

Thundering Crashes Close Doors on Prairie's Titan Era

By FRED BAKER
Denver Post Staff Writer

DEER TRAIL, Colo.—The rolling prairie 53 miles east of Denver and three miles north of Deer Trail shook as if an earthquake had struck the area Tuesday as massive missile silo doors, each weighing 100 tons, were slammed shut.

The concrete and steel doors, which once covered Titan I missiles in silos 180 feet deep and 40 feet in diameter, were left open about three years ago by a salvage contractor who removed the hydraulic equipment used to open and close the doors.

"The open holes at the abandoned missile sites have been a real headache for us," said G. W. Justeson of Denver, regional director of the property management and disposal service of the General Services Administration. "We lost a lot of sleep, fearful that a human or an animal might fall down one of them."

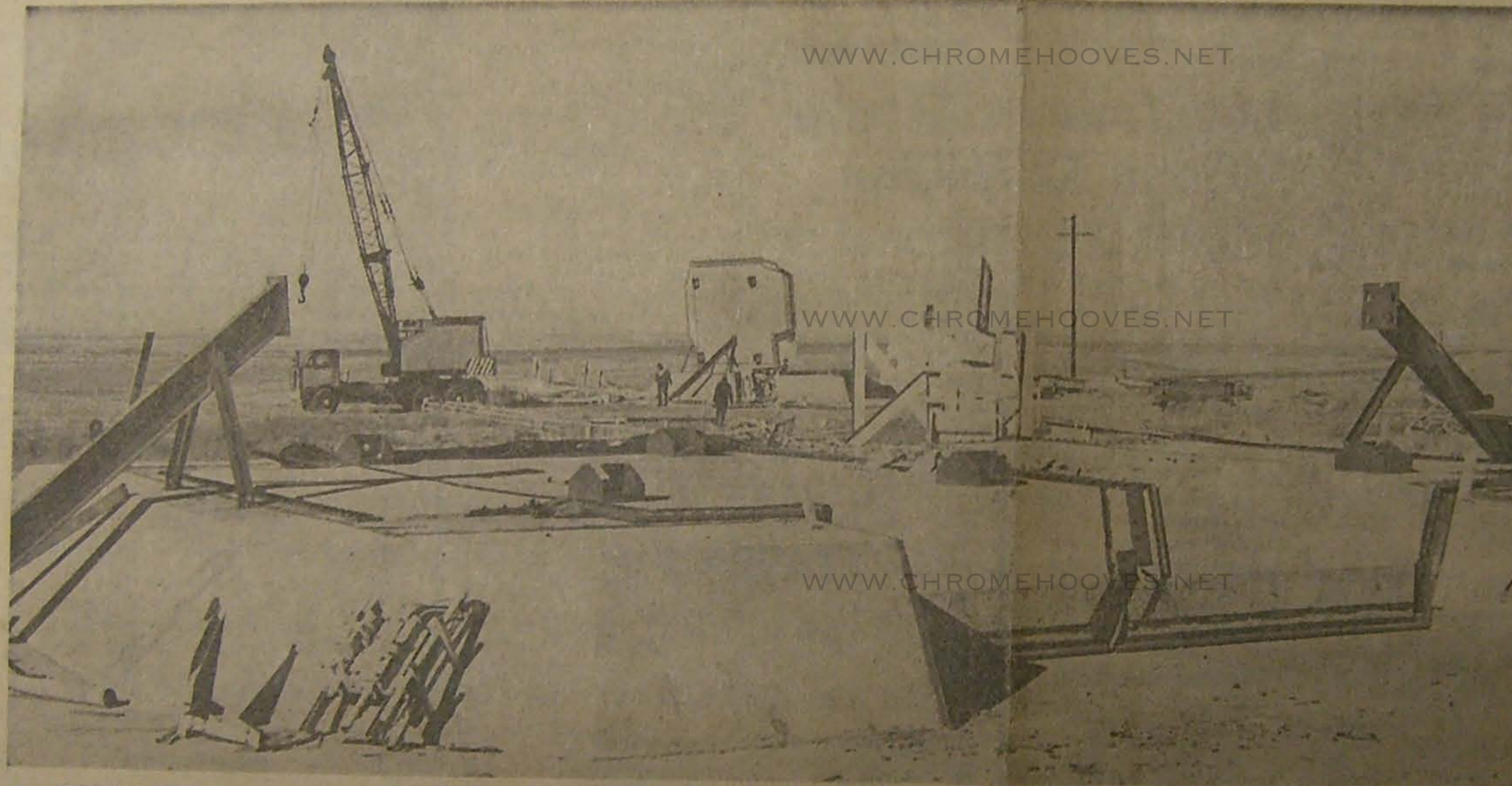
The silos near Deer Trail, like similar installations on the Lowry Bombing Range near Denver, were closed by a crew from Midwest Scrap Metals, Inc., of Glendale, Ariz.

The Midwest crew hooked a heavy cable on each of the six doors, two for each silo at the site. The crew pulled on the cable with a crane, and the multi-ton covers slammed back into a closed position. They were damaged some in the process, but not enough to prevent them making a permanent seal of the silo, Justeson said.

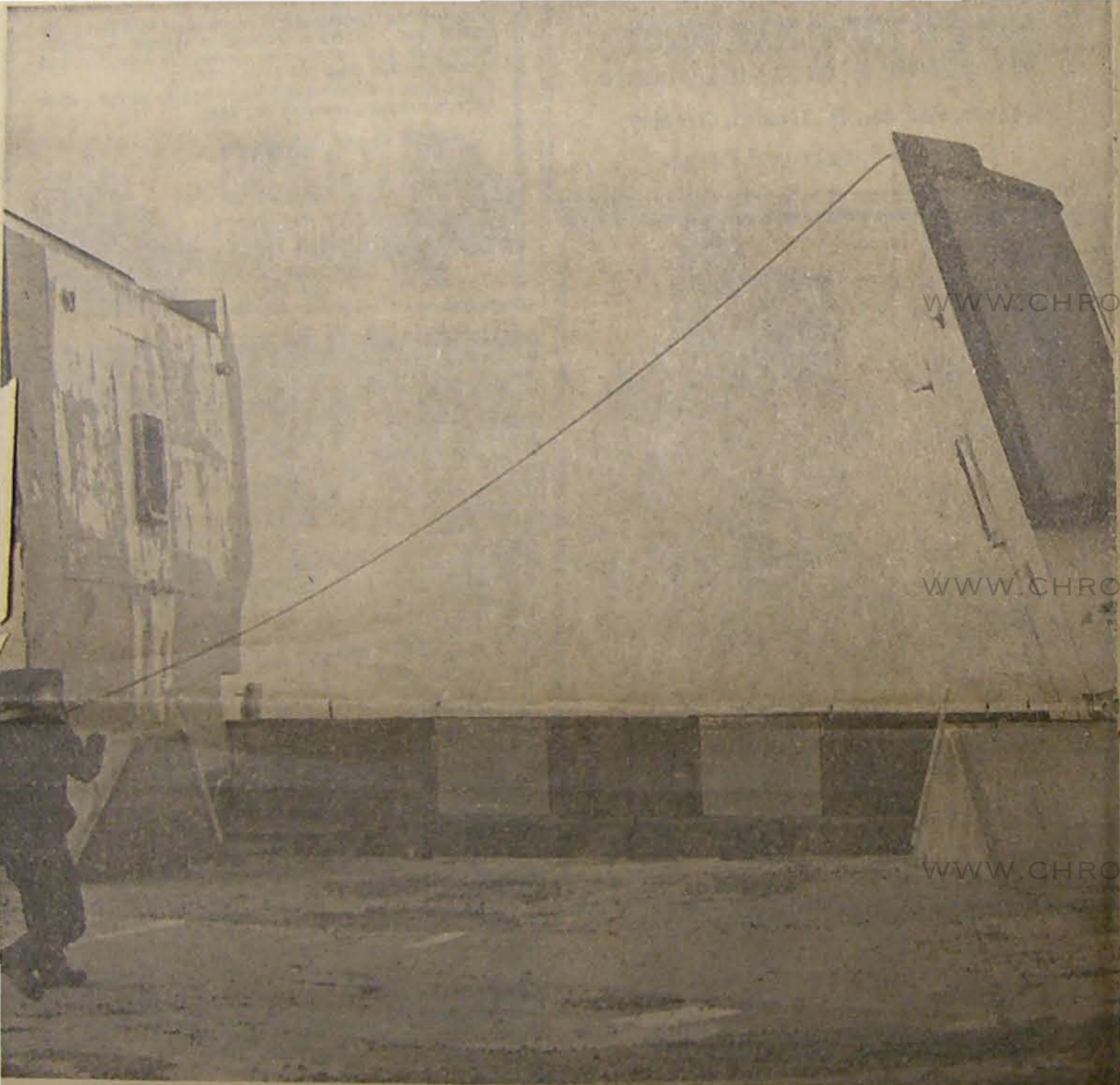
Justeson said two other silo sites on the old Lowry Range already had been sealed. Two more remain, one near Elizabeth, Colo., and another on the Lowry Range, but these haven't been declared obsolete and surplus by the U.S. Air Force.

The Midwest firm has a contract with GSA to close and seal all openings to the underground missile complexes, including the silos, the equipment access ways, ventilation shafts and personnel portal entries.

Denver Post Photos by BILL JOHNSON



CRANE, BACKGROUND, MANEUVERS UP TO PAIR OF MASSIVE SILO DOORS OPEN ABOVE THE ABANDONED 180-FOOT DEEP TITAN MISSILE SILOS.



One of the 100-ton concrete and steel missile silo doors at the abandoned Titan I site 3 miles north of Deer Trail is slammed shut by a cable attached to a crane. Cletus

Eversoll, employe of Midwest Scrap Metals, Inc., of Glendale, Ariz., pulls rope to keep cable taut as door starts to fall into closed position. Open shafts were a hazard.



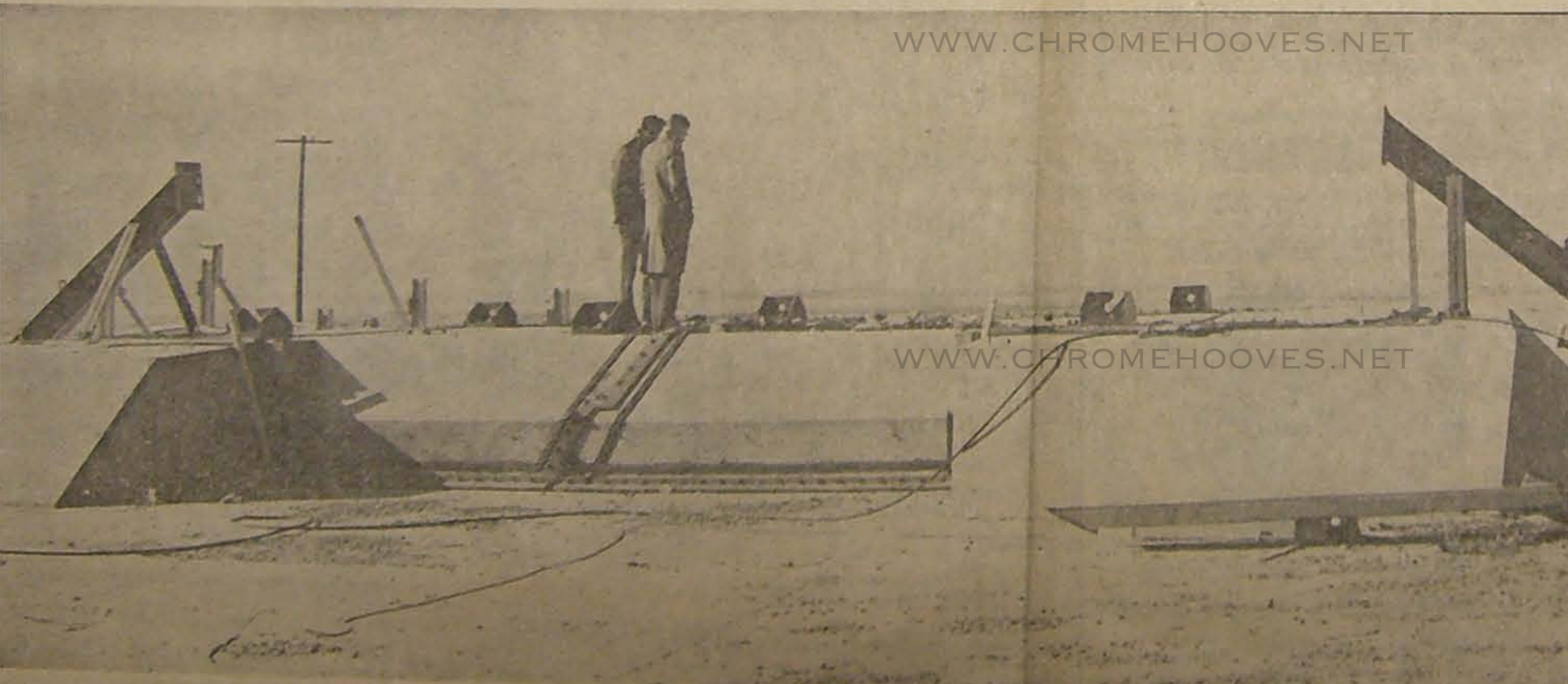
Half the job's done as one door slams to earth. G. W. Justeson, regional director of the General Services Administration property managment and disposal service, said

"We lost a lot of sleep fearful that a human or an animal might fall down one of those shafts." Hydraulic closing mechanisms were removed as salvage three years ago.



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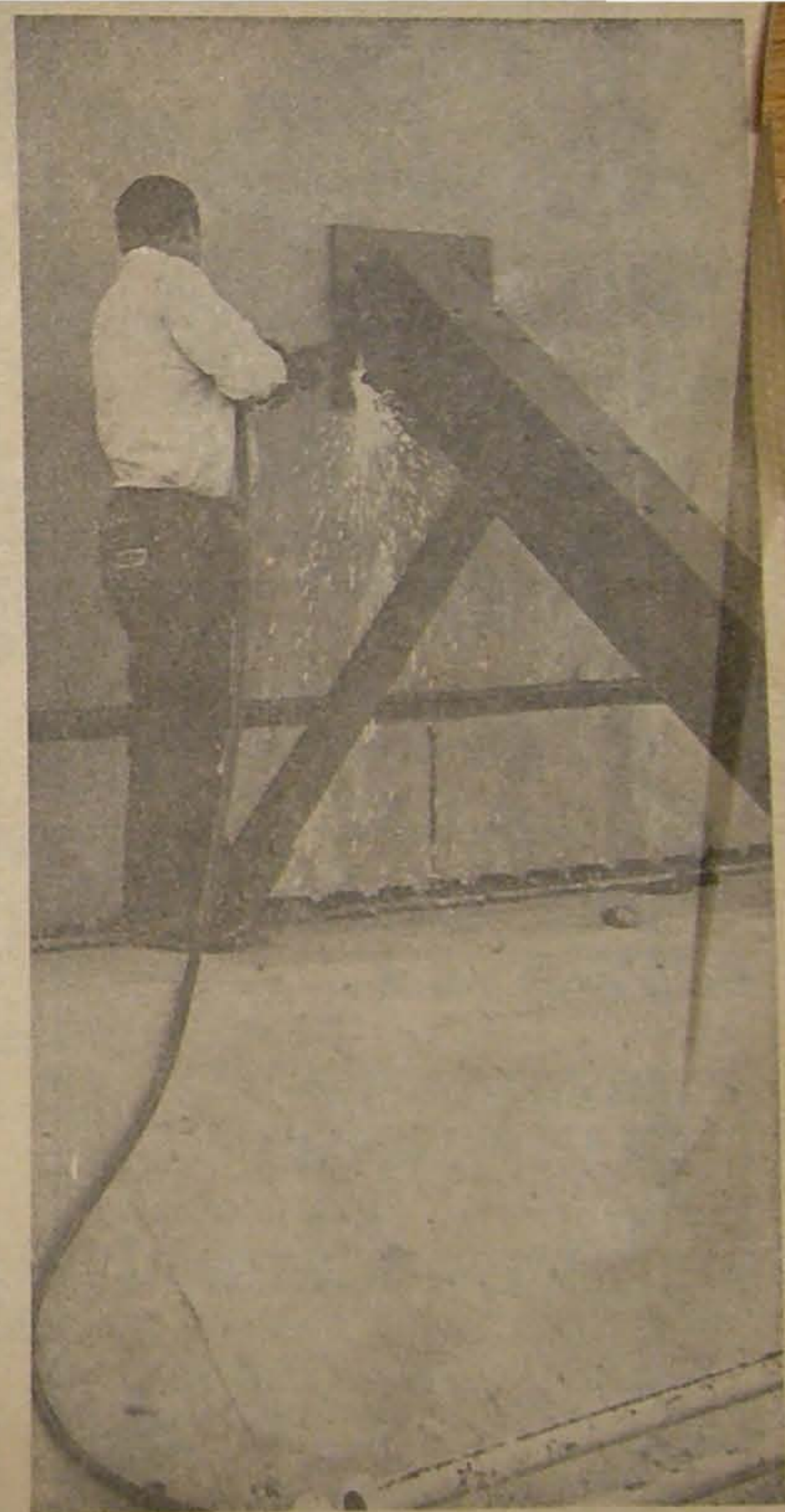
DIRT AND CONCRETE DUST FLY AS SECOND DOOR AT ONE OF SILOS SLAMS SHUT. ROLLING PRAIRIE IN AREA SHUDDERED WITH SLAM.



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G. W. JUSTESON, IN OVERCOAT, INSPECTS CLOSED SILO WITH A WORKMAN AS SILENCE CLOSES IN ON THE AREA THAT ONCE BUSTLED.



Fidel Salazar of Phoenix, Ariz., cuts away bolts with a cutting torch. Support had held silo doors in upright, open position after removal of closing mechanism in 1965.