

1st Test Made in Desert

Grand Forks (ND) Herald
early to mid August 1945
(included with Aunt Jean's
Aug 9 letter)

LOS ALAMOS, N. M.—(AP)

— The age of atomic force, described by the war department as most destructive known to man, was ushered in July 16, 1945, when a group of renowned scientists and military leaders gathered in New Mexico's desert wastelands to witness the results of their \$2,000,000,000 experiment.

The war department disclosed Monday that the test took place on that date on an isolated section of the Alamogordo, N. M., air base, 120 miles southeast of Albuquerque at 5:30 A. M.

"A revolutionary weapon destined to change war as we know it, or which may even be the instrumentality to end all wars," said the war department's announcement, "was set off with an impact which signaled man's entrance into a new physical world."

"A small amount of matter, the product of a chain of huge specially-constructed industrial plants, was made to release the energy of the universe, locked up within the atom from the beginning of time."

'SEEN' BY BLIND GIRL

The blast from that test jarred windows in homes as distant as southern Arizona.

At Albuquerque, 120 miles away, a blind girl, when the flash of the test lighted the sky before the explosion could be heard, asked, "What was that?"

A thunderstorm delayed the test an hour and a half and blotted out aerial observation.

The nearest lookout point was set up 10,000 yards from the steel tower from which the experiment took place. Key figures in the experiment took their positions 17,000 yards away. They were ordered to lie down with their heads away from the blast tower.

Final assembly of the atomic bomb had begun the night of July 12 in an old ranch house. Various component parts were assembled from distant points and put together there.

Dr. Enrico Fermi, noted nuclear scientist.

Maj. Gen. Leslie R. Groves, head of the atomic bomb project, gave this description.

"First came the burst of light of a brilliance beyond any comparison. We all rolled over and looked through dark glasses at the ball of fire. About 40 seconds later came the shock wave followed by the sound, neither of which seemed startling after our complete astonishment at the extraordinary lighting intensity.

"A massive cloud was formed which surged and billowed upward with tremendous power, reaching the stratosphere in about five minutes.

"Two supplementary explosions of minor effect other than the lighting occurred in the cloud shortly after the main explosion.

"The cloud traveled to a great height first in the form of a ball, then mushroomed, then changed into a long trailing chimney-shaped column and finally was sent in several directions by the variable winds at the different elevations."