

REPOSITORY WASH. NAT. RESOURCES CENTER

December 10, 1959

R
Marshall Islands files

COLLECTION 32081-6

Trip Report

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BOX No. Box 1

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This report concerns travel between 29 November and 3 December 1959 to the Marshall Islands and Guam for the purpose of discussing plans for future medical surveys of the Marshallese people exposed to fallout in 1954, and to the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission in Hiroshima, Japan for discussion of a proposed whole-body counting project on Japanese people at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Eniwetok. On November 19-20 I conferred with Mr. Ray Emens, Head of the Branch Office, Atomic Energy Commission, Eniwetok, about various aspects of their support of future medical surveys of the Marshallese as well as possible assistance in handling the steel room should transfer to Japan be indicated. A summary of the results of this conference is as follows:

1. Though the activities at Eniwetok are greatly reduced, it appears that assistance such as we have required in the past would still be available for the next two years. This pertains mainly to the on-loading and offloading of the 21-ton steel room to and from vessels and the furnishing of certain equipment and supplies.

2. The construction of a permanent shielded room at Rongelap for whole-body counting was not considered feasible at this time due to the reduced construction force at Eniwetok and the high cost of building such a room. Later, if the building program is resumed, such a project might be feasible.

desirable

3. It was considered possible to ship the steel room to Japan via one of the President Lines cargo vessels which put into Eniwetok every 30-45 days. Estimated cost of shipment was roughly \$1,000 each way.

The steel room and other survey equipment in storage at Eniwetok was inspected. The steel room and wooden electronics room appeared to be in good condition, but the boxes of medical equipment were slightly exposed to the weather near the floor. Mr. Emens agreed to arrange to have the boxes moved to an air-conditioned building for continued storage. Most of this equipment will not be needed until the 1961 medical survey.

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Eniwetok. I arrived at Eniwetok on November 20 via Navy plane. I found considerable change there since my last visit in March as a result of the new anti-missile base being begun. The Navy still appeared to be in charge, but with a large civilian component and some Army personnel. I conferred with Captain Smith, USN, Commanding Officer of the Naval Support Activity, with the following results.

Discussion with Dr. Decker!
Still want 5-10 year plan!
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1. He assured me that there would be no problem in plane support of our surveys as things now stand. The Search and Rescue amphibious planes would probably increase in number over the next year or two.
2. He recommended continued storage of our steel room and other survey equipment with the ABC at Eniwetok due to crowded storage facilities at Rujalein.
3. Should we consider using any ships (LSTs or LCAs) under his command, it would be very costly and he recommended procuring necessary ships elsewhere.
4. Medical assistance to Marshall Islanders including natives of Rongelap and Uthirik on an emergency basis with plane service would be continued whenever possible.

Drs. W. W. Fencil and S. Shippey at the Rujalein Hospital were most cordial and hospitable to me. I explained to them the background of the fallout accident and left them copies of the latest report of our studies on the Rongelapese. They assured me they would cooperate in every way possible to assist in emergency medical cases and autopsies on this group of people. It was unfortunate that Dr. Kara, the Marshallese Practitioner at Ebeye, was away on vacation.

Majuro. A Navy plane flew me to Majuro on November 22. Before conferring with Mr. Nease, the District Administrator, I held informal discussions with Dr. H. H. Macdonald, Director of Public Health for the Trust Territory. I explained that we were most sympathetic with their problems on Rongelap and want to cooperate in every way possible to come to agreement on the best means of carrying out the special medical examinations that we consider necessary. I was most gratified that Dr. Macdonald was extremely understanding of the importance of these objectives. I outlined minimal procedures that I felt necessary for 1960 examinations and suggested that in this survey only two of us from the United States accompany Trust Territory medical personnel on their regular field trip to Rongelap in the Spring via their Trust Territory ship. There was quick agreement on all points as to the scope and organization of the survey. I asked about the possibility and feasibility of use of the Trust Territory cargo ship for the 1961 survey to transport the steel room for whole-body counts. Dr. Macdonald seemed to think that this was a fine idea and should work out. The medical team could be berthed and messed on the vessel for the survey and, by using this ship, we would avoid the presence of a large Navy crew at Rongelap. He agreed to investigate this further and to send me dimensions of the cargo hold and other information.

Mr. Hens then called a conference which included Dr. Macdonald, Mr. William White, Mr. Boyd McLean, Mr. Danny Ahlstrom and myself. Dr. Macdonald presented the survey plans that we had drawn up and, after discussion of a few minor points, the plans were approved in toto by Mr. Hens. The use of the Trust Territory only for the 1961 survey appealed to Mr. Hens but he preferred to withhold his decision on this matter until later.

The attached memorandum from Dr. Macdonald to the High Commissioner outlines briefly the agreements reached on the medical survey.

I was most grateful for the cordial reception and hospitality afforded me by the Hensons and others while I was at Pangrap.

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Guam. I left Majuro by Trust Territory airplane plane on November 25 for Pangrap, Truk and Guam. I spent a most pleasant evening at Truk as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Steeds, the Assistant District Administrator. I arrived at Guam on Thanksgiving Day and Mr. Nuckler, the High Commissioner, and his wife invited me to a most pleasant dinner at their home. I conferred with Mr. Nuckler the following day about the results of our Majuro conference. He seemed most pleased at the accord reached and was in complete agreement with the plans for the survey. He put Mrs. O.L. on a copy of Dr. Macdonald's memorandum for me. Attached is a copy of a letter from Mr. Pyram, the Deputy High Commissioner, to Dr. Macdonald expressing agreement with the survey plans.

APCC, Marshalla, Japan. On arrival of Marshalla on November 30, I conferred with Dr. George Darling, the Director, about the conclusions reached by the November 22 meeting at the Division of Biology and Medicine at the APCC in Washington concerning the proposed whole-body counting of sample populations of Marshalla and Rapaahai. I discussed the generally-accepted belief of this group that the results of body burden determinations by gamma spectroscopy would most likely be completely negative; the fact that there was some doubt about the value of the study from the point of view of psychological-political aspects related to the Japanese radiation and the acceptance of such data by the Japanese; the probable High cost of using a Navy LST for transporting the BNL steel room to and from Japan; and alternative measures. Dr. Darling again expressed his belief that such studies would be valuable to the APCC. He arranged a conference later in the day for the discussion of the problem. The following were present: Drs. Darling, Mahaladul, Intl. Millingenorth, Russell, Stone, Aranson and myself. At Dr. Darling's request, I briefly reviewed the Washington meeting. He asked Dr. Mahaladul whether or not, in the light of the generally negative evidence to be expected, he felt that such a project should be carried out. Dr. Mahaladul answered in the affirmative and felt that the Japanese scientists would like to see the project undertaken. The group seemed to be generally favorably

disposed toward acquiring a steel room for such studies. Dr. Hollingsworth pointed out that he would welcome the presence of such a low level counting room for doing low level isotope studies. It was also pointed out that the University at Hiroshima would likely be interested in using the facility.

Methods of acquiring a steel room were discussed. In view of the difficulties in transporting the HE steel room to Japan, the most acceptable plan seemed to be the construction of a steel room at Hiroshima. The cost of labor being much lower than in the United States, it was felt that such a room could be constructed in Japan at a considerably lower cost. I agreed to send them plans for the steel room and to obtain advice on the best type of lining material. I told the group about a new type of portable shielded room that was under investigation and, if perfected, might be considered. Such a room would be composed of plastic bricks to be filled with water and this could be easily shipped. I promised to keep them advised of the developmental progress of this room.

Dr. Darling asked, if a shielded room were acquired by ABCC, would HE be willing to furnish the electronics equipment and personnel for doing the whole-body counting study. I said that I thought I could speak for Dr. Parr in assuring him of such assistance. I explained that in the near future we were procuring a more rugged transistorized type of electronic analyzer which was light enough to be easily shipped.

I brought up the problem of determination of the level of induced activity in the hypocenter area at Hiroshima that had existed early after the detonation. (These levels had never been accurately determined and, due to the recurring questions as to whether certain people had suffered radiation effects from induced activity, we had been asked to see if we could obtain further information on this problem.) I requested permission to obtain some representative soil samples from the hypocenter area to take back to NE where Dr. D. C. Borg and I would like to measure any residual activity that might be present and carry out neutron activation analysis. This was agreed to and the following day Dr. Nakaidomi and Dr. Arahama took me to the memorial museum where we were given several metallic samples from the hypocenter area and given permission to dig soil samples. We obtained soil samples from the hospital area and a drug building near the hypocenter. Dr. Nakaidomi agreed to send me soil samples from the Nishiyama Valley fallout area for analysis.

These discussions carried out at ABCC were considered well worthwhile and led to better mutual understanding of the overall problems there.

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