



**SUGAR,  
1.2 Kilotons,  
Nevada**

**Photograph by U.S. Air Force  
1352nd Photographic Group,  
Lookout Mountain Station**

9 a.m. Nov. 19, 1951

Sugar was the code name for one of the first atomic bomb blasts conducted at the Nevada Proving Ground about 65 miles from Las Vegas. The 1.2-kiloton yield produced by nuclear fission on this occasion was relatively low-level, at least in comparison with the hydrogen bombs employing nuclear fusion that would be exploded later at Enewetak and other Pacific Islands. Setting off this bomb only a few feet above ground level did have some dramatic results, however. One was to lift 50,000 cubic feet of vaporized, irradiated soil 11,000 feet into the atmosphere.

I know all this because San-Francisco-based photographer Michael

Light tracked down every government photograph of the nuclear-test program he could find in the public domain and published a selection of them in a 2003 book titled "100 SUNS." The 1352nd Photographic Group that made most of the images was stationed in Hollywood, in order to keep up with developments in picture-taking technology.

Light's own recent photographs show how powerfully the documentation he uncovered has affected him. His series *Some Dry Space* is of the Western desert shot from a low-flying plane. It's what you might call a bomb's-eye view of the sort of terrain where the nuclear detonations took place.