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The Atomic Bomb Fragment: An Experience in Explaining Nuclear Science to the Popular Media DEREK JOKISCH, DAVID PETERSON, PHILIP FULMER, Dept. of Physics and Astronomy, Francis Marion University — On March 11, 1958 a B-47 strategic bomber on a training mission accidentally dropped a Mark 6 nuclear bomb over rural South Carolina. The bomb, which did not contain the fissionable core, detonated on a lot in Mars Bluff, SC, less than a mile from the current campus of Francis Marion University (FMU). Though the accounts of this event have been written several times, the most extensive account was recently published in the May 2005 issue of Esquire magazine. The author of the Esquire article contacted health physics faculty at FMU in February of 2005 after finding a local resident that claimed to have a fragment of the bomb. In attempting to authenticate the fragment, the author was surprised to measure radioactivity with a Geiger counter. He asked if FMU had the equipment necessary to determine the source of the activity. We spent one afternoon with the author while acquiring a gamma-ray spectrum from the fragment. In addition to presenting the brief scientific analysis, this talk will describe the communication with the author of the article and the subsequent interpretation presented in the publication.

Derek Jokisch
Dept. of Physics and Astronomy, Francis Marion University

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