

Army radiation records falsified, medic says

United Press International
SACRAMENTO — The government kept two sets of records — one phony and the other accurate — of radiation exposure to soldiers in atomic tests in Nevada in 1956 and 1957, a former Army medic says.

Van R. Brandon, facing a threat of treason, broke 25 years of silence Sunday at a news conference to say he followed orders when he prepared the bogus records hiding high levels of radiation exposure to soldiers at the Yucca Flat, Nev., test site.

Two of Brandon's seven children were born mentally retarded, two others have developed arthritis and one of his two grandchildren had her blood changed at birth. He says he believes their problems are due to his own radiation exposure. He said he was worried about other veterans exposed to the radiation and their families might have similar problems.

James Freeman, a Pentagon spokesman in Washington, said he had no comment on the news conference or on an earlier interview, in which Brandon said his seven-man, top secret Combined Operations Nuclear Medical Evaluation Team kept two sets of ledgers to record radiation readings from film badges worn by soldiers at the test site.

The badges were designed to record the levels of radiation to which the men wearing them, who were sometimes marched to ground zero, had been exposed.

"One set was to show that no one received an exposure above the approved dosimeter read-

ing," he said. "The other set of books was to show what the actual reading was.

Sometimes the badges actually measured radiation exposures below the limit. In those cases, the true levels were recorded in both the real and phony books.

But two tests — in June 1956 and April 1957 — were the dirtiest ones, he said.

"Things were very highly contaminated," Brandon said. "I mean the ground zero was hot for weeks afterwards. They didn't march people through ground zero, but they got them close."

Brandon, 45, who now lives in Marysville, Calif., said when he left the Army in 1961 he was warned that if he told anyone of his experiences "I could be charged with treason under the National Security Act."

Barry Kail of the National Association of Atomic Veterans, based in Burlington, Iowa, said most test documents have been declassified and there are few legal risks in talking.

Brandon, who has suffered from degenerative discogenic spine disease since November 1979, said he was denied veterans benefits. He said officials denied the existence of the top secret medic unit he says he was in.

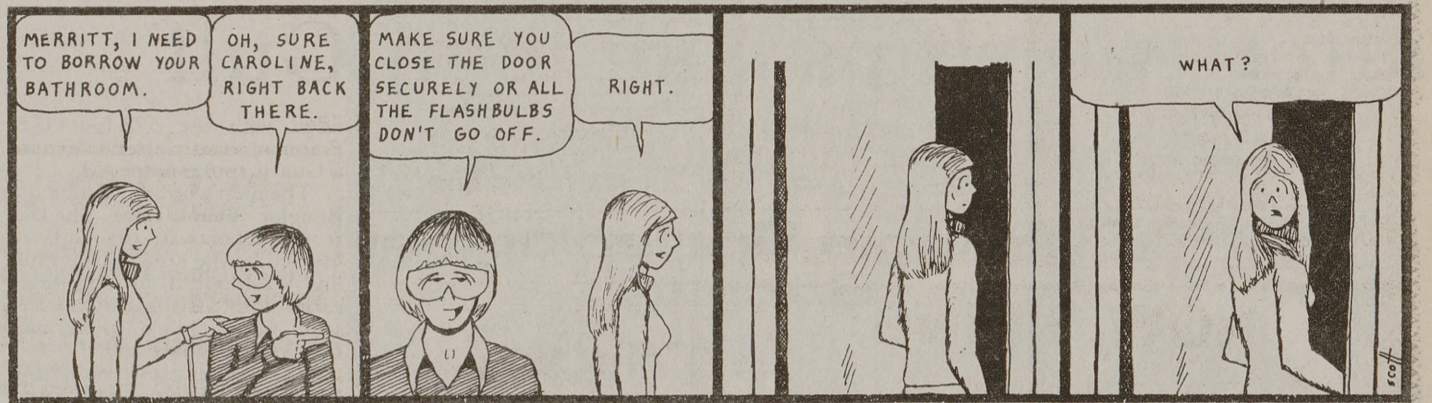
Brandon joined the military in January 1954 at the age of 17 and was sent as a medic to Korea and later joined the top-secret CONMET team.

After receiving training near the Bikini nuclear test site, he

was flown to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas. His team commuted by H-21 helicopter to the Yucca Flat test site, where the first test he worked was in February 1956.

At his own request, Brandon left the testing program in 1956, returning in 1957 for a test to train a new crew. He was hospitalized in July of 1957. He said he lost most of his teeth in 1968 because of internal nerve damage.

Warped



By Scott McCullar

O'Hare gets top airport ranking

United Press International
COLUMBUS, Ohio — The president of the Aviation Safety Institute ranks Cleveland Hopkins as the worst airport in the United States and Chicago's O'Hare Airport as the best.

John Galipault, a long-time aviation watchdog and founder of the 9-year-old non-profit institute, bases his rankings on air traffic control, runway and airport configuration, disaster preparedness, congestion and weather.

Galipault's top five airports are Chicago O'Hare, Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, Minneapolis-St. Paul and New York Kennedy. The five worst are Cleveland Hopkins, Washington National, St. Louis, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Galipault praised O'Hare for its excellent air control and run-

way configuration, its six runways that allow three simultaneous approaches in good weather and its handling of more air traffic than any airport in the world.

Hopkins, he said, is an old airport that handles large volumes of traffic with only one principal runway, which often forces planes into holding patterns. He also said that parallel runways are rough and too close together and weather is a constant problem.

Galipault, 51, has logged more than 7,500 hours of flight time since 1946 as a navigation trainer for the U.S. Air Force, a pilot for the New York Air National Guard and an aviation instructor at Ohio State University. Galipault has also served as a consultant to industry and military aviation groups.

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Public interests focus for Texas AFL-CIO

United Press International
AUSTIN — Given Texas' conservative nature and a right-to-work philosophy that seems written in stone, the state's labor unions are not expanding all their efforts in organizing Texas industries.

Although the Texas AFL-CIO represents 300,000 members and has experienced a 100 percent growth since 1969, it has become a champion of citizen rights and by one estimate spends about 80 percent of its time protecting the public interest.

"We are chartered by the national organization to provide political and legislative services to our members," said Harry Hubbard, the Texas AFL-CIO president for the last nine years.

During the legislative session the Texas AFL-CIO pushed for only one employee-related bill, one that provided workers' compensation to farm and ranch laborers. The group's efforts mostly involved fighting bills calling for higher interest rates and working for passage of generic drug legislation.

The right-to-work provision remains in the Texas Constitution, but inroads still are being made to help union workers, Hubbard said.

"In the past eight or 10 years we've not done anything in Texas to repeal the right-to-work law," he said. "Collective bargaining is what's important. Right-to-work has nothing to do with the collective bargaining system. Gains have been made in Texas through collective bargaining."

Hubbard said statistics reveal that productivity is increased by 25 percent in most situations where employees are given collective bargaining authority by

their employers.

"We've forced labor and management to come closer and closer together," he said. "It's been proven that productivity is going to thrive, and that's going to offset the right-to-work law."

Hubbard said the organization probably would provide about \$100,000 this year to campaign for political candidates. But one candidate who will not receive help or endorsement from the union group is Gov. Bill Clements.

The state organization had trouble during the 1960s with former Gov. John Connally, Hubbard said. But, he said relations improved under former Governors Preston Smith and Dolph Briscoe, both of whom were receptive to input from the labor organization.

The story is different with Clements, who Hubbard said was unwilling to cooperate with the Texas AFL-CIO.

"When he was elected we sought an audience with him, and he gave it to us," Hubbard said. "We told him we had not supported him, but we were sincere in trying to help in any way we could."

"But the only coordinated effort we've gotten is that he has

replaced every appointee Briscoe made that was a union person."

Hubbard also is concerned about Clements' desire to solve all major problems in the state with citizen task forces.

"He has fast brought the state to be governed by task force," Hubbard said.

Hubbard also is concerned about the appointments to those task forces. He said that recently the U.S. Health Department determined that Texas had an unusually high number of work-related injuries. Clements designated a task force to study the problem, but Hubbard said he neglected to name a single person who represents employees to the task force.

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