

Panorama

HENDERSON HOME NEWS
BOULDER CITY NEWS
GREEN VALLEY NEWS

Section
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Henderson Home News, Boulder City News, Green Valley News Page B1

Traces of World War II still remain

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Images of World War II and the Cold War are not just distant memories for veterans and their families. While traveling around Henderson and Boulder City, traces can still be seen of an era that brought with it the possibility of annihilation with one bomb.

Both cities were created with the help of the federal government and the benefits from the newly created towns were deemed targets during World War II.

Tunnels, fall-out shelters, bunkers, and guard posts were set up at strategic places around the two towns. A rifle range (located on Lower Portal Road) was built in Boulder City to accommodate the Army battalion from Ft. Riley which assisted in guarding Boulder Dam.

Basic Magnesium Inc. built two 10-by-10 foot concrete tunnels each stretching nearly a mile long underneath its plant to house the transmission cables. The underground cables brought power into the plant from three transmission towers placed in the Boulder Dam area. If one of the towers was rendered inoperable, the plant still could function normally.

An elaborate security network was created around the dam. Part of the system included:

- A cable that stretched across the lake to catch possible explosives.
- Guards posted with a hand-cranked communications system at a look-out point next to the water tank.
- A Marine hangar at the airport
- A rifle range near the Colorado River.

One of the most visible elements of the network is the machine gun bunker on the Arizona side of Hoover Dam. Situated now above the snack store, the bunker was one of three built around the dam to assure power to the war plant in Henderson and Los Angeles.

"It was the world's worst bunker," said Gene Shultz, who worked at the dam during the war. "It was the worst camouflage. Anyone could see it."

During World War II, crossing the dam required a military escort. A machine gun mounted on a jeep

led Shultz and other Boulder City High School students who traveled to Kingman for intermural sports. Tours of the dam were canceled after Dec. 7, 1941, for the duration of the war.

The dam also acted as the biggest fall-out shelter in the area but its remote location prevented many from possibly using it. So many residents built their own fall-out shelters.

Roy Campbell worked in the Army Reserves 427 Civil Affairs Military Government Unit. His courses on radioactivity and information he received from colleagues who doubled in Civil Defense gave him the impression an atomic bombing could become a reality.

The military had discussed areas that could be possible targets, Campbell said, and Nellis Air Force Base and the dam were two sites mentioned.

In the late 1950s, Campbell built a government-designed bomb shelter for his family. "It was a contingency that I hoped never came up. But my wife, Alta, and I wanted to give our children every opportunity that we could."

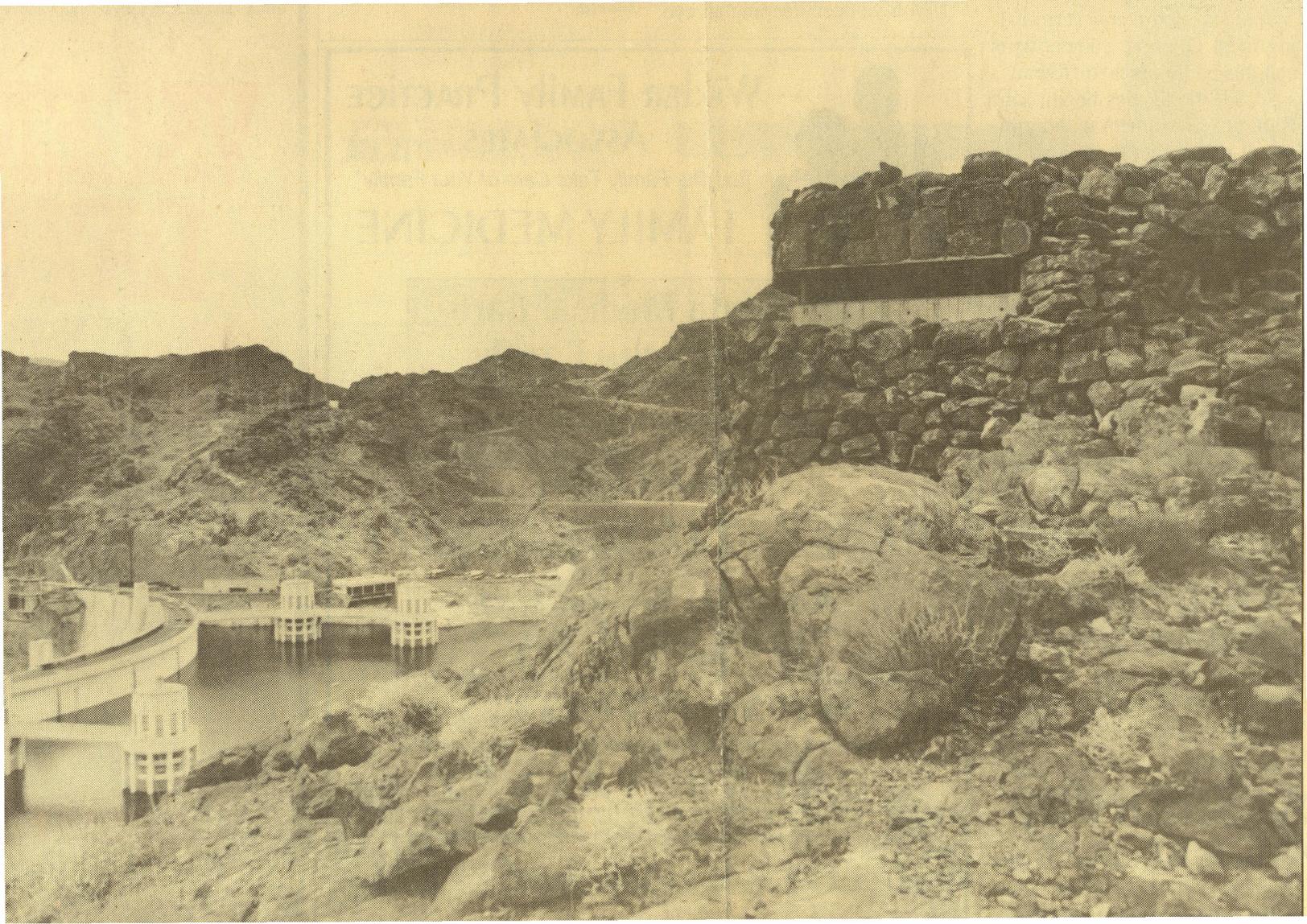
The underground, reinforced concrete shelter built in his backyard on Rose Way was equipped with water, supplies, air filters (for radioactive dust particles) but no weapons. "I just hoped everyone else could find a place." His shelter was barely adequate for his family to lie down in it.

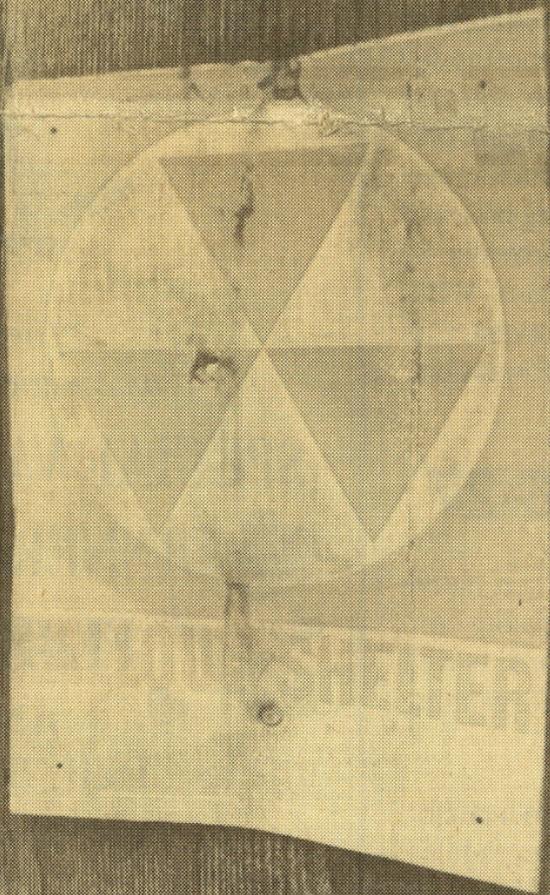
One incident in 1962 provoked Campbell and others to think a nuclear nightmare loomed.

"I remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. Some radio stations went off the air. I was working at the time so I headed home." Enroute, the radio stations came back on, alleviating the immediate worry.

Although Campbell has moved and no longer has a bomb shelter in his backyard, he said the fear of nuclear war still exists. "At that time, there was a lot of uncertainty of having a nuclear war. It is still not out of the question today.

"Not with the superpowers but by outlaw nations like Korea. The trouble is, you go around thinking the world is run by sane people and some of it isn't true."

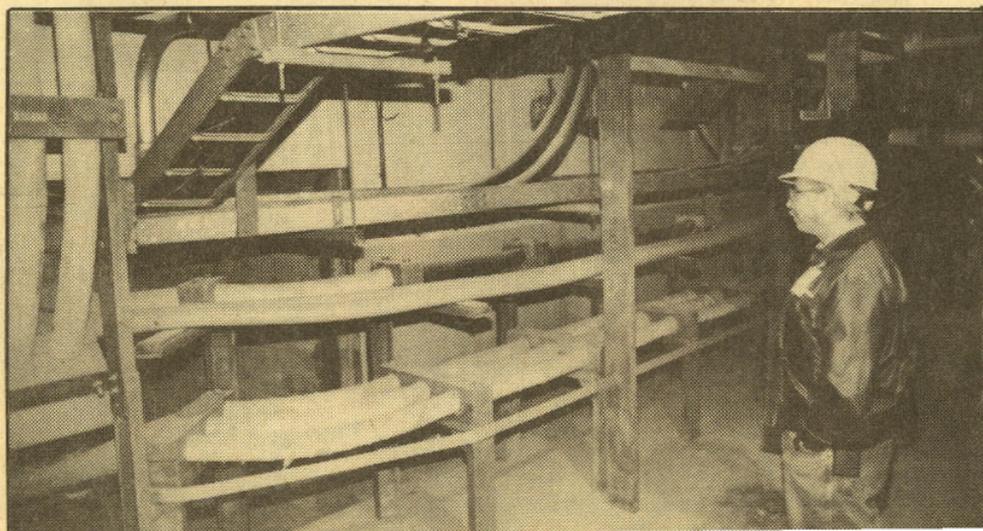


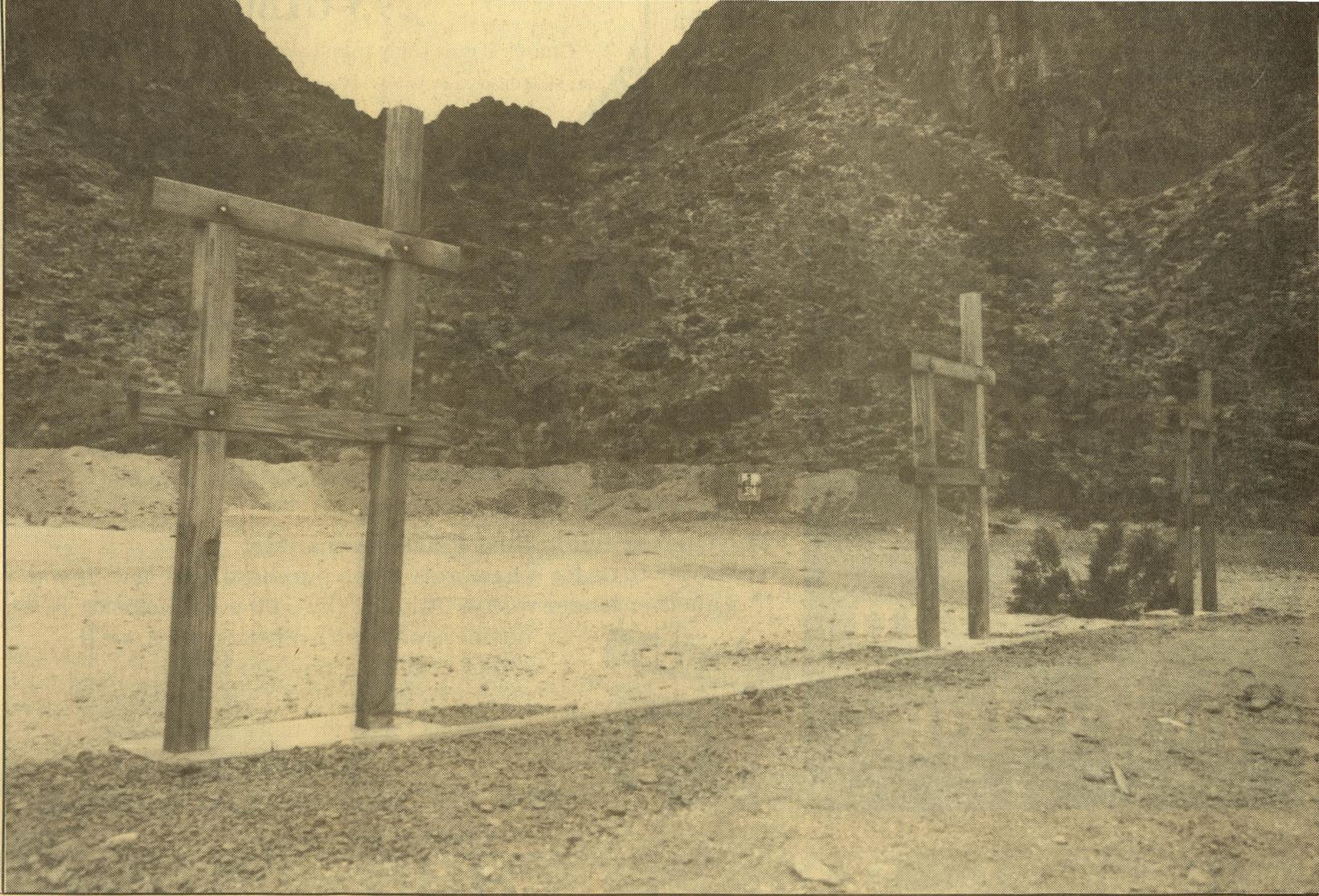




Top: Employees from Basic Management and Pioneer Chlor Alkali take a walk underneath the plants. Two 10-by-10 foot concrete tunnels which house the transmission cables stretch almost a mile underneath the plants.

Bottom: Dick Brown, assistant general manager for Basic Management Inc. checks the cables under the plant. Three sets of transmission cables bring power to the plant from Hoover Dam. The cables were built underground to prevent them from being blown up during the war.





A small rifle range built during World War II for the battalion from Ft. Riley still exists in Boulder City. The Hoover Dam Police

Department now uses the range on the Lower Portal Road for pistol practice.