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Twenty years ago today, while most New Bernians were still getting their last hour or so of morning sleep, something happened on a New Mexico desert that would change life for all of us for all time to come.

From that moment on, although we wouldn't fully comprehend it for awhile, the world was going to be different. Fear, in varying degrees, would grip the hearts of mortals everywhere.

Nothing has happened since to remove the awesome terror that hangs like a threatening cloud above the face of the earth. Only God's lower animals have been spared awareness of what might happen in the twinkling of an eye.

On the bombing range at Alamogordo Air Force Base, in the darkness just before dawn, a mighty fireball rose into the heavens and burst into brightness the like of which no human had ever seen before.

Such was the first atomic explosion, a dress rehearsal cloaked in military secrecy for the unbelievable devastation that would make a flaming inferno of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and cremate thousands of unsuspecting men, women and children in an instant.

The bombs that fell on these two Japanese cities undoubtedly shortened World War II, and saved the lives of countless American soldiers, sailors and Marines who had been plunged into desperate combat with an Asiatic enemy by the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

As General Sherman said, when he beat a path of destruction through the South during the War Between The States, war is hell. And certainly the wildest human mind can't envision anything closer from this first atomic test.

Actually, the lid was pried from Pandora's box on December 2, 1942, at the University of Chicago. Physicists, supervised by a scientist named Enrico Fermi, managed to produce a controlled nuclear chain reaction and the die was cast.

Then a team of engineers, chemists and mathematicians went about the grim and dangerous business of perfecting a weapon incorporating this power at Los Alamos, New Mexico. No one on the team, until the bomb exploded, realized the terrific potency of the thing that had been created.

Perhaps you've forgotten, or never heard, how the achievement was kept secret. The truth was hidden in news release from the commander of the Alamogordo Air Base that indicated a munitions dump had exploded, with no injuries.

Dr. Donald F. Hornig, who helped construct the first atomic bomb, has been quoted as saying, "Despite the costs, nuclear weapons have wrought a kind of restraint that is contributing to worldwide stability."

Incidentally, Dr. Hornig hasn't faded from the picture. At the present time he is serving as director of the President's Office of Science and Technology, and is chief science adviser to the President.

Another scientist who played a part in the atomic bomb's birth, Dr. George Klitckow-

(Continued on page 8)



WE'VE FOUND IT—Happiness is a little girl named Jenifer. She's the adorable daughter of Harvey and Adelaide Miller of Brevard, and the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. John F. Rhodes, Jr., of 221 Pollock Street. Eunice Wray, who works magic with her camera when she portrays a child, captured in this Mirror portrait the boundless ecstasy of a joyful tot on a summer day. Jenifer's world is a wonderland of things that adults never bother to see, or taste or listen to.

Complain if you must, about hot weather, too much rain, weeds in your flower garden, and the price of groceries at the nearest supermarket. Jenifer is much more concerned with discovering a butterfly, coloring a picture book, or teaching manners to her favorite doll. What a pity all of us can't appreciate life to the fullest, like a little girl with dreams in her eyes on a summer day.