

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO : Margaret Anne Rogers, H-12, MS-490

DATE: March 21, 1978

FROM : Carl Buckland, H-1

SUBJECT : I. RECOLLECTION OF 1945 CONTAMINATED DUMP FIRE  
II. ADDITIONAL WASTE DISPOSAL AREAS

SYMBOL : H-1

MAIL STOP: 401

- 1785  
TA-21
- I. In late August or early September, 1945, the Health Group received a report to the effect that a dump fire was in progress at D.P. Site. Louie Hempelmann, M.D. and Joseph G. Hoffman of the Health Group responded to the call. I was invited to accompany them in a weapons carrier. They took an instrument with them that responded to alpha, beta and gamma activity and may have been called the Zeus.

As I remember the incident, the pit ran north and south and was about 30 feet in length, 15 feet wide, and 7 feet deep. It was located very close and in front of the west entrance of D.P. East office and laboratory building. Entrance to D.P. East was from the west in 1945 instead of from the east like it is now. By being close to the front door, it seemed to me it was like 25 to 30 feet west of the entrance. From an old map, I believe the building number was TA-21-51. A newer 9/23/55 drawing, Eng-R 140, indicates this structure to be TA-21-151. No contamination was found around the periphery of the dump.

- II. a) In about 1953, an employee of CMB-6 in Sigma Building found his depleted or normal uranium-238 door stop, weighing approximately 20 lbs., missing. The janitor for the building had thrown the door stop in a Dumpster. The Dumpster, in turn, was emptied at the city dump which at that time was located north of the current air strip and east of the present airport buildings. It was not the area below the old incinerator building which later became a railway express office. The building has since been removed. At that time, the dump was burning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Charles Blackwell and a few others attempted to find and recover the uranium. Due to the intensity of the fire, they were restricted in their endeavors; however, a few pounds of uranium were recovered. The balance remains there to this day. Max Roy was in charge of nuclear materials at the time and he indicated no great concern in recovery; therefore, our efforts were somewhat tempered by his enthusiasm. Furthermore, recovery efforts were hampered by the fire and depth of the ashes in which the participant had to wade.

b) Massive quantities of concrete contaminated with low levels of normal and enriched uranium were encountered during the demolition of TA-1-11, 56, and 29, and possibly 103 and 104. To expedite the



TO: Margaret Anne Rogers, H-12

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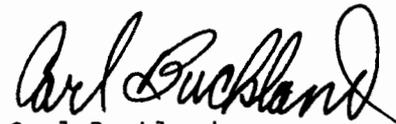
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disposal, much of this concrete was deposited in Bailey Canyon, named from the Bailey Bridge that once spanned the short draw and TA-1 perimeter road. The bridge was identified as TA-1-131 and was located N95+00 and E67+50 on Eng-R 113 map. Most of the concrete was covered with fill dirt. The alpha count on the concrete read on the average of 4000 d/m per 60 cm<sup>2</sup> of probe area. Much of the concrete was not contaminated. It was just easier to fill the void with all of it.

c) Sandbags of sand impregnated with D-38 shrapnel have been deposited in one of the small canyons or draws at TA-15 near TA-15-184. Ask Frank Jackson of M-2 for the exact location.

d) Many pounds, perhaps tons, of D-38 and/or normal uranium have been involved in shots at TA-15 and TA-39. Most of these shots took place at R-44 and R-184. For the precise location of these and other shot areas, contact Joe Green of present M-4 or Les Baggett or Eric Peterson, now retired, John Hopson of M-6 for TA-39 and Frank Jackson for M-2 at R-184.

e) Former TA-26-1 was a vault located on the edge of Los Alamos Canyon, just southeast of present-day Philomena's restaurant. The floor was alpha-contaminated to a few thousand d/m. After the floor was broken up, no count could be detected with hand survey instruments. The concrete debris remaining was 'dozed over the canyon edge. Most of it fell on a ledge half-way down. A few pieces tumbled all the way down to the canyon floor.



Carl Buckland

CB:ed

Cy: File