

One Summer Day

—the training paid off

As the battle waned over the desert floor adjacent to the “whale” at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, members of the battalion S3 staff prepared to set out on a radiological survey mission. The survey team loaded into the back of a 2½-ton truck, armed with the IM-174A simulated radiacmeter, and started their bumpy two-hour trip. The hour neared 1030, but the temperature was already over 90 degrees.

As I watched the truck roll away into a dusty image, I thought back to the hours spent training in

Kansas with the T-1 trainer set. I hoped the time invested in going to the TASC and drawing the equipment, setting up the transmitter in the field, and running survey missions had not been wasted as the soldiers faced this ultimate test.

Time passed quickly and a new set of operational orders was received from brigade headquarters. I had forgotten about the survey team until they came rumbling back into the TOC area. Their faces told the story—two hours in the heat and dust. The temperature was

now over 100 degrees, yet they had completed the mission and turned in a perfect survey sheet.

Their reward came during the after-action review for the battalion commander; the NTC staff praised the survey mission results. The radiation hazard overlay produced from the raw data of the survey showed none of our units in any danger of radiation contamination. Had this been real war, real radiation, soldiers’ lives would have been saved. A training device made it all seem real. ☒

