

“THE SLEEPING DRAGON”

Excerpts from “EMP: The Sleeping Dragon,”

An Editorial in Science Weekly

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In July 1962, a long-feared dragon awoke and crawled out of its lair....

Immediately following one of the last American nuclear explosions in the atmosphere...electrical systems in Honolulu, 800 miles from the blast, suddenly went dead....the secret of EMP, which had long terrified a handful of scientists, was broadcast to the world.

“Electromagnetic pulse” is the tremendous surge of electromagnetic energy that accompanies a nuclear explosion, and is especially severe when detonation occurs high above ground. Such fallout has very different effects from what we usually worry about with neutron bombs, for while leaving buildings and most physical objects intact, and people virtually unharmed, its invisible wave causes immediate “death” to electrical equipment that uses microcircuitry.

Then in the early part of the 21st century, soon after 9/11, came the development of non-nuclear explosives that could produce an even stronger electromagnetic pulse.

EMP had been known about for years, but not the extent of its power.

That it could cripple electrical power distribution and invisibly destroy sophisticated weaponry, as well as other technology, great distances away was alarming. Immediately, though the Federal Government played it down, building defenses against this powerful force became a highly classified priority.

And a scientific nightmare.

It also became a terrorist's dream: With great explosions at strategic points on the globe – that shed not a drop of blood – primitive third-world countries, with bursting populations, could exercise both physical and psychological muscle.

As early as 1963 the specter of EMP became, according to the League of Yale, “the third most likely plague that could destroy representative government in a country the size of the United States, if not the forward march of civilization itself.”

If this were not enough, with each passing month newer, tinier, more delicate and much cheaper miniature circuitry of astonishing capabilities began to invade everything plugged in, or that ran off of batteries. Millions of microchips, too small to see, too delicate to repair, and too complex for most to understand were created and spread like a viral contagion around the planet. By the late 1980's the infection of their magic was everywhere, in briefcases, pants pockets, clipped onto belts, on every wrist. Fleeting time had even become hostage. And when people paused over their instant dinners to reflect, they wondered how they had ever lived *BMic* (before microwaves).

But will the virus ever die?

Will some cataclysm ever usher in a new age – AEMP, After Electromagnetic Pulse – when we will have plenty of pendulum-swinging, ticking time to look back and ponder how we live?

Automobiles also surrendered their primitive past, receiving improved ignition systems; their dashboards became electronic cockpits, information centers. Even bulky electrical hardware became fine-tuned

with electronic grids of microcircuitry. One by one, power-generating and transmission companies surrendered to the new technology which seemed almost overnight to become faster, safer, and cheaper.

We had entered a new age. If there were bugs in the systems, time would take care of them. Hadn't it always?

But what to do to be really safe? Obviously "soft" and vulnerable parts had to be protected – "hardened." And so a reassuring new buzz word was born. But how hard is hard enough? And should "whole systems" be hardened or just "soft parts." Experts argued vigorously behind closed doors and hotly disagreed. Consequently, science has followed both paths.

Then arrived glass and fiber optics which was hailed to be the answer by some, just another complication by others. Glass should be immune to EMP just as "large" vacuum tube technology with its soldered and taped copper wire connections had proved to be. But delicate microcircuitry was never far away from glass linkages.

Ironically, the age of atmospheric testing was over just as the magnitude of the problem was realized, so the newly developed highly touted defenses against EMP that the military says we now have developed, as well as the very questionable commercial "walls of protection" that industry has sold itself, have never been adequately tested.

"We accept them on faith," declares Roger Steinberg of M.I.T., "because we have no other choice."

"The hairless ape has made himself into a god," says Nobel laureate Harvey Mott, "but he lacks the most important traits of divinity. He, pretending to be something he is not, forgets the past. And he doesn't know the present. He is not all-powerful. And the worst of his kind has found a way to destroy the best, for Homo sapiens, depends upon tools – and now the ones on which he depends the most have wriggled out of his control."

In short, technology as we now know it may disappear like the dinosaur, and highly specialized modern man along with it.

– Irving Miller

Editor and Publisher



The quickest and easiest way to understand Michael and Triana and the confrontation with their teacher, and explain the horror about how their world suddenly and dramatically changed, is to examine several more brief printed records that contain facts that seem to be of little consequence unless put side by side.

All were written at least 19 months before business as usual ceased:

- 11 brief (even as short as 2 lines) newspaper articles, or records from Kansas, New York, and Pennsylvania*
- 2 high school office memos exchanged by a teacher and principal*
- A Sunday take-home paper prepared by a small-town minister*

Put together, these paint just enough background of the peculiar, newly formed Susquehanna Territory of northeastern Pennsylvania. And reveal just enough about several important people who lived there.

Why?

To tell the story about how – in a thoroughly mixed-up modern world – one of the strangest teacher-student-parent confrontations that ever took place. One in which four people put everything they believed in on the line. And where resolving what first seemed like an ordinary conflict would open a door to a whole new world.

Or, to be more precise, two new worlds.