

Ice Age man called superior Government faces nuclear test suit

United Press International
LONDON — Modern man likes to think of himself as the inheritor of the Earth but Prof. Valerius Geist suggests it is time to stop bragging. He thinks the most impressive human of them all lived back in the Ice Age.

Geist suggests in a provocative theory published in New Scientist that only conditions of abundant resources produce really healthy individuals and Ice Age man not only lived in such an environment but he regulated his population to prevent

its destruction.

It's been down and up for the human race ever since, said the University of Calgary environmentalist, but the Ice Age represented a sort of peak.

"Bronze age and early middle-age Europeans also had eye-catching development, larger in average body size than present-day Europeans," Geist said. "Phenotypic development (the qualities acquired by a group) deteriorated thereafter, falling to a low during the Industrial Revolution.

He said recovery towards 'normal' development may still be in progress — the growth increases of the recent decades — "but on average we are still less well developed than some earlier humans."

Geist said his theory came to him during ecological studies he carried out in Canada's St. Elias Range which contains some 12,000 square miles of ice within massive glaciers. Contrary to popular belief, he said, glaciers are not hostile to life and at their edges produce conditions highly favorable to large mammals — of which Man is one.

He reached the conclusion that Ice Age Man had a hunting diet of animal products only occasionally supplemented with vegetables.

"They worked excruciatingly hard to gain tactical hunting skills against a dozen species of very dangerous large mammals.

"Confrontation hunting (closing in on prey) demanded superb strategic judgement, great bodily dexterity and skills in using weapons, great courage and unflinching loyalty to the hunting companions."

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LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Atomic Energy Commission officials gathered shortly after dawn at the Nevada Test Site on Dec. 18, 1970, to conduct an underground nuclear test codenamed "Baneberry."

The weapons-related device was one of the series of AEC nuclear tests spanning two decades at the desert facility, about 100 miles north of Las Vegas.

Something went wrong. The force of the underground blast tore open a 315-foot-long fissure in the earth's surface, less than 100 yards from ground zero. A radioactive cloud emerged.

Now, eight years later, nearly three months of testimony has been presented in a Las Vegas courtroom on whether two men died from effects of the escaped radiation, and

whether the government was at fault.

An official close to the government's case said the outcome of the trial, expected later this year, could have far-reaching effects in hundreds of claims involving millions of dollars filed by persons who say they were exposed to fallout from Nevada atmospheric tests in the 1950s and 1960s.

Baneberry, designed by the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in California, was intended to be a relatively low-yield explosion, be-

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lieved to be equivalent to less than 20,000 tons of TNT. It was buried in a 910-foot vertical shaft at Yucca Flat in the northeastern part of the 850,000-acre research facility.

Frank Cluff, the AEC deputy test manager at NTS and Baneberry project manager, said that when the blast was detonated at 7:30 a.m., scientists at the control point 19 miles south of the blast site "saw the normal shock wave and dust cloud" on television monitors linked to remote cameras focused on ground zero.

Three minutes later, a shadow passed across one monitor. Part of a cloud was visible in one corner of the screen. Cluff said he waited for the remote radiation monitor readings and went outside to take a look at the "vertical cloud of dust, obviously radioactive material."

Winds in the area were forecast to blow about four knots to the north and east. As was common practice, security guards swept areas north and east of ground zero to evacuate non-essential personnel. A work camp with 900 men, located 3.5 miles northwest of the Baneberry detonation point, was not evacuated.

However, the winds shifted. Between 7:38 a.m. and 8 a.m. the light winds gradually turned towards the southeast, then towards the southwest and finally, began blowing towards the camp. Cluff said he ordered an evacuation at 8:05 a.m.

One of the guards ordered into the camp was Harley Roberts, 50, a former Indiana truck driver who

moved to Las Vegas in 1966 where he got a job with Wackenhut Services, Inc.

Roberts and a dozen other security guards arrived at the camp at about 8:30 a.m. and ran from trailer to trailer, urging the men to leave. The cloud, he said, engulfed the camp.

When the camp finally was evacuated between 9:30 and 10, Roberts was ordered to set up a roadblock at Dead Horse Flats, several miles northwest of the camp. While the other security guards and the camp residents were gathered at a central point several miles south of the camp for a radiation check, Roberts remained at the roadblock until late afternoon when officials ordered him in for decontamination.

Test site welder William Nunamaker, 61, who lived in one of the trailers at the camp during the week, boarded a bus that morning and went to his job in a tunnel operation a short distance north of the campsite. A short time after he arrived at the tunnel, he was ordered to reboard the bus and his crew was evacuated.

Roberts and Nunamaker complained they felt increasingly tired and weak in 1972 and 1973. Both men died of myeloid leukemia in 1974. Their widows filed suit against the U.S. government.

The non-jury trial on the widows' civil suits began in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas on Jan. 16 before Judge Roger Foley.

Dorothy Roberts originally sought \$3.5 million. That amount

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was reduced to \$625,000 shortly before the trial's start. Louise Nunamaker's request for a \$1 million judgment was lowered to \$520,000.

Larry Johns, the women's attorney, alleges the government was guilty of 20 acts of negligence before, during and after the Baneberry detonation.

The charges concern the evacuation and drilling, failure to adequately train personnel and plan for an evacuation; failure to provide protective clothing; delay in decontaminating the camp.

Justice Department attorneys William Elliott and John Roberts maintain the accident prevented occurred when saturated soil geologic conditions.

Both sides agree that the issue in the case is whether Baneberry radiation caused men's leukemias and deaths.

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Eighty-six persons, including Roberts and Nunamaker, are enough radiation exposure. Baneberry to require decontamination. Government records into evidence show Roberts received approximately one dose of gamma radiation and Nunamaker was exposed to somewhat less.

Testifying for the widows, Alice Stewart, a British epidemiologist, said the men's deaths from a rare marrow leukemia was an occurrence. The 71-year-old statistician said the chances of the given group of 86 men contracting myeloid leukemia naturally "three in 10,000."

Dr. Stewart, involved in radiation studies since World War II, including an examination of level radiation effects on workers at Hanford, Wash., believes low-level radiation is highly improbable that the of two Nevada Test Site sites in 1974 from myeloid leukemia have occurred for reasons of radiation," she testified.

testimony was echoed by epidemiologist.

Dr. Shields Warren, emeritus at Harvard University Medical School and the first of biology and medicine at AEC, told the court radiation from the Baneberry blast was "a reasonable medical certainty cause of Roberts' leukemia."

"But to evidence he could not be certain Nunamaker.

The government presented weeks of defense testimony.

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