

Near Misses and Untold Truths



Photo by Ken Stephens

Ken Stephens

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Aiken Lifelong Learning



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“History is always written wrong, and so always needs to be rewritten. ...What is interesting is brought forward as if it had been central and efficacious in the march of events, and harmonies are turned into causes. Kings and generals are endowed with motives appropriate to what the historian values in their actions; plans are imputed to them prophetic of their actual achievements, while the thoughts that really preoccupied them remain buried in absolute oblivion.”

~ GEORGE SANTAYANA

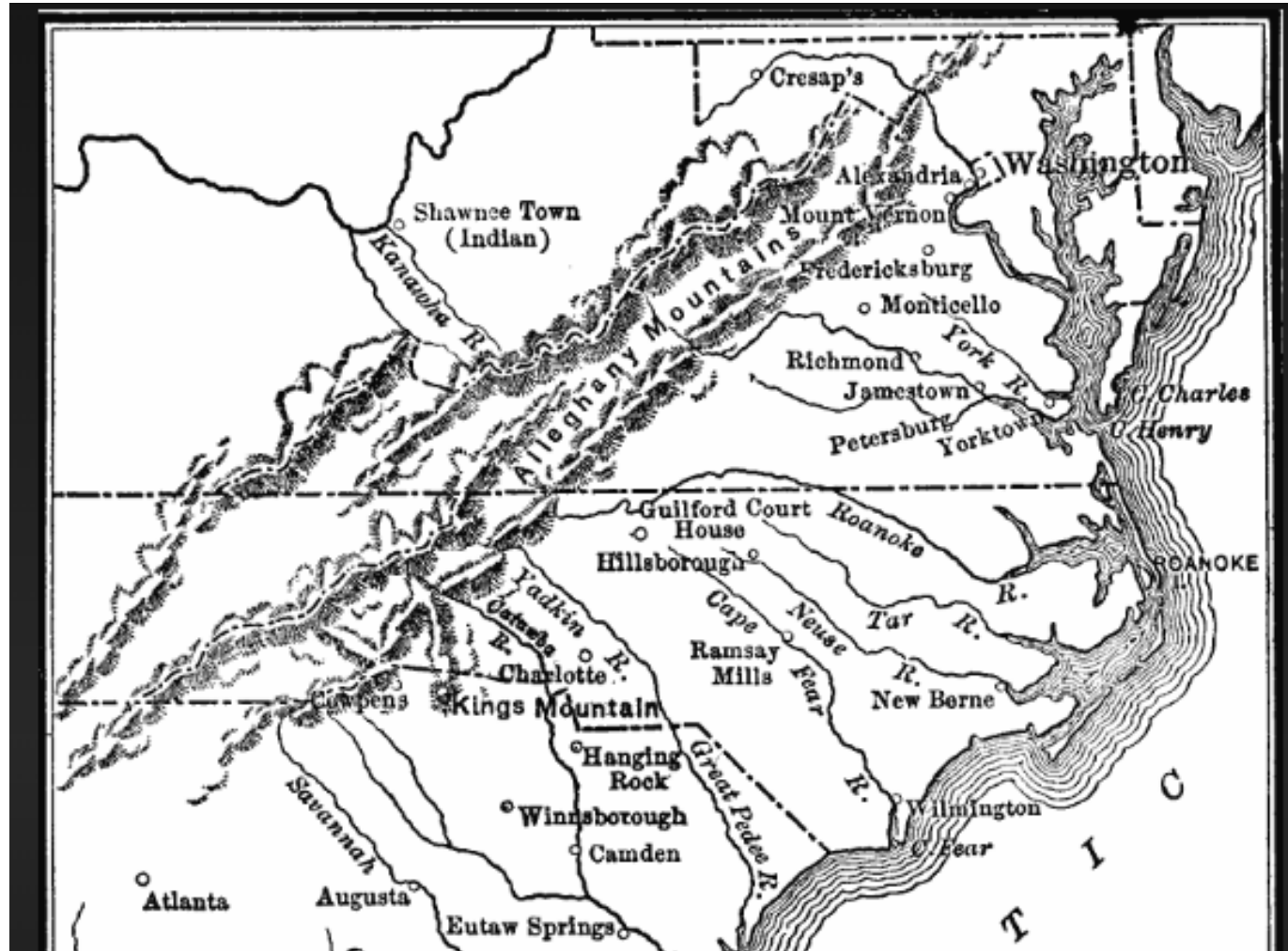
Background

- History to most of us
- Reasons for historical inaccuracies
- Military History professor made history EXCITING.

Battle of Yorktown

- Effectively ended Revolutionary War
- Cornwallis had superior professional forces.
- George Washington won.
- Why?

Map of Virginia in 1787



The Rest of the Story

- The role of Petersburg and one of its residents
- What happened at the surrender?
- How do we know all of this is true
- Why are recorded historical facts about the battle ambiguous today?

Napoleon Bonaparte

- How do most people consider him?
- How was he as a military commander?

The Rest of the Story

- Secret reason for his successes?
- What happened at the Battle of Waterloo?
- Historical tidbits about Napoleon?
- My favorite palindrome

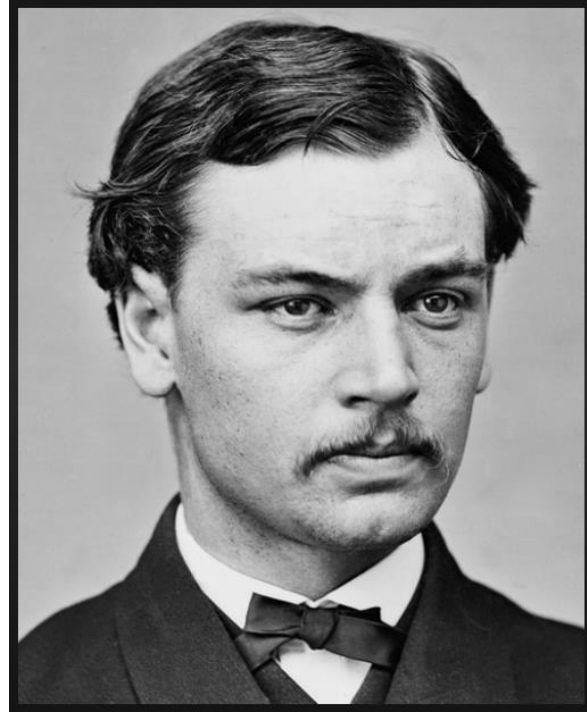
My Favorite Palindrome

ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA



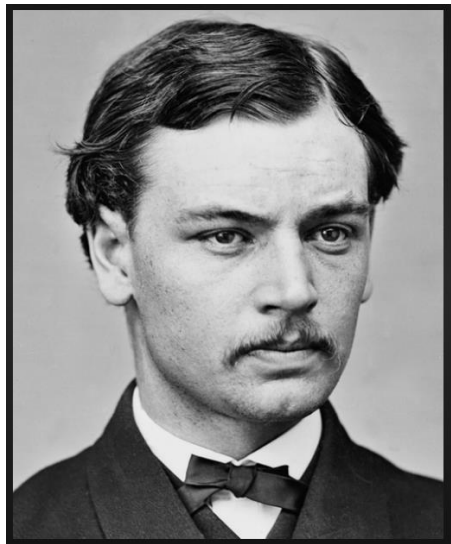
An Accident on a Train in 1864?

- The Harvard student going home
- The accident
- How he was saved



The Rest of the Story

- The student was Robert Todd Lincoln, son of Abraham Lincoln.
- The person who saved him was Edwin Booth, older brother of John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln a short while later.



What happened to Todd Lincoln and Edwin Booth?

Lincoln

- Lawyer and various government positions
- Witnessed assassinations of Garfield and McKinley
- Had lifelong guilt concerning his father's assassination
- Became CEO of the Pullman Company

Booth

- Continued acting career
- Became impresario for the Winter Garden in New York

The *Sultana* Disaster

- A sidewheeler Mississippi River Steamboat
- Need to bring Union soldiers home from Vicksburg, Mississippi

Three Key People

- Captain Hatch (Chief Union Quartermaster in Vicksburg)
- Captain Speed (Hatch's lackey)
- Captain of the *Sultana* (Mason)

The Timeline

- Abraham Lincoln assassinated April 14, 1865.
- *Sultana* trip down river from Ohio, spreading the word about Lincoln's assassination
- *Sultana* boiler leak discovered after arriving in Vicksburg
- Hatch (Chief Army Quartermaster) offered Mason (Captain of the *Sultana*) over \$40,000 in today's money to overload the *Sultana* with prisoners, and patch the boiler leak (if Mason gave Hatch a kickback).
- Mason agreed, and headed northward on April 23, 1865.

The Facts

- *Sultana* designed for 346 passengers
- Overloaded with:
 - 2027 soldiers
 - 100 civilian passengers
 - 85 crew
 - 250 hogsheads of sugar
 - 100 mules
 - 100 hogs

The Facts (continued)

- Soldiers crammed on deck and the roof, inside cabins, and in the boiler room with four boilers (including one with faulty repairs)



The Facts (continued)

- On April 27, 1865 about 1:00 am, near Memphis, the repaired boiler exploded.
- Boat listed strongly and reduced water level in other boilers.
- Other boilers, with low water, exploded.
- *Sultana* rapidly sank.

The Facts (continued)

- Some people were killed instantly, some were killed in the fire, and many were dumped into the water.
- People from Union side of river (Memphis) and Confederate side of river (Arkansas) came to the rescue. Two weeks earlier, Confederates would have shot Union soldiers.
- 757 were rescued. Many of them died shortly thereafter. Everybody else died, including the *Sultana's* Captain.

The Rest of the Story

- The only person ever held accountable was the Chief Quartermaster's lackey, Captain Speed.
- Speed was convicted of all charges by a military court. However, the Army's Adjutant General dismissed all charges.
- Chief Quartermaster Hatch had received his position as patronage from Abraham Lincoln, because one of Lincoln's confidantes was related to Hatch.
- Hatch was never punished for his crime of kickback or for his negligence in the *Sultana* disaster.

The Rest of the Story (continued)

Sultana killed more people than the Titanic, yet *Sultana* disaster was barely recorded by historians. Why?

1. Overshadowed by Lincoln's death
2. Suppressed by the Abraham Lincoln Society and others

Only in the 20th century were historians able to ferret out the truth.

The Tippecanoe Jinx

- William Henry Harrison elected President in 1840
- Gave longest inaugural speech ever
- Died about a month later

The Rest of the Story

- William Henry Harrison, military officer and the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe, a fight with a Native American tribe
- Running mate: John Tyler
- Slogan one of the most remembered: *Tippecanoe and Tyler Too*
- Harrison very macho, rode a white horse to the inauguration (not a closed carriage), caught a “cold” and never recovered.

The Jinx

- Elected in 1840: William Henry Harrison, died in office.
- Elected in 1860: Abraham Lincoln, died in office (**assassinated**)
- Elected in 1880: James Garfield, died in office (**assassinated**)
- Elected in 1900: William McKinley, died in office (**assassinated**)
- Elected in 1920: Warren Harding, died in office.
- Elected in 1940: Franklin Roosevelt, died in office
- Elected in 1960: John Kennedy, died in office (**assassinated**)

Who was elected in 1980?

Who was elected in 1980?

- Ronald Reagan, did not die in office (**survived assassination attempt**)
- Jinx broken

Were any of the people in the jinx involved with Presidential Scandal?

Warren Harding

- Considered by many historians the most corrupt of all Presidents
- Carried on affairs with at least two women
- Kept a mistress and fathered a daughter with the mistress (Nan Britton)
- Died in office; money to mistress and daughter stopped
- Destitute mistress wrote first tell-all book (The President's Daughter)
- Mistress was sued, and she lost the case.
- “No President would do such a thing.”
- Only in 2015 did DNA prove daughter was his offspring.
- Was Harding the only President who misbehaved? No.

Pause

- Harding was last President to be insulated from the press or criticism.
- Thereafter, all such protections were gone forever.
- Presidents are no longer 100 percent hero.

Franklin Roosevelt

- Accused of an affair with someone, while married to Eleanor
- Never proven
- Had four terms
- Tried to pack the Supreme Court

John Kennedy

- Father, Joseph Kennedy, accused of bootlegging during Prohibition
- His biographer says no.
- Joseph gave Scotch to his college class during Prohibition
- Technically not bootlegging (given, not sold)
- John Kennedy known in Washington as a “ladies man”
- Carried on multiple affairs, including Marilyn Monroe
- Broke it off and passed her on to his brother, RFK

Lyndon Johnson

- Complicated, egotistical man
- Two Lyndon Johnsons
 - One championed civil rights.
 - One privately was racist.
- For 20 years in Congress, opposed every civil rights bill
- Even MSNBC confirms the racist accusations.

The next President with confirmed “hanky-panky”

Bill Clinton

- Very intelligent
- Rhodes Scholar at Oxford
- Accused of a scandal, with wife Hillary, when Governor of Arkansas
- Had an affair with a White House intern, Monica Lewinski
- Lied to the American people: “I did not have sexual relations with that woman.”
- Hillary violated Federal security laws as Secretary of State. (received no significant punishment).

Other Presidents Accused of Scandal, Affairs, or Sexual Impropriety

- Thomas Jefferson
- Grover Cleveland
- Richard Nixon
- Gerald Ford
- George H.W. Bush
- George W. Bush
- Barak Obama
- Joe Biden
- Donald Trump He is releasing classified files re Kennedys, Johnson, etc.
- Jimmy Carter Not accused of sexual impropriety, but criticized for 18% home loans and American embassy employees taken hostage in Iran

20th Century Acceleration of Science/Technology

- Wright Brothers
- World War I (development of chemical weapons)
- World War II and the Manhattan Project
- Proliferation of nuclear weapons
- Intercontinental ballistic missiles
- Players other than big countries
- Changing map in Europe

What did this mean?

- Being separated from a country thousands of miles away, no longer protection
- Late 50s: No ICBMs to reach Soviet Union
- Later: ICBM travel between U.S. and Soviet Union: 30 minutes

Greenland is in the News Today

Greenland (continued)

- Raid before Pearl Harbor and aid agreement with Denmark
- Thule Air Force base since 1941
- Renamed Pituffik Space Base
- 1959 Operation Iceworm and Camp Century (declassified 1996)

Armageddon and World War III

- Multiple instances in which we came perilously close to World War III
- My direct involvement in some of them

The Time We Came Close to Nuclear Armageddon

- Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962
- Soviets secretly put nuclear missiles in Cuba.
- U.S. says NO!
- Very tense situation with U.S. and Soviet fleets
- Four Soviet submarines—diesel subs, but nuclear torpedoes
- **Field commanders of Soviet forces had authority to order nuclear launch without higher approval.**

Vasili Aleksandrovich Arkhipov

- Decorated Soviet nuclear submarine officer
- Prior accident in nuclear submarine
- Second in command of submarine flotilla,
First Officer on a submarine in Cuba



Captain decides to fire nuclear
torpedo at U.S. ships.

- Launch required three people to concur: Captain, Arkhipov, and Political Officer.
- Only Arkhipov refused to concur. Captain threatened to shoot him.

- Arkhipov talked Captain into going to shallow depth for radio contact.
- Soviet High Command said: “Stand down. Return to Russia!”

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Advisor to the President said:

“This was not only the most dangerous moment of the Cold War. It was the most dangerous moment in human history.”

In 2017, Arkhipov was posthumously recognized by the Future of Life Institute for:

“Exceptional measures, often performed despite personal risk and without obvious reward, to safeguard the collective future of humanity.”

Stanislav Petrov



Another Close Call

- Lt. Col Stanislav Petrov (Soviet Army)
- Duty Officer of Soviet Early Warning System September 26, 1983:
System said: **Five U.S. ICBMs Launched**

Another Close Call (continued)

- Petrov sat on the information, until he could confirm info was bogus.
- Delay in reporting was insubordinate.
- What could have happened if he had passed information up the line?

Sad Commentary

- Three of my grandchildren have graduated from good schools.
- None of them in History classes studied Arkhipov or Petrov.
- What is the state of U.S. preparedness for an attack?

Pause for Questions and Discussion

Humor During the Cold War

- James Bonds (Sean Connery vs. Roger Moore)
- Vladimir, doorman at the Soviet Embassy in Washington
- Antenna farm on the roof of the Soviet Embassy, and four bedsprings

An Incident on the “Hot Line” (Cold War)

- Personal
- Not commonly known
- Text of the FLASH to us from Soviets on the “Hot Line”

A Visit to Cheyenne Mountain

- Tall granite mountain near Colorado Springs, CO
- NORAD Headquarters





DEFCON

Readiness condition	Exercise term	Description	Readiness
DEFCON 1	COCKED PISTOL	Nuclear war is imminent or has already begun	Maximum readiness. Immediate response.
DEFCON 2	FAST PACE	Next step to nuclear war	Armed forces ready to deploy and engage in less than six hours
DEFCON 3	ROUND HOUSE	Increase in force readiness above that required for normal readiness	Air Force ready to mobilize in 15 minutes
DEFCON 4	DOUBLE TAKE	Increased intelligence watch and strengthened security measures	Above normal readiness
DEFCON 5	FADE OUT	Lowest state of readiness	Normal readiness

Actual DEFCON Situation During My Visit

- The rest of the story

Broken Arrows

- What they are
- Broken Arrow Teams
- The good news: over 30 incidents; no accidental nuclear weapon detonations
- Two movies: *Broken Arrow (1996)*, *The Peacemaker (1997)*, and *technical advisors*

Situation at End of Cold War

- Collapse of Soviet weapons accountability
- U.S. collaboration with Russia and former Soviet Republics (role of Savannah River Site)
- Detectors at border crossings
- Crossing between Russia and Chechnya
- The rest of the story

Discussion and Questions

- Anything in the first two sessions
- Anything new

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Feel free to use it.

Highly secure

Your secrets are safe with me.

From Goldeneye (1995)

- James Bond (Pierce Brosnan)
- Xenia Onatopp (Famke Janssen)
- This doesn't happen in the real world, right?

A Real World Three-Way

- Olga (MI-6 believes Onatopp was patterned after her)
- Boris
- A third party (a member of the Politburo)

This happens in the real world, but never in Aiken. Right?

WRONG!

- FBI Counterintelligence
- A new agent
- A “Red Sparrow,” Kristina Semonova
- An American who went over to the dark side

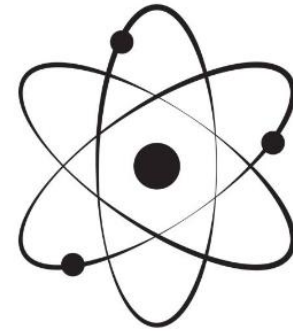


Chinese Spies in Aiken?



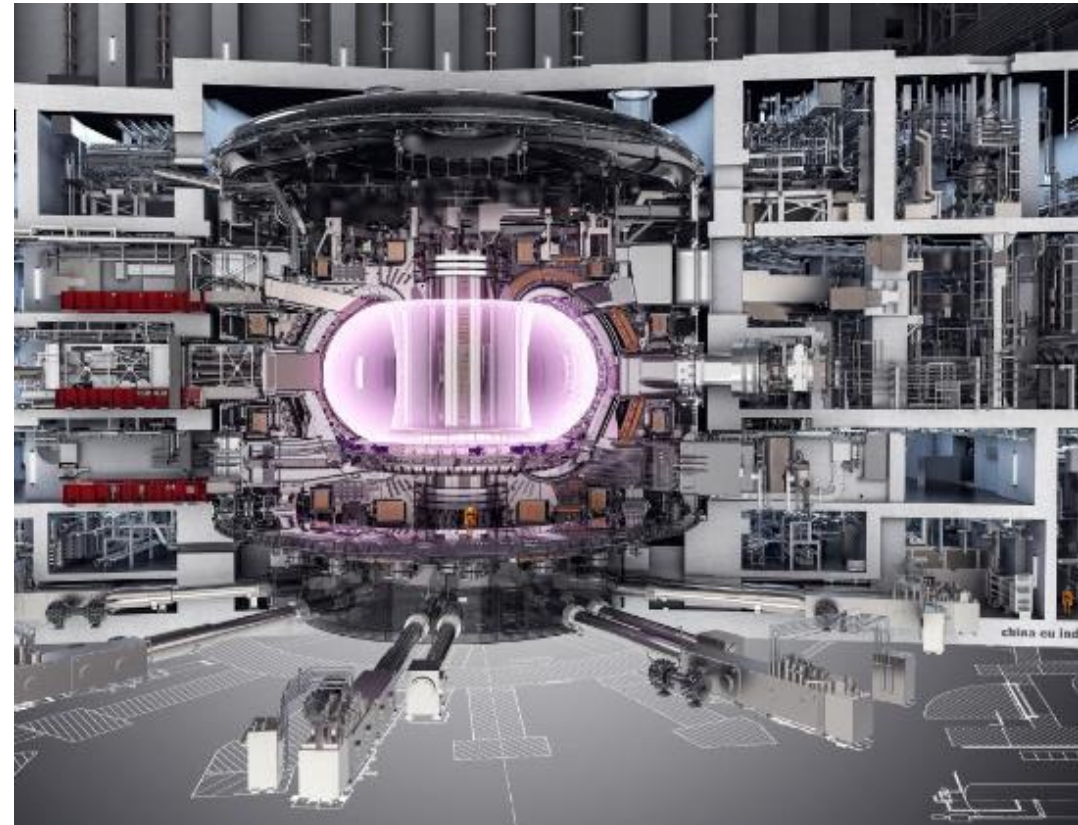
Bombshells and an Announcement

- One scientific bombshell
- One political bombshell
- A personal announcement

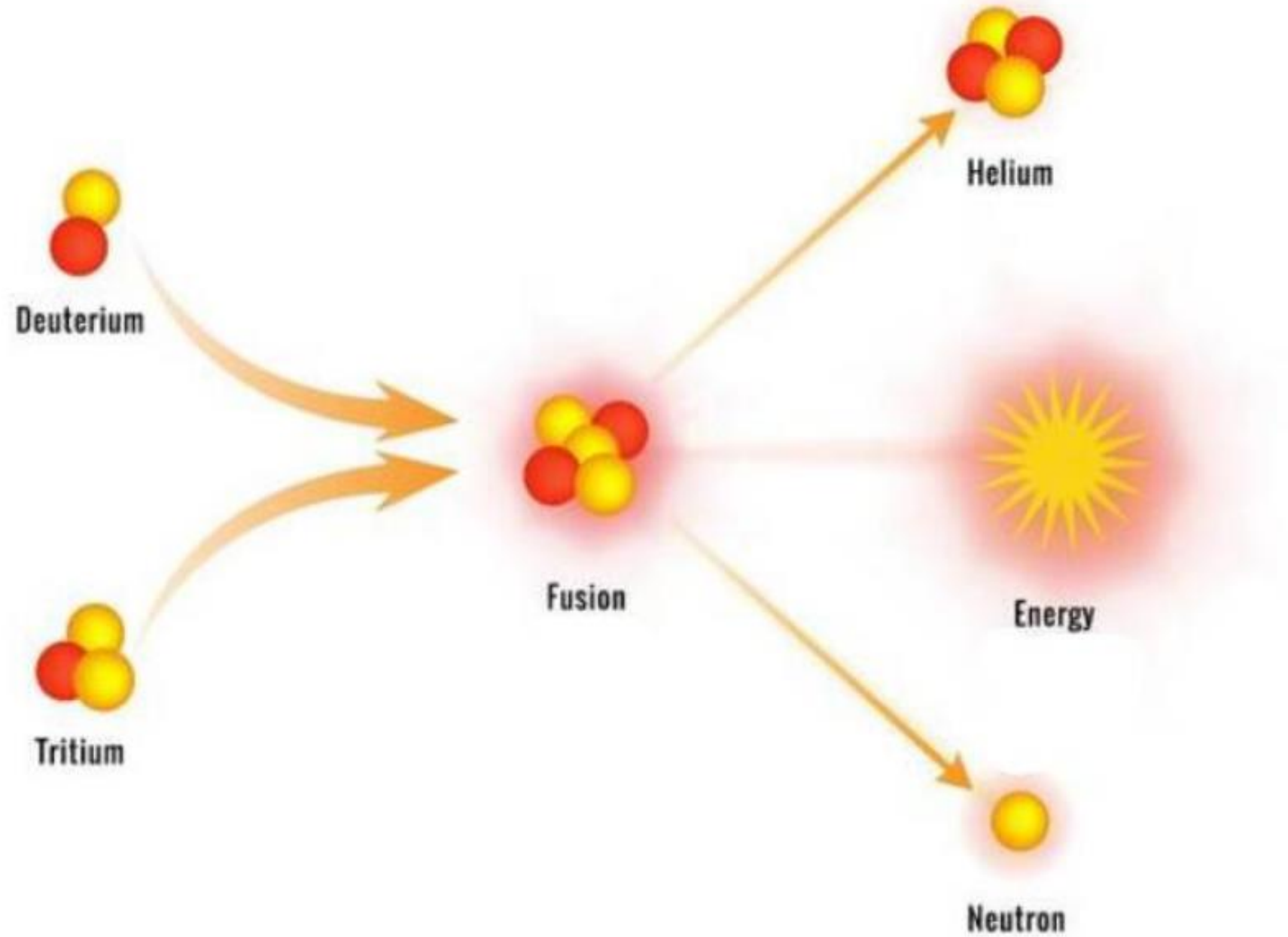


Is fusion the way of the future?

- The sun is a big fusion reactor.
- ITER (International Thermonuclear Energy Reactor)
 - In France near Marseilles, many countries including US/SRS participate



Fusion



No power-scale fusion reactor will ever be available, until problem of high-energy neutrons is solved.

No solution is envisioned.

Ken's Extracurricular Activities

- Testing whether an inside job made weapons program vulnerable
- Discovering reason for increase in inoperative Air Force parachutes
- Finding missing binary nerve-gas weapons
- How to demilitarize binary nerve-gas weapons

Chemical Weapon Treaties

- 1925 Treaty dealing with World War I-vintage weapons
- 1990's Treaty dealing with modern weapons
- Egypt, North Korea, and South Sudan have not ratified treaty.

Remember the War in Iraq?

- Saddam Hussein
- (Close to getting nuclear weapons)
- George W. Bush needed reason to enter war.
- Weapons of Mass Destruction (Role of Dick Cheney)
- “There were no Weapons of Mass Destruction.” Bush vilified.

Or were there?

Call to Me from a Former Colleague Just Before Iraq War Ended

- Binary chemical weapons work earlier
- The call:

Announcement

This Might be Your Last Opportunity for Questions

- Questions about what we have covered
- Questions about me
- Questions from the index cards

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- Feel free to use it.
- Highly secure
- Give me ideas for other courses

Keep Learning and Stay Young



Photo by Ken Stephens