

Bacteria Study Seeks Answers To Radiation

An intensive study of mysterious chemical compounds that seem to help some microorganisms withstand thousands of times as much atomic radiation as a normal human is under way at Oregon State College.

The three-year research project, financed by a \$24,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, is under the direction of Dr. A. W. Anderson and Dr.

Paul R. Elliker, OSC bacteriologists. In the study, the researchers hope to isolate and identify certain chemical compounds that seem to make it possible for some bacteria to withstand radiation dosages of over four million roentgens—about 10,000 times as much as a normal human.

The bacteria the scientists are studying were discovered at the OSC agricultural experiment sta-

tion four years ago. Research since that time has shown the bacteria are equally resistant to normally-lethal doses of ultraviolet light and X-rays.

Since their discovery, OSC scientists have studied the bacteria's metabolism—the way they chemically use their food—and their physical structure. These studies indicated the bacteria produced chemical compounds in

their every-day living processes that hadn't previously been reported as products of normal metabolism in living organisms.

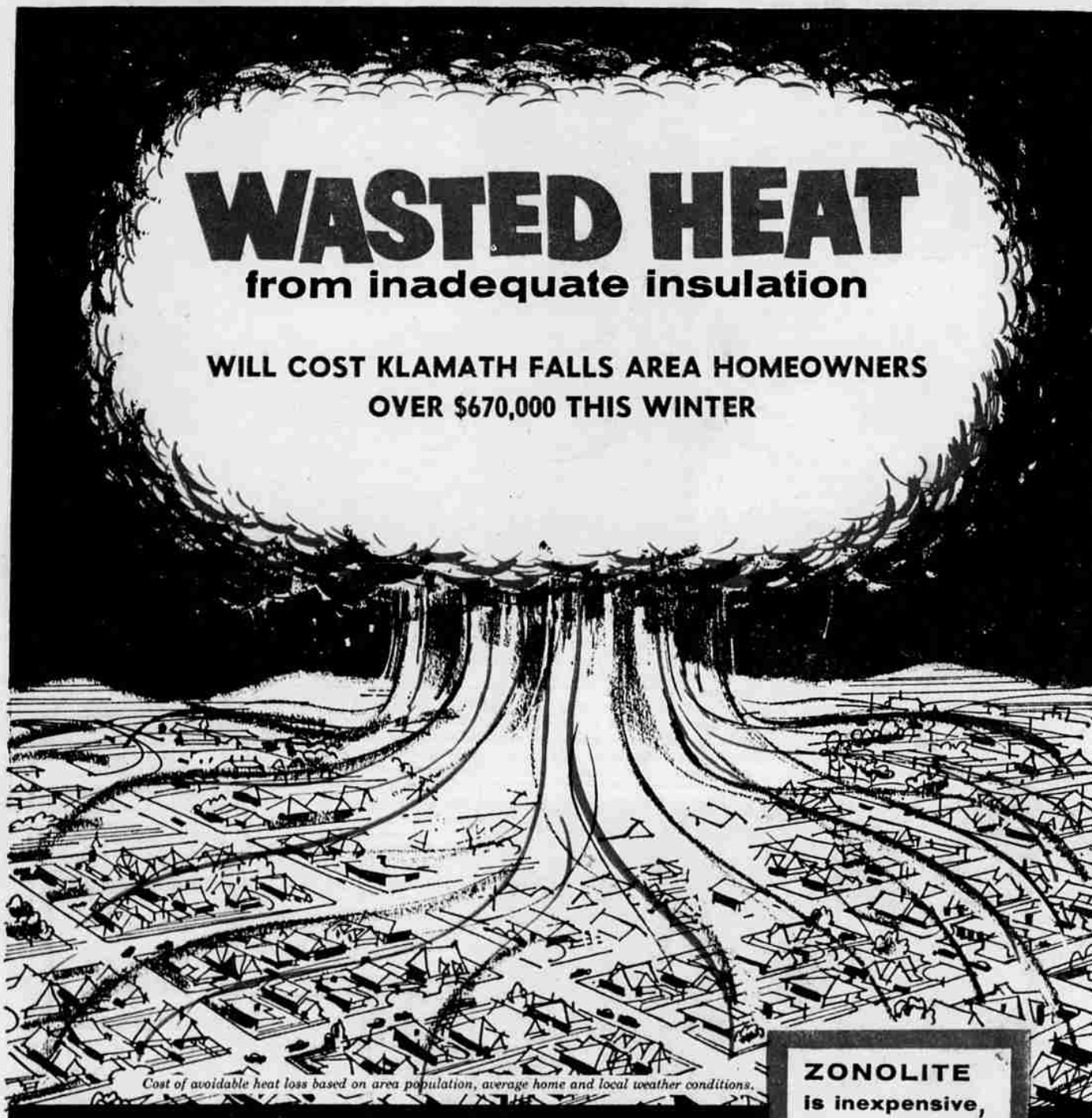
This information led the scientists to believe these unusual chemical compounds may be the key to the bacteria's phenomenal radiation resistance. As soon as they are able to isolate and analyze these compounds, the scientists plan to carry out tests to see if these compounds can be used to provide improved radiation resistance in higher forms

of life. Working on the study, in addition to Anderson and Elliker, are Anne Deeny and Lee Jong, OSC graduate assistants.

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