



Building the H Bomb: A Personal History

Kenneth W Ford

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In this engaging scientific memoir, Kenneth Ford recounts the time when, in his mid-twenties, he was a member of the team that designed and built the first hydrogen bomb. He worked with — and relaxed with — scientific giants of that time such as Edward Teller, Enrico Fermi, Stan Ulam, John von Neumann, and John Wheeler, and here offers illuminating insights into the personalities, the strengths, and the quirks of these men. Well known for his ability to explain physics to nonspecialists, Ford also brings to life the physics of fission and fusion and provides a brief history of nuclear science from the discovery of radioactivity in 1896 to the ten-megaton explosion of "Mike" that obliterated a Pacific Island in 1952.

Ford worked at both Los Alamos and Princeton's Project Matterhorn, and brings out Matterhorn's major, but previously unheralded contribution to the development of the H bomb. Outside the lab, he drove a battered Chevrolet around New Mexico, a bantam motorcycle across the country, and a British roadster around New Jersey. Part of the charm of Ford's book is the way in which he leavens his well-researched descriptions of the scientific work with brief tales of his life away from weapons.

Readership: A memoir for general readership in the history of science.

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