations about the Downwinders and Rocky Flats.

But for those of us who grew up in the 1950s reading *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, with its regular exposés of the dangers of above-ground nuclear testing, the accompanying coverups and denials, and the silence of the mass media on those subjects, the end of all nuclear testing is a shock. In the 1950s, it seemed that the world was permanently divided into two unequal parts: the nuclear industry, with its enormous power, and a handful of powerless critics, who could speak the truth but who would be ignored.

How, then, in less than 40 years, did the nuclear establishment reach a point where no new nuclear power plants are under construction or planned, and no bombs are being exploded?

Part of the answer is the collapse of the Soviet Union, which let George Bush trade away nuclear testing for his beloved Superconducting Super Collider.

But there are more fundamental reasons. The fall of the Soviet Union is as much about the failure of centralization as it is about the failure of an economic system. In the United States, nuclear-fueled electricity and the nuclear weapons complex are also highly centralized operations. They have been beaten down by the same decentralizing forces and the same growing ecological awareness that defeated the U.S.S.R.

Nuclear energy was also handicapped in the U.S.S.R. by the fact that the weapons makers and the power plant builders were immune from democratic oversight and criticism. Although the western United States from the 1950s through the 1970s was not totalitarian, when it came to nuclear energy, it might as well have been. Any criticism of the nuclear weapons complex had to come from outside the region.

The decision to put nuclear weapons development in the West had its practical aspect. The region had the uranium ore, the wide open spaces in which to play with this dangerous technology, and an insatiable thirst for federal payrolls. Hence, Los Alamos, Hanford, Livermore, INEL, and the Nevada Test Site were welcomed here, as were the uranium finds that boomed towns such as Grand Junction, Colo., and Moab, Utah.

But nuclear energy meant more to the West than another chapter in its boom-and-bust history. The West is where the lightly rooted and the reckless go. All Americans dream of striking it rich and of wondrous new technologies. But Westerners more than other Americans are likely to act on those dreams.

As a result, Westerners who didn't know the difference between an electron and a proton understood from the git-go — from Hiroshima and Nagasaki — that nuclear

energy was not just a bigger stick of dynamite. They understood that the world had changed, and they embraced that change for both practical and idealistic reasons.

The 1950s-era Westerners and the nuclear developers were made for each other. Environmentalists think of themselves as visionaries and idealists, but we are pikers when it comes to the nuclear pioneers and their Western supporters. They were driven by the twin dreams of victory over godless Communism and victory over scarcity. Powerful nuclear weapons would enable the United States to dominate or defeat the Soviets, and nuclear energy too cheap to meter would bring unimaginable plenty to the nation.

Even bombs had their constructive side: they would build instant harbors in Alaska, create commercial gas fields out of impermeable rock, and dig a new Panama Canal in moments.

Perhaps if Jefferson had never made the Louisiana

In both nations, the nuclear establishments used their power recklessly and destructively. In the United States, the Atomic Energy Commission and its successor, the Department of Energy, visited disease and economic ruin on some of the desert people who lived around the Nevada Test Site, on residents of desert towns, and on soldiers deliberately exposed to nuclear blasts.

The nuclear establishment promised national security and energy too cheap to meter. But these god-like promises were made by individuals and corporations who wouldn't protect sheep herds and shepherds in Utah from fallout, children from radioactive strontium in their milk, employees and neighbors of Rocky Flats from vented or misplaced plutonium, small towns in Colorado and Utah and Indian reservations in Arizona from scattered piles of uranium mill tailings, and uranium miners from lung cancer.

The nuclear developers couldn't be bothered with such niggling details when there was an enemy to be beaten and endless prosperity to be won.

The nuclear Mandarins — the administrators of this immense, centralized system — were not only lousy housekeepers, but when in danger of being caught, they covered up their mistakes by lying, bullying, and appealing to Westerners' patriotism.

In pursuit of their idealistic goals, the nuclear establishment mishandled its technology and betrayed those who believed in them. They sucked billions out of the U.S. Treasury in their ill-thought-out attempts to make nuclear power practical. And they betrayed Westerners in particular by mismanaging uranium mining and milling, and bomb making and testing.

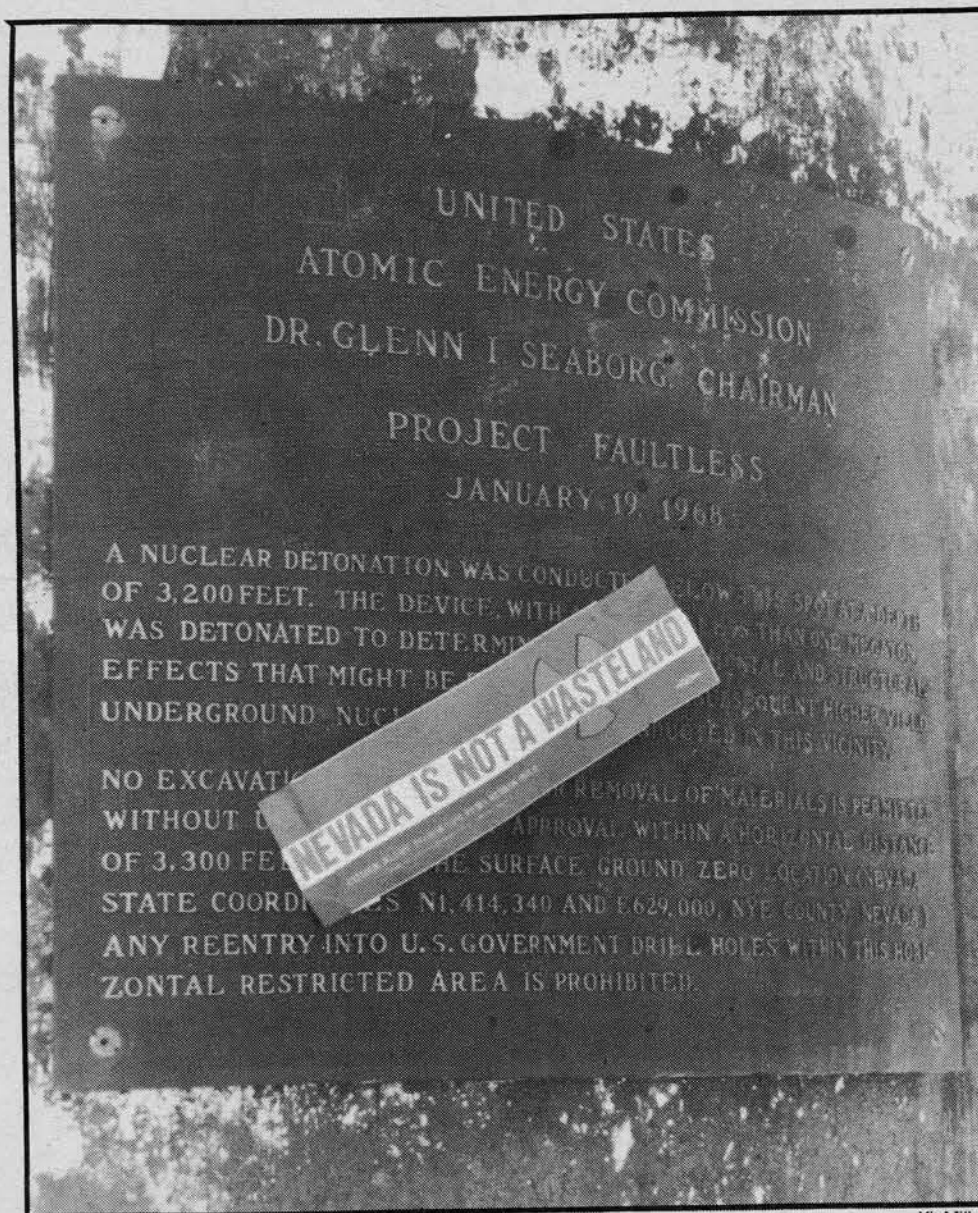
Over the last few decades, and especially in the last few years, this sorry record has become better and better known. As a result, the nuclear establishment has lost the support it once had nationally and regionally.

This loss of support and the end of the U.S.S.R. has brought the nation to this present quiet historic moment. Nuclear power plant building stopped several years ago. And underground nuclear testing has now halted, leaving tens of thousands of employees in the Department of Energy's facilities facing the possible end of jobs and careers.

Unless the Chinese begin testing nuclear bombs and the efficiency approach to meeting demand for electricity fails, all that is now left of the nuclear age is an extended debate over whether the people and institutions that made the radioactive mess can be trusted with the cleanup.

Those of us who are engaged in a fight against this nation's insatiable materialism should be heartened by the nuclear collapse. We might even posit a sort of domino theory. Nuclear energy is simply the most extreme, run-amok wing of our technological system. If we can pull back from nuclear energy, as we seem to be doing, perhaps we can pull back from other destructive aspects of modern technology. We may even someday learn to do without the unbounded materialism that drives us and our technology.

So the moratorium on underground nuclear testing provides a reason for hope. But it also stands as a warning to environmentalism in the West. We are successors to the scientific, technical and managerial elite that moved into the West during and after World War II and then failed it in a practical and a moral way. Like them, we have brought a new culture to the West. Like them, we are driven by idealism. We must be careful that, also like them, we don't elevate our cause above people and communities. ■



The activist group Citizen Alert leaves its calling card

Kit Miller

Purchase, the immense promise of nuclear technology would have been partially fulfilled in the United States. If Jefferson had not bought the West, development of nuclear energy would have been confined to the eastern part of the nation, with its denser population and more settled and cautious culture. That might have avoided many of the mistakes that were made.

But because nuclear weapons development ended up in the West, its managers were free to do as they chose in zealous pursuit of their twin missions. The West, which still lacks a regional newspaper, a broad-based citizens reform movement and a university that gives a damn about the region, had neither the interest nor the capability to provide the discipline and oversight the nuclear establishment needed. The West provided exactly the wrong climate in which to develop a technology that needed caution, attention to detail, and good housekeeping. Instead of oversight, the nuclear scientists and bureaucrats found the same kind of license here their counterparts had in the U.S.S.R.

OTHER VOICES

ORVs are the scourge of the West's public lands

by Kraig Klungness

If noise is the only thing Randal O'Toole hates about ORVs (*HCN*, 8/24/92), he can breathe easy and conserve his hormones, for I've been told that a research center here in Michigan is working on the development of a "stealth" snowmobile. Stealth ATVs, dirt bikes, dune buggies, swamp buggies, mud-bog trucks and jet skis could be next. However, my ORV hate list, and that of many others, is much longer than O'Toole's.

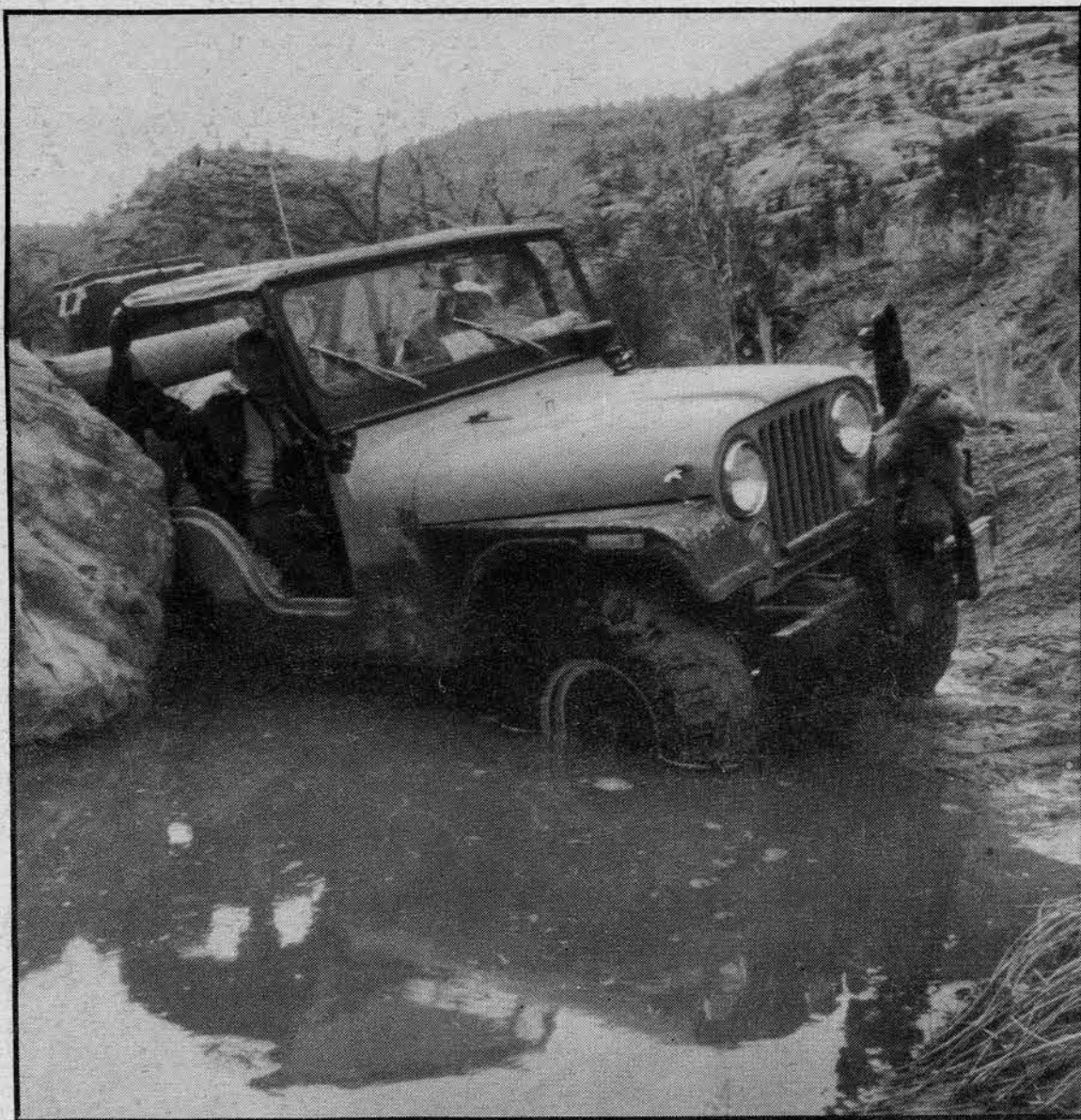
ORVs stink. They emit enormous amounts of air pollutants, more than many automobiles. Their toxic plumes often hang in the surrounding air for extended periods, contaminating both wildlife and humans.

ORV use is high-consumption industrial recreation inextricably tied into heavy fossil-fuel usage. ORVs are transported to areas on trailers towed behind gas-guzzling muscle wagons, often over long distances. This is followed by hours and days of internal-combustion wheeling through wild country.

Last February a gas station owner told me that during winter months he sold more gasoline filling snowmobiles than automobiles. In addition, there are the impacts of ORV manufacturing and distribution, parts and accessories, and associated economic restructuring towards a plague of more gas stations, pavement, convenience stores, fast-food restaurants and roads, all of which adversely impact wild country. Leakage and disposal of toxic fluids and the ultimate disposal of worn-out ORVs must also be considered. It all adds up to a toxic consumption frenzy.

ORV use is the most elitist form of recreation on public lands. Most machines cost thousands of dollars, and associated costs are high. ORV user groups receive extensive backing from corporations to ensure that public-land usage continues to fatten the ORV cash cow. Most people can afford an economical backpack, sleeping bag and hiking boots while, for many, owning an ORV would require going into debt. ORV use frequently precludes the enjoyment of many other forms of recreation on public lands. Few people seeking an experience in the wilds wish to encounter a pack of renegade machines, or their destructive imprint, noise or no noise.

ORV "trails" are really roads. They are usually at least eight feet wide and cause many ecological disrupt-



Arch Canyon in Utah sends a signal to an off-road vehicle

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

tions, including habitat fragmentation, alteration of watershed hydrology, disruption of animal migration patterns, increased erosion (I do not believe O'Toole's claim that ORV roads can be erosion free), stream sedimentation, excessive edge effect, chemical pollution, invasion of exotic species, loss of native species to generalist species, increased incidence of human-caused fire, and increased wildlife mortality due to increased motorized access.

The bubbas who shoot endangered predator species such as wolves and bald eagles usually ride into the wild on motorized vehicles, and quiet ones may increase their success. ORV interests are constantly lobbying for an ever-increasing network of subsidized ORV roads on public land, and are succeeding.

To say, as O'Toole does, that staying on "trails" (ORV roads) is the only other requirement ORV users should meet besides noise reduction to qualify for a hearty environmental welcome is, at the very least, naive.

First, there is the destructive effect of establishing

and maintaining an expanding network of ORV roads. The land is already suffering from an excess of roads. A moratorium on all road building, including ORV roads, and removal of many public-lands roads, is needed.

Second, much of the ORV mentality is tied to the attitude that straddling a crotch rocket gives you the right to go anywhere. ORV advertisements contain slogans such as "TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY." Nothing is off limits and any suggestion to the contrary is met with intense hostility, as I have experienced with snowmobilers on my own land and at ORV hearings.

Challenging terrain, such as steep, erosion-prone slopes, and sensitive terrain, such as sand dunes, desert and beaches, attract ORV users in search of the ultimate cheap thrill. Enforcement efforts to restrict ORV activity to designated ORV roads has always been a dismal failure. The situation will not be any different in the future. In many sensitive areas, brief, illegal incursions leave extensive tire tracks that will remain for decades and can greatly disrupt ecological patterns.

While a hiker will impact one about one acre in 40 miles, ORVs can impact one acre in six miles, and their daily mileage is far greater.

Public lands provide the only opportunity left to create a continental pattern of vast, roadless ecological preserves necessary to the continued existence and evolution of millions of non-human species. The larger ecological community needs to be included within the definition of public.

In addition to being at odds with most other types of recreation on public lands, ORV users are seriously at odds with critical ecological needs of the land itself. To ask that public lands be off-limits to ORVs can hardly be characterized as a melodramatic, world-saving solution. The ORV problem goes far deeper than O'Toole's simplistic parameters of hormones, mufflers and adherence to "trails." ■

The writer lives in Houghton, Michigan, and is a member of Alliance for a Paving Moratorium, Box 4347, Arcata, CA 95521, and editor of *Paving Moratorium Update*.

LETTERS

MAYBE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

Dear *HCN*,

Randall O'Toole's comments on ORV groups and their alliance with the wise use movement were certainly timely for me (*HCN*, 8/24/92). A couple of weeks later, I participated in a Forest Service workshop on recreation management and wheeled vehicles. The workshop focused on the issues and management of off-road motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, mountain bikes and 4-WDs. The Forest Service brought together user group and industry representatives, Forest Service personnel and an environmentalist ... me.

I will admit to having a recurring vision of myself being stretched between

two all-terrain vehicles about to roar off in opposite directions. Everyone was cordial, however, if not surprised by my attendance. I was impressed by the level of support the off-highway vehicle groups gave this event. Obviously they are aware of the benefits of this kind of interaction with Forest Service personnel, rather than remaining aloof or confrontational.

I agree with Mr. O'Toole that it is unfortunate that the alliance between highway groups and the wise use movement is a reaction to disputes of the past. Perhaps with more contact in forums, such as the one I participated in, all groups can begin to understand each other's interests better. I do not pretend to think that off-highway vehicle groups and environmentalists will agree on the

larger public land issues, or even in all sites where user conflicts are a problem because of demand. I do believe there are areas where, with proper management, different users can be satisfied.

Rob Corkran
Kittridge, Colorado

YOU BET THERE ARE IMPACTS

Dear *HCN*,

It is really hard to believe that Randall O'Toole lives on the same earth as I do (*HCN*, 8/24/92). His commentary on the environmental impacts of ORVs ("Some say they cause erosion, but that isn't true for snowmobiles, and it isn't necessarily true of other ORVs, if they

stick to trails that are built to their standards," — emphasis added) certainly shows a lack of familiarity with scientific literature on the subject.

Does he really believe that hikers or equestrians don't cause erosion if they stick to trails "built to their standards"? Are riding ORVs, horse, and hiking "needs" that must be satisfied for all who demand the satisfaction? Should we all join forces to make sure each of us has the continued "right" to degrade the earth, so long as we don't offend one another?

Neither the earth nor its ability to support life (human or otherwise) are in this equation.

Howard Wilshire
Mountain View, California