

145
4-11-78

Sh. 2004

LA-7121-H

History

UC-46

Issued: March 1978

MASTER

Thirty Years at Pajarito Canyon Site

Hugh C. Paxton

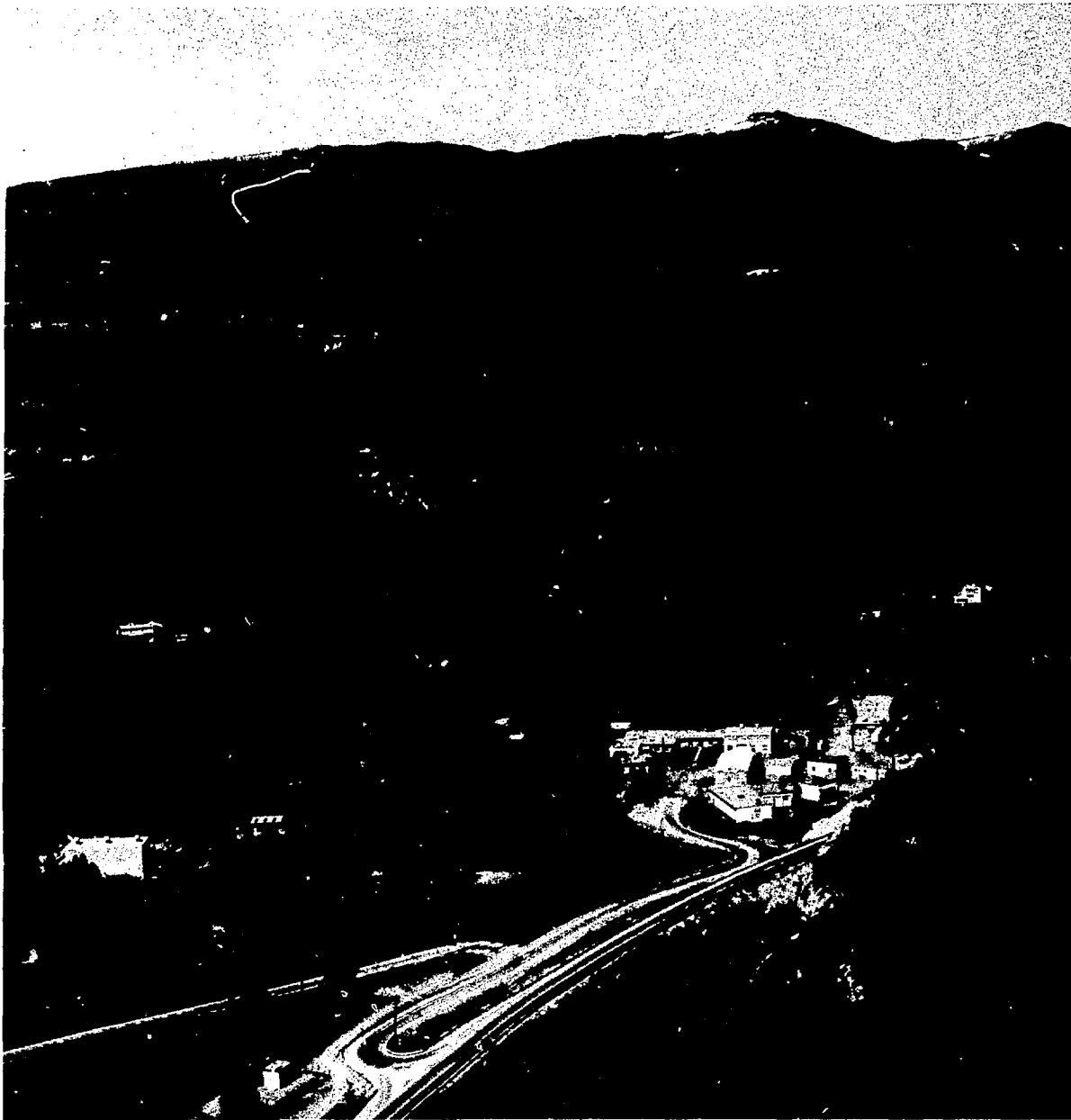


los alamos
scientific laboratory
of the University of California
LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO 87545

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
CONTRACT W-7405-ENG. 36

REPRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT IS UNLIMITED



Frontispiece

Pajarito Site, March 1969. Main building with control room is at center; outlying buildings containing critical assemblies are Kiva 1 at right rear, Kiva 2 at left rear, and Kiva 3 in left foreground.

NOTICE

This report was prepared as an account of work sponsored by the United States Government. Neither the United States nor the United States Department of Energy, nor any of their employees, nor any of their contractors, subcontractors, or their employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights.

FOREWORD

A history without the names of outstanding participants—Columbus, Cortez, Drake—would lose color, yet too many names would destroy the effect. The proper balance in this account is elusive because of the team effort required in the critical experiments that play a central role. The senior member of a team could not act alone and so should not be singled out for credit, which seems to leave the choice between all names and none. I have selected the latter course at the sacrifice of color, but have moderated it some by naming those who appear in illustrations, the authors in an extensive list of unclassified publications (Appendix A), and the administrators of the Groups that have been at Pajarito Canyon (Appendix B).

Of the many who have helped reconstruct this history, several names stand out. Raemer Schreiber supplied the personal touch that I missed during the years before 1949; in particular he wrote Appendix C on critical-assembly guidelines. Roderick Spence of the Geosciences Division and Keith Davidson of the Materials Technology Group provided records and recollections of the Rover Program. And Walter Bramlett and Pres Martinez of the LASL Records Center have unearthed much of the remaining information needed to correct my hazy recollections.

Hugh C. Paxton

THIRTY YEARS AT PAJARITO CANYON SITE

PROLOGUE

In her *House at Otowi Bridge*, Peggy Pond Church tells of two years in Pajarito Canyon at her father's dude ranch, the Pajarito Club.¹ The location, where the Canyon broadens just below a fork, is the Pajarito Canyon Site of the present account. The Club was abandoned in 1916 when its water supply, a spring that fed a small stream, dried up — reminiscent of the much earlier history of the Canyon's Indian ruins.² A log cabin that actually predates the Club is still standing, and a nearly obscured sawdust pile shows that there had been a sawmill at some time.

The first use of the Pajarito Canyon by The Los Alamos Laboratory, as it was originally named, was by the Radioactivity Group in mid-1943.³ The choice of this outlying Site for a field station was to avoid the radiation background arising from other Laboratory activities. A year or so later, this Group moved to the East Gate Laboratory that was set up specifically for spontaneous fission measurements.

In late 1944, the Site was adapted as a proving ground for the so-called "magnetic method" of diagnosing implosions. Three earth-covered bunkers are the only remaining evidence of that activity, which was abandoned before the end of 1945.

Finally, work with critical assemblies was moved from the Omega Laboratory to the Pajarito Site in April 1946.⁴ Although this followed the fatal radiation injury of Harry Daghljan, urgently required critical assemblies were still manipulated by hand until Louis Slotin suffered the same fate about a year later. In each case, a component of the assembly slipped into a more reactive position, producing a superprompt-critical pulse of radiation. This second accident outlawed hand operation, thus increasing the urgency of need for a facility for remotely controlled critical assemblies. Because of its remoteness and existing rudimentary buildings, Pajarito Canyon remained the favored location for this new facility, which was rushed to completion in 1947. This brings us to the beginning of the thirty years during which activities at The Pajarito Canyon Site have evolved systematically.

BEFORE ROVER

In the course of numerous changes of activities and groups at the Pajarito Canyon Site, the thread of continuity has been the remote-control Critical Experiments Facility. Originally, this Facility consisted of a critical-assembly laboratory known as "Kiva" (the ceremonial chamber), located one quarter mile from a control room in an existing shack. An exclusion area provided radiation protection by keeping people beyond this distance whenever the remotely controlled critical assemblies were operated. Guidelines directed toward the safety of operations are described in Appendix C. Except as required directly for critical experiments, the operating Group M-2 was housed in Gamma Building near the Los Alamos townsite.



Fig. 1.

Site of The Pajarito Club, about 1914. From the collection of Peggy Pond Church, courtesy of the Los Alamos County Historical Museum.



Fig. 2.

The still-standing log cabin of early days. Known now as "Dwight's cabin," after Dwight Young who batched there in the 1960's and greeted us in mornings with the fragrance of fresh bread.



Fig. 3.

The original Kiva from an Indian cave in the nearby wall of Pajarito Canyon.



Fig. 4.

The original Kiva control room in a previously existing shack. From left to right, Vernal Josephson, Roger Paine, Lester Woodward, and Hugh Karr. Josephson was Alternate W-2 Group Leader. Commander Paine and Colonel Woodward represented military personnel who contributed invaluable to our critical experiments.

Kiva operations began in April 1947 as subcritical measurements for weapon safety guidance. Accidental criticality had to be avoided during the handling, storage, and transportation of weapon components, and during the assembly and manipulation of weapons. The experimental guidance was necessary to avoid impractical restrictions.

In early brute-force weapons, yield was limited by criticality-safety restrictions, and each high-yield capsule was tested to be certain that those restrictions were satisfied. As weapon design became more subtle, the need for capsule tests decreased, but guidance for the storage of complete weapons became more important, especially for shipboard storage in severely limited space.

A year and one-half after the Kiva became operational, criticality of the Topsy assembly (she just grewed) was reported by the Group, then redesignated W-2. The matter-of-fact report of Topsy operation gives no hint of its real significance. This metal assembly of enriched uranium in thick natural uranium provided the first basic information about fast-neutron fission chains in a readily computable system. Superprompt-critical pulses that had occurred were too fleeting for neutronic experiments, and earlier critical mockups of a mercury-cooled fast reactor at Omega Site were too complex for reliable calculation. Thus Topsy was the first of a series of assemblies to provide fast-neutron data for checking the powerful computational techniques that relied upon high-speed machines being developed at the time.

These techniques, used for both weapon and fast-reactor design, required experimental confirmation because of uncertainties in the many input cross sections. In addition to observed critical specifications, data for this purpose included descriptions of neutron energy spectra, effective cross sections of various materials within the assembly, the time behavior of prompt neutron chains (on a scale of microseconds), and delayed-neutron characteristics (on a scale of seconds). Prompt neutrons from fission lead to the runaway reaction in a nuclear explosion; the minute fraction of delayed neutrons makes reactor control possible.

These neutronic measurements to assist weapon designers increased in importance as designs became sophisticated. They gradually supplanted direct tests on components and assembled weapons, but even today such tests have not been eliminated.

As a natural result of work with critical systems, we became a source of advice on nuclear criticality safety. This covered chemical processing, fabrication, storage, and transportation of enriched uranium and plutonium. It focused on operations at Los Alamos and certain other AEC installations, but invited generalization. An outcome was the promotion of criticality safety as a discipline, and concomitant participation in the preparation of safety guides and standards—a continuing activity.

Another diversion from critical experiments was a study of fission outside critical assemblies. Experiments with a betatron borrowed for this purpose promised sufficiently useful weapon applications to justify splitting off this line of research. The new group, designated W-5, remained in old buildings at Pajarito from the time of its formation in May 1951 until the fall of 1954 when it moved from the Site and, as Group K-4, redirected its efforts toward controlled thermonuclear development. As W-5, its most important contribution was a practical external initiator of weapon explosions.

A second critical assembly for basic studies, Lady Godiva (she was unclad), began operation in August 1951. This essentially bare sphere of enriched uranium, simpler than the two-component Topsy, had not been planned earlier because of unknown sensitivity to outside influence, facetiously, even the effect of a fly alighting on the surface. This assembly was followed a year later by a plutonium core in Topsy.

The addition of Lady Godiva and a couple of new machines for safety tests stretched the capacity of the Kiva to its limit. There was even three-shift operation, although at some presumed sacrifice of continuity and alertness of experimenters. To improve both

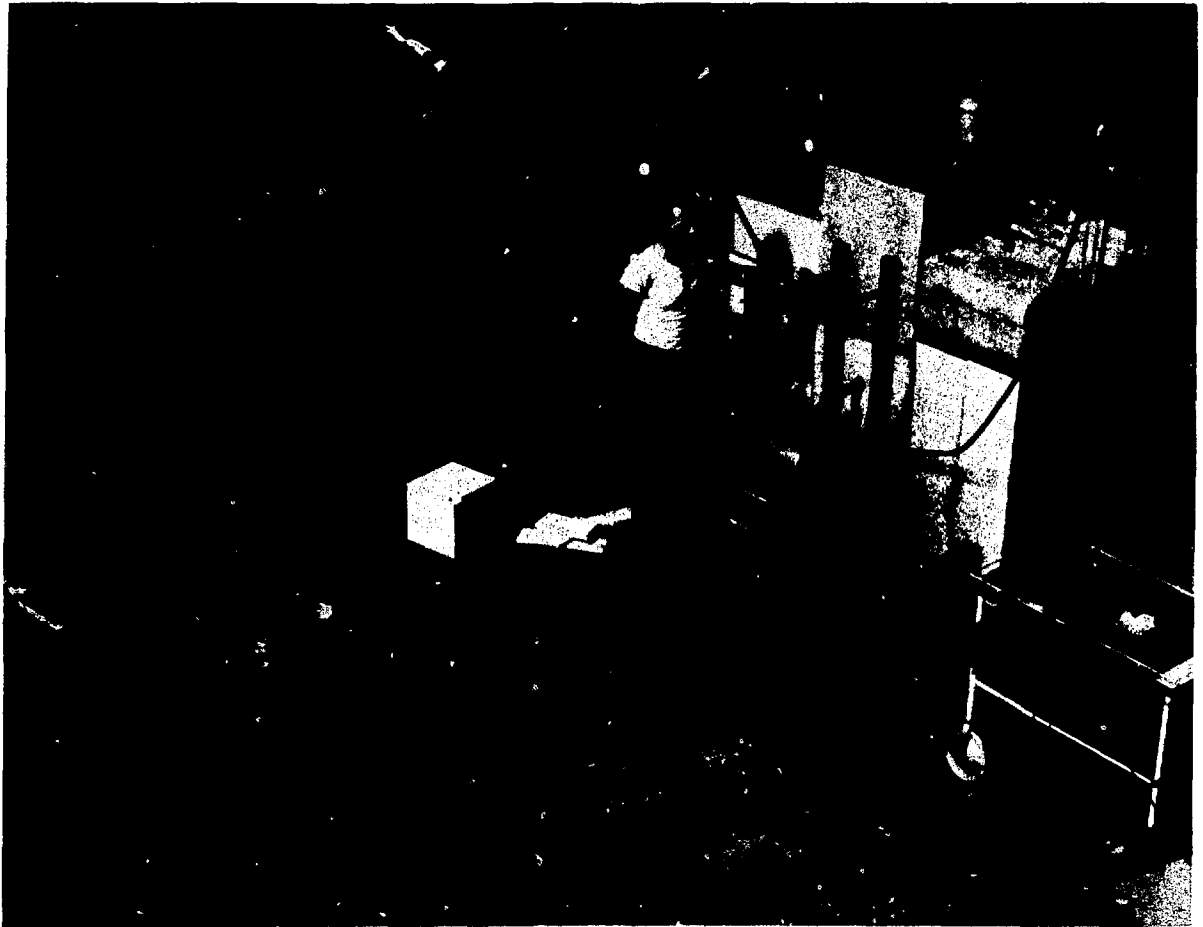


Fig. 5.

A concrete vault with remote closure for early weapon-capsule storage tests in Kiva 1. The entire stockpile was called upon for these measurements. The participant is Raemer Schreiber, then M-2 Group Leader. Stringent security was maintained during these experiments, including a special contingent of Military guards, machine gun emplacements on the walls of Pajarito Canyon, and a requirement that all operating personnel wear distinctive jackets while moving between buildings. Operations were conducted around the clock to minimize the total time the stockpile was exposed.



Fig. 6.

Dirty jobs were part of the game—an adult version of mud pies being mixed and tamped into parts of a "bomb mockup." Identifiable of these old Group M-2 members are William Wenner who holds the bucket, Gustave Linenberger in the center foreground, and James Roberts standing above.

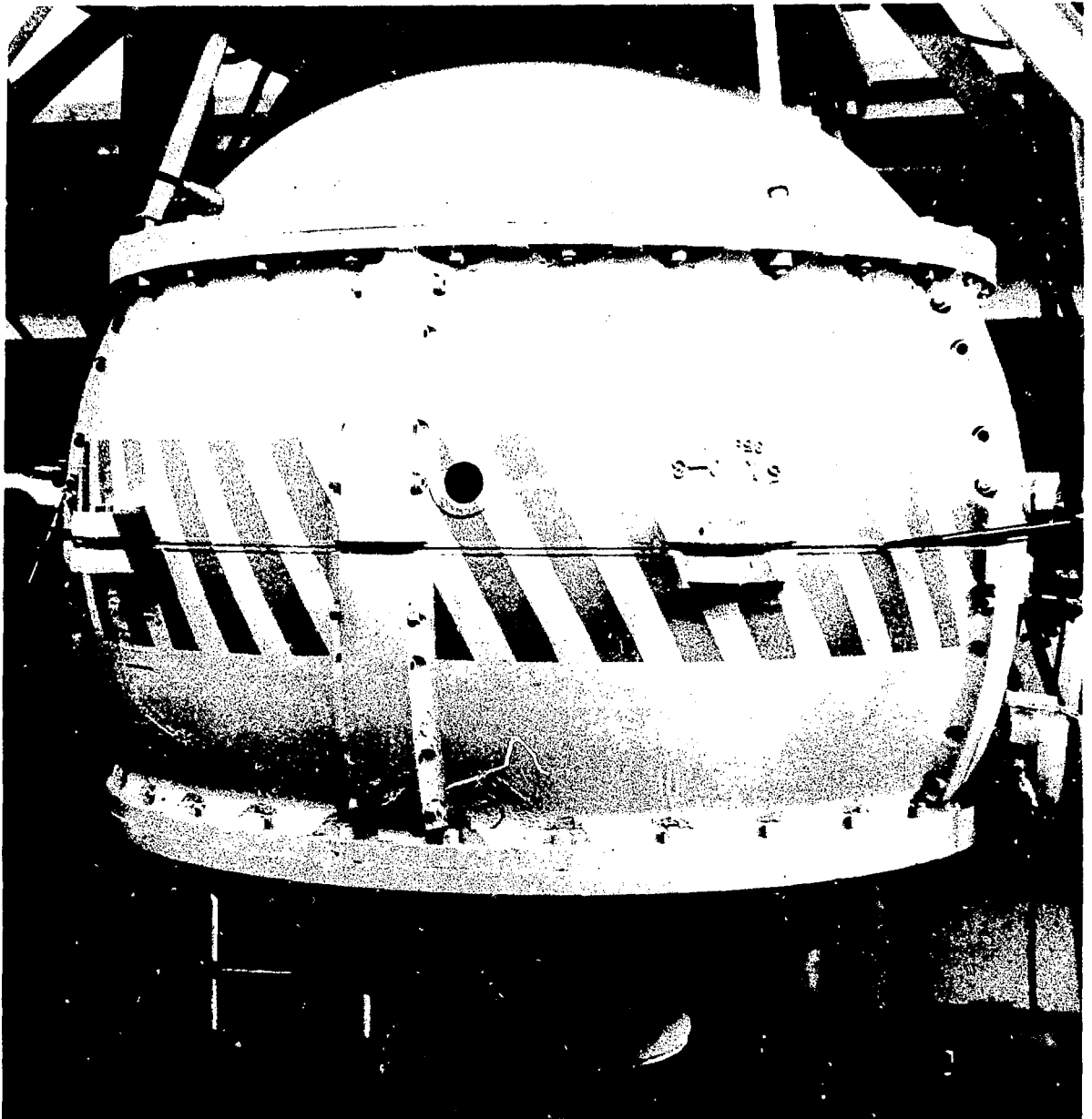


Fig. 7.

A Kiva 1 implosion weapon mockup in which capsules are replaceable. Measurements in this "bomb mockup" established subcritical limits for more advanced designs than the Nagasaki weapon.

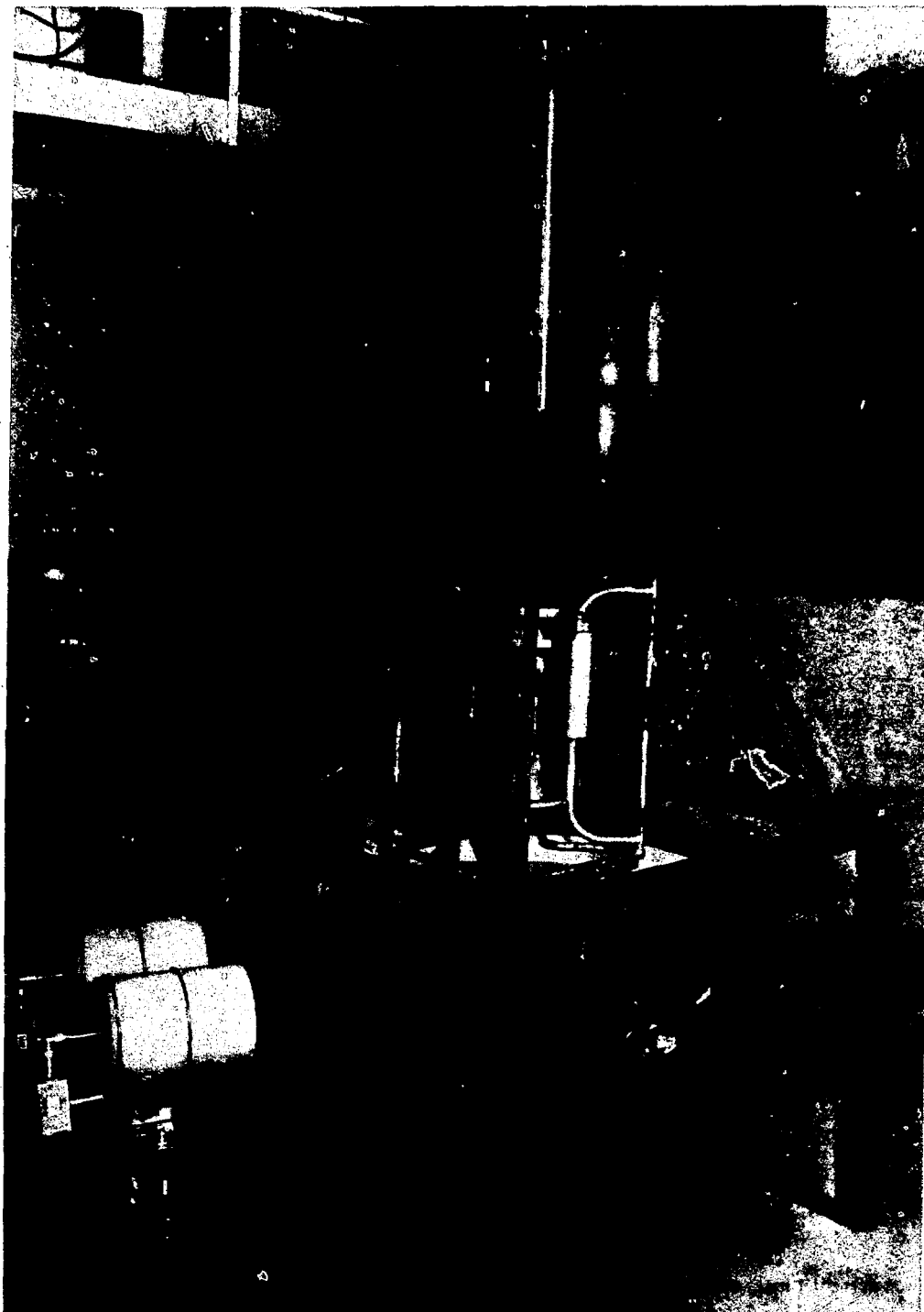


Fig. 8.
Weapon capsule in carrying case about to be lowered into water tank to measure the effect of flooding.

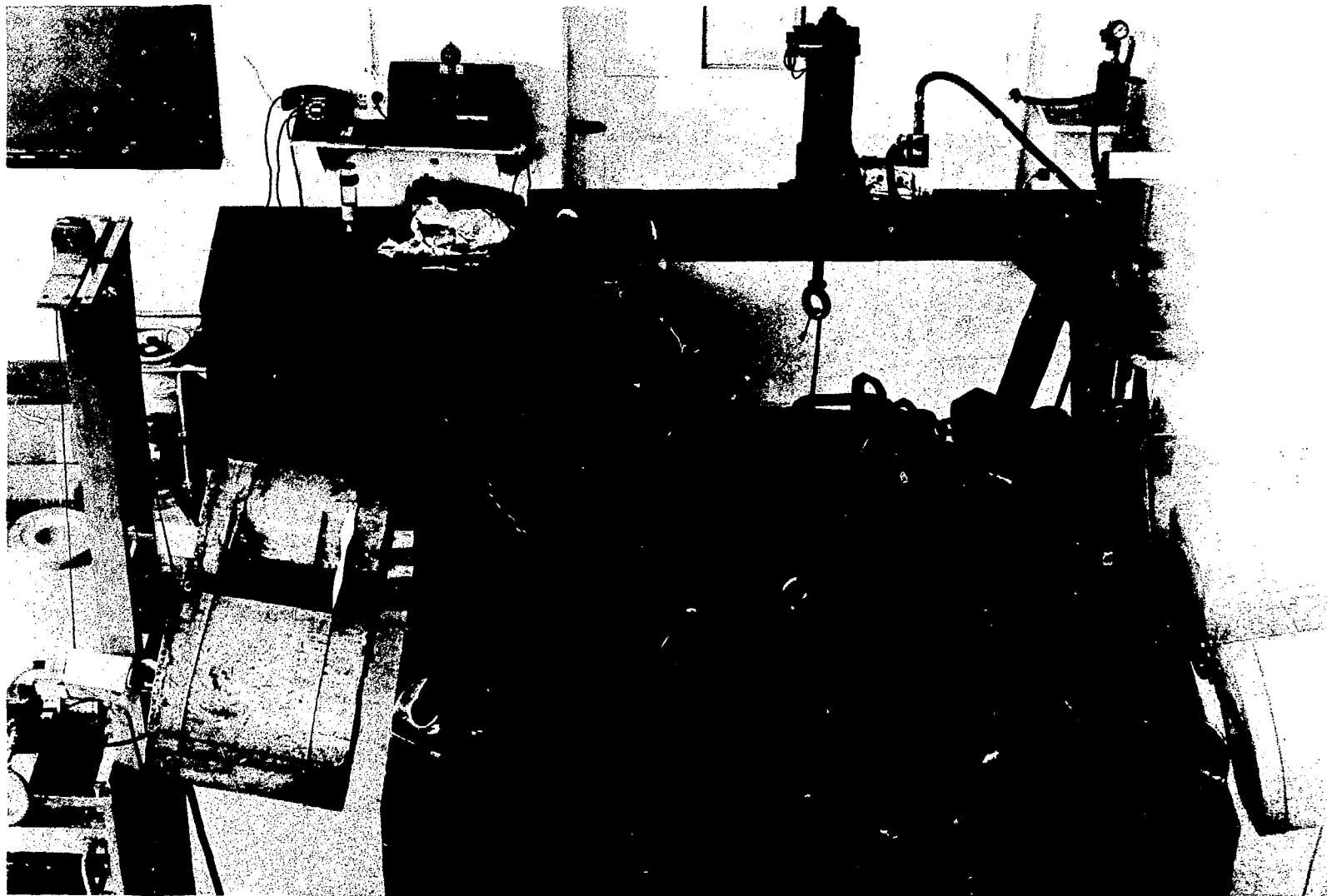
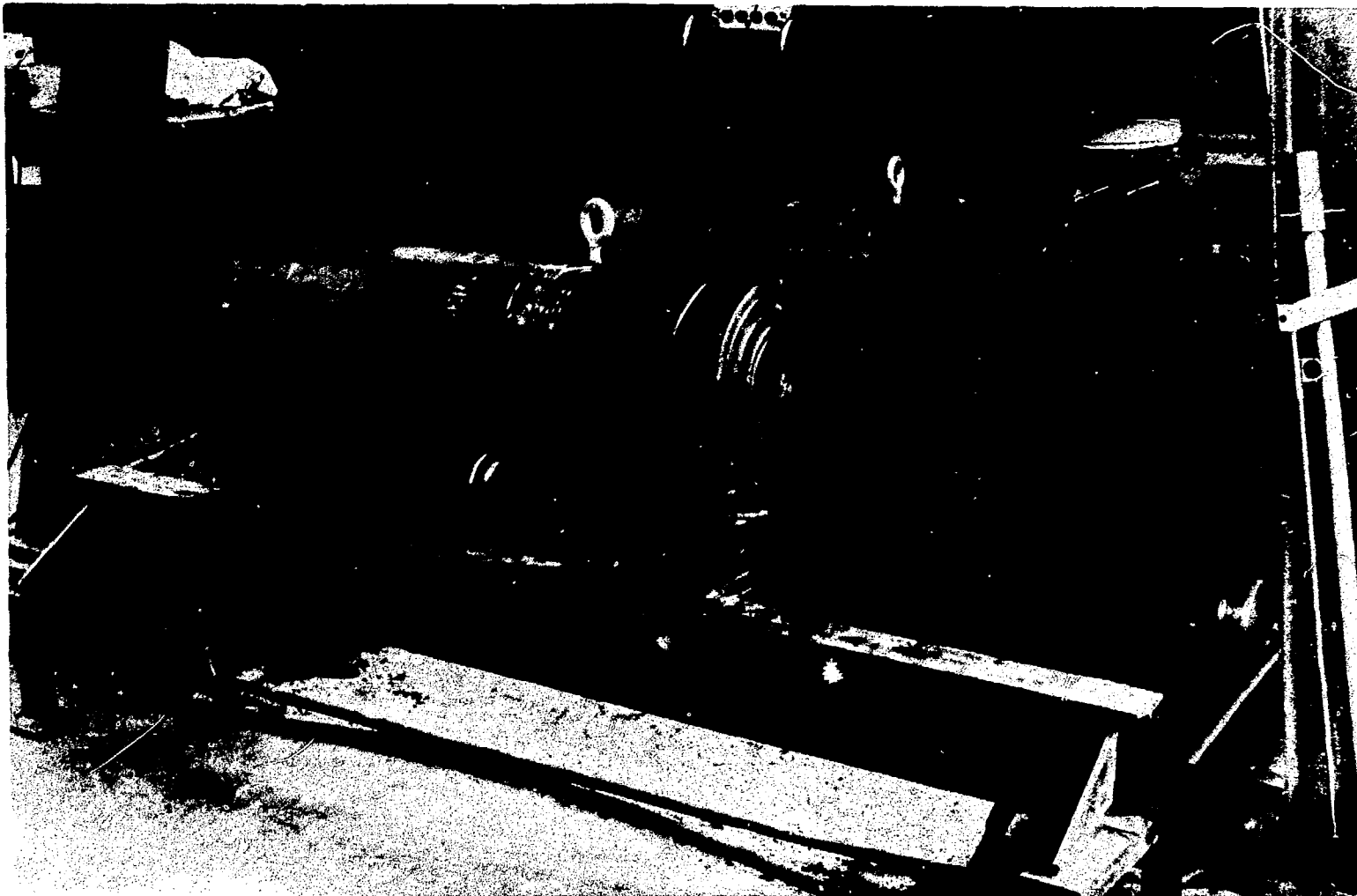


Fig. 9.

Artillery weapon in steel simulating the breech of a Naval gun. Safety was established by lowering the weapon remotely.



*Fig. 10.
Setup for measuring the interaction between artillery shells. Results helped to establish rules
for safe storage.*

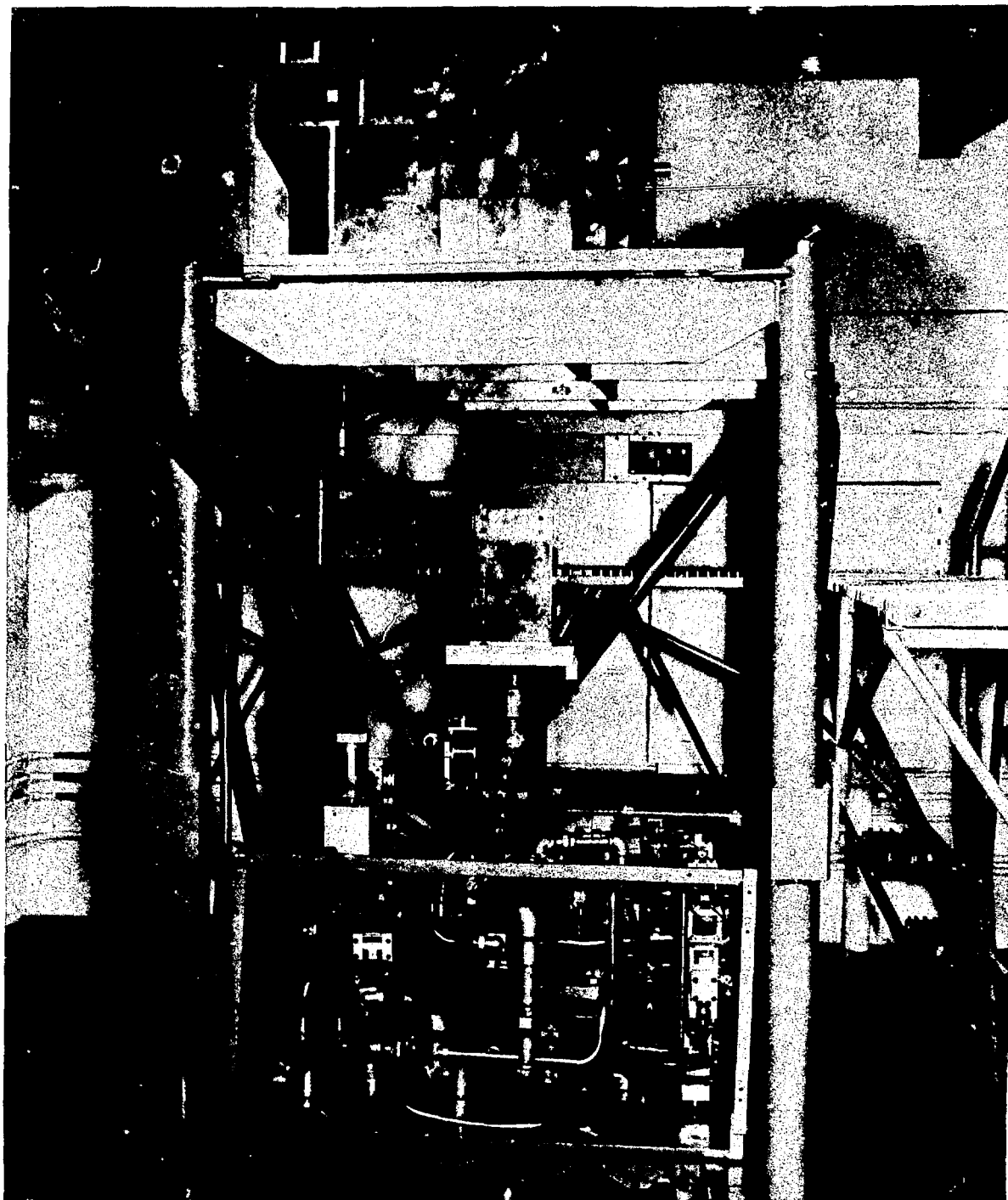


Fig. 11.

The Topsy critical assembly. The enriched uranium core embedded in part of the natural uranium reflector rises into a cavity in the main reflector body. Spherical or cylindrical cores were approximated by one-half-inch cubic blocks.

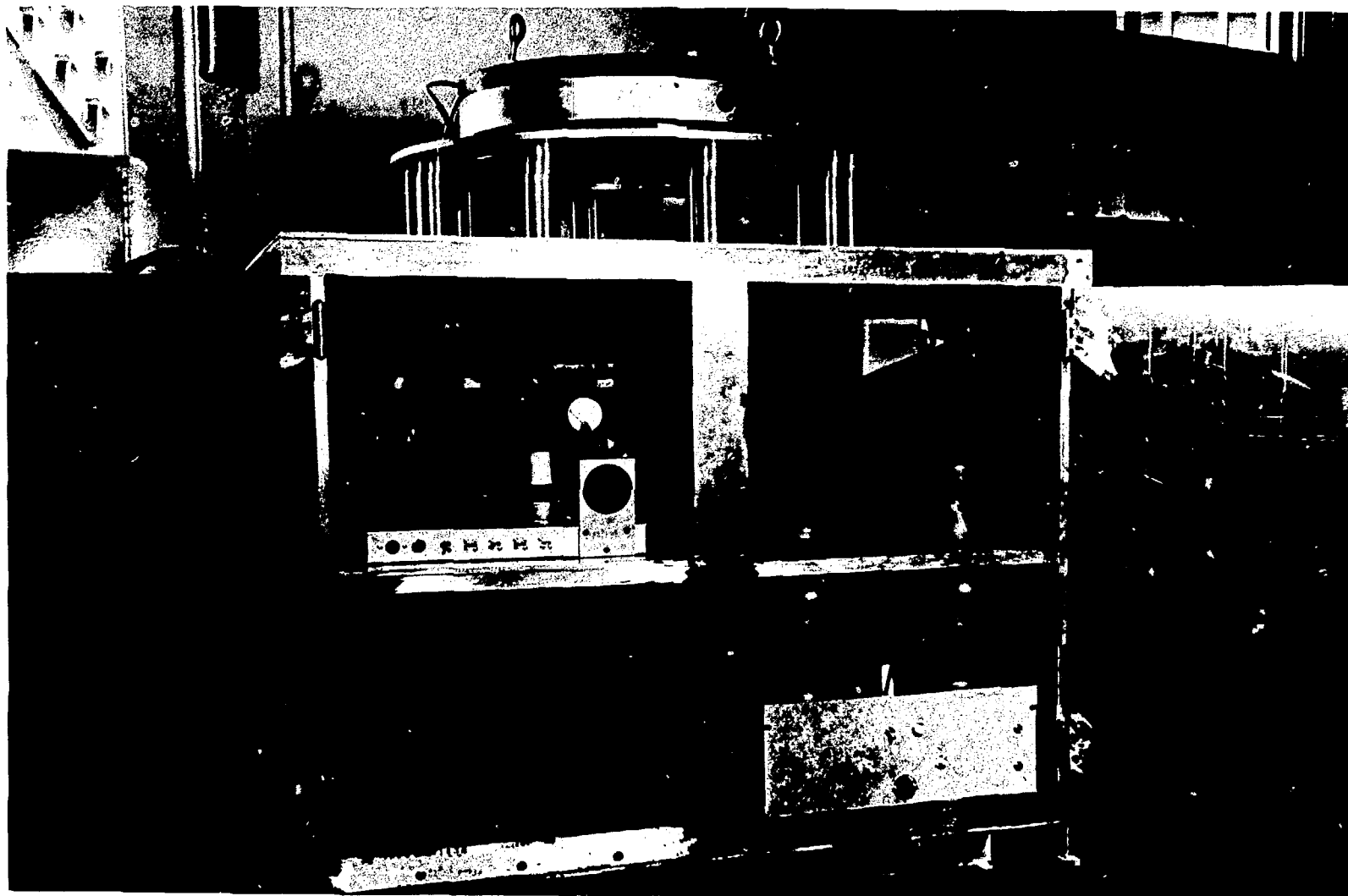


Fig. 12.
A compact successor to the General Electric Company betatron that started the activities of Group W-5.

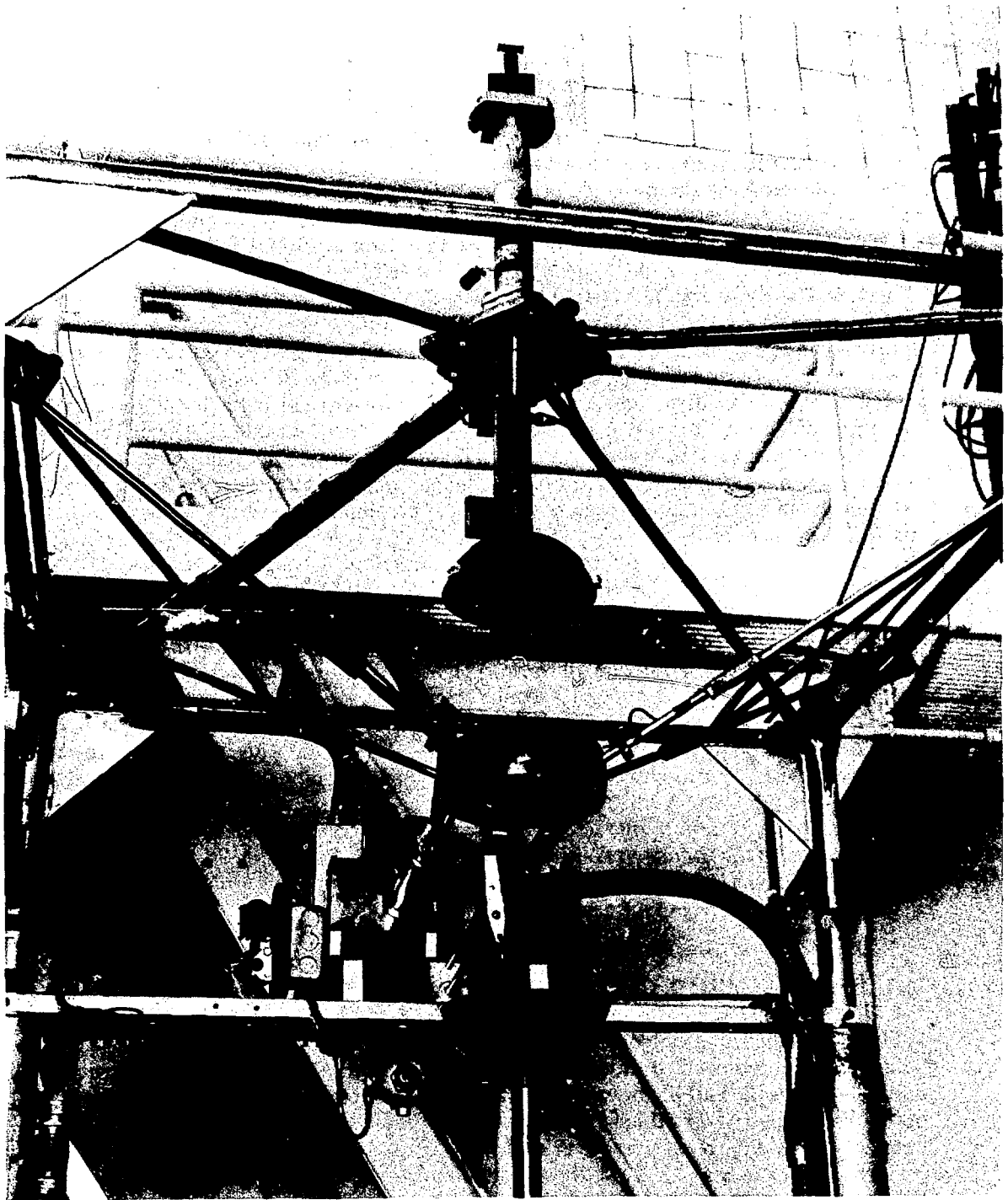


Fig. 13.

The Lady Godiva critical assembly of highly enriched uranium. For operation, the upper cap drops and the lower cap rises to form a near-sphere without reflector.

the efficiency and safety of critical experiments, a central laboratory and office building brought the entire Group to the Site, and a second remote-control laboratory, Kiva 2, shared the critical assemblies. After transfer to this Kiva, Lady Godiva, for example, began operation about February 1953.

Shortly, thereafter, we ran the first reactor mockup at Pajarito. This simplified version of the LAPRE solution reactor being developed by newly formed K-Division was suitable for checking design calculations. Another simplified mockup, a few months later, assisted the Argonne National Laboratory in its design of the proposed EBR II reactor. Studies of reactor mockups such as these remained brief and incidental to weapon-related activities until the advent of Rover.

In mid-1953 there was the handsomest payoff of remote control, the superprompt-critical operation of Lady Godiva. This delicate stepping into a previously forbidden region depended upon isolation from people. The typical result was a sharp, intense radiation pulse terminated by the thermal expansion of Lady Godiva.⁵ Although intended simply to confirm predictions of superprompt-critical behavior, these pulses were immediately in demand as near-instantaneous sources of radiation for a variety of experiments ranging from biological to solid state. Because the pulses simulated the radiation from a test device beyond blast-damage range, they were also used to proof-test instrumentation and controls that were supposed to withstand radiation from a nuclear explosion. Thus they provided an alternative to expensive field tests, and ultimately led to the family of fast-burst reactors that extended to the Sandia Laboratories, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, White Sands Missile Range, and Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The total of about 1000 prompt bursts from Lady Godiva were not without incident, for twice the safe limit beyond prompt criticality was overstepped. The first time, damage was repairable, but in the second, uranium parts were too badly warped and corroded for further use. The assembly was then replaced by Godiva II, designed specifically for burst production. In addition to the Lady Godiva accidents, remote control has served its purpose in six other instances where prompt criticality was attained unintentionally.⁶

In the pre-Rover period, late 1954, another critical assembly for basic studies came into operation. This unreflected sphere of δ -phase plutonium, called Jezebel, is still in operation. Because it is unique and simple, it is classed as a bench-mark assembly, one of the standards for checking fast-neutron calculations.

THE ROVER PERIOD

The Rover nuclear-propulsion program that came to Los Alamos in the spring of 1955 added a new dimension to Pajarito critical experiments. N-Division, newly formed to take on this work, had headquarters at the Site until more suitable housing could be built. We became part of this Division, were renamed Group N-2, and shared the excitement of developing rocket reactors.

Throughout the next 17 years, the neutronics of Rover reactors dominated our attention, although weapon-related work was not neglected. First there were parametric surveys to provide general guidance for the designers. In these, geometric imperfections were tolerated for the sake of flexibility. Then, when overall dimensions became fixed, details of core, controls, and internal structures were established in a mockup with good geometry. Finally, the reactor destined for testing in Nevada was checked at Pajarito and adjusted if found to depart from specifications. With a few exceptions, this progression was followed for each new Rover reactor.

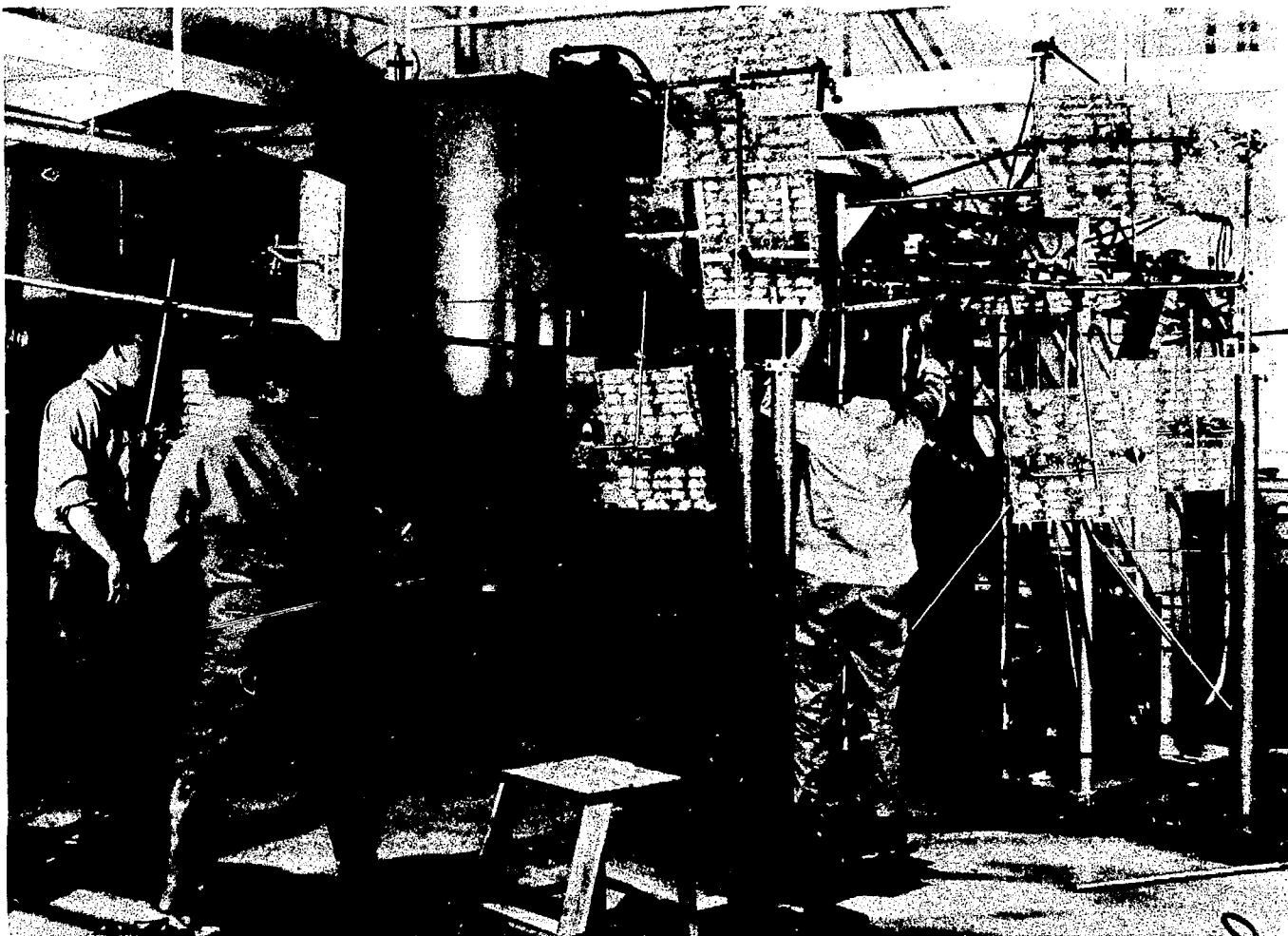


Fig. 14.

Mice disposed about Lady Godiva for prompt-burst irradiation. Dr. Payne Harris, then of Group H-5, is identifiable. Effects on other irradiated mammals, including burros and monkeys, when extrapolated to man, helped to establish both lethal doses and the greater immediately incapacitating doses.

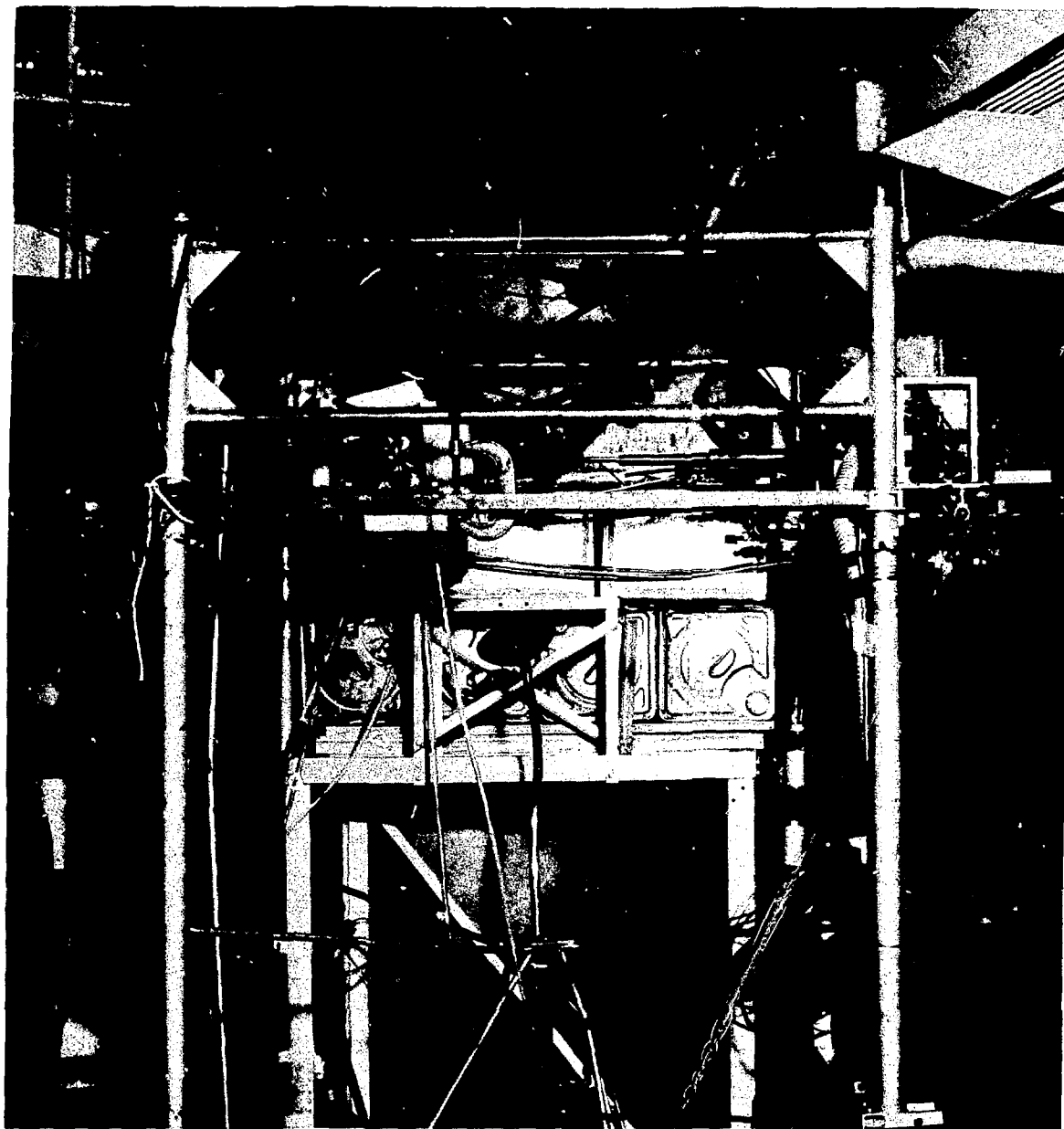


Fig. 15.
Lady Godiva after the accident that led to retirement.

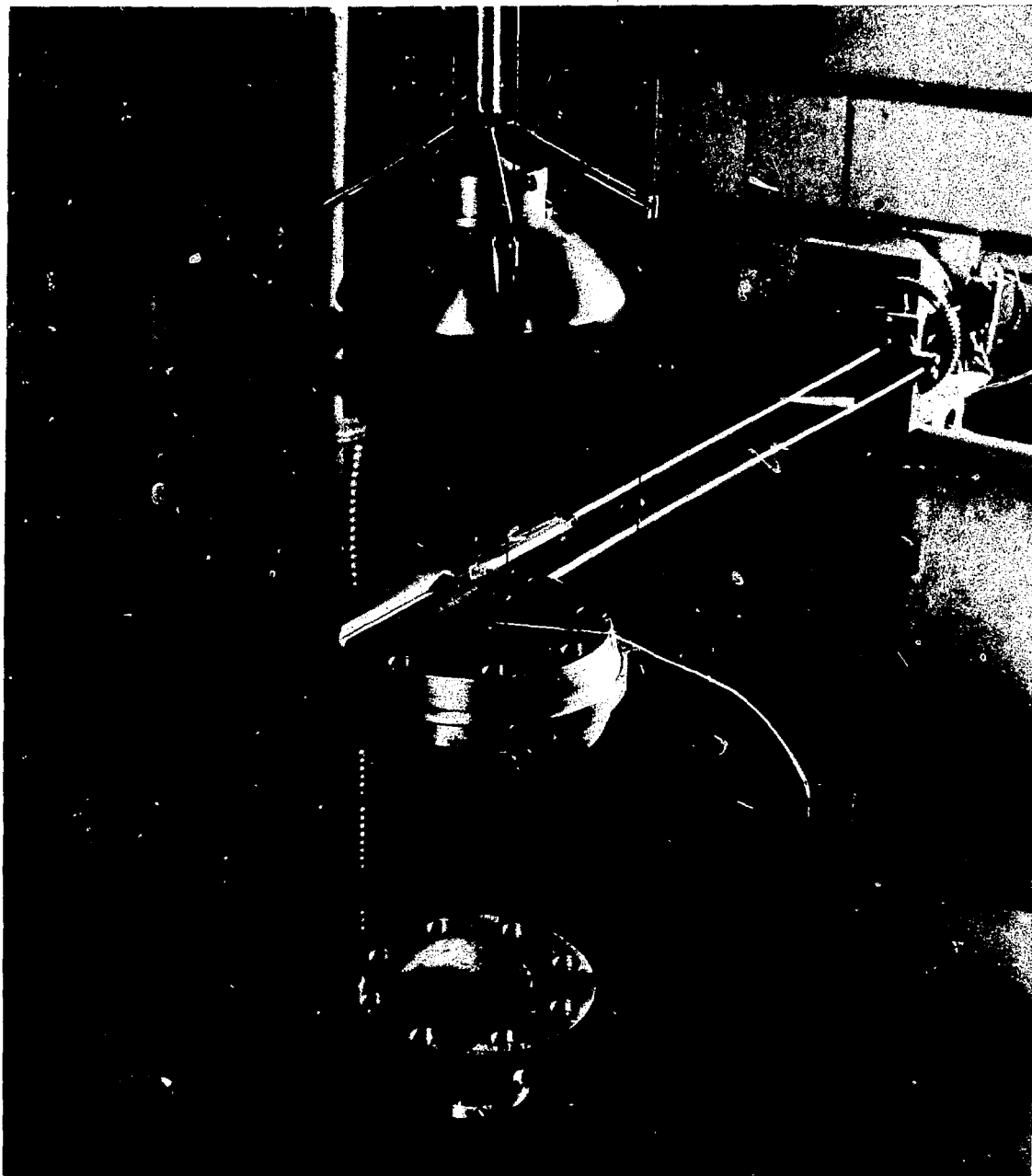


Fig. 16.

The Jezebel assembly of unreflected plutonium. For operation, the upper cap drops and the lower cap rises to form a near-sphere.

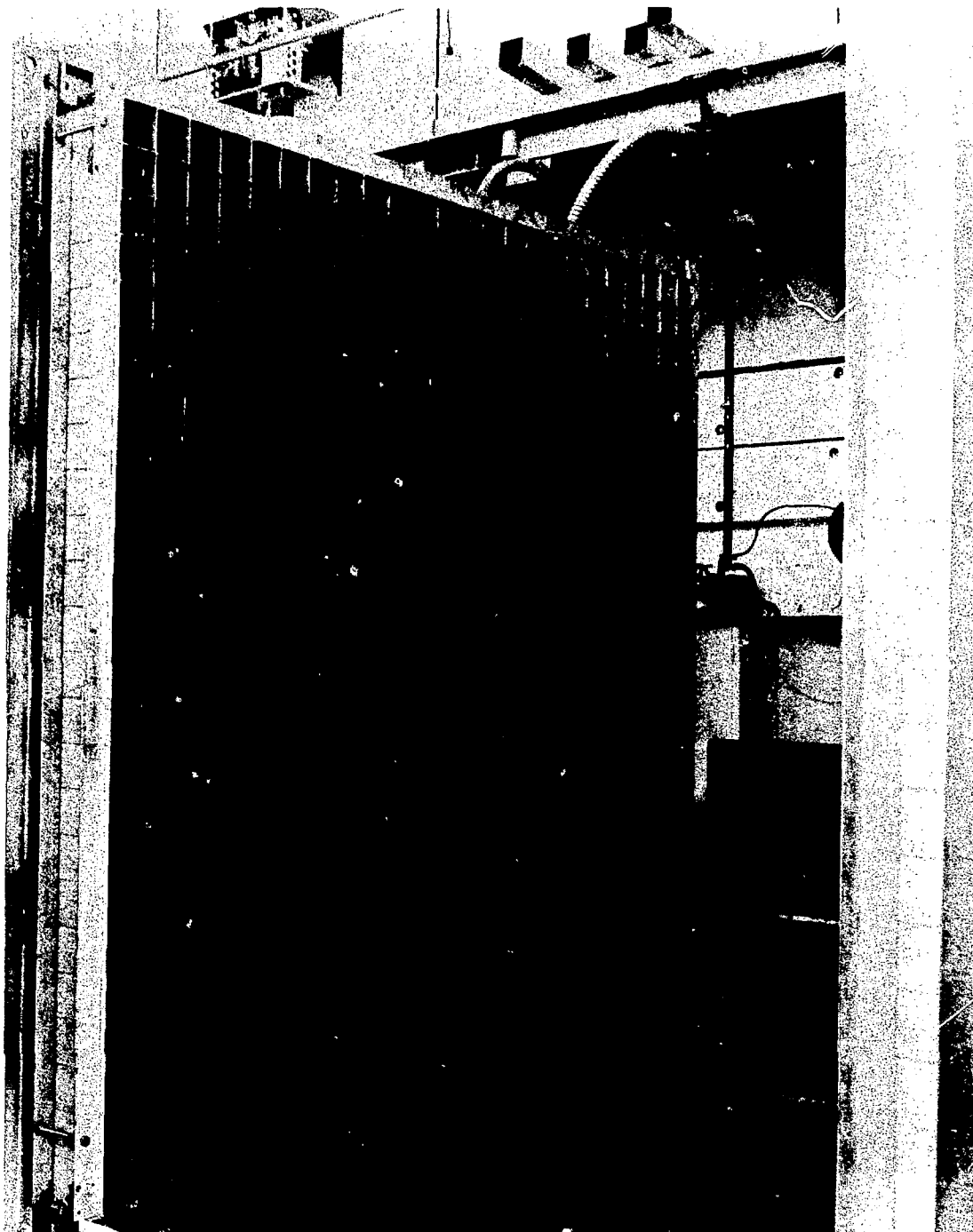


Fig. 17.

The Honeycomb assembly machine for Rover parametric surveys. The fixed portion shown contains part of a crude mockup of the first Rover reactor.

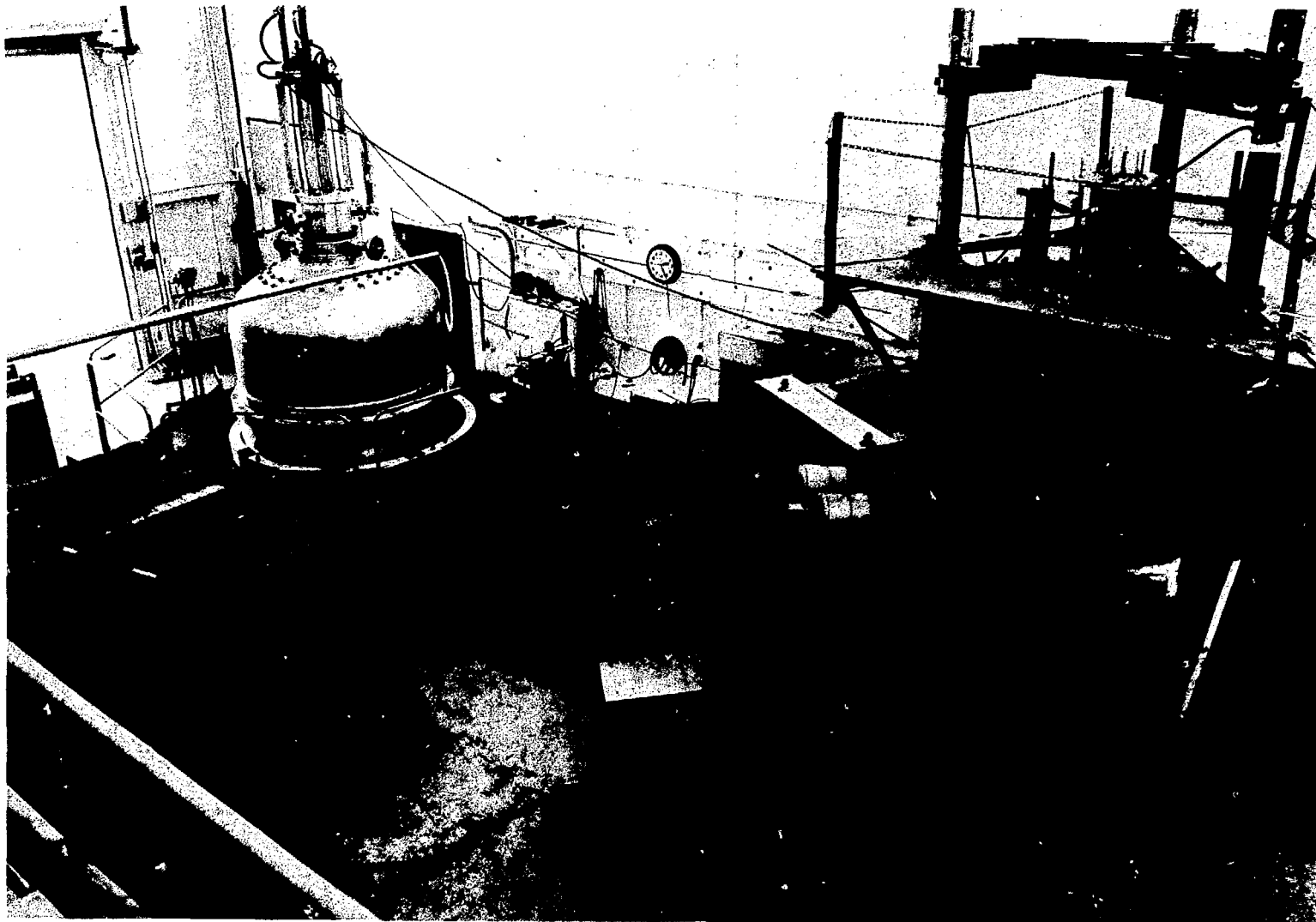


Fig. 18.

Kiwi-A, the first reactor for testing at Nevada, in Kiwa 1. A zero-power mockup of the same reactor appears at the right, and part of Honeycomb with a crude mockup is at the far left.

A computational capability at Pajarito, which had been required for interpreting and supplementing critical experiments, was expanded for the Rover program. It encompassed the conversion of room-temperature critical data to high-temperature operating conditions, the detailed evaluation of radiation heating, and the calculation of shielding required in an operable rocket.

The additional demands on Group N-2 included assisting in the preparation for field tests and work on a competitor to the favored graphite-moderated reactor. This competitor, Dumbo, was to take advantage of the excellent high-temperature properties of tungsten, and, to keep weight down, required a cooled hydrogenous moderator. Following several years of intensive design effort requiring continual neutronic experiments, this concept was abandoned in the fall of 1959.

Another concept was a gas-core reactor with external moderator cooled by a spiral of incoming gaseous propellant. Although too "far out" for immediate development, this type of reactor was simulated by a series of assemblies with large cavities surrounded by thick heavy water or beryllium. Neutronic studies of these assemblies immediately followed the Dumbo program.

In addition to its part in these activities, Group N-2 helped to prepare for reactor tests in Nevada; for example, it provided the initial neutronic instrumentation and prepared the accident analyses required for safety documentation. Further, it assisted in performance of the tests by providing neutronic and reactor-safety specialists. As a result of the extensive—and intensive—program, the Group grew in size and required a third Kiva that was completed in 1960. At that time, local work with Nevada-test reactors was transferred from Kiva 1 to Kiva 3. For these reactors, the design group, N-3, managed assembly, disassembly, and packaging for shipment, leaving neutronic checkouts for N-2. Zero-power mockups remained in Kiva 1, and non-Rover assemblies were concentrated in Kiva 2.

Here we should update critical assemblies directed toward weapons, and, in principle, toward fast reactors. The Flattop machine in Kiva 2, a replacement for Topsy, had spherical components instead of a core and reflector made up of blocks. It first operated with a highly enriched uranium core in 1958, and with a uranium-233 core two years later (as for Topsy, a plutonium core also was available). Shortly afterward, a bare uranium-233 assembly was set up on Jezebel, rounding out the triumvirate of fissile metal assemblies, unreflected and in thick uranium.

As contrasted with enriched uranium and nickel-coated plutonium, uranium-233 components were awkward to handle because of intense gamma radiation arising from uranium-232 impurity. As a result, Jezebel components of this material were retired after a cursory, but adequate survey. The smaller Flattop core is somewhat easier to handle without significant exposure, so it has been retained.

At this stage, the monumental Rover test series was under way at Nevada, having started with Kiwi-A high-temperature operation in mid-1959. Thereafter, there were twelve other operational tests through 1968, identified in Appendix D. The part of Group N-2 in preparation for each of these tests and neutronic analysis afterward was both arduous and rewarding, an experience certainly shared with the other Rover participants.

These Nevada tests, on which our attention focused, are summarized in Appendix D and discussed further in the following paragraphs. In the first series, called Kiwi-A, an axial D₂O island conserved enriched uranium and made possible "proof-of-principle" tests at a power of about 100 MW. The fuel elements, graphite loaded with uranium carbide, were distributed in a graphite matrix. Although contributing to early testing, both island and gaseous-hydrogen coolant were inappropriate for a flyable system.



Fig. 19.

The "Pajarito Club" of January 1956—personnel associated with the Critical Experiments Facility. 1. Cleo Byers, 2. G. A. Linenberger, 3. E. Plassman, 4. D. Mascarenas, 5. L. Engle, 6. T. Wimett, 7. M. Taylor, 8. A. Usner, 9. R. White, 10. M. Fogelsong, 11. J. Grundl, 12. T. Thomas, 13. F. Kerbitz, 14. D. Young, 15. H. Paxton, 16. P. Koontz, 17. G. Jarvis, 18. A. Spooner, 19. K. Dunahugh, 20. H. Duhamel, 21. R. Keepin, 22. C. Mascarenas, 23. D. Wood, 24. C. Hoogterp, 25. J. Orndoff, 26. R. Wagner, 27. M. Diaz, 28. G. Hansen, 29. G. Graves, 30. D. Barton, 31. H. Lacey.

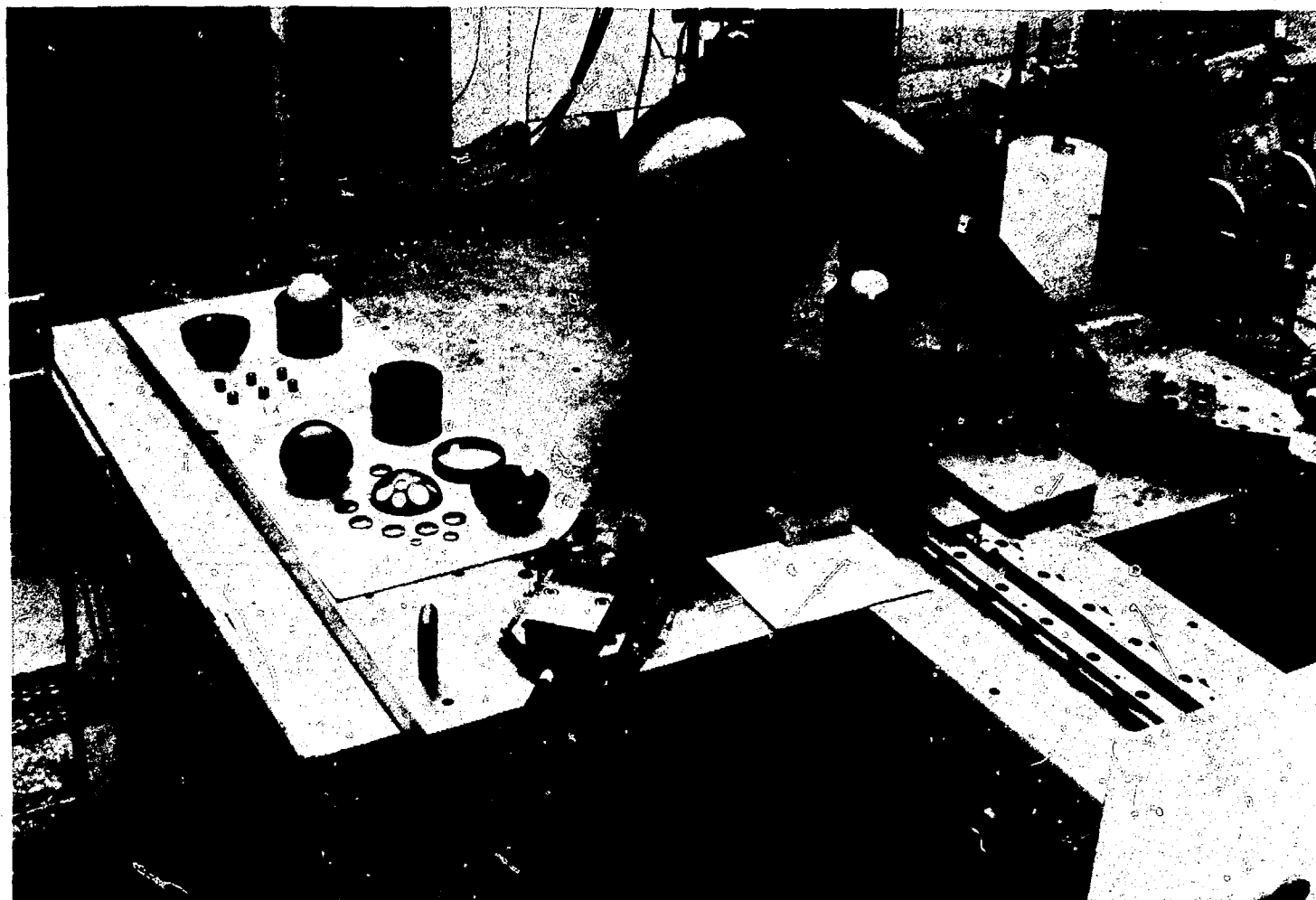


Fig. 20.

The Flattop critical assembly machine. The plutonium core is shown retracted from the natural-uranium reflector; enriched-uranium and uranium-233 cores with adapters are laid out at left.

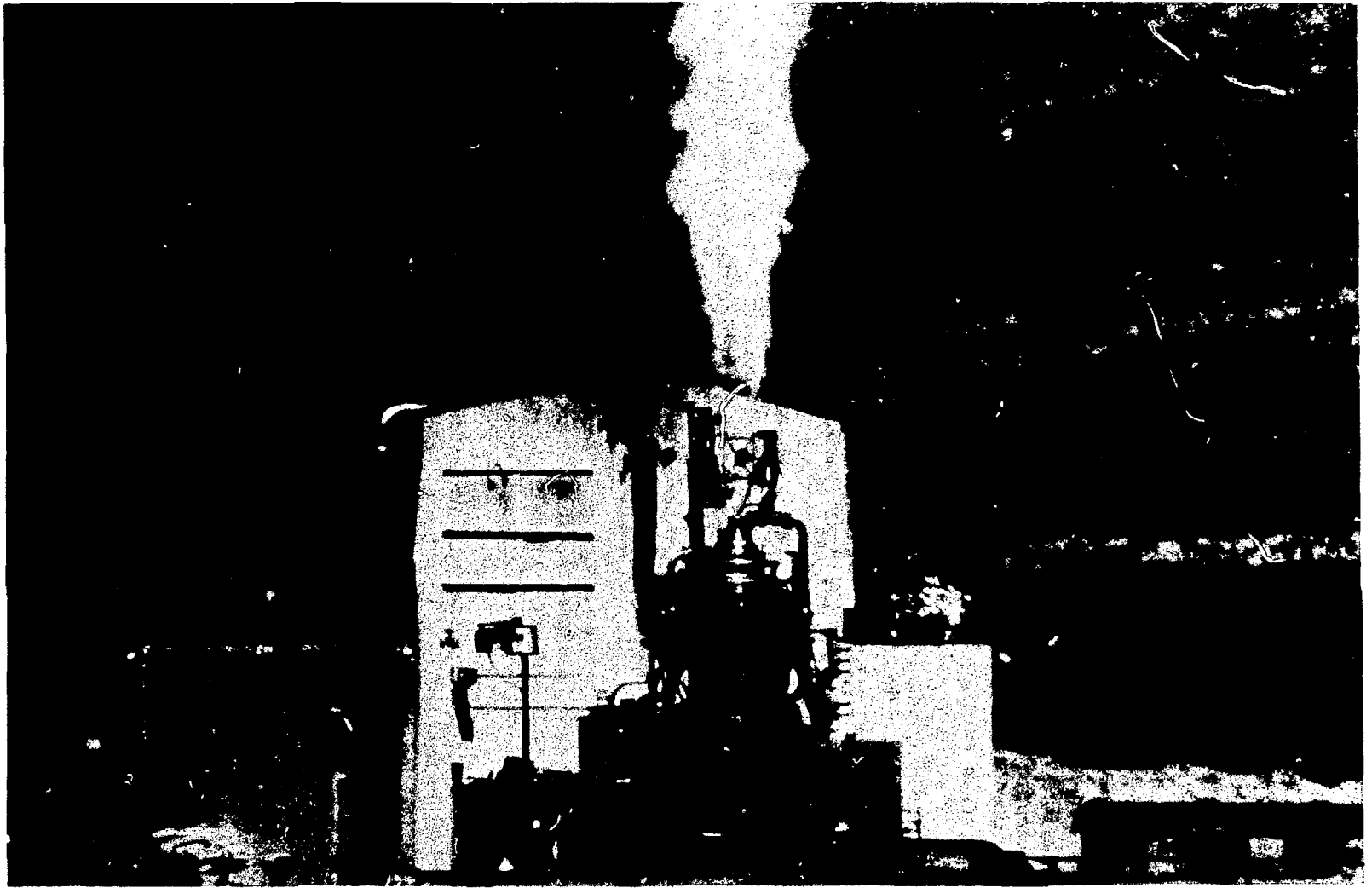


Fig. 21.

Kiwi-A operating test at Nevada. Kiwi nonflying reactors are named after the earth-bound New Zealand bird.

Severe erosion in the first test was reduced in the next two by niobium liners in the hydrogen flow channels.

In the pair of Kiwi-B1 reactors that followed, elimination of the D_2O island led to a more realistic power—about 900 MW in the second test. Of course, this was at the expense of greater enriched-uranium content. Fuel rods were still distributed in a graphite matrix. Gaseous hydrogen in the first test was replaced by liquid hydrogen in the second, a further step toward a flyable system. Liquid hydrogen remained the coolant-propellant in all succeeding tests.

As observers, we were fascinated by the technology used to produce fuel elements of the ultimate form. The 132-cm-long hexagonal rods, 1.9 cm across, each contained 19 precisely located flow channels—a production feat. These elements were packed together as cores of the Kiwi-B4 series and succeeding reactors (the last Nevada reactor was an exception). A niobium coating on element surfaces controlled corrosion, but a more serious problem was encountered in the first test. Vibration led to the fracturing of fuel elements and ejection of pieces. The cure, a different design of core constraint, was confirmed by satisfactory behavior during the next two tests of this series. Restart capability and 10-minute operation at about 1000 MW were demonstrated.

Puzzling behavior of the first Kiwi-B4 reactor was encountered during its checkout at Pajarito Site. Contrary to results with mockups, the system was too reactive to be completely assembled as designed. For proper operation, it was necessary to replace some fuel by inert material and to introduce neutron "poison." Ultimately, the extra reactivity was traced to hydrolysis of the uranium carbide distributed as particles throughout the graphite fuel matrix. The source was moisture in the air. Starting later in the Kiwi-B4 series, hydrolysis was eliminated by distributing the uranium carbide as small beads with a protective coating.

The final reactor of this class, with a special arrangement to increase reactivity very rapidly, was purposely destroyed to simulate a reactivity accident. This served to check the required accident analyses, thereby increasing confidence in yield calculations.

Before going to Nevada, this reactor was involved in a unique series of experiments at Pajarito Site. It and the similar PARKA reactor, positioned close together, were operated simultaneously in order to measure their interaction. This information was desired for estimating the effect of clustering several reactors to power a single high-thrust rocket.

Refinements for flyable systems were introduced in the Nevada tests of the next two reactors, designated Phoebus 1. These reactors were of Kiwi-B4 size and general design. Improved fuel led to increased power density and duration of operation. More specifically, the second test demonstrated 30-minute operating time at about 1500 MW, and a propellant exhaust temperature of 2500 K.

The final test of a potentially flyable reactor, Phoebus-2, was directed toward increased power and thrust. To attain this goal, the core size was increased (it contained 4000 fuel elements!); otherwise, the design was generally like that of Phoebus-1. In Nevada, power greater than 4000 MW was attained.

The final two LASL reactors operated at Nevada, Pewee and Nuclear Fuel Furnace, were designed specifically for relatively inexpensive testing of improved fuel elements. Again, they were inappropriate for flyable systems. Although Pewee contained just 400 elements, one-quarter the number in Phoebus-1, test of a second version was canceled in 1971 because of funding restrictions. The power density attained in Pewee-1, 5 MW per liter of fuel, was the greatest observed. It was still possible to test the much smaller Nuclear Fuel Furnace the next year (only 49 elements with water moderation), but the entire program was canceled a year and one-half afterward.

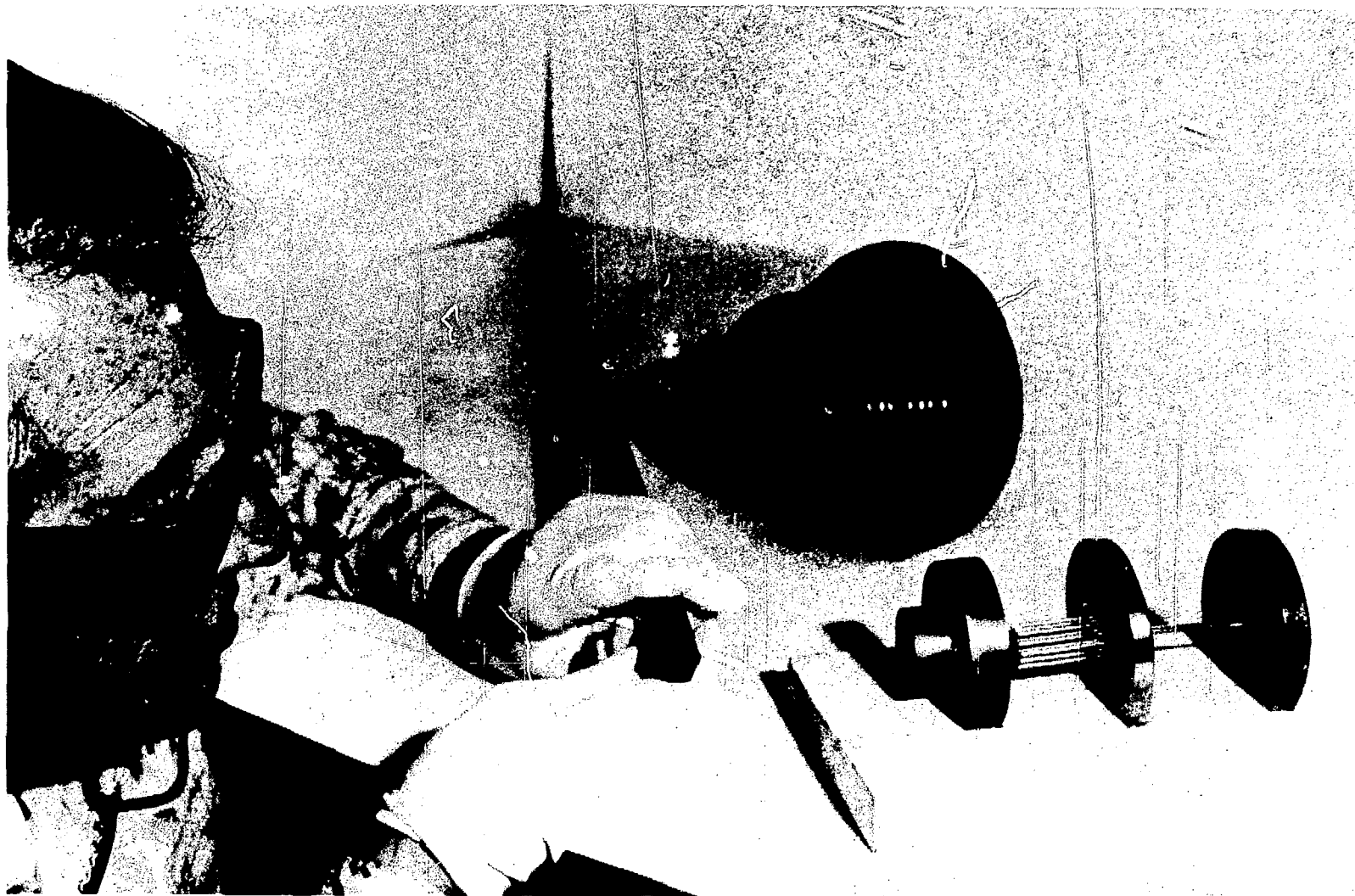


Fig. 22.

William Martin of Group CMB-6 holding a Rover fuel element of the ultimate form. Nineteen flow channels are positioned precisely. Dies for extruding elements appear on the right.

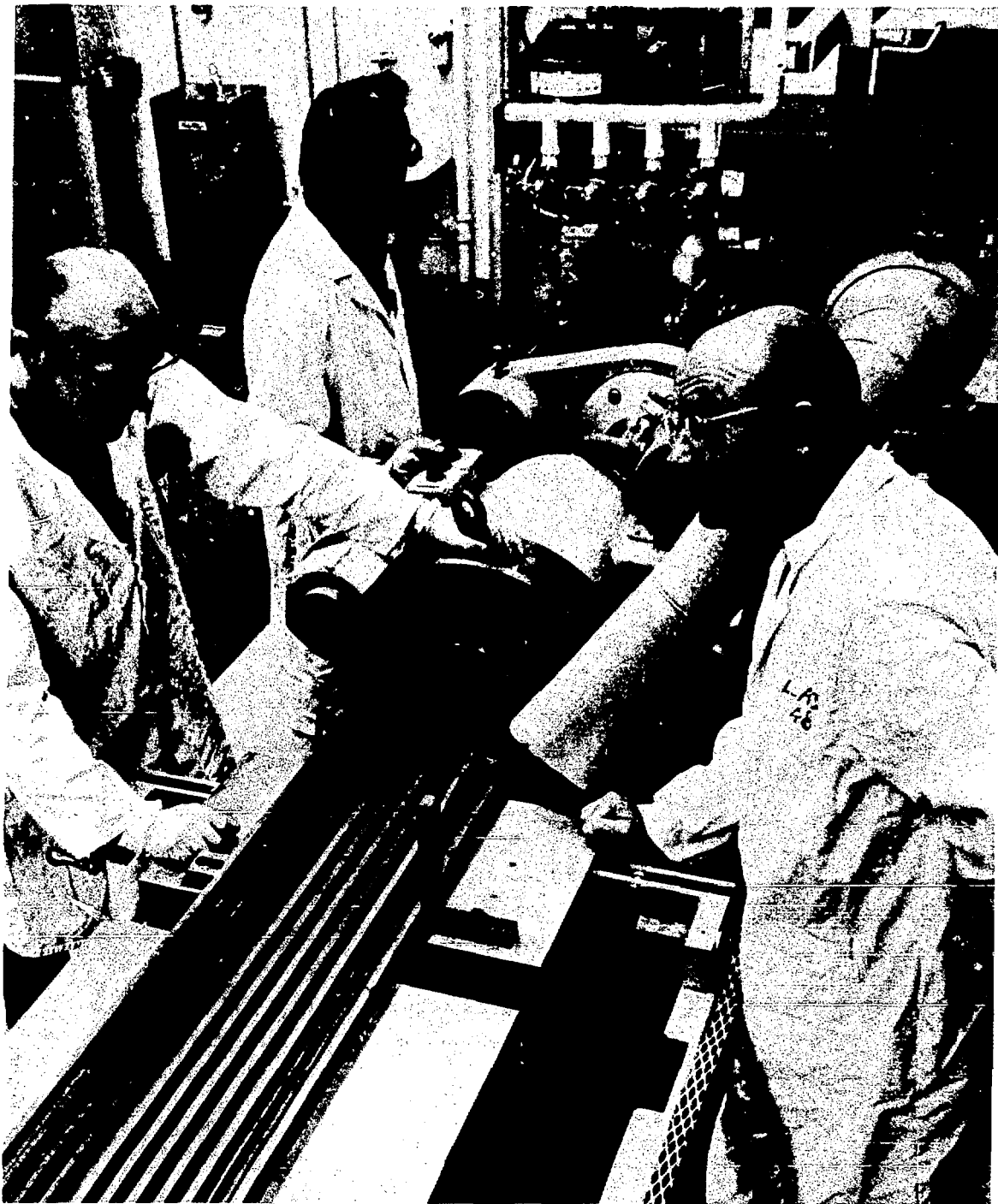


Fig. 23.

Extrusion of 19-hole Rover fuel elements. Conducting the operation are, left to right, Donald Schell, Belarmino Abeyta, and Keith Davidson, all of Group CMB-6. After extrusion, the elements were baked, graphitized, and coated with niobium that became converted to carbide in the reactor.



Fig. 24.
Remnant of Kiwi-TNT on test stand after the planned destructive excursion.

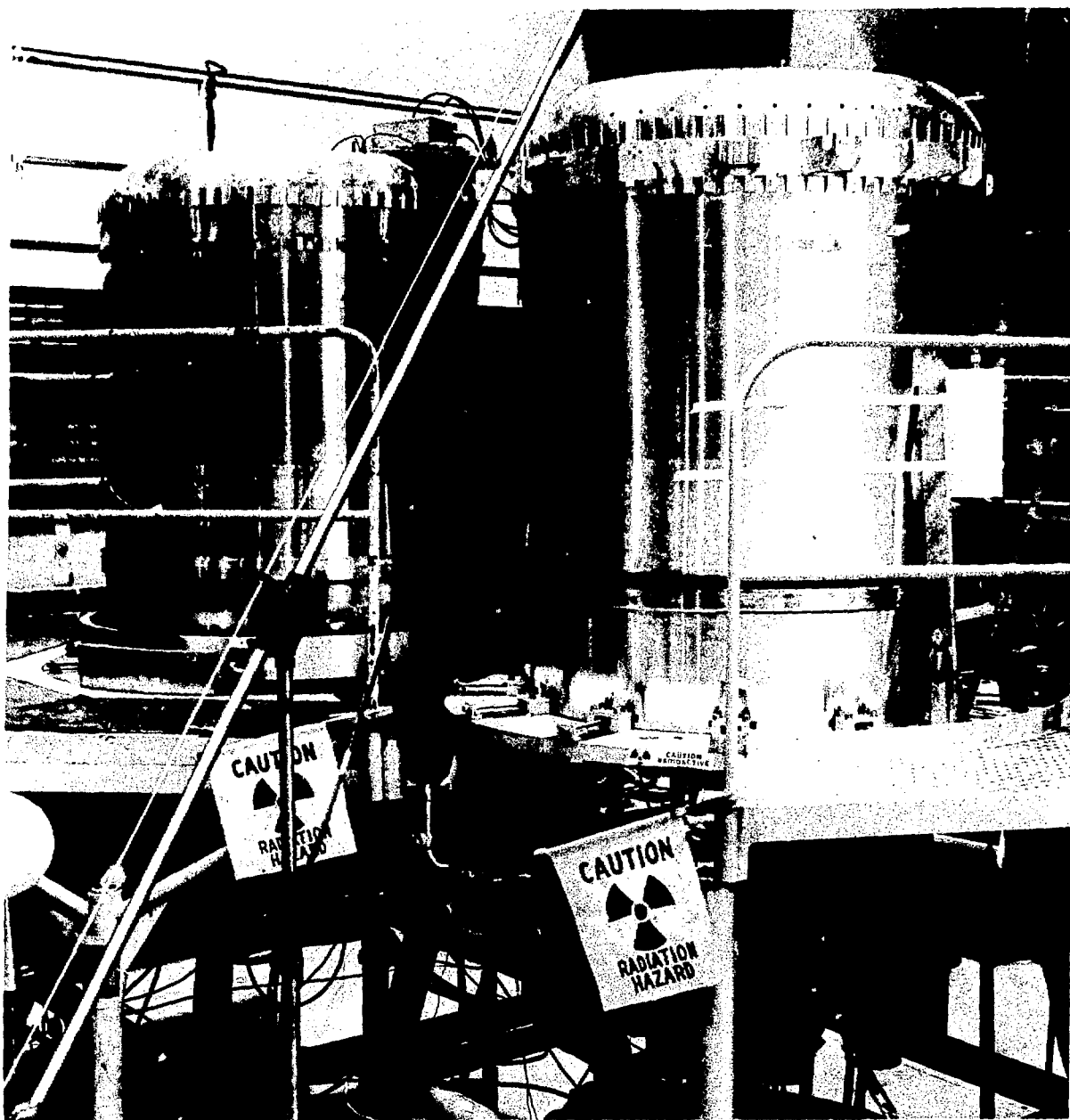


Fig. 25.

The Kiwi-TNT and PARKA reactors in Kiva 3 for measurement of interaction at various separating distances.

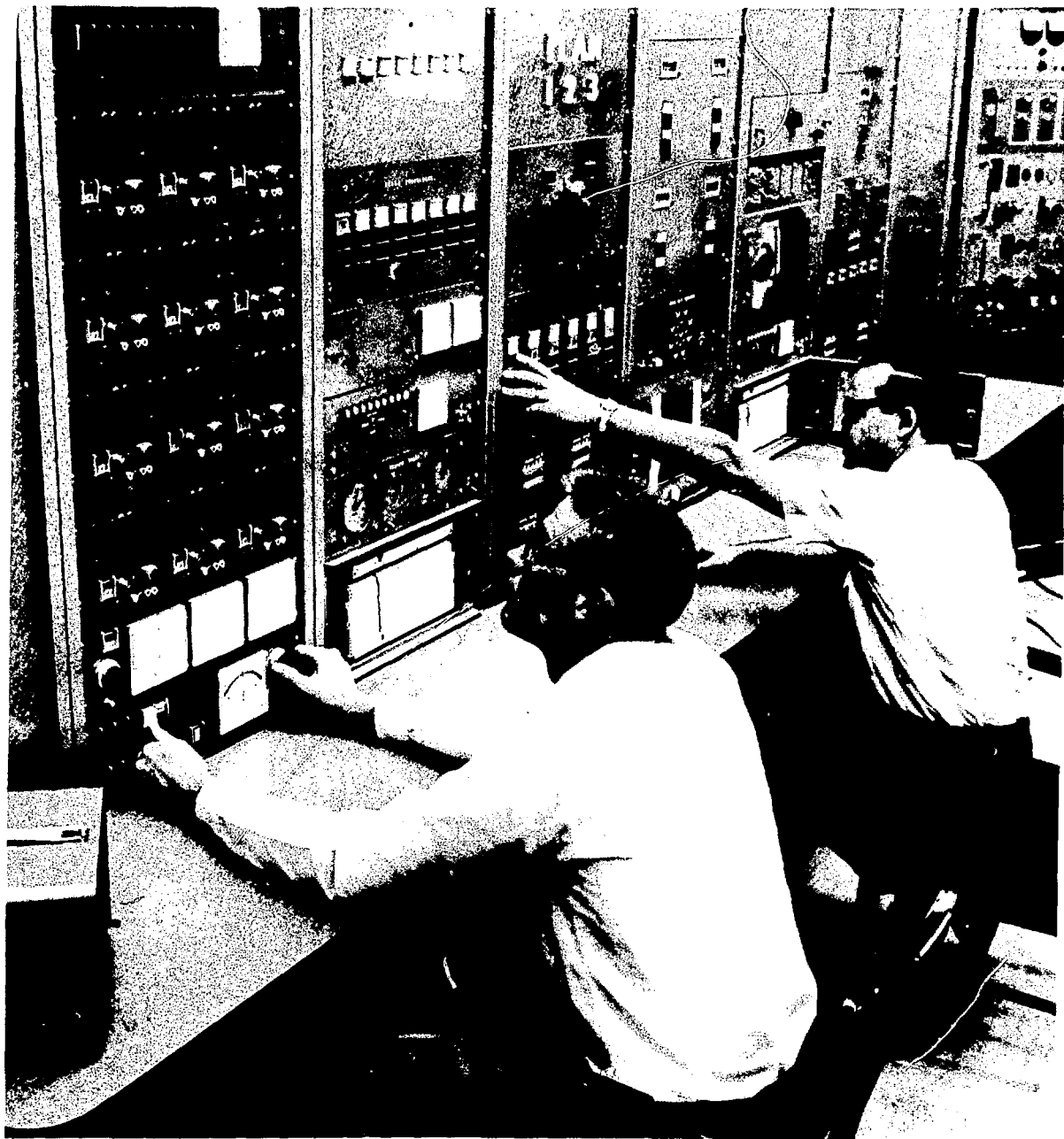


Fig. 26.

Herbert Helmick and Robert Seale operating Kiwi-TNT and PARKA simultaneously. Helmick is now Group Leader of Q-8, and Seale is a long-standing consultant from the University of Arizona.

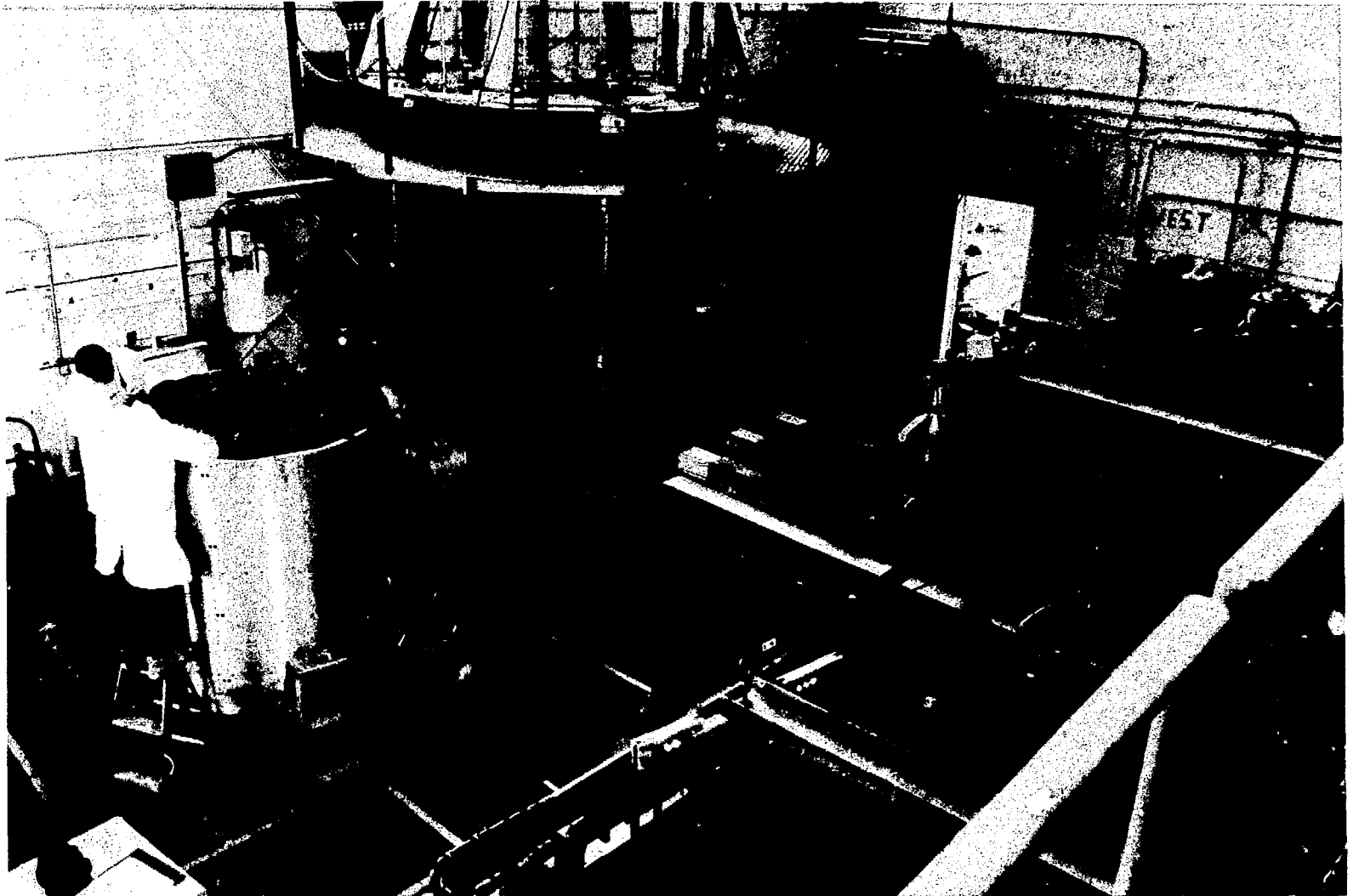


Fig. 27.

The core, with 4000 fuel elements, being assembled in a mockup of the Phoebus-2 reactor. A much cruder simulation of the same reactor is in the Honeycomb machine at the right.

Loss of the Rover program was a traumatic experience, but, unlike most of N-Division, a greatly attenuated Critical Experiments Group was allowed to survive. P-Division (the physics division) provided a place for us under the designation P-5 (in February 1973). The Group dropped to 17 persons from a peak of 41 in 1968-1969. A legacy from Rover was PARKA, essentially a Phoebus 1 reactor set up as a critical assembly. Another new assembly was Big Ten, a cylindrical uranium-metal system with a core averaging 10% uranium-235. Big Ten is a step from our very small metal assemblies toward fast-neutron power reactors. It was designed for easily interpreted measurements of internal neutron spectra and effective cross sections.

In December 1960, two members of our Group became the nucleus of Group A-1, formed to handle safeguards technology. A portion of this group that had remained at Pajarito Site was split off in September 1970 and named A-2. It was redesignated Q-2 in February 1977, but retained the functions of its title, Detection, Surveillance, Verification, and Recovery.

AFTER ROVER

During two years in P-Division, our Group became increasingly involved with projects for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The major project, still active, is directed toward a plasma-core power reactor to be operated at very high temperature. A helically flowing buffer gas is to protect the containing vessel from the hot gaseous core. Beryllium reflector components and control drums left over from the Rover Program were essential parts of a progressive series of mockups of this reactor. In the earlier versions of this so-called Plasma Cavity Assembly, the gas cores were simulated by thin foils of enriched uranium, either distributed within a large cavity or lining it. In following versions, distributed Rover fuel elements were used instead of foil, then some of these elements were replaced by gaseous UF_6 . Ultimately, a complete UF_6 core is planned.

Another NASA project is a study of gaseous lasers for transmitting power. This is related to the reactor development as a possible means of extracting power through radiation from the plasma core. A noteworthy result of this project was one of the first demonstrations of a laser pumped by uranium fission products.

Since February 1977, the NASA projects have been managed by Group Q-8, a further subdivision of the Critical Experiments Group, which remains housed at Pajarito Site. Another NASA interest being investigated by this Group is the nature of radiation from a uranium plasma. A means of simulating the plasma is by rapid compression of UF_6 in the barrel of a Naval "cannon."

Following our period in P-Division, we became, successively A-5 and R-5 (in the reactor division) for roughly a year each. During this period, fast-reactor safety studies funded by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were added to our responsibilities. These fell into two categories, the calculation of yields from various reactor accidents, and the development and evaluation of techniques for measuring fuel behavior in a destructive environment such as ANL's TREAT reactor. The calculational program extended the computational techniques used for Rover accident analyses, and it was transferred to Group Q-7 in February 1977. The development and evaluation made use of the PARKA assembly, another remnant of Rover. They also incorporated weapon-test technology, relying upon continuing efforts by members of Group J-12 and the research section of the P-Division office. Upon its formation, Group Q-8 (Reactor Safety Experiments) took over and expanded the portion of this project dealing with the generalized development of diagnostic instrumentation for reactor safety studies,

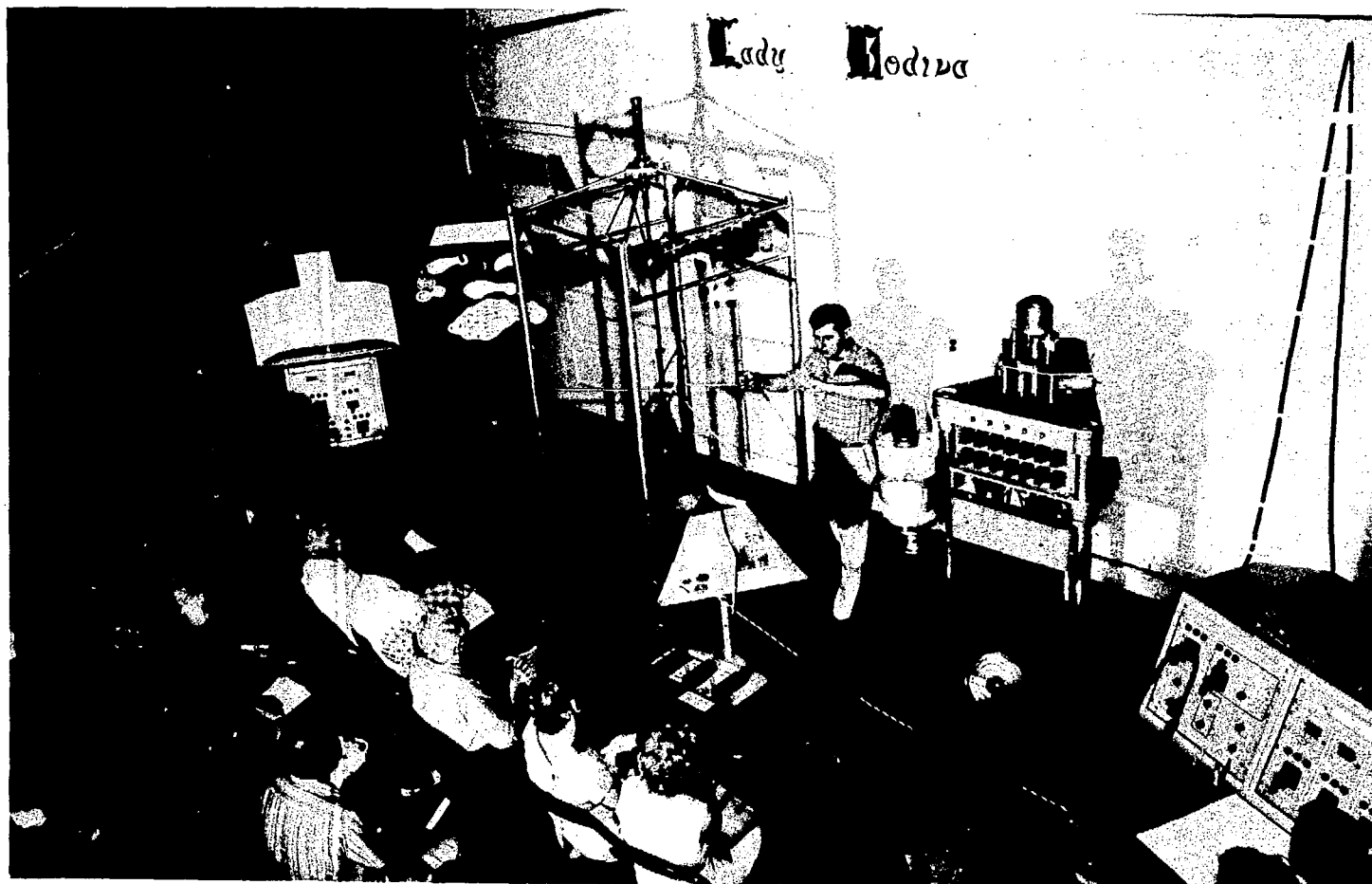


Fig. 28.

James Grundl demonstrating a model of Lady Godiva during Family Days of 1965. The chart in the background represents a superprompt-critical burst in which a power of ten billion watts is attained very briefly.

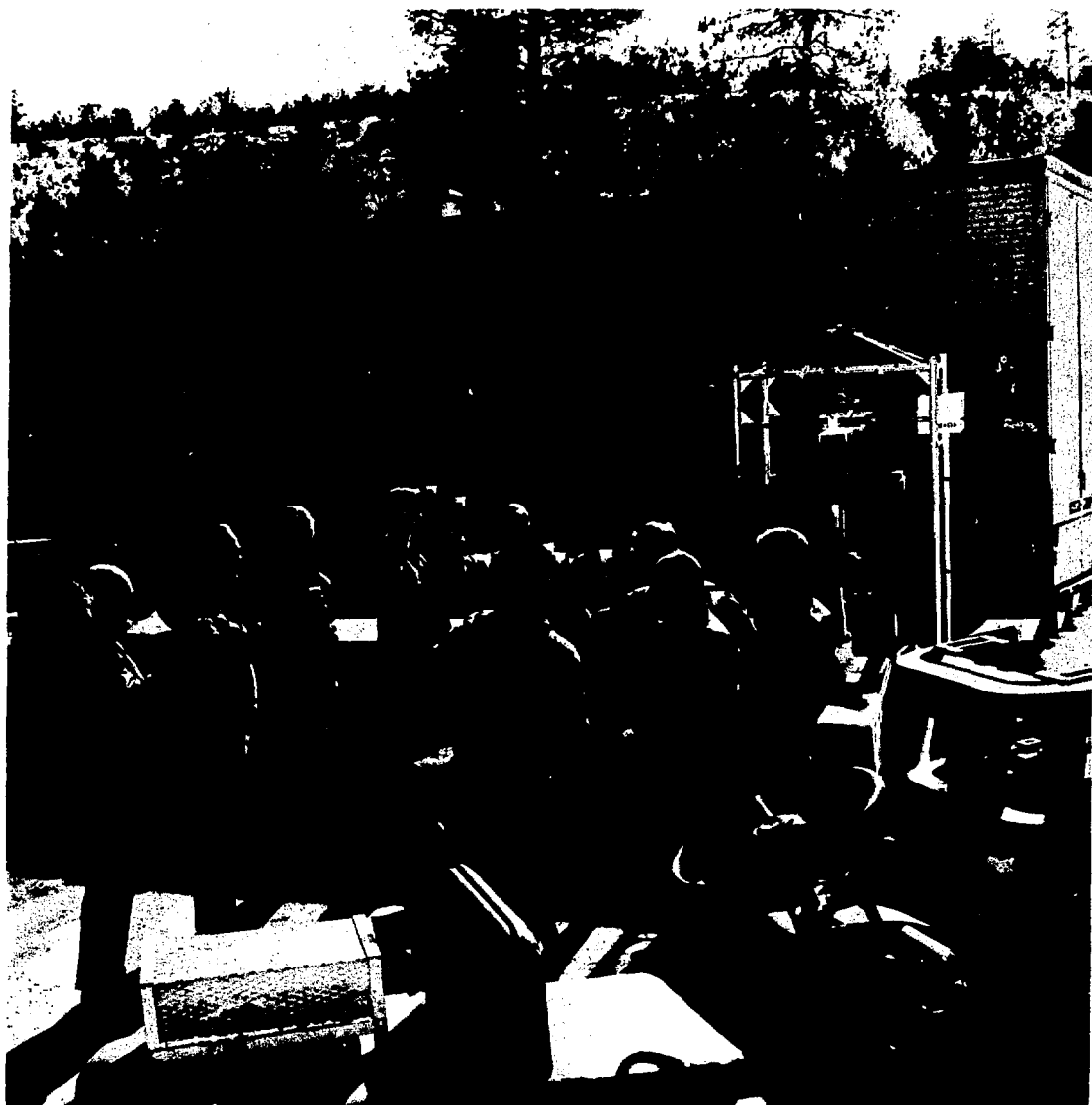


Fig. 29.

Seeing the Lady Godiva replica off to the Smithsonian Institution. James Grundl, master of ceremonies and instigator, has his back to the camera. Others, left to right, are Roger White, Robert Keepin, David Barton, Lewis Osborn, Arthur Usner, Manuel Diaz, and Gordon Hansen.

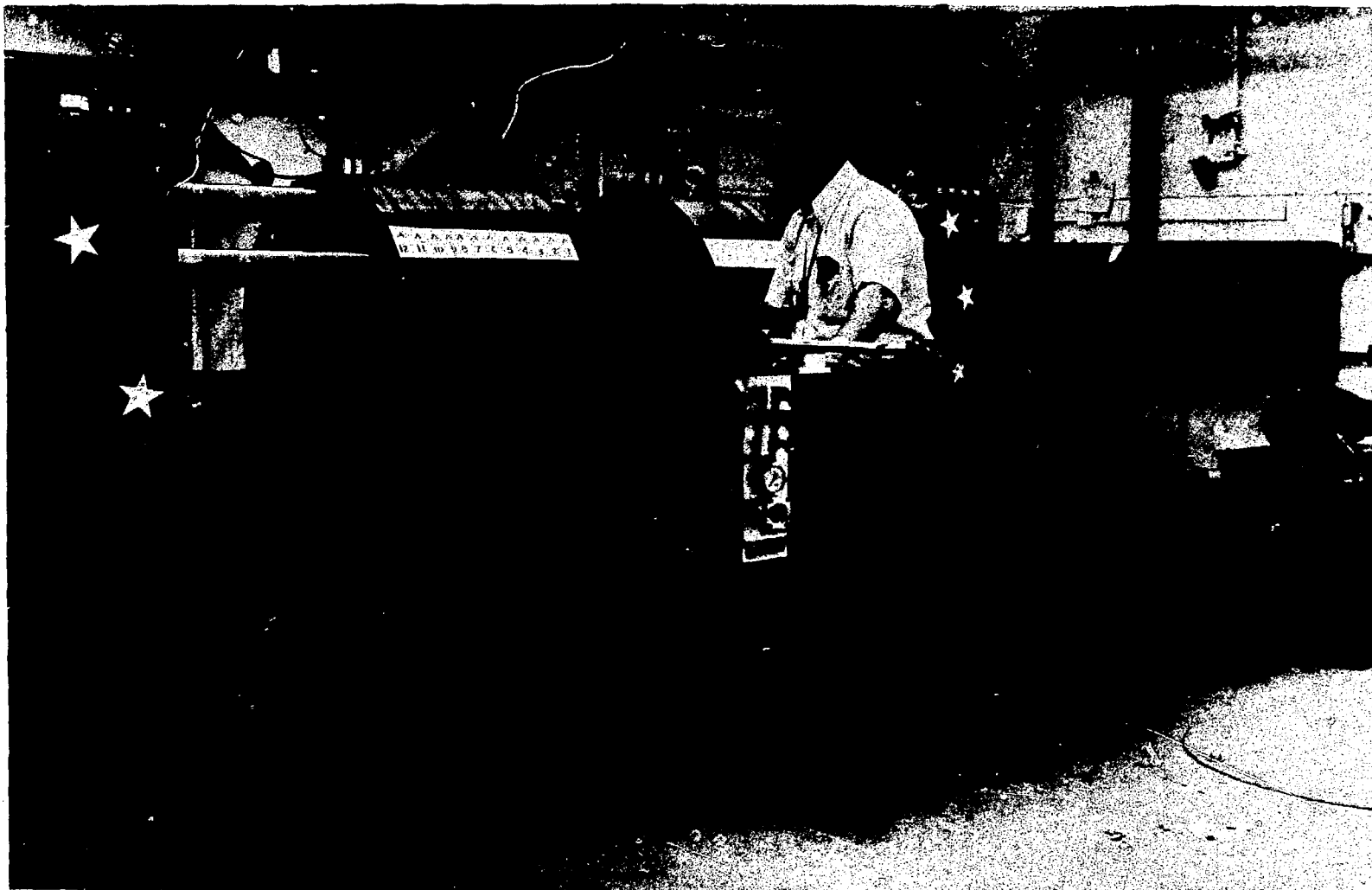


Fig. 30.

Big Ten, the all-uranium-metal assembly with core averaging 10% uranium-235. Behind is Gordon Hansen of Group Q-14, and in foreground is Jerry Koelling who left to join Group WX-8.

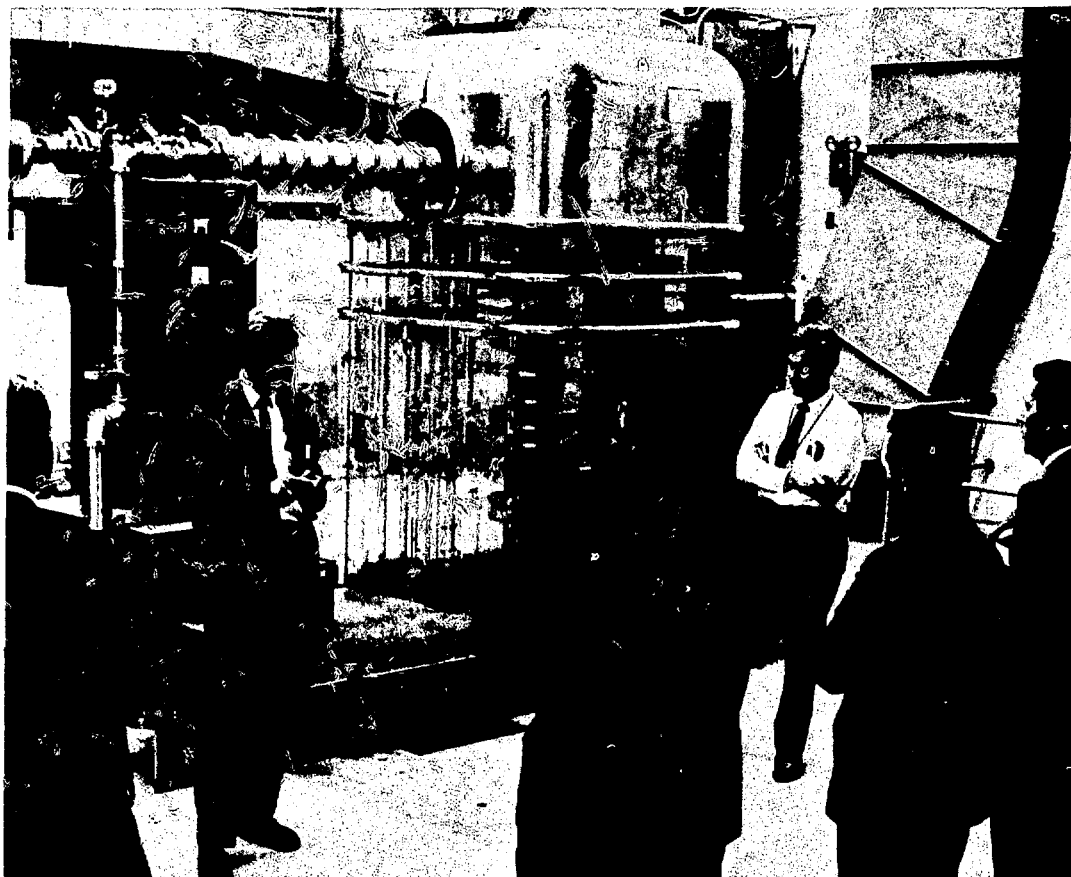


Fig. 31.

Robert Keepin showing the Pajarito Cockcroft-Walton accelerator to visitors escorted by Henry Motz, P-Division Leader. At present, the accelerator is operated by Group Q-2, and Keepin is the Associate Q-Division Leader for Nuclear Safeguards and Director of Nuclear Safeguards Programs.



*Fig. 32.
Carl Henry, Q-2 Group Leader, and Gary Worth of that Group evaluating a radiation
monitor for detecting fissile materials at plant exit points.*

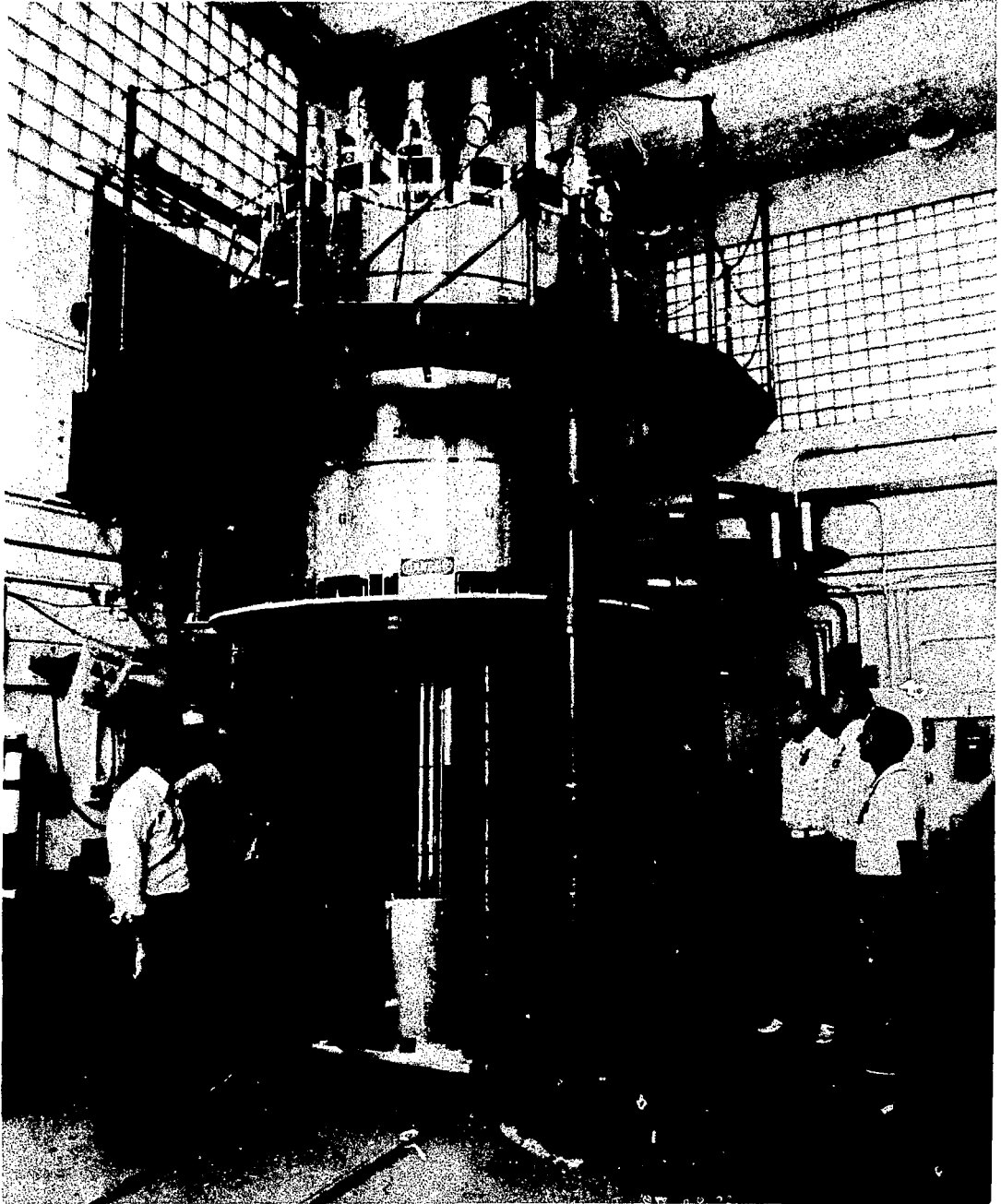


Fig. 33.

The Plasma Cavity Assembly with gas core simulated by Rover fuel. The thick beryllium reflector consists of Rover-reactor components. Shown, left to right, are William Bernard, George Jarvis, Carl Schwenk of NASA, Herbert Helmick, and Gordon Hansen.

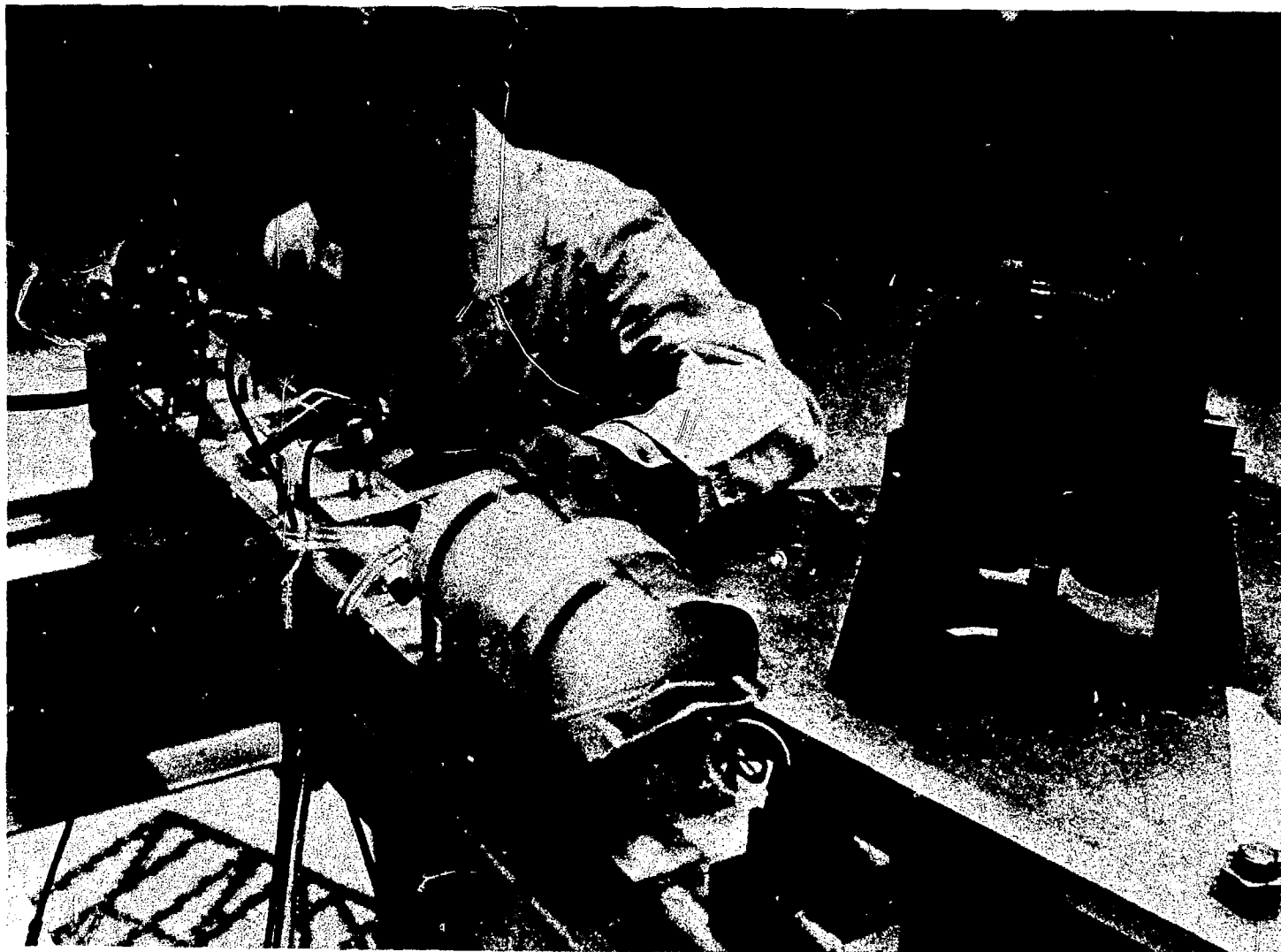


Fig. 34.
Fission-pumped laser with Godiva IV as a source. Herbert Helmick is checking the setup.

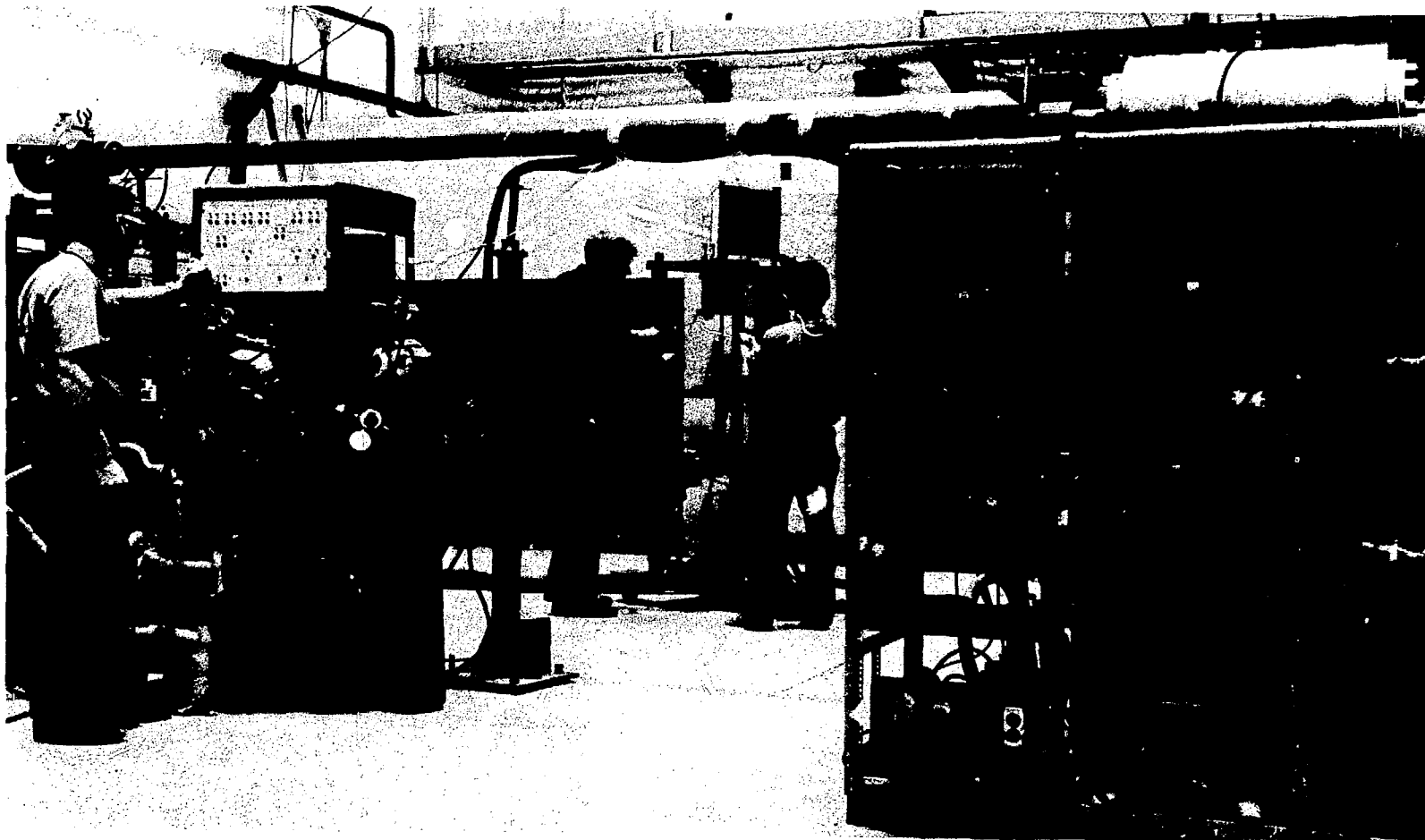


Fig. 35.

A Naval "cannon" adapted as a chamber for compressing UF_6 gas to 450 atmospheres and a temperature of 1250 K. The purpose is to examine radiation from the hot gas. In the foreground is Charles Mansfield of Group Q-8. With Godiva, which is used as a neutron source, are (left) Herbert Helmick, Q-8 Group Leader, and Raymond Pederson, Health Physics Surveyor.



Fig. 36.

Raemer Schreiber, LASL Deputy Director, right, presenting a safety award to the Critical Experiments Group. Hugh Paxton is accepting a plaque recognizing 1,500,000 manhours (25 years) without a disabling injury.

whether or not in a reactor. The portion directed specifically toward a proposed Safety Test facility remained centered in the Critical Experiments Group.

In these recent years, educational activities of our Group have grown. Largely for LASL personnel, but not limited to them, are training sessions in criticality safety conducted at Pajarito. Although conceived as a limited series, they are in such demand that they are being repeated seemingly without end. Also we have cooperated in several short courses on Nuclear Criticality Safety presented by the University of New Mexico. Both in connection with these courses and separately, our staff and facilities have been made available to augment the laboratory experience of Nuclear Engineering students. As encouraged by LASL administration, it is expected that cooperation with the University of New Mexico will continue along these lines.

Thus the original weapon-oriented activities of the Critical Experiments Group have diversified, and they promise to diversify further as a result of the Division's shifting in February 1977 from emphasis on reactor safety and technology to the broader interests of the Energy (Q) Division. As Q-14, this Group ends the thirty-year history recounted here and begins a sequel that offers further productivity and excitement.

REFERENCES

1. Peggy Pond Church, *The House at Otowi Bridge* (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, New Mexico 1959).
2. Roland A. Pettitt, *Los Alamos Before the Dawn* (Pajarito Publications, Los Alamos, New Mexico, 1972).
3. David Hawkins, "Manhattan District History, Project Y, The Los Alamos Project," Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory report LAMS-2532 (Vol. I, Inception until August 1945) (August 6, 1946).
4. Edith C. Truslow and Ralph Carlisle Smith, "Manhattan District History, Project Y, The Los Alamos Project," Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory report LAMS-2532 (Vol. II, August 1945 through December 1946) (October 15, 1947).
5. T. F. Wimett, "Time Behavior of Godiva through Prompt Critical," Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory report LA-2029 (May 1956).
6. H. C. Paxton, "Safety Analysis of the Los Alamos Critical Experiments Facility," Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory report LA-6206, Vol. I (February 1976), pp. 17-18.



Fig. 37.

University of New Mexico students assembling about Flattop in Kiva 2. David Smith (left) and Cleo Byers are in the foreground, and Thomas McLaughlin is at the right rear.

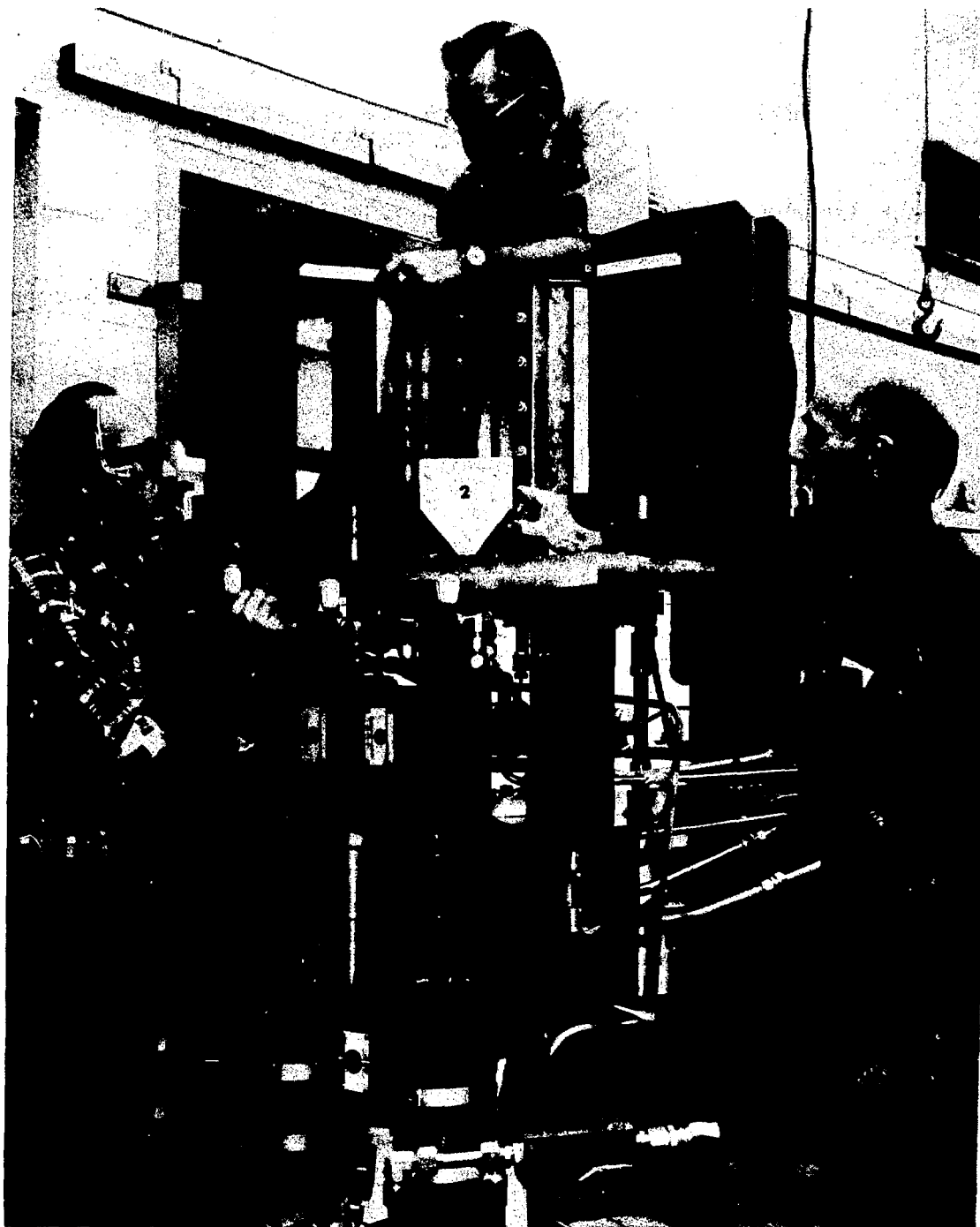


Fig. 38.

Skua, a descendent of Godiva for producing high-fluence pulses of low-energy neutrons. Expected applications include investigation of the influence of its intense radiation fields on air chemistry, and improved excitation of fission-pumped lasers. At the left is Calvin Davis of the Shops Department, above and to the right are Edward Ferdinand and Thomas Wimett of Group Q-14.

APPENDIX A

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL EXPERIMENTS GROUP

About 135 unclassified Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory LA and LAMS reports and 50 classified reports are not included.

P. G. Koontz, G. R. Keepin, and J. E. Ashley, "ZnS(Ag) Phosphor Mixture for Neutron Scintillation Counting," *Rev. Sci. Inst.* **26**, 352-356 (April 1955).

P. G. Koontz, C. W. Johnstone, G. R. Keepin, and J. D. Gallagher, "New Multichannel Recording Time-Delay Analyzer," *Rev. Sci. Inst.* **26**, 546-554 (June 1955).

H. C. Paxton, "Critical Assemblies at Los Alamos," *Nucleonics* **13**, 48-50 (October 1955).

G. R. Keepin and T. F. Wimett, "Delayed Neutrons," *Proc. Intern. Conf. Peaceful Uses At. Energy*, 1st, Geneva, 1955 (United Nations, New York, 1956), Vol. 4, pp. 162-170.

R. H. White, "Topsy, A Remotely Controlled Critical Assembly Machine," *Nucl. Sci. Eng.* **1**, 53-61 (March 1956).

R. E. Peterson and G. A. Newby, "An Unreflected U-235 Critical Assembly," *Nucl. Sci. Eng.* **1**, 112-125 (May 1956).

R. N. Olcott, "Homogeneous Heavy Water Moderated Critical Assemblies," *Nucl. Sci. Eng.* **1**, 327-341 (August 1956).

G. E. Hansen and W. H. Roach, "Interpretation of Neutron Resonance Detector Activities in Critical Uranyl Fluoride-Heavy Water Solutions," *Proc. Brookhaven Conf., Resonance Absorption of Neutrons in Nuclear Reactors*, Upton, New York, September 24-25, 1956 (Brookhaven National Laboratory report BNL-433, July 1957), pp. 13-25.

G. R. Keepin, "Delayed Neutrons," *Progress in Nuclear Energy*, Series I, Physics and Mathematics, Vol. 1 (Pergamon Press Ltd., London, 1956), pp. 191-225.

G. A. Graves and H. C. Paxton, "Critical Masses of Oralloy Assemblies," *Nucleonics* **15**, 90-92 (June 1957).

J. D. Orndoff, "Prompt Neutron Periods of Metal Critical Assemblies," *Nucl. Sci. Eng.* **2**, 450-460 (July 1957).

G. R. Keepin, T. F. Wimett, and R. K. Zeigler, "Delayed Neutrons from Fissionable Isotopes of Uranium, Plutonium, and Thorium," *Phys. Rev.* **107**, 1044-1049 (August 1957).

G. E. Hansen, J. C. Hoogterp, J. D. Orndoff, and H. C. Paxton, "Critical Assemblies of Graphite and Enriched Uranium with Beryllium Reflectors," *Proc. French-American*

Conf. Graphite Reactors, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York, November 12-15, 1957 (Brookhaven National Laboratory report BNL-489, 1958), pp. 291-296.

G. R. Keepin, T. F. Wimett, and R. K. Zeigler, "Delayed Neutrons from Fissionable Isotopes of Uranium, Plutonium and Thorium," J. Nucl. Energy 6, 1-21 (1957).

J. A. Grundl, R. L. Henkel, and B. L. Perkins, " $P^{31}(n,p)Si^{31}$ and $Al^{27}(n,\alpha)Na^{24}$ Cross Sections," Phys. Rev. 109, 425-428 (January 1958).

H. C. Paxton, "Critical Assembly Booby Traps," Nucleonics 16, 80-81 (March 1958).

H. C. Paxton, "Critical Facilities for Basic Physics," Nucleonics 16, 42 (December 1958).

G. A. Graves, G. E. Hansen, and D. P. Wood, "The Use of Los Alamos Critical Assembly Facilities in a Nuclear Training Program," Proc. Intern. Conf. Peaceful Uses At. Energy, 2nd, Geneva, 1958 (United Nations, New York, 1958), Vol. 1, pp. 332-336.

T. F. Wimett and J. D. Orndoff, "Applications of Godiva II Neutron Pulses," Proc. Intern. Conf. Peaceful Uses At. Energy, 2nd, Geneva, 1958 (United Nations, New York, 1958), Vol. 10, pp. 449-460.

G. E. Hansen, "Properties of Elementary Fast-Neutron Critical Assemblies," Proc. Intern. Conf. Peaceful Uses At. Energy, 2nd, Geneva, 1958 (United Nations, New York, 1958), Vol. 12, pp. 84-88.

W. R. Stratton, T. H. Colvin, and R. B. Lazarus, "Analysis of Prompt Excursions in Simple Systems and Idealized Fast Reactors," Proc. Intern. Conf. Peaceful Uses At. Energy, 2nd, Geneva, 1958 (United Nations, New York, 1958), Vol. 12, pp. 196-206.

H. C. Paxton, R. D. Baker, W. J. Maraman, and Roy Reider, "Los Alamos Criticality Accident, December 30, 1958," Nucleonics 17, 107-108, 151-153 (April 1959).

L. J. Koch and H. C. Paxton, "Fast Reactors," Ann. Rev. Nucl. Sci. 9, 437-472 (1959).

G. A. Jarvis, G. A. Linenberger, J. D. Orndoff, and H. C. Paxton, "Two Plutonium-Metal Critical Assemblies," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 525-531 (1960).

G. E. Hansen and C. Maier, "Perturbation Theory of Reactivity Coefficients for Fast-Neutron Critical Systems," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 532-542 (1960).

L. B. Engle, G. E. Hansen, and H. C. Paxton, "Reactivity Contributions of Various Materials in Topsy, Godiva, and Jezebel," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 543-569 (1960).

G. E. Hansen, H. C. Paxton, and D. P. Wood, "Critical Plutonium and Enriched-Uranium-Metal Cylinders of Extreme Shape," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 570-577 (1960).

D. P. Wood, C. C. Byers, and L. C. Osborn, "Critical Masses of Cylinders of Plutonium Diluted with Other Metals," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 578-587 (1960).

- G. E. Hansen, D. P. Wood, and W. U. Geer, "Critical Masses of Enriched-Uranium Cylinders with Multiple Reflectors of Medium-Z Elements," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 588-594 (1960).
- J. A. Grundl and A. Usner, "Spectral Comparisons with High Energy Activation Detectors," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 598-607 (1960).
- C. C. Byers, "Cross Sections of Various Materials in the Godiva and Jezebel Critical Assemblies," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 608-614 (1960).
- E. A. Plassmann and D. P. Wood, "Critical Reflector Thicknesses for Spherical U^{235} and Pu^{239} Systems," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 615-620 (1960).
- W. H. Roach, "Computational Survey of Idealized Fast Breeder Reactors," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 621-651 (1960).
- C. G. Chezem, "A Uranium-Metal Exponential Experiment," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 652-669 (1960).
- G. R. Keepin and C. W. Cox, "General Solution of the Reactor Kinetic Equations," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 670-690 (1960).
- T. F. Wimett, R. H. White, W. R. Stratton, and D. P. Wood, "Godiva II—An Unmoderated Pulse-Irradiation Reactor," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 691-708 (1960).
- G. E. Hansen, "Assembly of Fissionable Material in the Presence of a Weak Neutron Source," Nucl. Sci. Eng. 8, 709-719 (1960).
- G. E. Hansen, "Status of Computational and Experimental Correlations for Los Alamos Fast-Neutron Critical Assemblies," Proc. Seminar on Physics of Fast and Intermediate Reactors, Vienna, August 3-11, 1961 (IAEA, Vienna, 1962), Vol. I, pp. 445-455.
- C. G. Chezem and R. H. Moore, "Autoradiographic Power Distribution Measurements in Nuclear Reactors and Analysis by Digital Computer Methods," Phot. Sci. Eng. 5, 343-348 (November-December 1961).
- F. P. Durham and J. D. Orndoff, "Nuclear Propulsion," *Handbook of Astronautics* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1961), Sec. 21, pp. 2-31.
- H. C. Paxton, "Correlations of Experimental and Theoretical Critical Data," *Criticality Control in Chemical and Metallurgical Plant*, Proc. Karlsruhe Symp. (O.E.C.D., Paris, 1961), pp. 173-206.
- W. R. Stratton, "A Review of Criticality Incidents," *Criticality Control in Chemical and Metallurgical Plant*, Proc. Karlsruhe Symp. (O.E.C.D., Paris, 1961), pp. 491-533.
- E. R. Woodcock and H. C. Paxton, "The Criticality Aspects of Transportation of Fissile Materials," *Progress in Nuclear Energy, Series IV, Technology, Engineering and Safety*, Vol. 4 (Pergamon Press, London, 1961), pp. 401-434.