

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



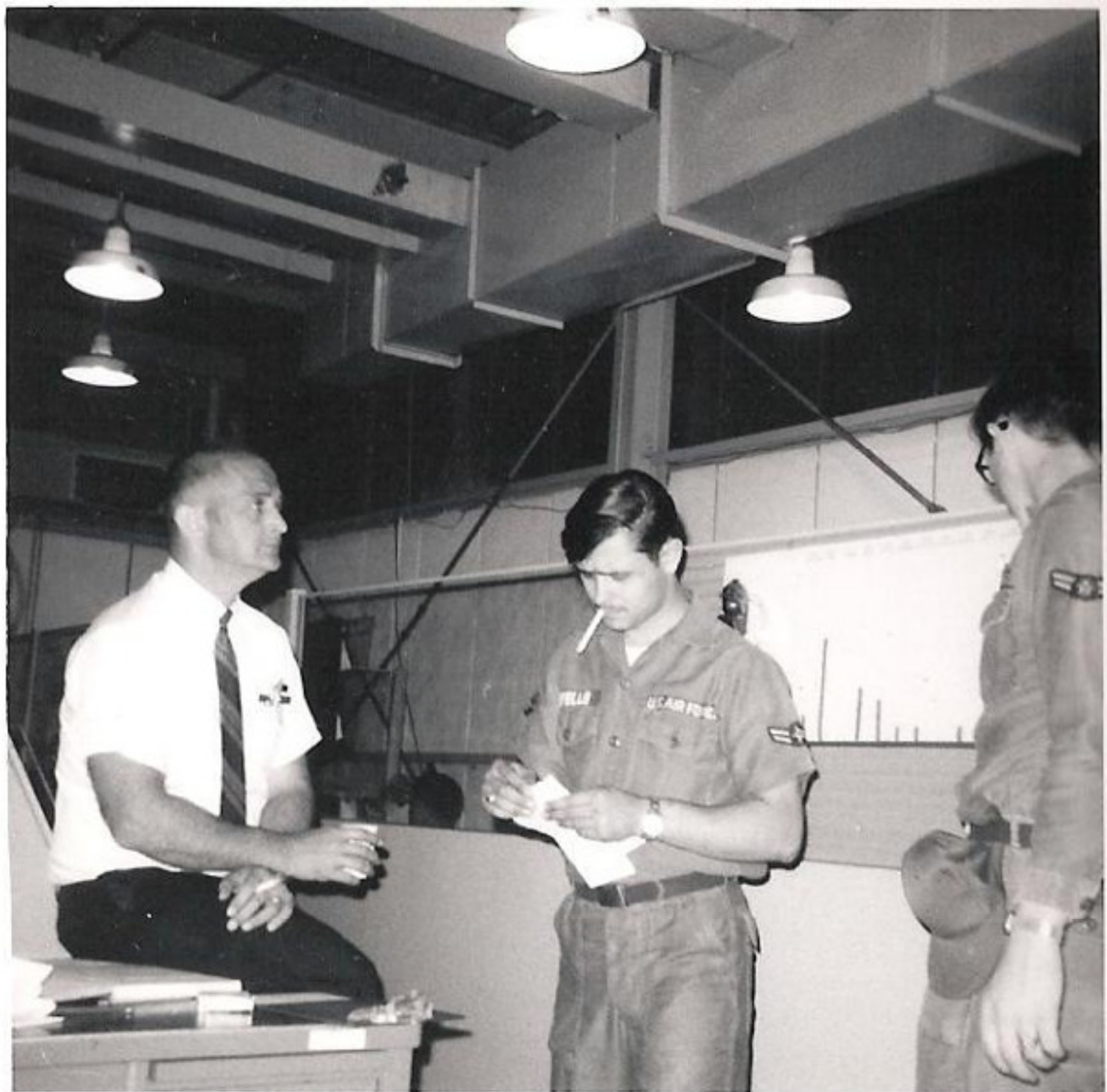
656 RADAR SQUADRON (SRGE)











final days at Saratoga

FS, N.Y. — At the end of this year the Air Division will lose one of its oldest units, the 656th Radar Squadron here. The squadron and personnel will be leaving only a small caretaker force to maintain the facilities.

Changes have occurred in the past few years. Station personnel and special operations bases got down to the business of closing up the site. As equipment was shipped out and buildings dismantled, numerous "Off Limits" signs were posted around the site, signalling the end of an era.

The Electronics Installation Squadron B arrived on station in May. Its presence known as two of



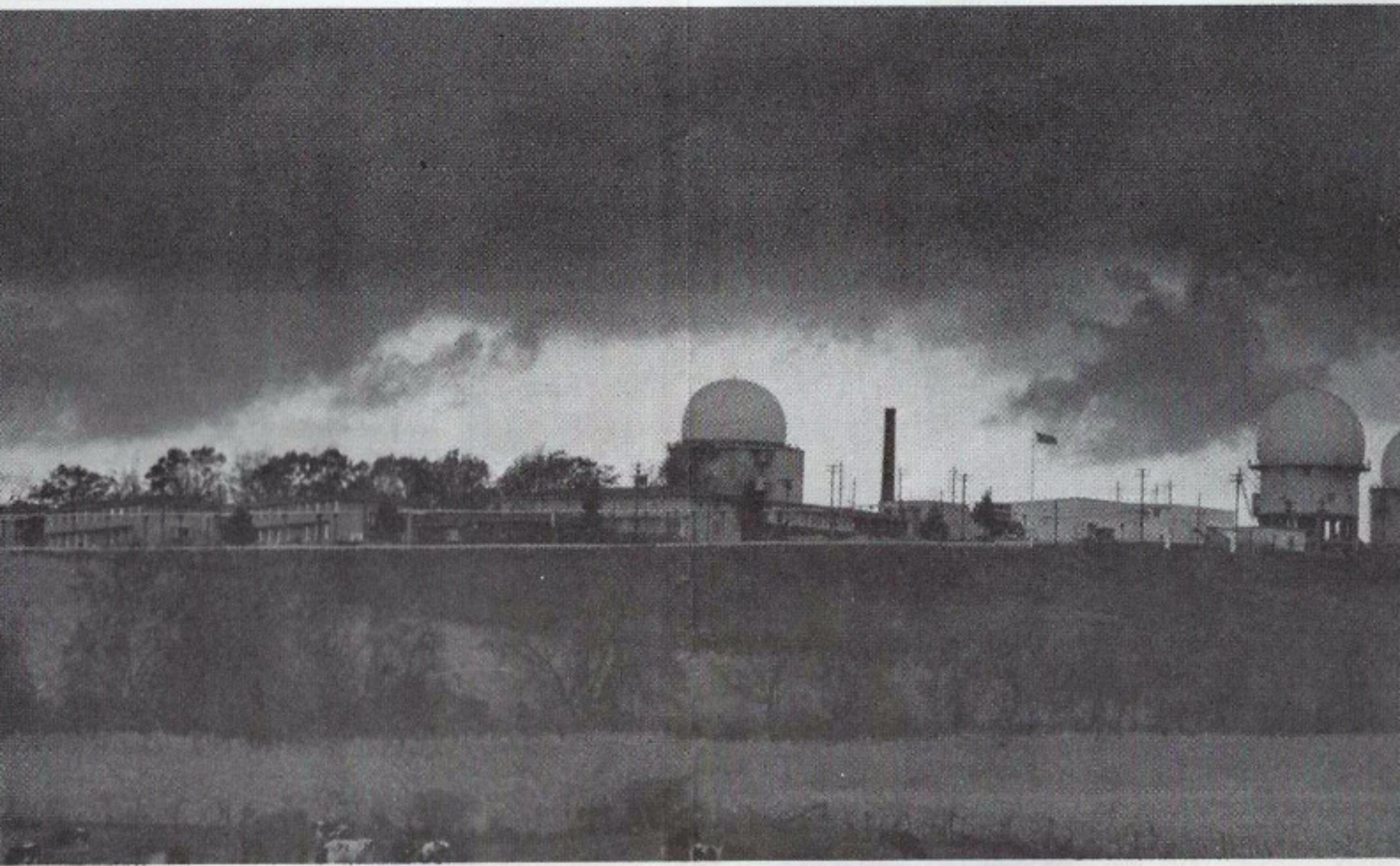
the three familiar radomes will be disassembled.

CEMIRT (Civil Engineering Inspection Repair Team) received two huge diesel generators and prepared for shipment to Greenland.

On May 31, the Dining Hall will serve the last meal to be served in that building. After the food service stops, the end of an era.

As of this writing there are only 100 assigned when the notice came. Most of them are on their new assignments or just arrived. Only 2 military and 6 civilian remain in the caretaker force. After 27 years of active installation will come to an end. The 656th RS will become history.

Story and Photos
by TSgt. Ed Day



THE BLACK CLOUD — Saratoga personnel felt they were living under a black cloud as the threat of closure hovered above them long before the official notification came.

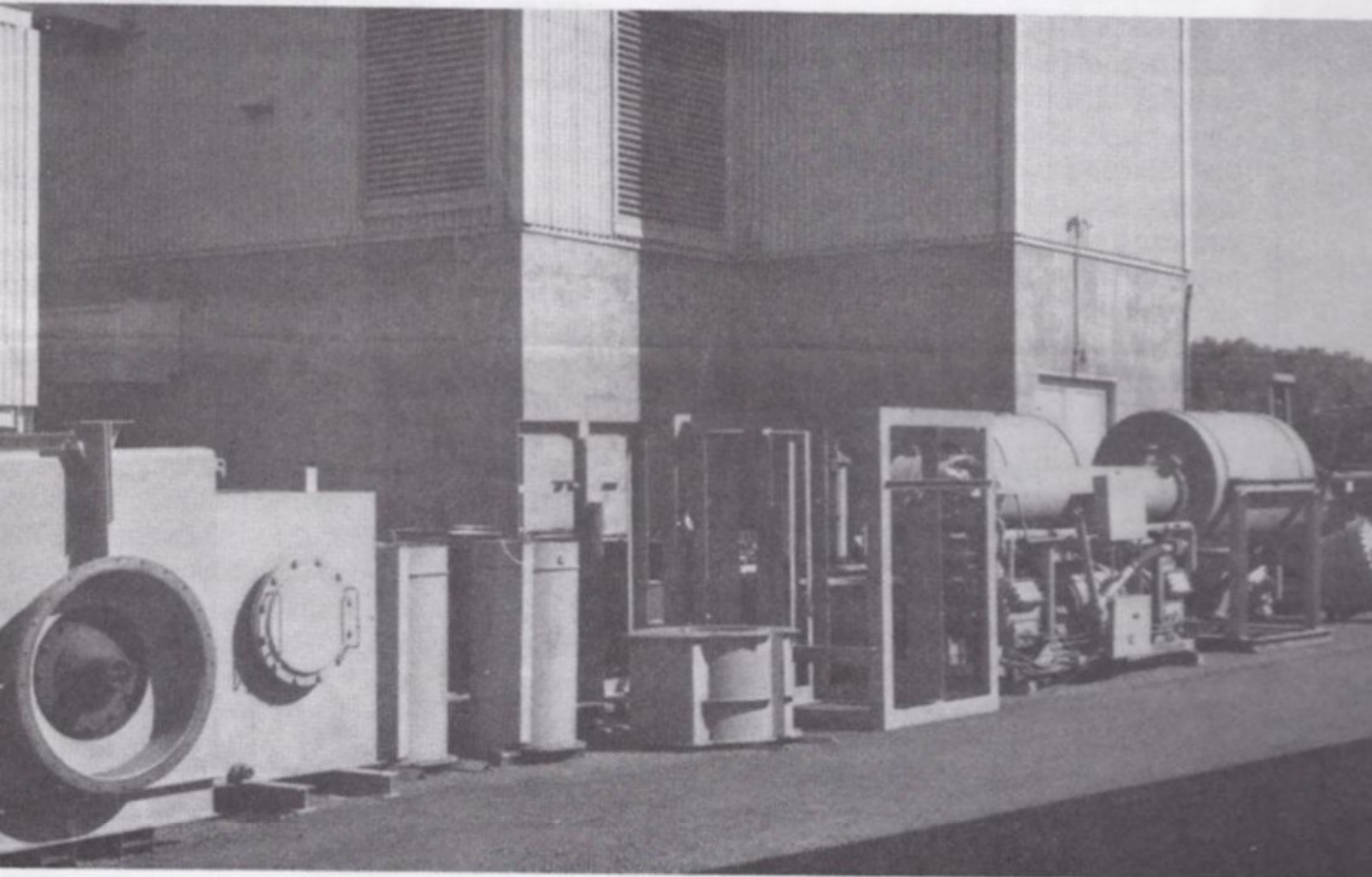


**Jennings and Frank Kopa, station civil
eers, post an "off limits" sign on the front door**

**of the NCO Club, permanently closing it
business.**



One of the two 500 kilowatt generators are removed by Sgt. Louis Rivera, Mr. Odi Ekseth and Amn. Ken Godfroy, members of the 656th, under the guidance of

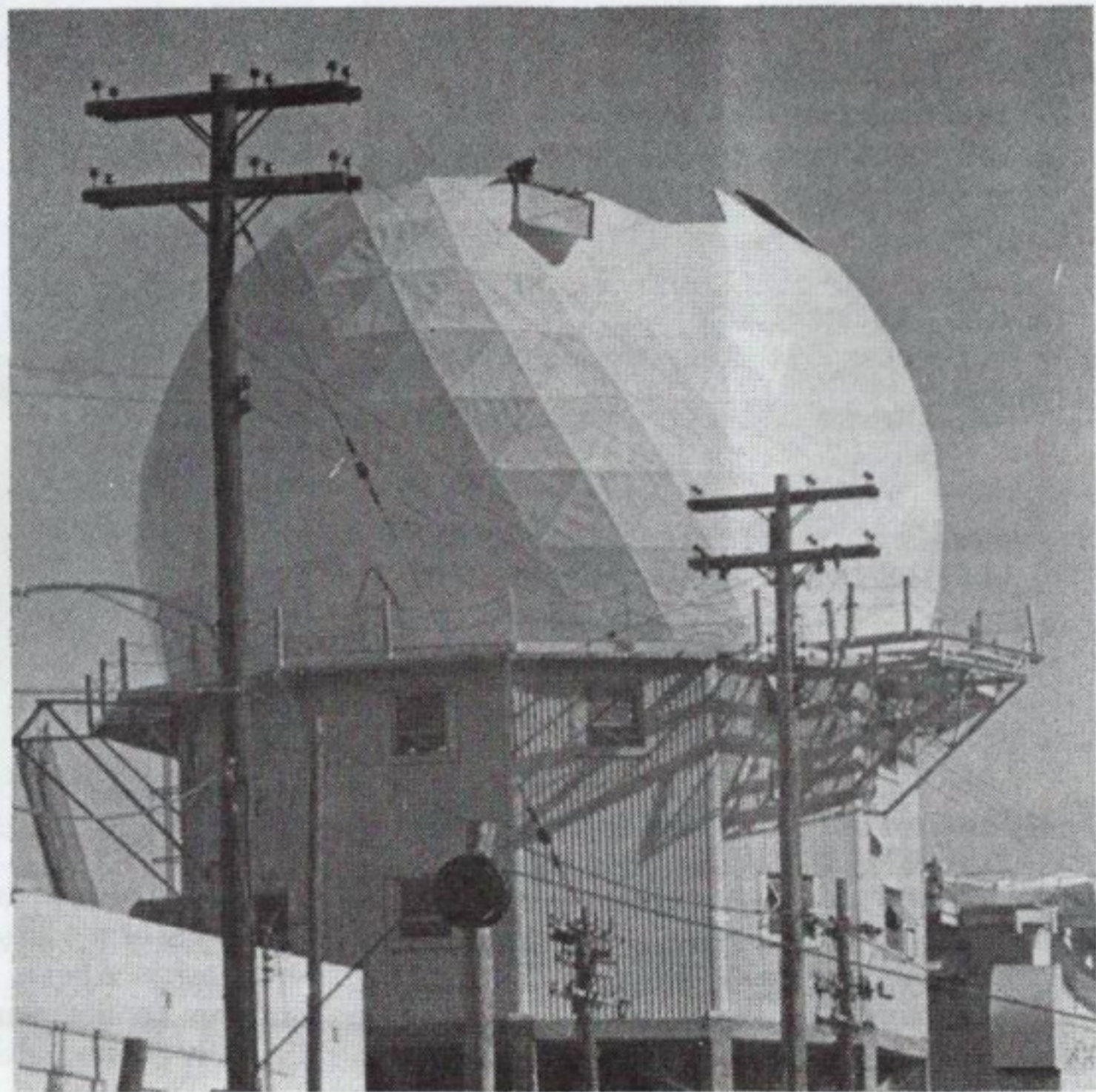


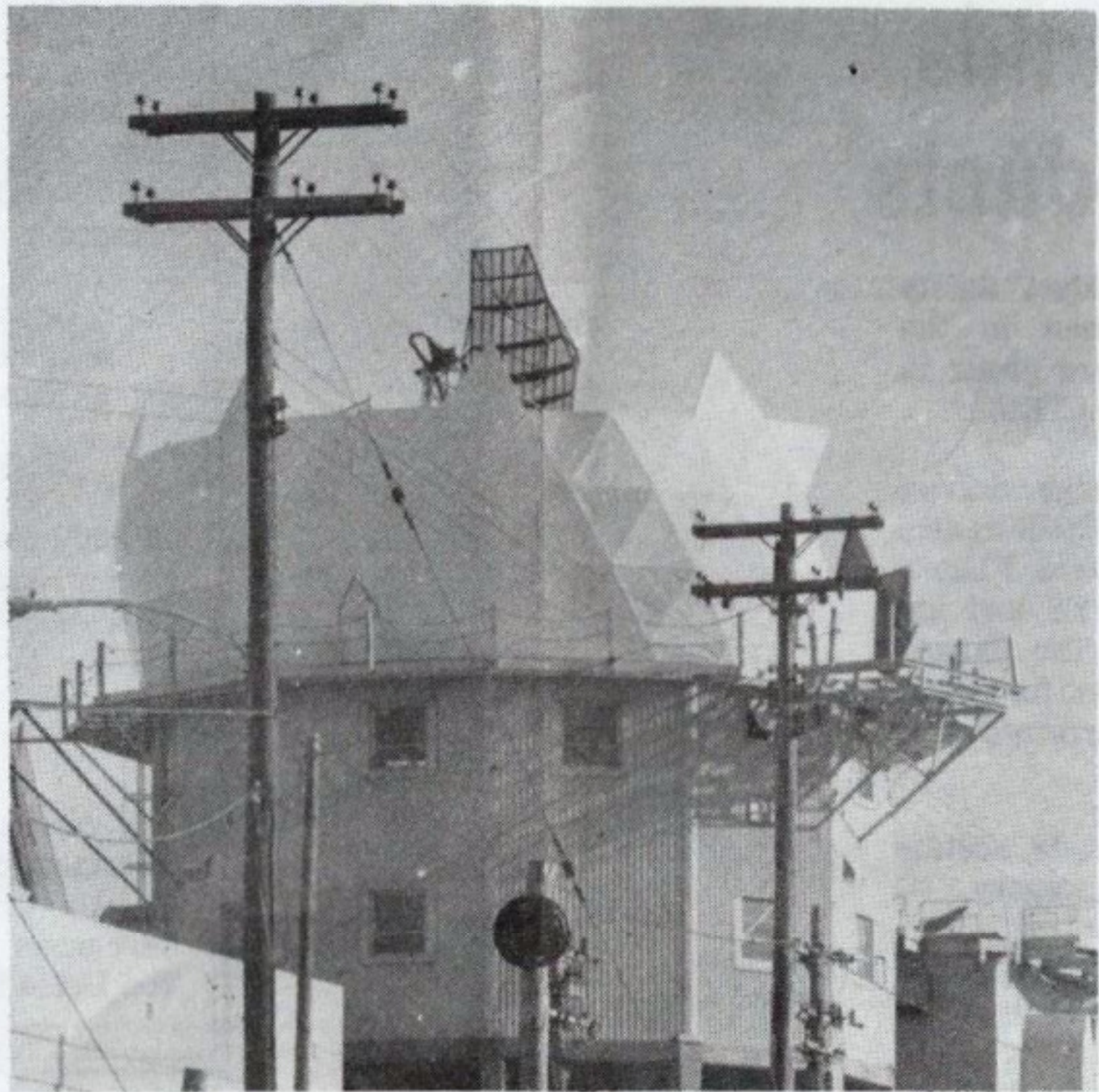
adar equipment from the FPS 27 tower is lined
outside the building waiting to be shipped

elsewhere. The final destination of the equipm
has not yet been determined.

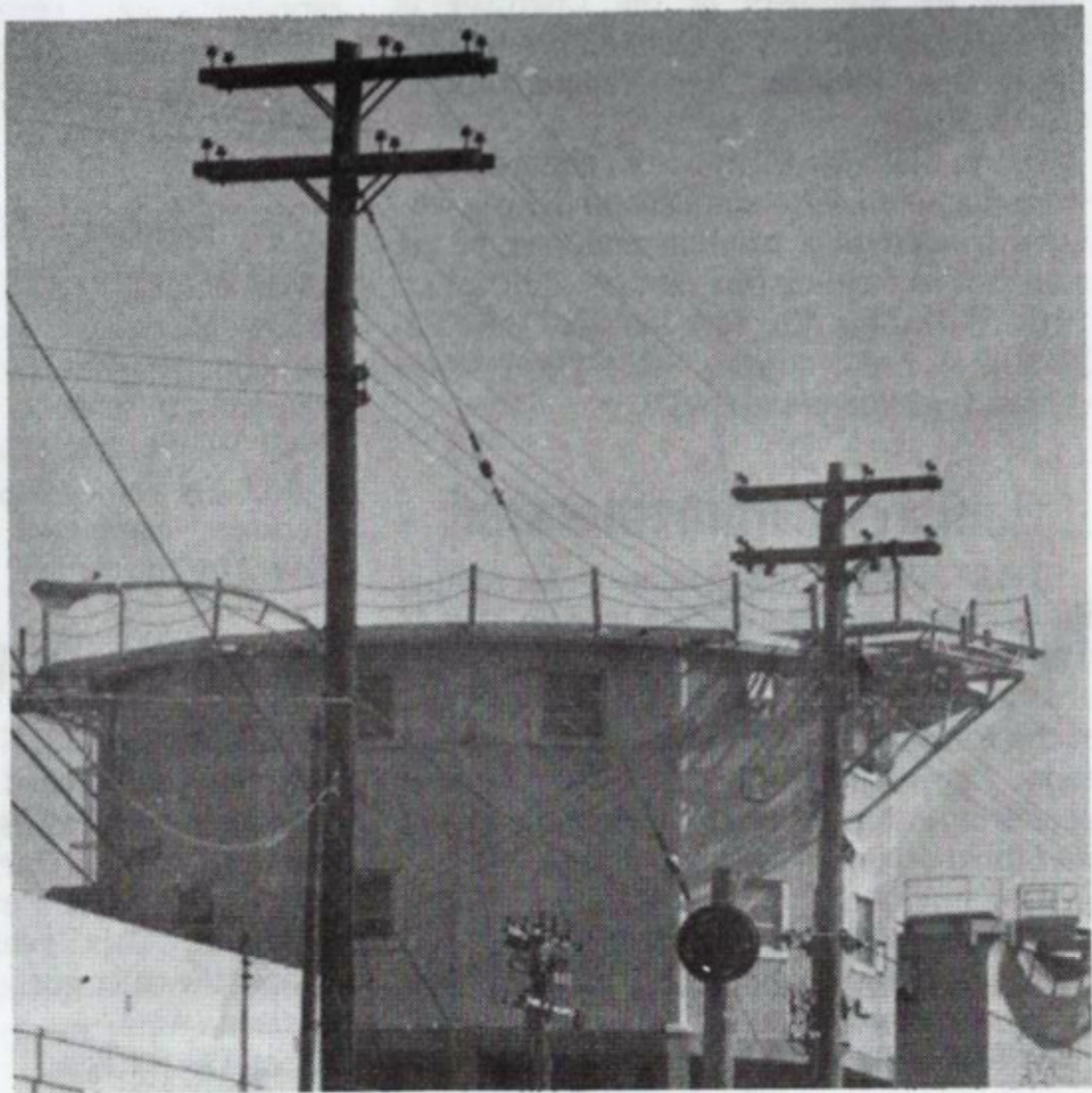


Inside the FPS 26 tower the first piece of the dome is removed by the 485th EIS from Griffiss AFB. The glow of light in the picture is the sun coming through.









Saratoga: almost over, except for memories

SARATOGA AFS, N.Y. — At the end there was just a quiet announcement: "The United States Air Force Aerospace Defense Command is planning to inactivate two of its long range radar units this spring . . . The command will inactivate the 656th Radar Squadron, Saratoga Air Force Station, New York . . . Closing of the sites is part of the Air Force Aerospace Defense Modernization Program which includes deleting selected interior radars while retaining a peripheral aircraft detection system."

In 1950 things were different. The Air Defense Command was expanding rapidly to meet the threats of the Cold War with Russia. Units were being activated so quickly that base construction could not keep up and Ground Observer Squadrons were actively supporting the mission.

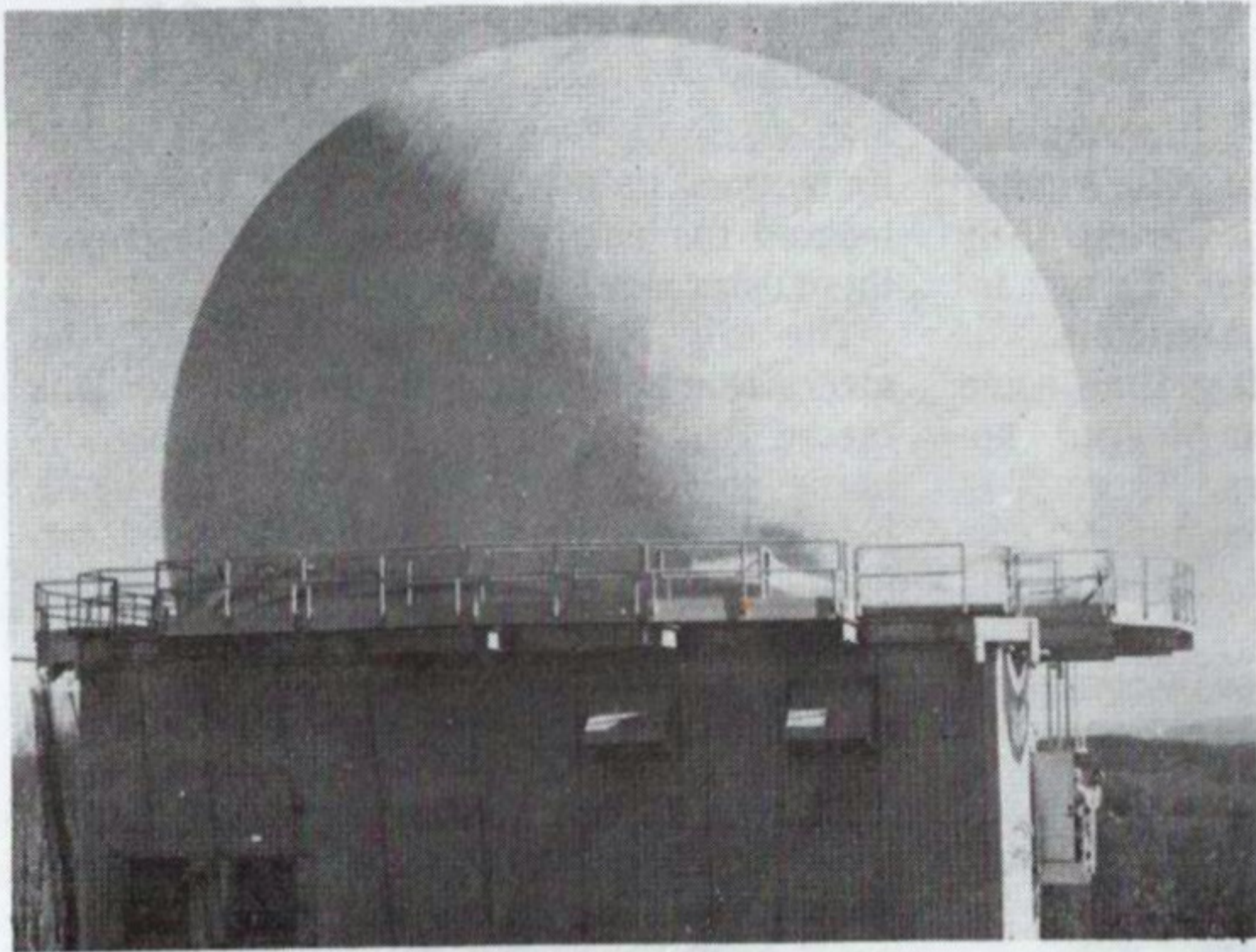
The 656th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was formed in 1950 and occupied temporary quarters in the Schenectady Army Depot in Rotterdam, N.Y. In 1952, after completion of a one-million dollar construction project, the squadron moved to its present location which became Saratoga AFS.

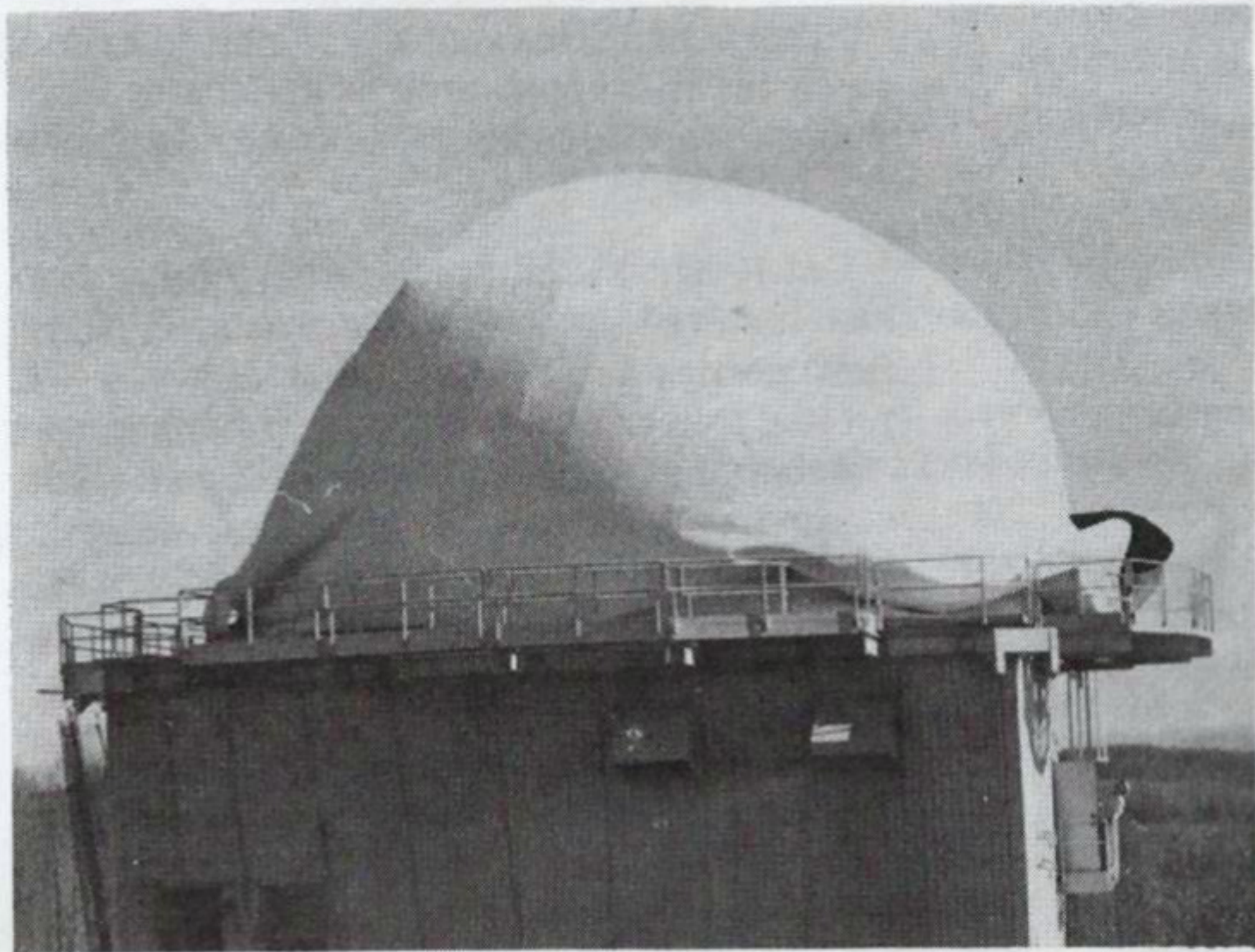
Until 1959 the 656th functioned as a manual ground controlled intercept unit, providing support for the aircraft assigned to the 4707th Air Defense Wing, its parent unit.

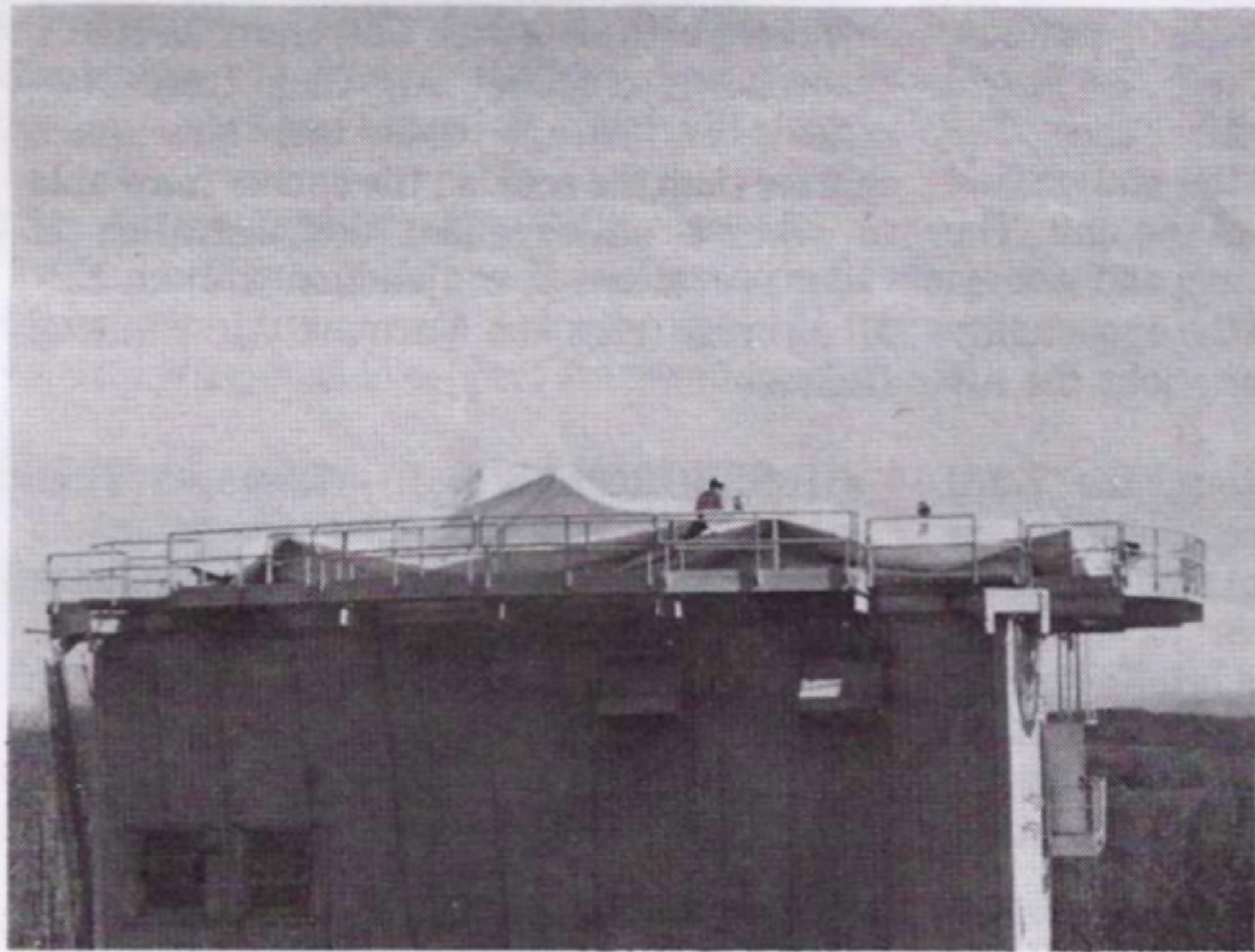
In 1959 the squadron was redesignated the 656th Radar Squadron to reflect its integration into the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system's Boston Air Defense Sector. From 1962 to 1965 the unit was assigned both a manual and a SAGE mission when it functioned as a Manual Air Defense Control Center in the BUIC I system. In 1965 the unit became a long-range radar squadron and has maintained this mission ever since.

In 1964 the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) assumed maintenance responsibility for the search radar and Saratoga became a joint-use site. Maintenance responsibility was returned to the Air Force in 1973, but FAA continued to use beacon data from the radar to support their operations.

Between now and the end of June, all mission equipment and personnel will be trickling to other units throughout the country and the world. On July 1, 1977, the 656th Radar Squadron will no longer exist. All that will remain will be memories.







Not with a bang

ore like a fizzle at Saratoga AFS ree
the antenna, six men from the 485th
Squadron, Griffiss AFB, took knives to th
ower. Although tech orders estimate that
for the radome to deflate, it actually took
ile word flashed around the base when v
was down before most personnel could g



MSgt. Clive Felderman prepares to unload a sweeper provided by the Army to make job of cleaning up the site before leaving easier.







