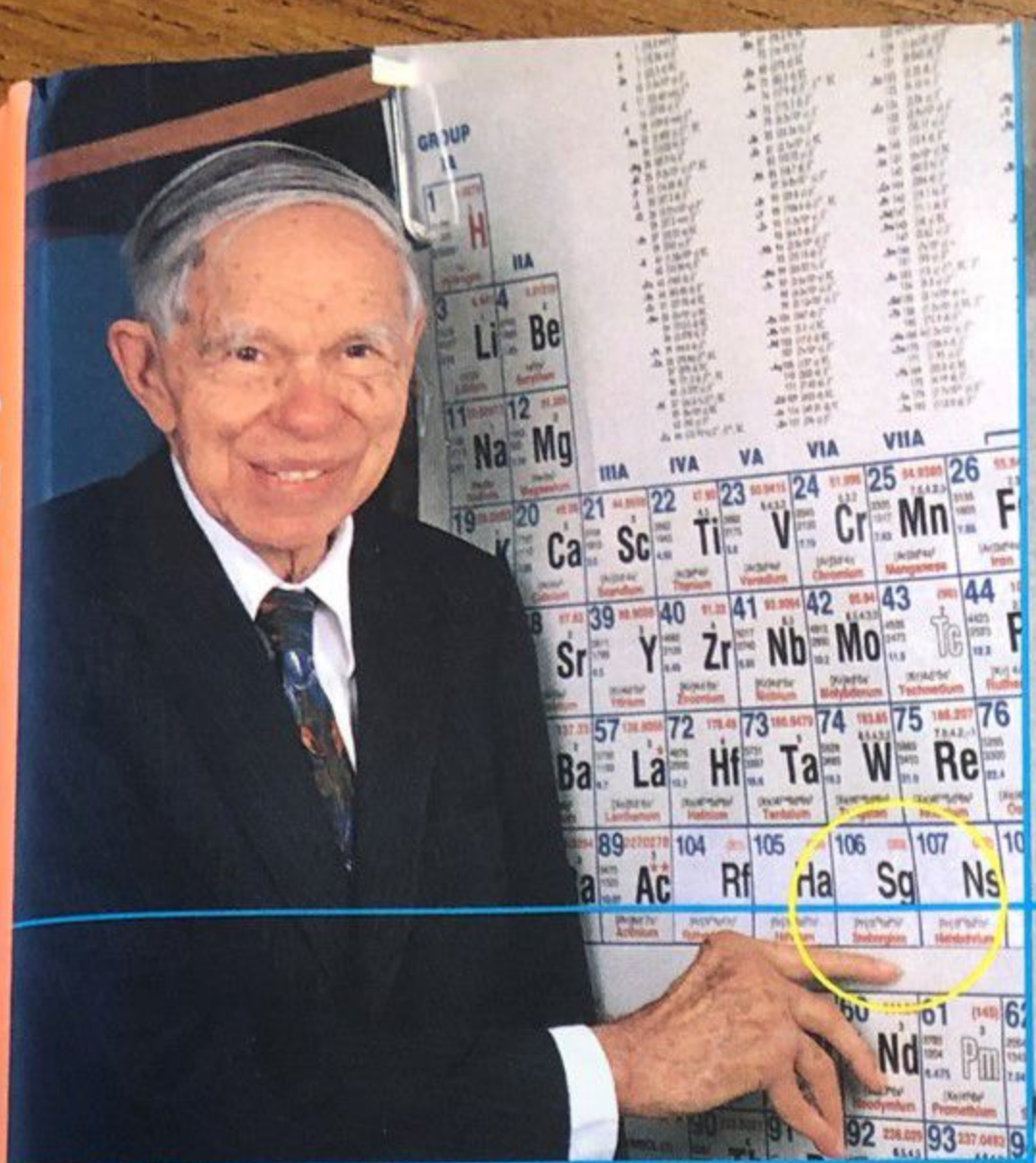
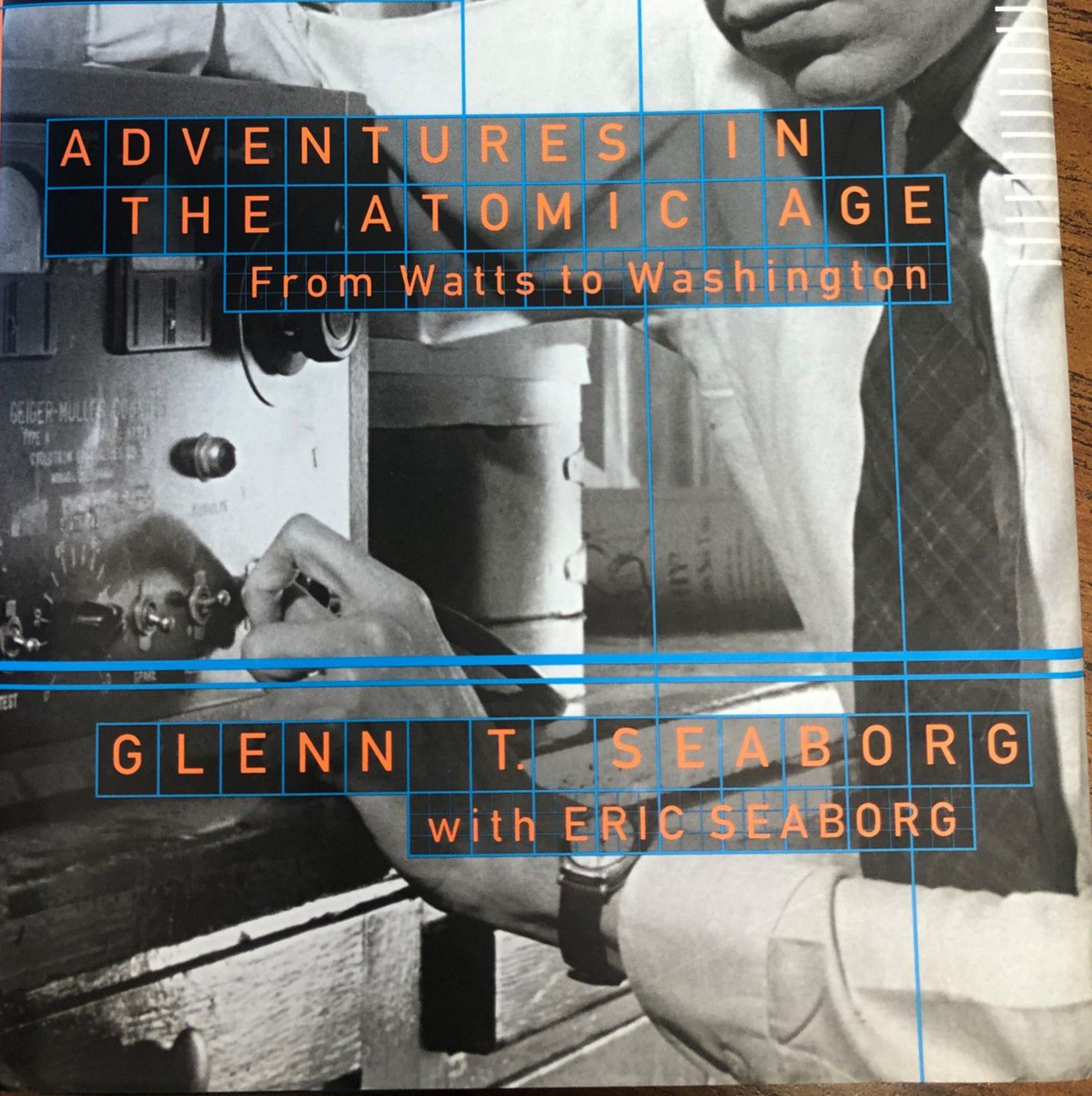


ADVENTURES IN THE ATOMIC AGE



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THE ATOMIC AGE
From Watts to Washington



GLENN T. SEABORG
with ERIC SEABORG

used was sterilization. One of our group said that men were not much interested in being sterilized, and Zhou didn't wait for the translation to jump in, saying, "Male chauvinism and inequality. Do you agree?" Our delegation obtained Zhou's agreement to nine areas of scientific exchanges; he ruled out three of our proposals in the social sciences (China studies, urban studies, and science and technology in China's development), putting them off for "further consideration" in the future, but agreed to exchanges in areas such as plant studies, earthquake prediction, and acupuncture.

As we passed through the receiving line he made comments that perhaps revealed differences in our political systems that he hadn't mastered. He mentioned that our Committee for Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China had been in existence since the middle 1960s, but it was only when Nixon made contacts with the Chinese leaders that the committee could be effective. "Doesn't this mean President Nixon has done something good?" he asked, but then he threw his hands up and said, "But oh, Watergate." When our delegation member replied that whatever the outcome of Watergate, he didn't think it would affect U.S.-Chinese relations or the exchange agreements we were negotiating, Zhou happily and vigorously grasped the man's hand with both of his.

At the beginning of my AEC chairmanship, I had once again neglected exercise and begun to pay a price in my health. With my workload and schedule, golf had become more and more difficult to use as an outlet. But then I discovered I could find just as much, if not more, pleasure and relaxation in hiking. We spent many happy weekends enjoying the marvelous system of trails in Shenandoah National Park, a two-hour drive west of Washington. The premier hike near Washington is Old Rag Mountain, with a rock scramble along its ridge and over the top, and we made an annual pilgrimage there around Memorial Day weekend. That grew to be such an event that some fifty people made up the party one year.

On many evenings after work and on weekends we tromped along the peaceful trails of Rock Creek Park, where in a ten-minute drive

from our house we could take a walk of several miles, along the White Horse Trail over hills on the west side of the park and the Black Horse Trail along Rock Creek, through forests that seemed hardly touched by humans.

When I returned to our home in Lafayette, I was delighted to find the network of parks that had been created, many of them in the years when I'd been away. The counties of the East Bay had had the foresight to vote for a one-cent-or-so sales tax that went to support parks, and as a result were in the process of building perhaps the premier urban park district in the country. I got to know the head of land acquisition for the East Bay Regional Park District, the affable Hulet Hornbeck, and spent many weekends with him and others scouting out possible purchases and ways to connect parks. (The East Bay was a leader in the greenway movement, for its parks were linked by abandoned railroad lines and old canal rights-of-way that were converted to trails.) In 1972 and 1973 I served on the Citizens' Task Force for the district, chairing its Trails Committee and advising it on a master plan for future expansion and operations. This meant many hikes and exploratory trips with task force members. (The plan was accepted and implemented.) In succeeding years, Helen and I took a multitude of hikes on weekends, often with the Mount Diablo Regional Group of the Sierra Club, and I sometimes served as leader.

As a birthday present, one of my sons gave me a charter membership in the American Hiking Society, a group formed to give a national voice to people who enjoy our nation's trails. Helen and I happened to be in Washington when the nascent society was having one of its first board meetings. We had the afternoon free, and took a cab out to Vienna, Virginia. The small group was discussing a proposal to sponsor a cross-country hike as a way to heighten its profile and dramatize the need for trails. They were proposing starting in Los Angeles when I piped up and volunteered that if the route began in San Francisco instead, I'd be willing to plan the route through California. The group was not about to let a volunteer slip by. So Helen and I spent almost every free weekend for a year scouting and laying out the path for the hike across California. We greatly enjoyed that task, discovering wonderful places to hike and making friends with people involved in the history of the Pony Express Trail (part of which we followed through the Sierra Nevada).

We laid out a route about 265 miles long, designed to be traversed in twenty-one hiking days. The hikers would cover about thirteen miles a day, and there had to be a site where a large group could camp at the end of the day.

The project was given the name HikaNation, and to start it out with a bang, we obtained permission to walk across the Bay Bridge from San Francisco to Oakland (it took an act of the legislature, something our friend Mike McReynolds took the lead in obtaining), the first time this had ever been done. Seven thousand people turned out early on the morning of Sunday, April 13, 1980, to walk across the bridge. It was a glorious blue-sky and crystal-clear day, and a thrill to walk across the bridge. But it was a tough day for the backpackers, because we had to keep to a fast pace to get across the bridge in time for it to be reopened, and then it was a good distance to an appropriate camping spot—an arduous breaking-in, with more than its share of blisters. The hikers jokingly (I think) accused me of underestimating the actual mileage, and added a term to their lexicon—"Seaborg miles"—for miles that seemed (or were) much longer than expected.

A group ranging from one to two hundred people hiked across California; Helen and I hiked with them on weekends and whenever else we could, and a core group of about forty hikers made it all the way across the country. Helen and I flew east to join the HikaNation group at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, the following May, and hiked with them down the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal to Washington.

A decade later, my son Eric and his (now) wife Ellen Dudley were recruited by the American Hiking Society and *Backpacker* magazine to scout the route of the American Discovery Trail, the first coast-to-coast trail. That route incorporates the one Helen and I scouted from Berkeley to Sacramento, a contribution that made us proud.

Of course, the big issue of the 1970s was the energy crisis, when Middle Eastern countries embargoed and increased the price of oil. One of the lessons of this time that I'm not sure we fully appreciate yet is modern culture's total dependence on energy. The great inflation of the 1970s was tied at least somewhat to the increase in the price of energy. Everything we do is based on energy, so if you increase its price, the price effect rip-