

Chapter 14

Getting Ready

One day the regular Reeves Aleutian Airline Flight arrived, and from out of nowhere a military guard surrounded the plane. No one was allowed to leave the plane — no supplies were unloaded, no mail, nothing. A flat bed truck backed up to the baggage compartment, opened it and started unloading a half dozen boxes — very carefully.

Our forty kiloton hydrogen bomb had arrived.

I watched from the window of my office — just a bunch of cardboard boxes. You would have passed it on the street — in fact, I don't believe the airline knew they were carrying it. I'm sure the passengers didn't. I wonder how many we have met on the highway being hauled across country on a truck?

The hole had been completed a few days earlier, the computer to trigger the shot was on the island and running — now things were ready to get serious.

Some of the "scientific crew" assembled the bomb, and our Corps of Engineers crew performed the task of lowering it in the hole, filling it back up, then capping it to prevent a blowout.

Moisture was a "no-no", and all the sand, gravel, and plastics used in sealing off the hole could not contain more than a 5% moisture content. This is very dry. On Amchitka this created a problem. Solution: a building was constructed over the top of the hole which

housed a conveyor/dryer combination, and by carefully monitoring the materials this very critical criteria was met.

The hole had been drilled, I believe, to about 2200 feet deep and the bomb placed at the bottom. In fifty foot sections the sand, gravel, plastics, and concrete were alternated to its top; then capped with concrete. This arrangement was designed to contain the explosion underground, completely – which it did. According to the scientific personnel I talked with they anticipated that the explosion would produce a 500 foot glass- lined globe, which would be sufficient to hold up the earth above it without creating a crater. Air samples would be taken for an extended period of time to be sure there were no "leaks" to the atmosphere.

The plans were to drill into the globe to analyze the test results, then seal it off where they had drilled – put a chain link fence around the site with warning signs, then turn the island back over to the eagles and sea otters – until ready for the "big" shots.

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