

H-Bomb Race On Savannah Said Progressing Right On Schedule

By DOUGLAS LAISEN
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 AUGUSTA, Ga. (NEA)—America's most vital defense project, the Savannah River hydrogen bomb plant, is one of history's largest and most fabulous single construction jobs.

When this fantastically large and complicated plant is completed it should give America a new, commanding lead in the race with Russia to produce nuclear weapons.

And despite Congressional harassment, and weak support from government production officials, it is going up on schedule. That's the claim of Trumble Blake, engineer and spokesman for the E. I. duPont de Nemours Co., which is building the plant and will run it.

Some statistics reveal its almost unbelievable size. The site, on the East bank of the Savannah River in South Carolina, occupies 315 square miles. This is five times the size of the District of Columbia and about one-third the size of the whole state of Rhode Island.

More than 36,000 construction workers draw about \$4 million a week. In the Fall a peak of 45,000 workers is expected. The permanent employment at the plant is estimated at 7000.

The 32 million cubic yards of earth being moved for the various plants and roadways would fill a hole one-quarter of a mile square more than 500 feet deep.

Each day 11,000 private cars swarm in and out of the project, requiring 150 traffic officers on the site. A crew of 25 men works on nothing but pest and insect control. The project has a complete weather station.

The \$1.2 billion estimated cost makes it about one-third larger than the Hanford, Wash., atomic plant, which had been the world's biggest single construction job. That comparison includes increase in costs.

Today all but 15 families have been moved off of the site. At a



WHEELED TRAILERS house Savannah River Hydrogen plant construction workers in hundreds of parks, like this one at Augusta, Ga. Most of the available trailers are rented.



BIG BARRACKS were built along with trailer camps to house construction workers, but only 1500 of the 4500 rooms are rented. Contractor subsidizes rents for the empty barracks.

are included.

Exact progress of construction of the plant and the date it will get into full operation are secret. Some of the 250 permanent buildings, scattered all over the site in individual areas, are completed. The rest, consisting of huge, strange-looking concrete and steel structures, factories resembling huge petroleum refineries, and gigantic power plants are in various stages of construction.

Trumble Blake, the key du Pont engineer, says:

"We are right now on the time schedule we promised the AEC at the start of construction."

However, he admits that if production officials in Washington had given the plant a top priority for materials it would now be ahead of that schedule. Instead, the plant has had to compete for materials with far less important defense projects.

All the Atomic Energy Commission has said is that the plant will

produce materials for both hydrogen and atomic bombs. It is assumed that this means the hydrogen substance known as tritium, a basic ingredient in the H-bomb, and plutonium for A-bombs.

Any person who is familiar with construction jobs can see evidence of good coordination. There is a minimum of loafing, plenty of signs of economy-minded management. All superintendents and key project men are in constant touch through an efficient communications system which includes eight short-wave channels.

Housing for workers has been a major headache. Based on previous experience, AEC and du Pont signed a contract with private firms to build barracks and set up trailer camps, and guaranteed to pay the difference in rent if they were not filled.

Approximately 3000 of the 4500 barracks rooms are empty. The trailers are full. However, a federal rent board ordered trailer rent cut from \$2.50 per month to \$60 and rent per week for double barracks rooms cut from \$15 to \$10.

An appeal has shown comparable housing in the area to be more expensive. The average worker gets more than \$100 a week. If the appeal is denied and the barracks stay as empty as they are, the total bill for subsidizing the workers' rent will be \$6,112,000.

However, the barracks, which are far better than the average Army barracks, are slowly filling up. The jamming in nearby Augusta and Aiken could soon help fill the barracks completely.

Former citizens of Ellenton are now adjusting to their new environments and the citizens of adjoining towns are enjoying new prosperity.

The site was selected for the ample, mineral-free water supply of the Savannah River and because there was a lot of land with few people on it, located near much larger centers of population.

Fireball Seen Over Klamath

A small white ball of fire trailing orange flame sailed over downtown Klamath Falls at about 10:30 p.m. last night, disappearing in a cloud of sparks.

W. A. Sattelberg, New York, was walking down Main Street with his dog Duchesne when he heard a sizzling noise in the air above him. He glanced up to see the fireball moving in a northeasterly direction across Main street. It ended at about Main and Esplanade.

Sattelberg said his dog, a German Shepherd, heard it and pulled back at the sound, attracting his attention to it.

He described it as about six inches in diameter, with an orange tail about two feet long behind it. He estimated its speed at between 50 and 60 miles per hour.

New Lookouts On Pelican

Two new lookouts have been posted atop Pelican Butte, on the Rogue River National Forest northwest of Klamath Falls.

They are Mr. and Mrs. Francis Gaines, Gainesville, Fla., college students who plan to do a hitch on the mountain top during summer vacation.

The couple had to hike three miles over snow-clogged trails to get to their summer home. Dist. Ranger R. L. Cooper reported plans are clearing the road out slowly, and the lookouts will be ready for visitors later this month.

He said the tower building itself suffered some snow damage during the past winter.

Pelican Butte is 8026 feet high, one of the highest lookouts in this part of the country. It can be reached later by taking the Lake of the Woods road and following the signposts.

Four Groups Now At Lake O'Woods

Lake of the Woods is the scene of our young people's encampments. District Ranger Robert Cooper reports:

At the present time are Merford Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls from Klamath Falls, Girl Scouts from Medford, and the Salvation Army.

The new resort building is nearing completion, Cooper said, with the lower area ready for use.

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