INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 5 September 1945

TO: File

FROM: Ralph Carlisle Smith

SUBJECT: Comments on Trinity Test Shot Trip.

PUBLICLY RELEASABLE
LANL Classification Group
MAR 23 2000

At about 1945 MWT, 15 July 1945, the coordinating council started from the Los Alamos Technical Area, riding in a three bus convoy with three G. I. sedans driven by Convoy Commander Captain George Turner, Mr. David Row, and Dr. Earl Long and with a G. I. truck carrying spare equipment. The first stop was at the Camel on the Santa Fe Road. Then through back road of Santa Fe to outskirts of Albuquerque where we stopped twenty minutes for convoy to be reassembled. The truck had broken down and the sedans had stopped to get passengers at Santa Fe (Dr. C. A. Thomas).

We then proceeded to Wilson's garage to get gas, remaining in Albuquerque for about 45 minutes -- the passengers wandering about town. At the Hilton, Sir James Chadwick, William Laurence, William Fowler, Tom Lauritsen, Charles Lauritsen, Major Ackerman, and an Army Captain (S-2) awaited the convoy. 2nd Lt. Dazzo (S-2) was there but was returning to Los Alamos.

We proceeded to Trinity (just beyond San Antonio, N. Mex) on Route U. S. 385 at a turn off marked Harriets Ranch. We were first stopped at the bivouac of Major T. O. Palmer's Special Detachment of Engineers, who were stationed there for any emergency such as evacuation of personnel. After a brief check we proceeded to the Military Police Post No. 2 which was about 20 miles from zero point and about ten miles from the Trinity Base Camp. This was approximately 0200 to 0230 16 July 1945. About 0500 the searchlights allegedly at 6 miles from zero point started playing about, apparently fixing cloud elevation. At about 0520, the warning came by radio that the test was about to take place in 10 minutes. 1st Lt. Schaeffer, a civilian, and I stretched out on a blanket facing south to the spot where theseveral searchlights seemed to be focusing on the ground. A glow was appearing in the sky toward the East so that the mountain range stood out quite distinctly. The road was to our right and the buses to the rear of us. It was bright enough that you could identify people several hundred feet away. 1st Lt. Huene fired a rocket at minus six minutes and again at minus three. The latter did not explode in the air, hence another rocket went up about minus one minute. About then you could hear the warning siren at the bivouac area. I was staring straight ahead with my open left eye covered by a welders glass and my right eye remaining open and uncovered. Suddenly, my right eye was blinded by a light which appeared instanteneously all about without any build up of intensity. My left eye could see the ball of fire start up like a tremendous bubble or nob-like mushroom. I dropped the glass from

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by authority of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission,
By L Redman 6/9/54
(Person authorizing change in classification) (Date)
By Pat McCandless 6/9/54
(Signature of person making the change, and date)

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SUBJECT: Comments on Trinity Test Shot Trip.

my left eye almost immediately and watched the light climb upward. The light intensity fell rapidly hence did not blind my left eye but it was still amazingly bright. It turned yellow, then red, and then beautiful purple. At first it had a translucent character but shortly turned to a tinted or colored white smoke appearance. The ball of fire seemed to rise in something of toadstool effect. Later the column proceeded as a cylinder of white smoke; it seemed to move ponderously. A hole was punched through the clouds but two fog rings appeared well above the white smoke column. There was a spontaneous cheer of the observers. Dr. Von Neumann said "that was at least 5000 tons and probably a lot more." My estimate of the width of the ball of fire was guessed to be 1 to 2 miles at that time. Someone said keep your mouth open and just then, about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes after the light flash, a sharp loud crack swept over us--it reverberated through the mountain like thunder. Several small flashes took place some distance from and after the big flash, apparently part of a measuring system. Commander Bradbury said that the cloud was up over 20,000 feet and still rising. The top of the cloud was moving slightly northeast and was being sheared off. At about 0555, we were aboard the buses and started home again. We stopped for relief on the road between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, we passed at Santa Fe (Closson & Closson) but did not dismount. We arrived at the Hill at about 1300 16 July 1945.

Ralph Carlisle Smith

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PER DOC REVIEW JAN. 1973

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