PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

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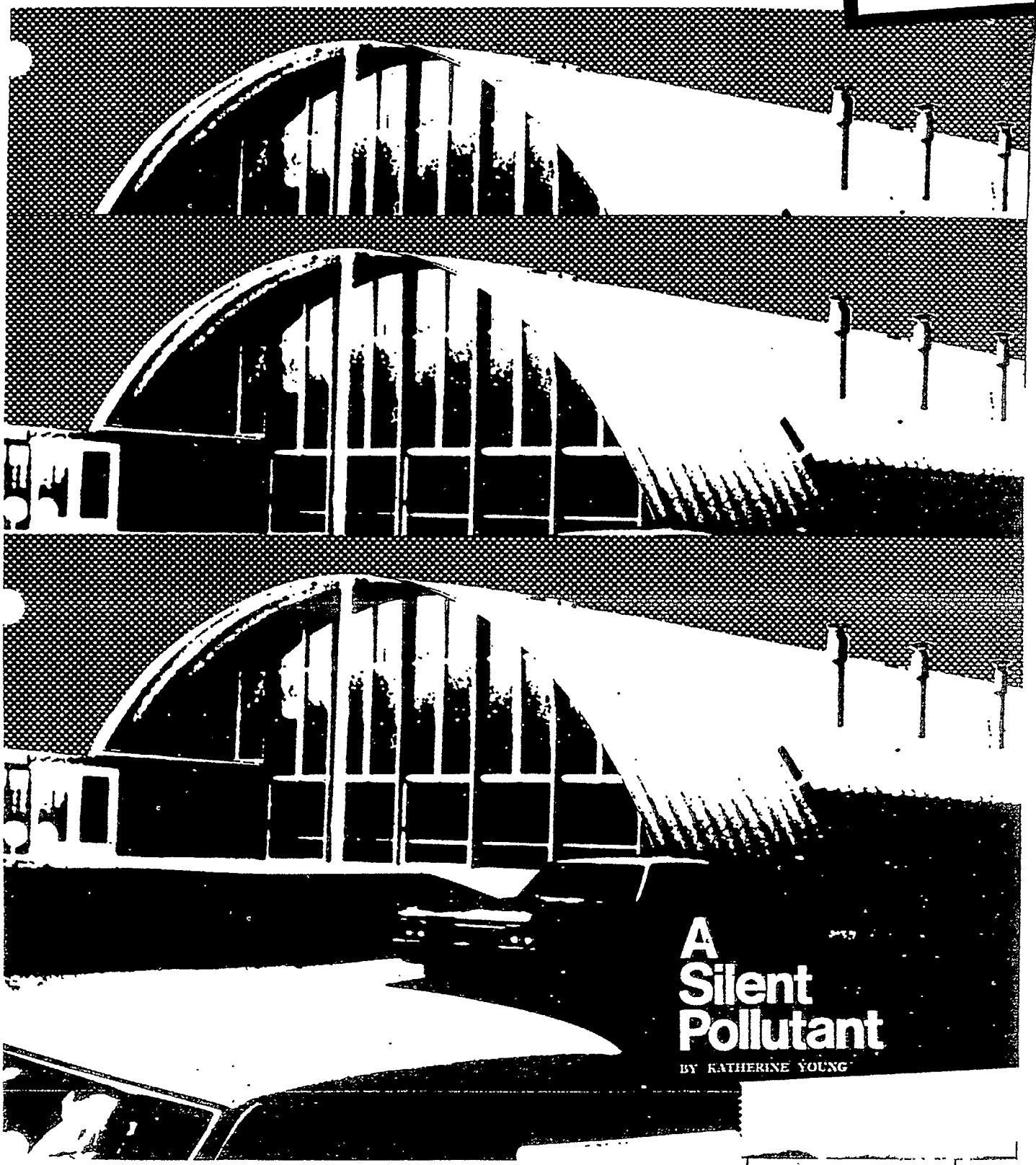

A Silent Pollutant

BY KATHERINE YOUNG

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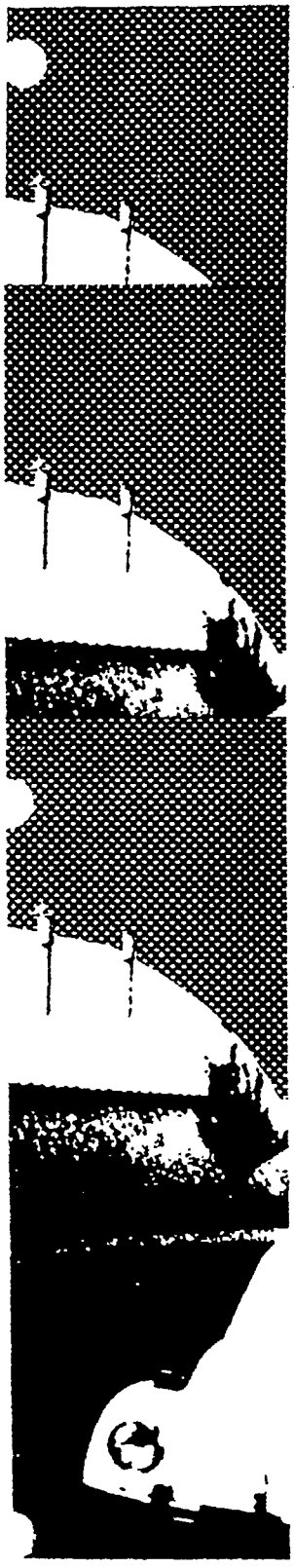

On Friday, April 14, the Northside Elementary School in Lander, Wyo., was closed at the order of the Wyoming Department of Health and Social Services and the State Superintendent of Schools. The student population, approximately 520 pupils, transferred to other schools for the remainder of the school term.

Why? Because, while in the classroom, children were breathing an unhealthy mixture of air and asbestos dust. The school, built in 1961, is a Quonset-type fabricated steel structure. The interior coating of sprayed-on asbestos for insulation was directly accessible to the students.

The school librarian first took note of the layer of "dust" covering furniture all over the school. Suspicious of its origin, the school requested the state health department to make an inspection.

The State Department of Health and Social Services then requested the assistance of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Asbestos expert Dr. William M. Johnson, deputy director of the Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations at the NIOSH Cincinnati laboratories, and Dr. Bobby J. Gunter, regional industrial hygienist in the Region VIII NIOSH office, inspected the school and made their recommendations.

NIOSH provided technical assistance and inspection at the request of the state because of its expertise in asbestos analysis. Since the Institute has no authority under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to inspect public institutions such as state or city entities, or take any action on their findings, all findings were turned over to the State Health Officer.

The NIOSH investigators found that "asbestos falls intermittently in both large and small quantities, and one is able to wipe up asbestos dust at random from the surfaces of the schoolroom furniture. The ventilation system recirculates room air, and the intake filters are clogged with asbestos fibers."

They advised that, "The deteriorating physical condition of the asbestos ceilings can only result in increased asbestos exposure in the future. We consider any further asbestos exposure to these children imprudent and hazardous to health."

The effects of asbestos fibers on the human pulmonary system is not a new concern. Asbestosis, a nonmalignant lung disease, was first described forty years ago in Great Britain when it was recognized as a major health hazard to persons living and working in an environment laden with asbestos fibers.

Subsequently, a relationship between inhalation of asbestos dust and lung cancer has generally become accepted. Present standards issued by the Department of Labor for a Threshold Limit Value of particles of asbestos dust in the air are based on NIOSH recommendations resulting from their research findings in the area.

Renovation to replace the present asbestos insulation material in the Northside Elementary School began June 19, at a cost to the Lander School System of just under $52,000. But due to strong community awareness and support, the renovation is being financed through a local bond issue.

Even though the standards in effect at the time of the closing of the school were not exceeded by the measurement found in the building, Wyoming health and school officials were concerned about the hazard, based on the opinion that exposure to asbestos at any level increases the possible chances of cancer.

Obvious occupational hazards are noticed quite readily. Possibly of greater importance is the silent pollutant that makes no noise, has no odor and slowly performs its destruction over an extended period of time. Deterioration from such conditions as asbestos flaking often go unnoticed or undefined as a hazard to human health.

Mrs. Young is the information officer for the regional health director, Region VIII, Denver.

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