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# Steam Generator Tube Integrity Program Leak Rate Tests

## Progress Report

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Prepared by R. A. Clark, R. L. Bickford

**Pacific Northwest Laboratory**  
Operated by  
Battelle Memorial Institute

Prepared for  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory  
Commission

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Manuscript Completed: March 1983  
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Prepared for  
Division of Engineering Technology  
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555  
NRC FIN B2097



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## ABSTRACT

This interim report presents preliminary results on leak rate tests performed on through-wall defected Inconel 600 steam generator tubing. Tube defects included an EDM (electro-discharge machine) notch and IGSCC (intergranular stress corrosion cracks) of various lengths. Tests were conducted at PWR operating temperatures with leakage of hot water/steam into air. A number of IGSCC cracks were unstable under the experiment conditions of these initial tests, continuing to grow until system capacity limitations resulted in decreased pressure differential. However, initial testing also pointed to a need for reconfiguration of the test apparatus to sustain increased flow and, more importantly, alter the mode of control. The initial test configuration is based on flow control, with pressure differential across the specimen an independent variable. This often results in pressure increases too rapid to establish the initiation of crack instability. A reconfigured system based on pressure control with flow as an independent parameter is being recommended for future tests.

# ABSTRACT

This interim report presents preliminary results on leak rate tests performed on through-wall detected Inconel 600 steam generator tubing. Tube defects included an EDM (electro-discharge machine) notch and IGSCC (intergranular stress corrosion cracks) of various lengths. Tests were conducted at PWR operating temperatures with leakage of hot water/steam into air. A number of IGSCC cracks were unstable under the experiment conditions of these initial tests, continuing to grow until system capacity limitations resulted in decreased pressure differential. However, initial testing also pointed to a need for reconfiguration of the test apparatus to sustain increased flow and, more importantly, after the mode of control. The initial test configuration is based on flow control, with pressure differential across the specimen an independent variable. This often results in pressure increases too rapid to establish the initiation of crack instability. A reconfigured system based on pressure control with flow as an independent parameter is being recommended for future tests.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leak rate testing of laboratory stress corrosion cracked Inconel 600 steam generator tube specimens is part of NRC research efforts concerning primary system integrity. The total matrix of proposed tests is shown in Table 1. This matrix is designed to evaluate potential leakage associated with cracks of different sizes and orientations. More importantly information is generated on what happens to the defect under an accident condition such as a main steam line break (MSLB) during which the pressure differential across the generator tubes is temporarily increased.

Stress corrosion cracked specimens are generated by the process described in Ref. 1. After being removed from the autoclave, they are cleaned and nondestructively tested by an eddy-current probe scan. If the SCC specimen meets the criteria for an acceptable leak test specimen as described in a later section of this paper, it is photographed and ultrasonically cleaned. The leak test is performed and the specimen is either photographed, in the case of a crack opening up, or eddy-current tested if the crack remained tight.

This paper includes a summary of test results to date, some problems encountered and corrective action taken. Detailed descriptions of each leak test performed including computer results and specimen photographs are provided.

## SUMMARY OF LEAK TEST RESULTS TO DATE

Fifteen autoclave runs consisting of 59 specimens of .875" OD x .050" wall Inconel 600 tubing with a machined uniform thinned area were made in an effort to produce tight 90-100% through-wall SC cracks<sup>(1)</sup> suitable for leak testing. Of the 59 uniform thinned specimens autoclaved, 7 uniform thinned specimens were successfully cracked through-wall and were subsequently leak tested. Two additional unthinned tubes were also leak tested for a total of nine leak rate tests. Table 2 shows a list of the thinned specimens, along with their thinning parameters, NDE/visual results after autoclaving, and notations showing the specimens used for leak testing. The two unthinned tubes are described in Table 3 along with descriptions of each leak test performed to date.

<sup>(1)</sup>R. A. Clark and R. L. Burr. Technical Note: A Method for Controlled Stress Corrosion Cracking in Nonsensitized Inconel 600 Tubing. Corrosion. Vol. 36, No. 7, p. 382-383. July 1980.



TABLE 1. Leak Rate Test Matrix\*

Uniform Thinning and Stress Corrosion Crack

Study 1/4", 1/2", 1", and 1-1/2" SCC with uniform thinning twice the crack length and of the following depths: 0%, 35-45%, 55-60%, 75-85%. (Number of tests = 16)

Long Through-Wall Cracks

Study 2" and 3" cracks with no uniform thinning. (Number of tests = 2)

0.625" x 0.034" Tubing

Spotcheck tubes with no thinning and varying crack lengths. (Number of tests = 4)

SCC Through-Wall Circumferential

Study circumferential cracks of 45°, 90°, 120°, 180°, 270°. (Number of tests = 5)

Leak in Simulated Tube Sheet Crevice

Test 1 SCC and multiple SCC with and without packing. (Number of tests = 4)

Leak Under Dent

Study tubes with 1/8" and 1/4" cracking on each side of support plate. (Number of tests = 2)

\*0.875" x 0.050" tubing unless otherwise noted.

TABLE 2. Autoclaved Specimens and Visual/NDE Results to Date

<u>Specimen Number</u>	<u>Percent of Wall Thinning</u>	<u>Length of Thinned Area (in.)</u>	<u>Visual/NDE Results</u>
E-1	40	1	Burst
E02-4	60	2	One 90% through-wall crack (could not be seen by microscope)
E02-8	80	2	Burst
E02-10 (LT)*	40	1	100% through-wall crack
E03-10	40	1	No indications
E04-2	60	1	Burst
E04-6	80	1/2	No indications
E04-10 (LT)	40	1	Two indications - each 90%
E05-2	40	1/2	No indications
E05-6	60	2	Burst
E05-10 (LT)	60	2	100% through-wall crack
E06-4	80	1/2	No indications
E09-4	40	1/2	Through-wall crack near end plug
E09-6	80	1	Burst
E09-10	40	1/2	Burst
E10-2	80	1/2	No indications
E10-3	60	2	Burst
E10-5	80	1	Burst
E10-6	80	2	Burst
E10-7	40	1/2	No indications
E10-8	80	1/2	No indications
E13-0	40	2	No indications
E13-1 (LT)	40	1	100% through-wall crack and several shallow cracks
E13-5	40	2	One crack ~25% through-wall
E14-10	40	2	One crack ~60% through-wall
E15-4	40	1/2	No indications
E15-6	80	2	Burst
E15-10	60	2	Burst
B44-4	60	1	No indications

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Specimen Number	Percent of Wall Thinning	Length of Thinned Area (in.)	Visual/NDE Results
F01-8	60	1/2	One crack <50% through-wall
F04-6 (LT)*	60	2	One crack ~90% through-wall
F04-10 (LT)*	40	2	One crack ~90% through-wall
F07-2 (LT)	40	2	One crack ~90% through-wall
F07-6	40	1	Burst
F08-2	60	1	Burst
F08-4	40	2	No indications
F08-6	80	1	Burst
F12-1	40	1/2	No indications
F12-3	40	1/2	100% through-wall near end plug
F12-4	40	1/2	No indications
F12-5	60	1/2	No indications
F12-7	40	1	One crack <20% through-wall
F12-9	60	1	No indications
F63-4	40	1/2	No indications
L-1	40	1/2	Burst
L-2	60	1/2	Burst
L-3	80	1	Burst
L-4	80	1	No indications
L04-2	40	1/2	No indications
L11-8	60	1/2	No indications
L16-2	20	1/2	No indications
L16-4	40	1/2	No indications
L17-1	80	1/2	No indications
L17-2	40	1/2	Burst
L17-4	80	1/2	No indications
L17-6	20	1/2	No indications
L17-7	40	1/2	No indications
L17-8	60	1/2	No indications
L17-9	60	1/2	No indications

\*Leak tested



TABLE 3.

E01-3

- Computer data: Figures 8, 9 and 10.
- After test photograph: Figure 35.
- Eddy current before test: 100% through-wall crack.
- Visual inspection: No thinning, 3/8" long crack in center of exposed area.
- Testing: Flow remained <2 gpm although pressure ranged between 2700 and 2500 psig. Test ran for slightly over 2 minutes.
- Test results: Major crack opened slightly and length increased to 1/2". No substantial crack growth noted on videotape.

E03-9

- Computer data: Figures 11, 12 and 13.
- After test photograph: Figure 36.
- Visual inspection: 1/2" long EDM notch.
- Testing: Pressure built up to 500 psi and flow remained at <2 gpm for first 50 seconds of test. Then pressure increased in steps to a maximum of ~1700 psi while flow increased in steps to 10 gpm.
- Test results: Notch bulged slightly at both edges.

E13-1

- Computer data: Figures 14, 15 and 16 - original test.  
Figures 17, 18 and 19 - retest.
- After test photograph: Figure 37.
- Eddy current before test: 100% through-wall crack.
- Visual inspection: 1" long thinned area, 40% thinning (60% of wall remaining), major crack ~1/4" long and towards one side of thinned area, several small shallow cracks in same area.
- Testing: On the first run, the control panel indicated that hot water never got to the specimen (this problem and action taken are discussed previously in this paper). Flow remained at <2 gpm and pressure was ~2700 psi. Test terminated after 2 minutes due to water temperature problem. The retest was run after the specimen drain valve was installed in the line. The pressure on the specimen remained at 2500 psi and flow was <2 gpm for ~70 seconds. Specimen then burst and flow increased to 20 gpm and pressure decreased to ~600 psi. Test remained running for 80 seconds. Flow vs. pressure plot for this run shows a nice curve.
- Testing results: Tube burst; length of crack increased to 6/10".

TABLE 3. (Continued)

F07-2

- Computer data: Figures 20, 21 and 22.
- After test photograph: Figure 38.
- Eddy current before test: Major crack ~90% through-wall.
- Visual inspection: 2" long thinned area, 40% thinning (60% of wall remaining), crack ~3/8" long - started at very edge of thinned area.
- Testing: Flow remained at <2 gpm for 10 seconds then increased to 4 gpm until test was terminated. Pressure started out at ~2300 and decreased to ~1750 psi when 4 gpm flow started. Test lasted for 150 seconds.
- Test results: Length of crack grew to 6/10" and opened up slightly.

E05-10

- Computer data: No computer data due to computer problem developed after test initiation.
- After test photograph: Figure 39.
- Eddy current before test: One crack 100% through-wall.
- Visual inspection: 2" long thinned area, 60% thinning (40% of wall remaining), 7/16" long crack in center of thinned area.
- Testing: No computer results however instrument panel indicated pressure began at ~2500 psi and specimen burst immediately. Flow meter was pegged at 100% (20 gpm).
- Testing results: Specimen burst wide open over almost entire length of thinned area. Small amounts of crack growth could be seen on videotape before bursting occurred.

E04-10

- Computer data: Figures 23, 24 and 25.
- Before and after photographs: Figures 40 and 41.
- Eddy current before test: 90% through-wall - 2 indications.
- Visual inspection: 1" long thinned area, 40% thinned (60% of wall remaining) 1/2" long crack running towards one side of thinned area.
- Testing: Pressure was not applied to specimen until ~25 seconds into the test. Pressure started out then to be 1000 psi and flow increased from <2 gpm to 7 gpm. Test ran for 60 seconds after maximum flow.
- Test results: Crack opened up over its entire length but did not burst.



TABLE 3. (Continued)

F04-10

- Computer data: No computer data due to computer problem developed after test initiation.
- Before and after photographs: Figures 42 and 43.
- Eddy current before test: One crack 90% through-wall.
- Visual inspection: 2" long thinned area, 40% thinning, 1/2" crack in center of thinned area.
- Testing: All data was obtained from control panels. Pressure remained at 2400 psi and flow was <2 gpm for entire test. Test lasted 80 seconds.
- Test results: Crack opened up slightly but flow never increased over <2 gpm.

F04-6

- Computer data: Figures 26, 27 and 28.
- Before and after photographs: Figures 44 and 45.
- Eddy current before test: One crack 90-100% through-wall.
- Visual inspection: 2" long thinned area, 60% thinning, 1/2" crack in center of thinned area.
- Testing: Flow was increased in steps to a maximum of ~14 gpm. This flow was held for 30 seconds. Pressure was increased slowly to a maximum of 600 psi during maximum flow.
- Test results: Crack burst open but its length did not increase significantly.

E02-1.0

- Computer data: Figures 29, 30 and 31 - original test.  
Figures 32, 33 and 34 - retest.
- Before and after photographs: Figures 46 and 47.
- Eddy current before test: One crack 100% through-wall.
- Visual inspection: One major crack and several branching cracks, 1" long thinned area, 40% thinning.
- Testing: Original test produced no results due to water temperature problem in specimen. Test was run for 5 minutes but temperature never increased substantially. This problem was remedied by installation of a specimen vent valve. The retest was run for 100 seconds. The flow was increased in steps to a maximum of 20 gpm. Pressure remained at ~200 psi for most of test.
- Testing results: Crack burst open. Length 3/4".



## SPECIMEN FABRICATION PROBLEMS

For uniform thinned tubes, typically 30-40% of autoclaved specimens exhibit no detectable NDE indications and the remainder of the specimens exhibit varying depths of SC attack. Specimens with no NDE indications after one autoclave run have historically had a 70% chance of cracking if autoclaved again.

A heat of .875" OD x .050" wall Inconel 600 tubing, designated the L heat, is now being used for fabrication of leak rate specimens due to depletion of tubing from the B, E and F heats. Fifteen uniform thinned specimens from the L heat have been autoclaved. Four specimens burst and the remainder had no detectable NDE indications (results are shown in Table 2). Three specimens with no NDE indications were autoclaved a second time with no NDE results. For this heat of tubing, ~70% of the specimens exhibited no NDE indications (vs. 30-40% for previous heats of tubing) and no cracking occurred during a second autoclave run (vs. a 70% chance of cracking for previous heats).

Considering that machining stresses and resultant work hardening may be a contributing factor, a heat treatment of 1600°F for 30 minutes in an inert atmosphere with an air quench was devised for relieving the machining stresses. This was done after consulting with Huntington Alloys. Four uniform thinned specimens from the L heat were subjected to this heat treatment and autoclaved. Again, there were no detectable NDE indications in these tubes.

Two unthinned specimens from the L heat were autoclaved in an effort to determine if the method of thinning was a deterrent to initiating SCC. These specimens were run for a period exceeding 100 hours and had no NDE indications upon examination. Previous experience with other material heats has shown cracking within 24 hours.

We are presently continuing to autoclave specimens from this heat although it appears to be crack-resistant.

## LEAK TEST PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

In the initial runs, the tube leak tests did not perform as expected, it was noted that specimen water temperatures were not rising to the expected level of 250-270°C. It was determined that these problems were a result of cool water left standing in the pressure line between the metering valve and the specimen. This problem was remedied by the addition of a drain line from the specimen and a specimen vent valve. In operation, this configuration allowed water of the proper operating temperature to pass beyond the specimen before valve closure and test initiation.



## CLEANLINESS OF CRACKS

A stress corrosion cracked steam generator tubing specimen produced by autoclaving in a caustic solution<sup>(1)</sup> was subjected to SEM/EDX analysis to determine crack cleanliness of specimens used for leak rate testing. The specimen had a 60% through-wall SCC in a thinned area and was cleaned prior to SEM/EDX analysis using the same technique used for leak test specimens prior to leak testing - one half hour of ultrasonic cleaning in an alcohol/deionized water solution. The specimen was then compressed in a vise to open the crack and expose the interior for SEM/EDX analysis.

The crack interior was shown to have an Inconel 600 chemistry but with a slightly lower amount of nickel and a higher amount of aluminum (Figure 1). Figures 2 and 3 show SEM photographs of the crack interior at 200X and 1000X magnifications. An area closer to the crack mouth (Figure 4) showed an Inconel 600 chemistry with trace amounts of Al, Si, Cd, Sb (Figure 5) and a few small particles high in Si, Al, Ca and Fe with smaller amounts of K, Cr and Ni (Figure 6). Very few high Cu particles were found in the SEM/EDX scan indicating that excess Cu particles left on the specimen due to the cracking process are effectively removed during specimen cleaning. These high Cu and other impurity particles found in the crack during the analysis were small and few in number and very likely do not influence the crack propagation during the leak test.

## DESCRIPTION OF LEAK RATE TESTS

The leak rate testing system is shown in Figure 7. A large autoclave serves as the hot water reservoir. Pressure is maintained in the autoclave by bleeding in a cover gas from high pressure accumulators as the autoclave blows down via a bottom penetration through the test specimen. The blow-down water passes through a high temperature flow meter to the specimen which is instrumented to measure internal pressure and temperature. Each test is started by first opening a vent valve on the specimen and allowing sufficient heated water to pass through the specimen to bring it to test temperature. The vent valve is then closed and specimen leakage is controlled by a metering valve. In concept the metering valve will enable several pressure differential versus flow data points to be taken. The metering valve is positioned and pressure in the specimen allowed to come to an equilibrium for the particular flow, then the metering valve opened further allowing a new equilibrium

<sup>(1)</sup>R. A. Clark and R. L. Burr. Technical Note: A Method for Controlled Stress Corrosion Cracking in Nonsensitized Inconel 600 Tubing. Corrosion. Vol. 36, No. 7, p. 382-383. July 1980.

x# 3, Ref micro B-24, 801

& Recimen P-5076 (#1 CRACKED Tube)

General scan of cracked area

5-10.22 kW; 20 W lch; 10 sec. Count

FS: 4096

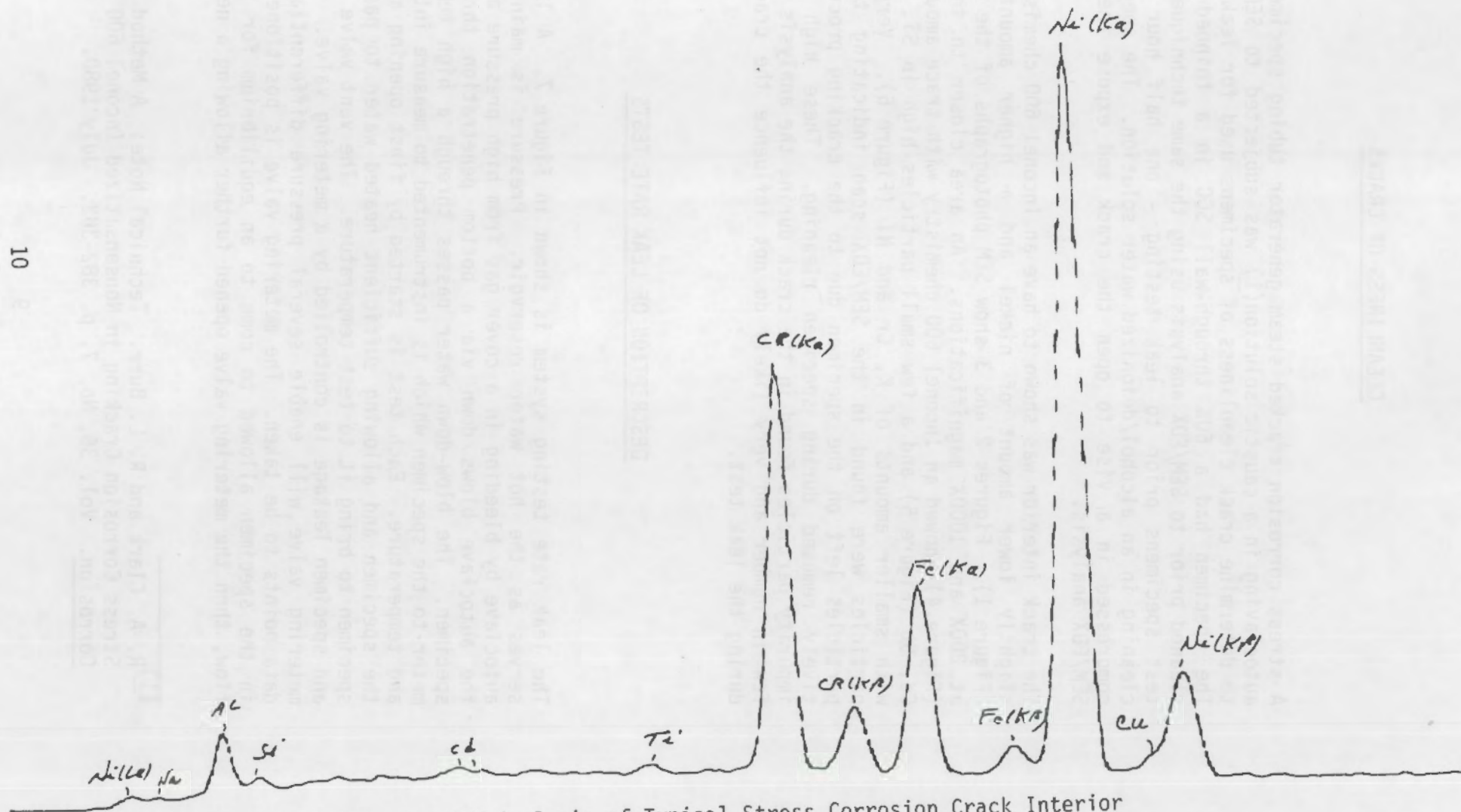


FIGURE 1. EDX Analysis of Typical Stress Corrosion Crack Interior





200X

FIGURE 2. SEM Photograph Looking Down into Crack Mouth Showing Crack Interior



1000X

FIGURE 3. SEM Photograph - Close-up View of Interior Section Seen in Figure 2

X#6, Ref micro B-24, 804  
 Specimen, P-5076 (Cracked tube)  
 Lower end of large crack  
 0-10.22 kV; 20 uA/cm; 10 sec count  
 FS: 8192

12

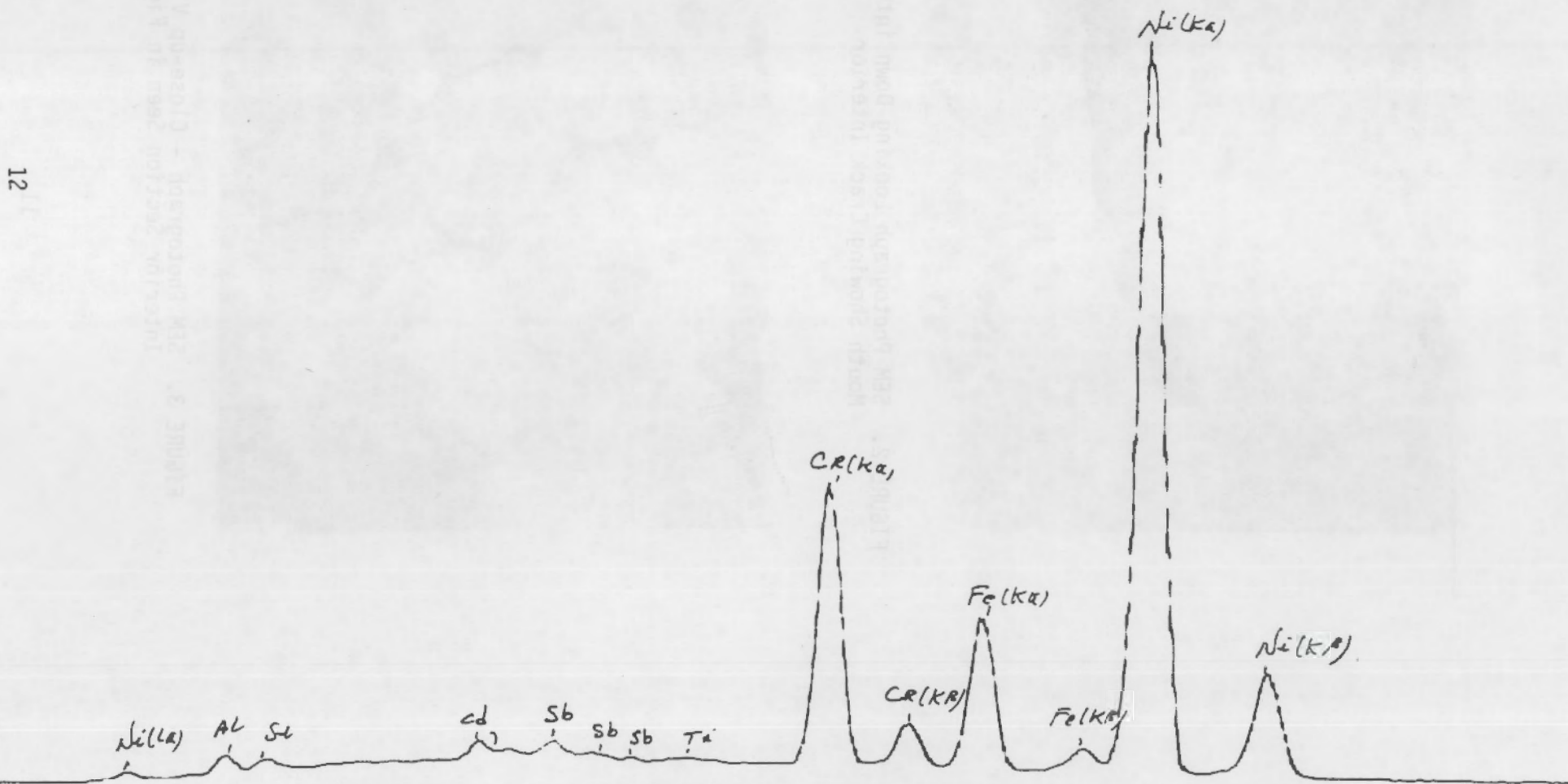


FIGURE 4. EDX Analysis of Area Near Crack Mouth Showing Trace Amounts of Al, Si, Cd, & Sb

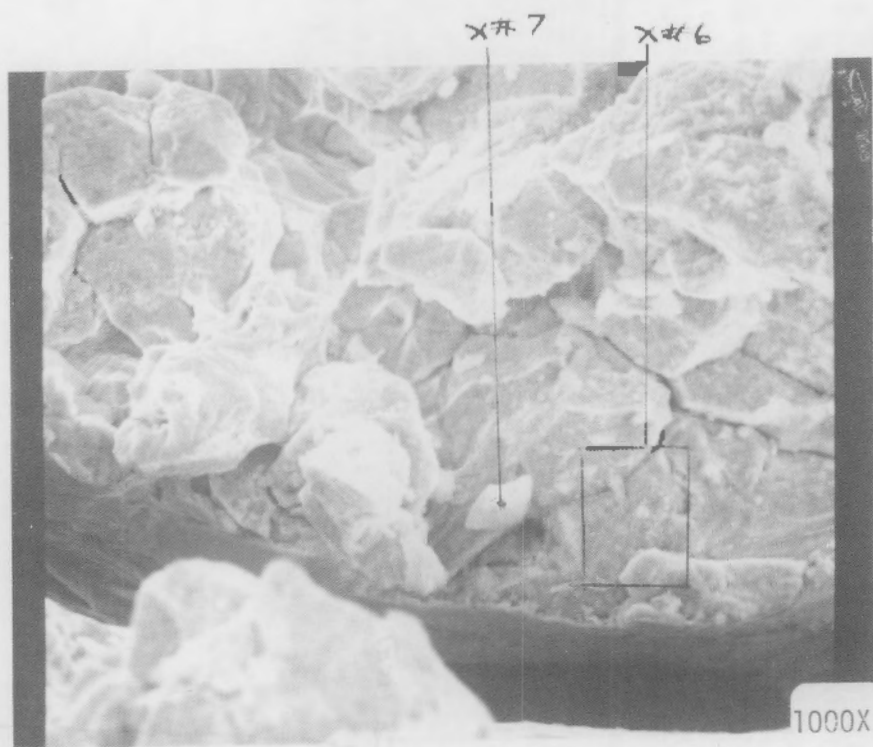


FIGURE 5. SEM Photograph of Area Near Crack Mouth. Impurity Particles Can be Seen.



X# 7, Ref memo B-24,884  
 Specimen P-5076 (#1 CRACKED TUBO)  
 Particles on fracture face  
 0-10.2 Kev; 20 W/cm; 100 Psec Count  
 FS = 4096

14

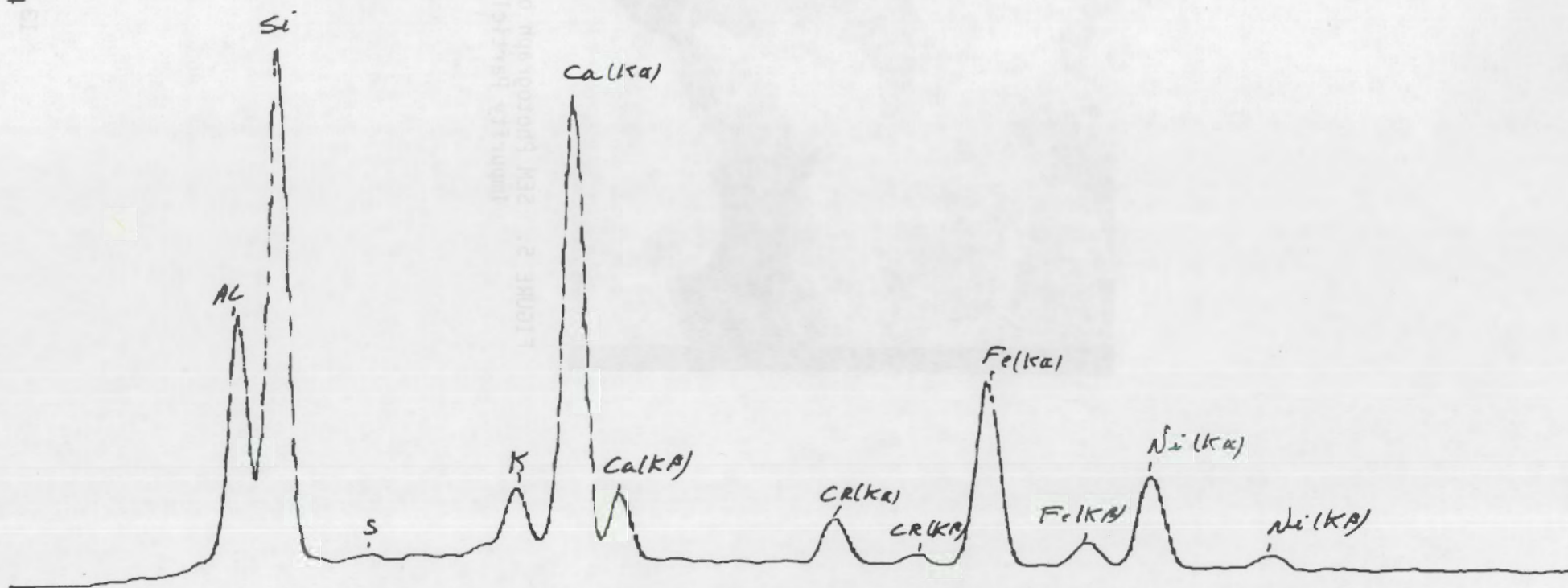


FIGURE 6. EDX Analysis of Impurity Particle Seen in Figure 5

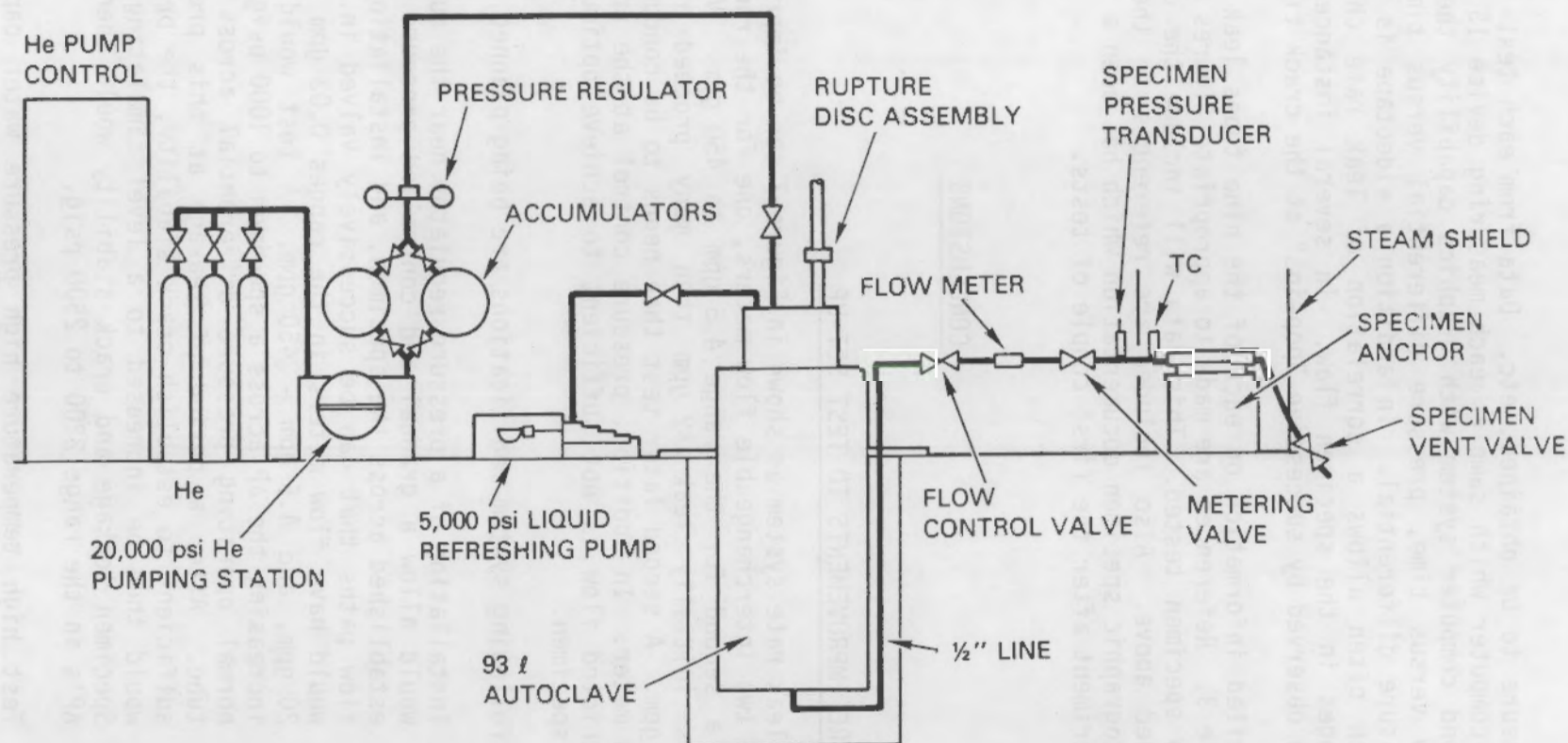


FIGURE 7. Schematic of Leak Rate Test Set-up



pressure to be obtained, etc. Data from each test is acquired using a minicomputer which samples each measuring device 15 times a second. A second computer system with graphics capability then creates plots of flow versus time, pressure differential versus time and flow versus pressure differential. In addition a videotape is taken of each test which often allows a correlation of leak rate changes with visible changes in the specimen flaw. In several instances crack growth has been observed by successive "pop-ins" at the crack tip.

Detailed information on each of the nine tubes leak tested is given in Table 3. References are made to appropriate figures containing data for each specimen tested. This data will include the computer plots mentioned above. Also included are references to the before and after photographic specimen documentation which has been a routine part of the experiment after the first couple of tests.

## CONCLUSIONS

### FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO TEST SET-UP

The leak rate system as shown in Figure 7 can be improved. Currently we have two interchangeable flow meters, one for the range 2 gpm to 20 gpm and a second for the range 4.5 gpm to 450 gpm. Virtually all tight SCC's initially leak <2 gpm then many proceed rapidly to leakage >20 gpm. A second later test then needs to be conducted using the high flow meter. In addition, pressure control at the specimen by means of restricted flow is not sufficient to achieve optimum information from the specimen.

The following system modifications are being planned.

- Installation of a pressure regulator near the autoclave source that would allow a gradual and controlled pressure differential to be established across the specimen, and installation of three parallel flow paths that can be successively valved in. These flow paths would have flow meters in the ranges 0.03 gpm - 3.0 gpm, 2 gpm - 20 gpm, and 4.5 gpm - 450 gpm. A test would be run by slowly increasing the  $\Delta P$  across a specimen to 1000 psig, approximating the normal operating pressure differential across a steam generator tube. After a period of leakage at this pressure differential sufficient to establish crack stability, the pressure differential would then be increased to a level simulating a MSLB condition. Specimen leakage and crack stability would then be determined for  $\Delta P$ 's in the range 2200 to 2500 psig.
- Test high temperature high pressure water capacity needs to be expanded to run longer tests for evaluation of crack stability.
- A larger capacity blower will be installed to keep the camera lens path clear of steam.



### TEST MATRIX SUGGESTIONS

Experience with the tests run to date suggests some redirection. First the method used to produce localized stress corrosion cracks in tube samples does not appear to be capable of producing 100% through-wall cracks longer than 1" without deformation in the sample. This is probably due to crack growth aspect ratios leading to through-wall failures at smaller crack lengths. On the other hand crack growth behavior in 1" long and shorter cracks suggests there is no real benefit in testing the longer cracks. It appears that 1" long and shorter through-wall stress corrosion cracks are not stable at a pressure differential of 2500 psig across a .875" OD x .050" wall steam generator tube. We propose limiting the test matrix for uniform thinned specimens to 1/4", 1/2" and 1" long SCC with 40%, 60% and 80% thinning in an area twice the crack length.

The testing concept that we propose to be of most interest would involve a through-wall crack that at  $\Delta P \approx 1000$  psig leaked  $< .2$  gpm and was stable. We would then gradually increase  $\Delta P$  to 2250 psig and evaluate crack growth and leak rate behavior. This would provide input into possible consequences associated with code acceptable leaks in the event of a main steam line break (MSLB).

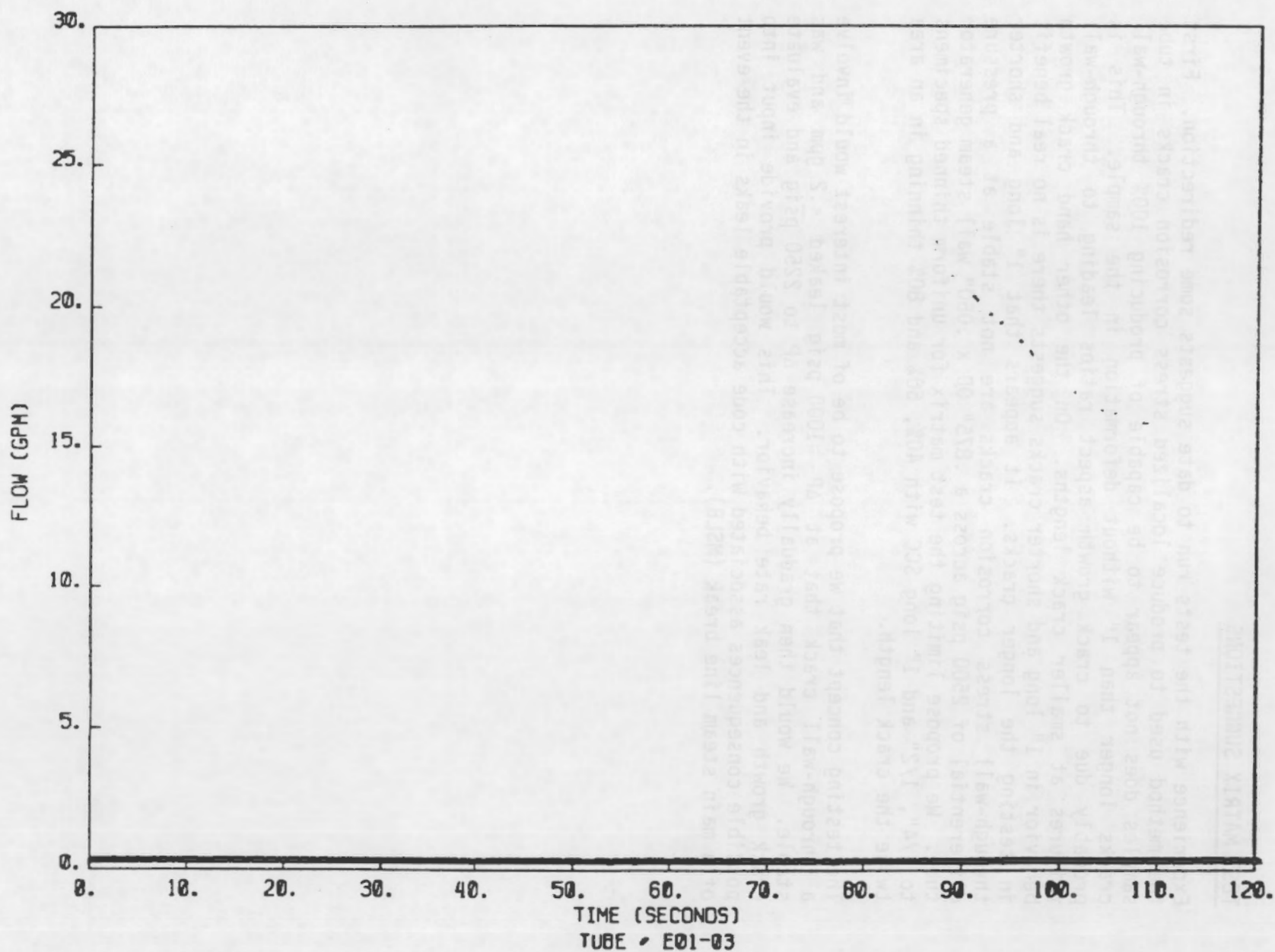


FIGURE 8

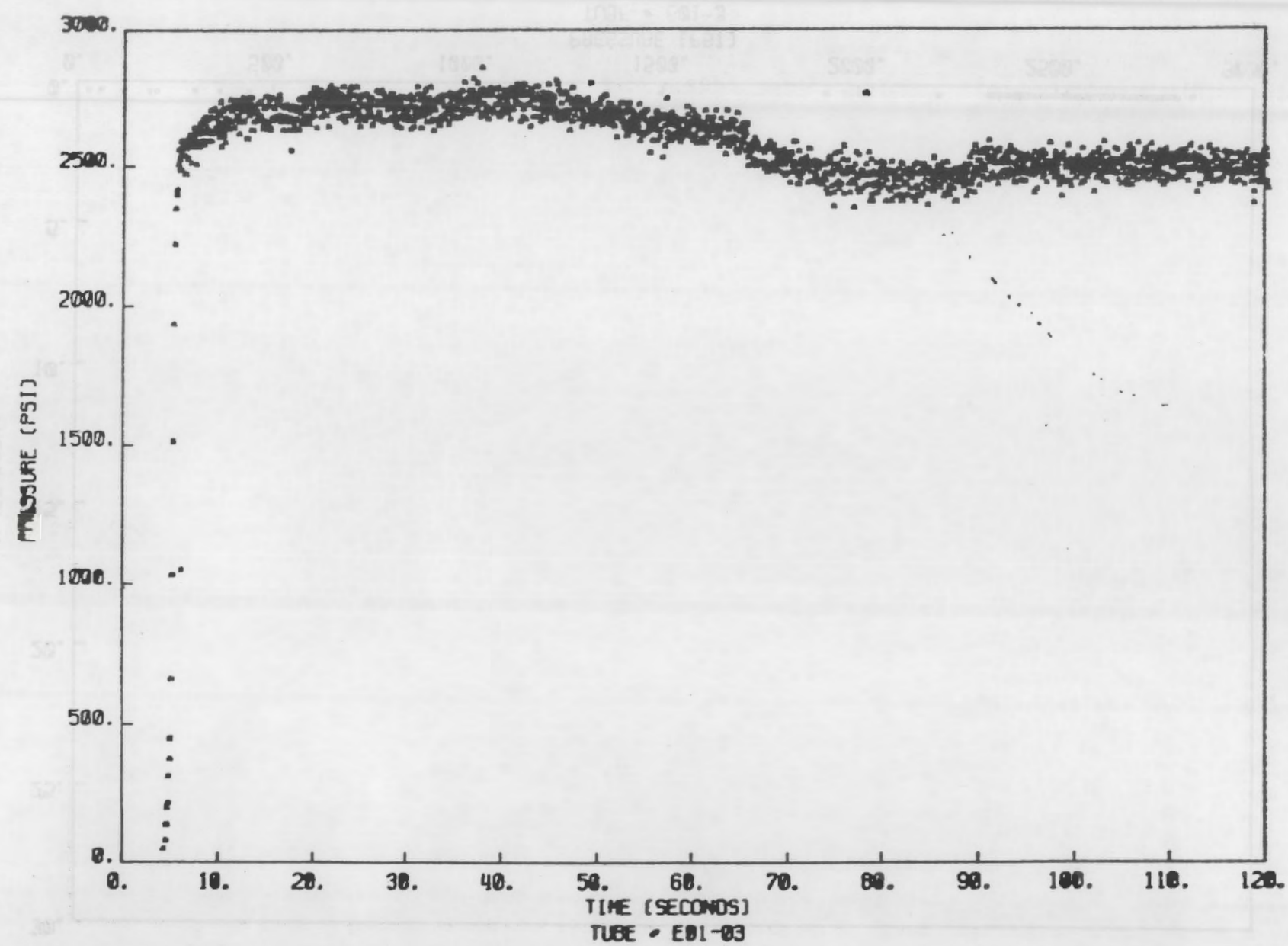


FIGURE 9



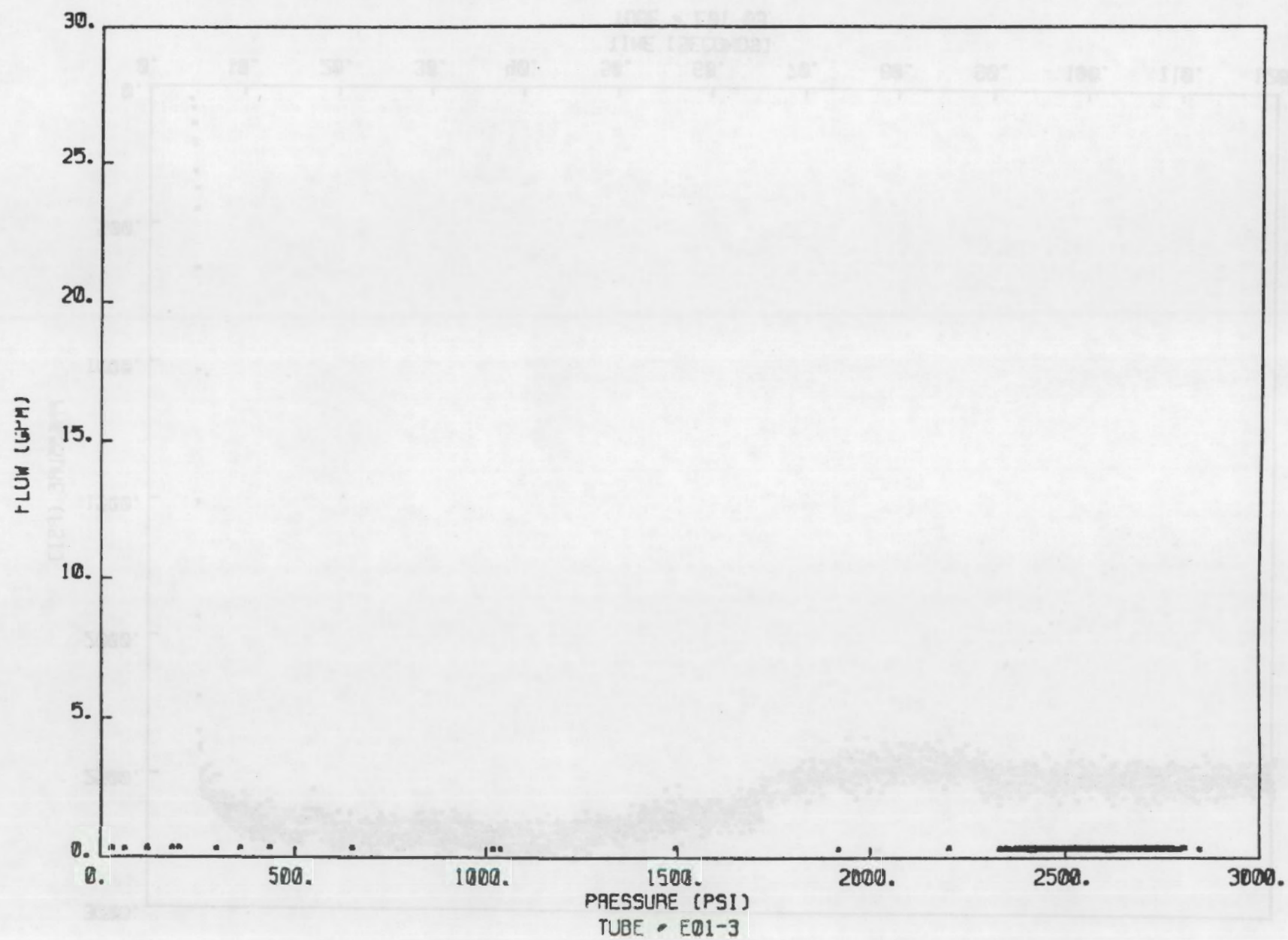


FIGURE 10

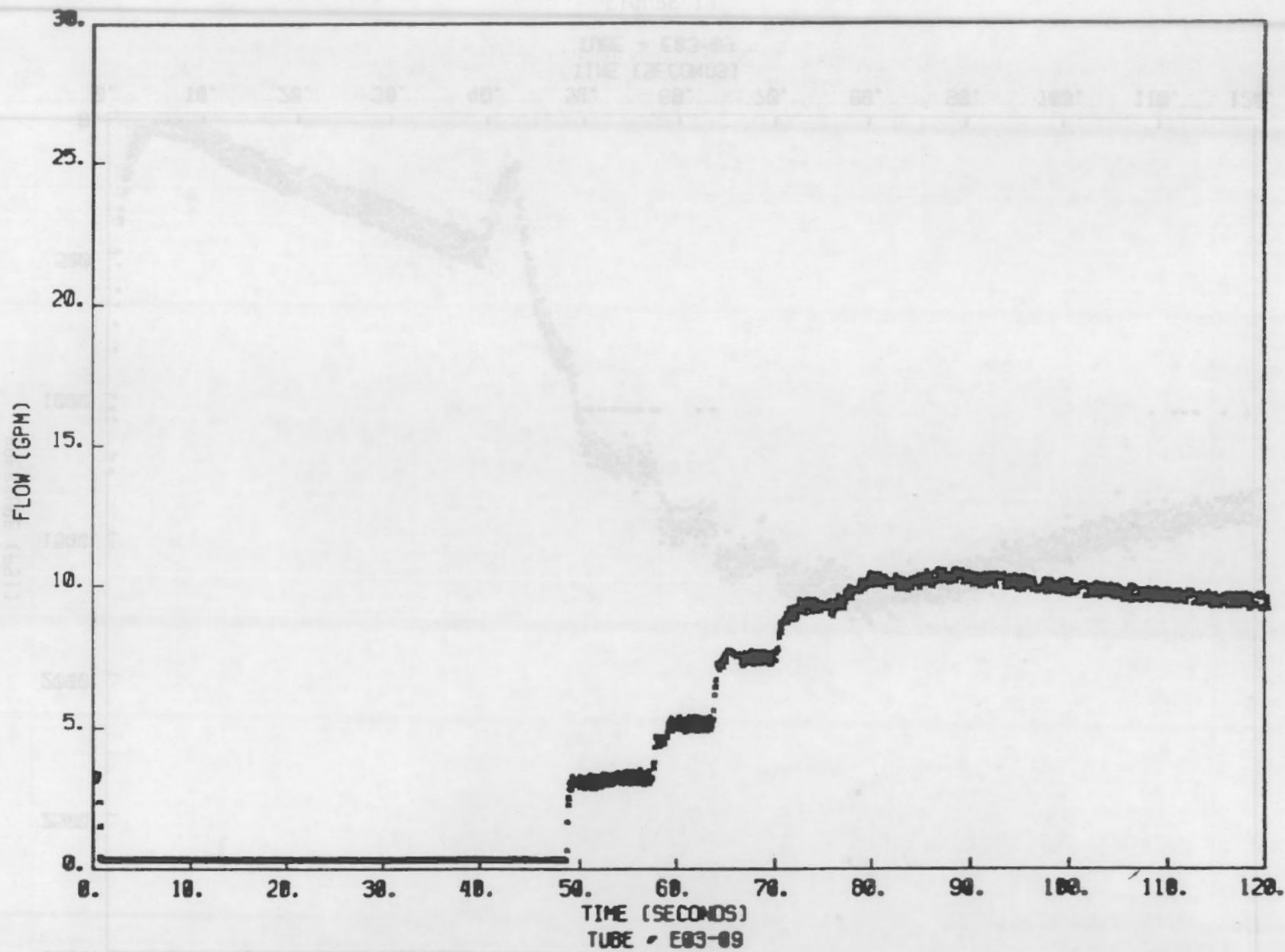


FIGURE 11



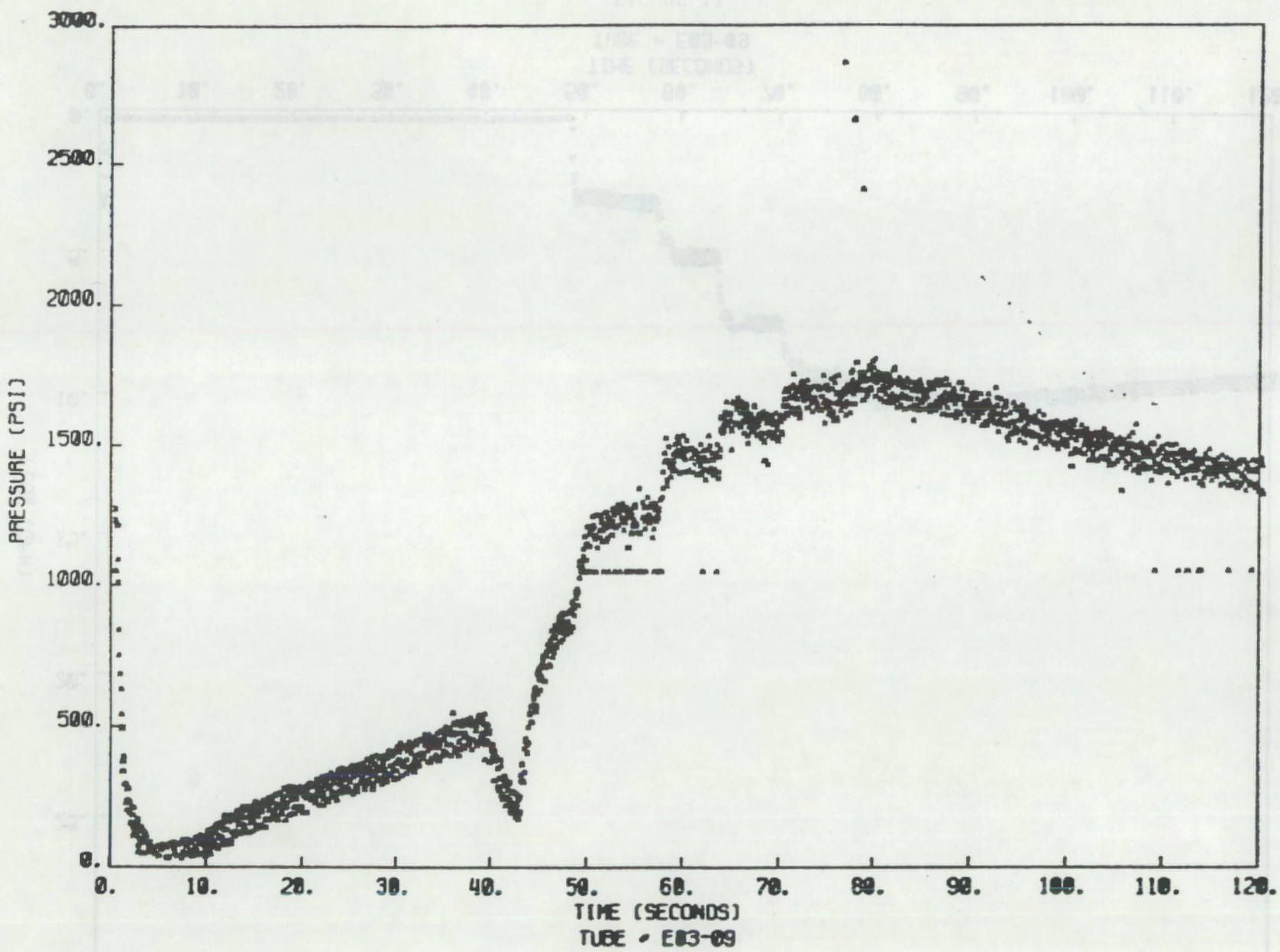


FIGURE 12

FIGURE 13

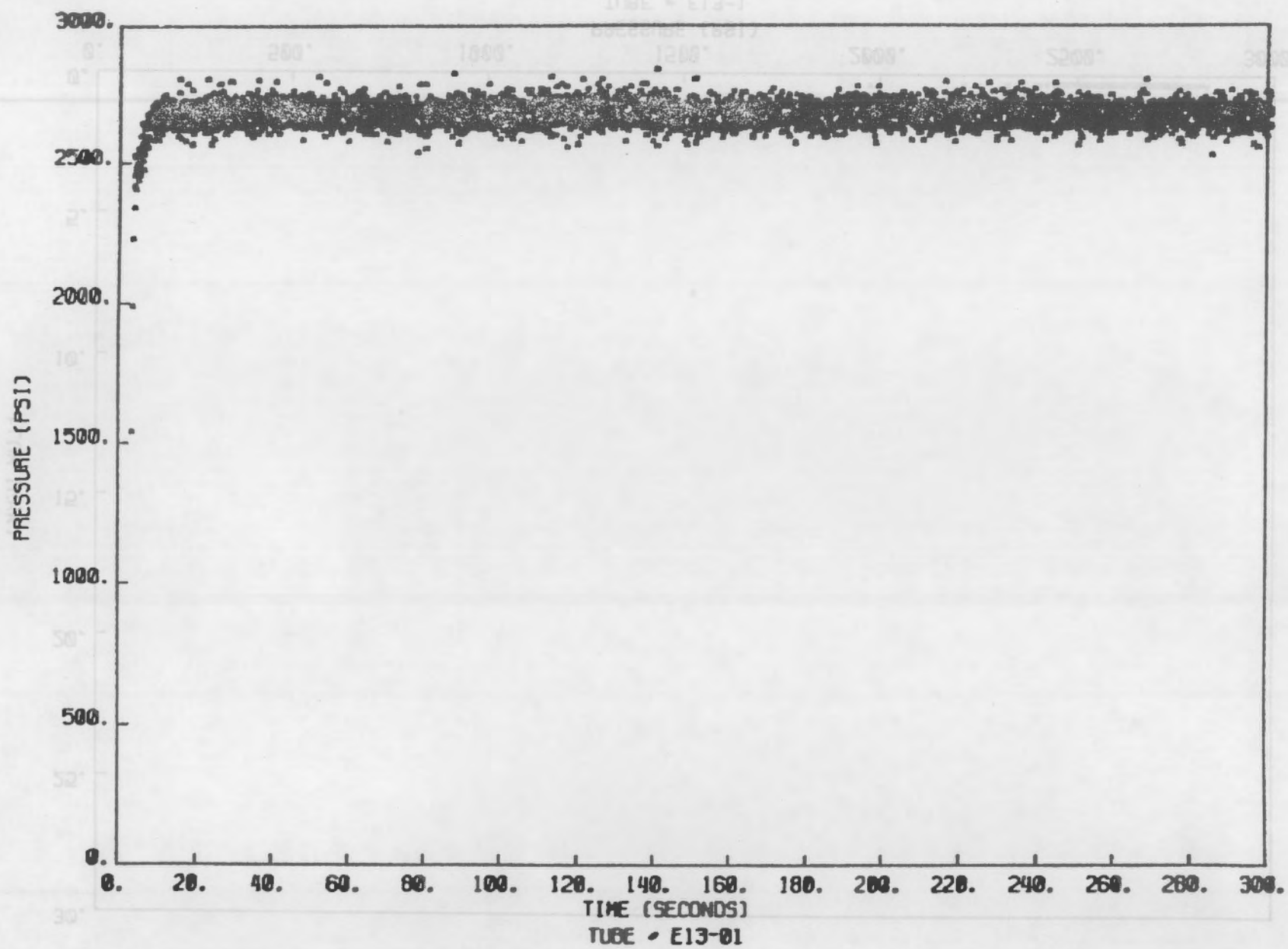


FIGURE 15



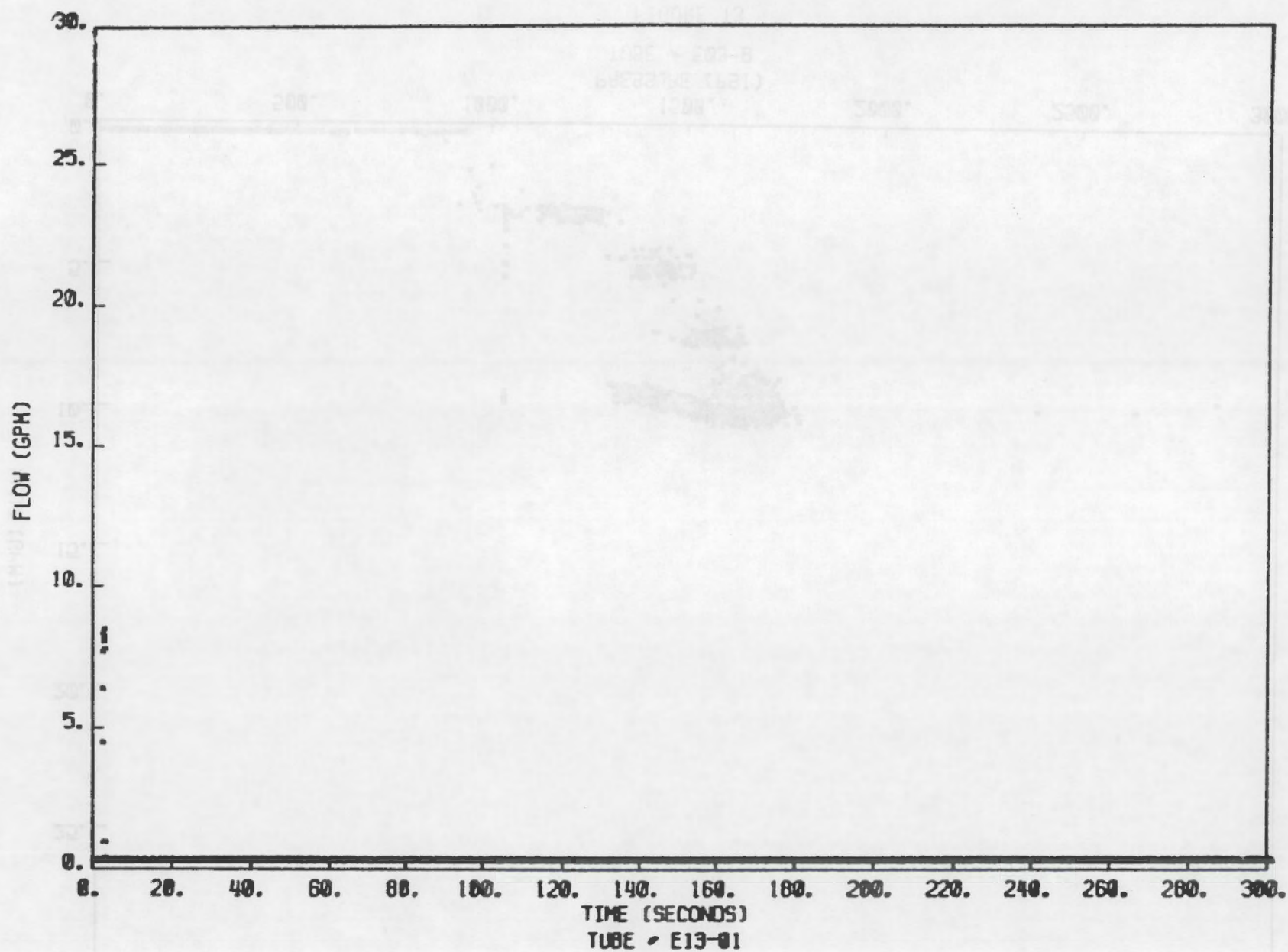


FIGURE 14

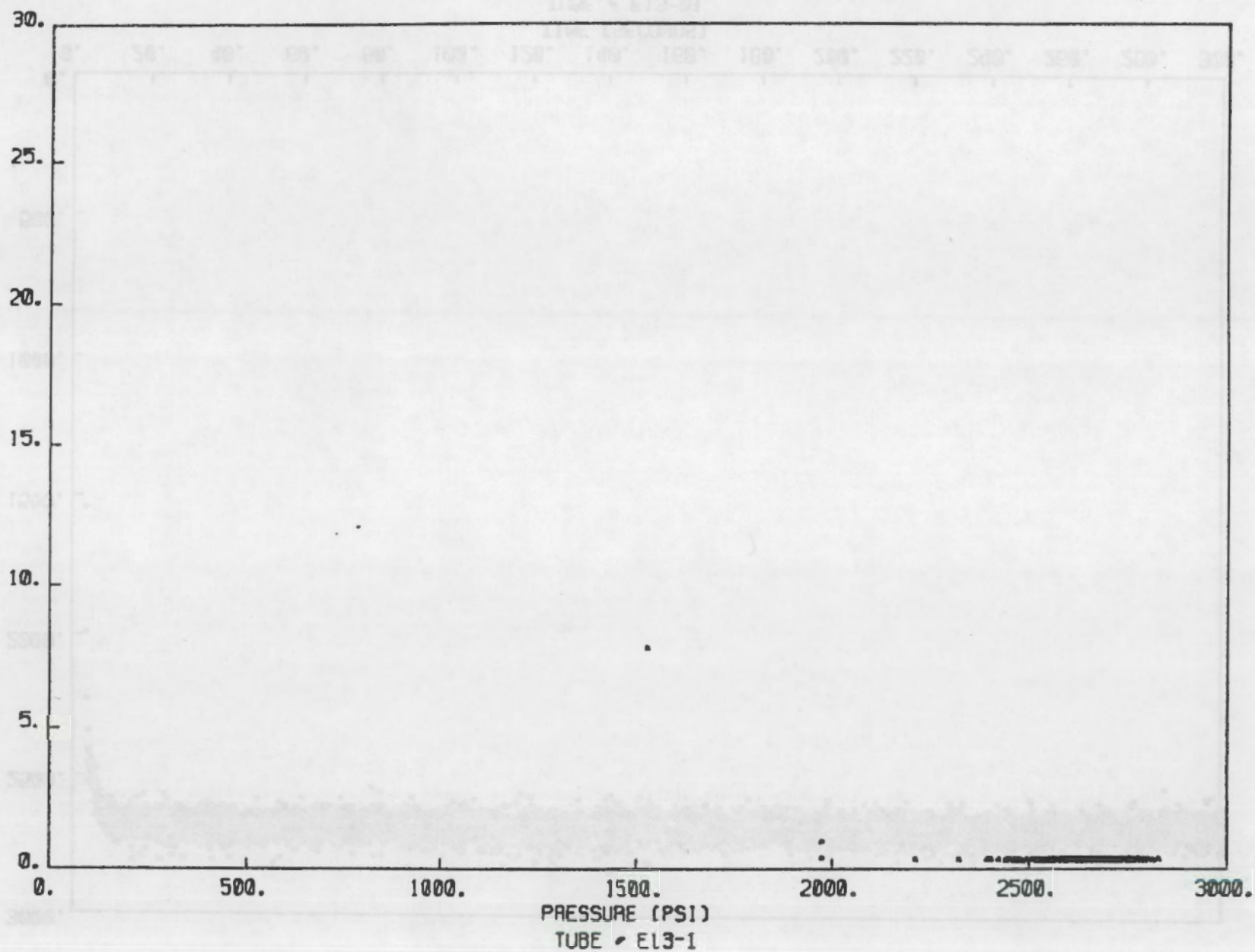


FIGURE 16

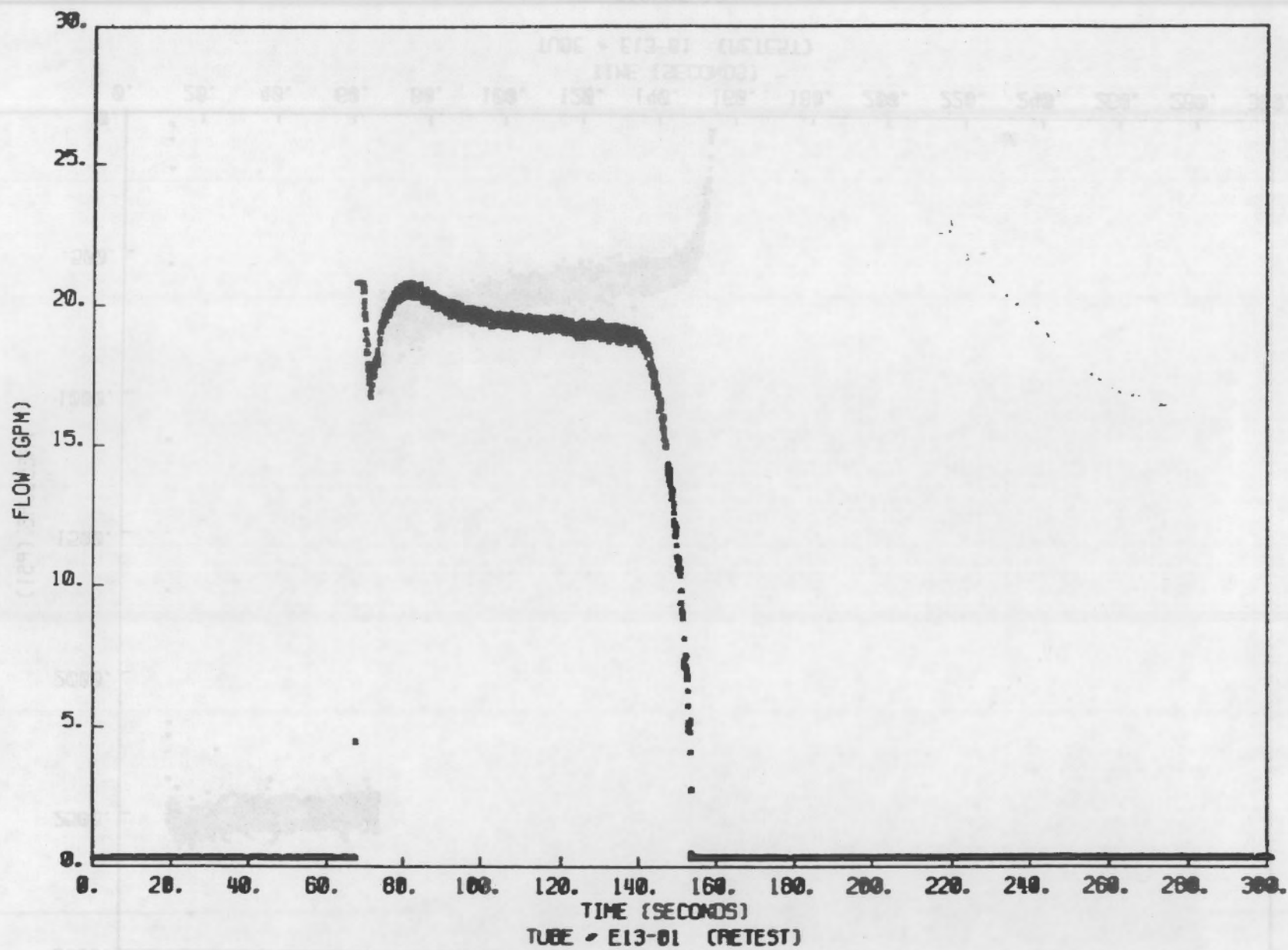


FIGURE 17



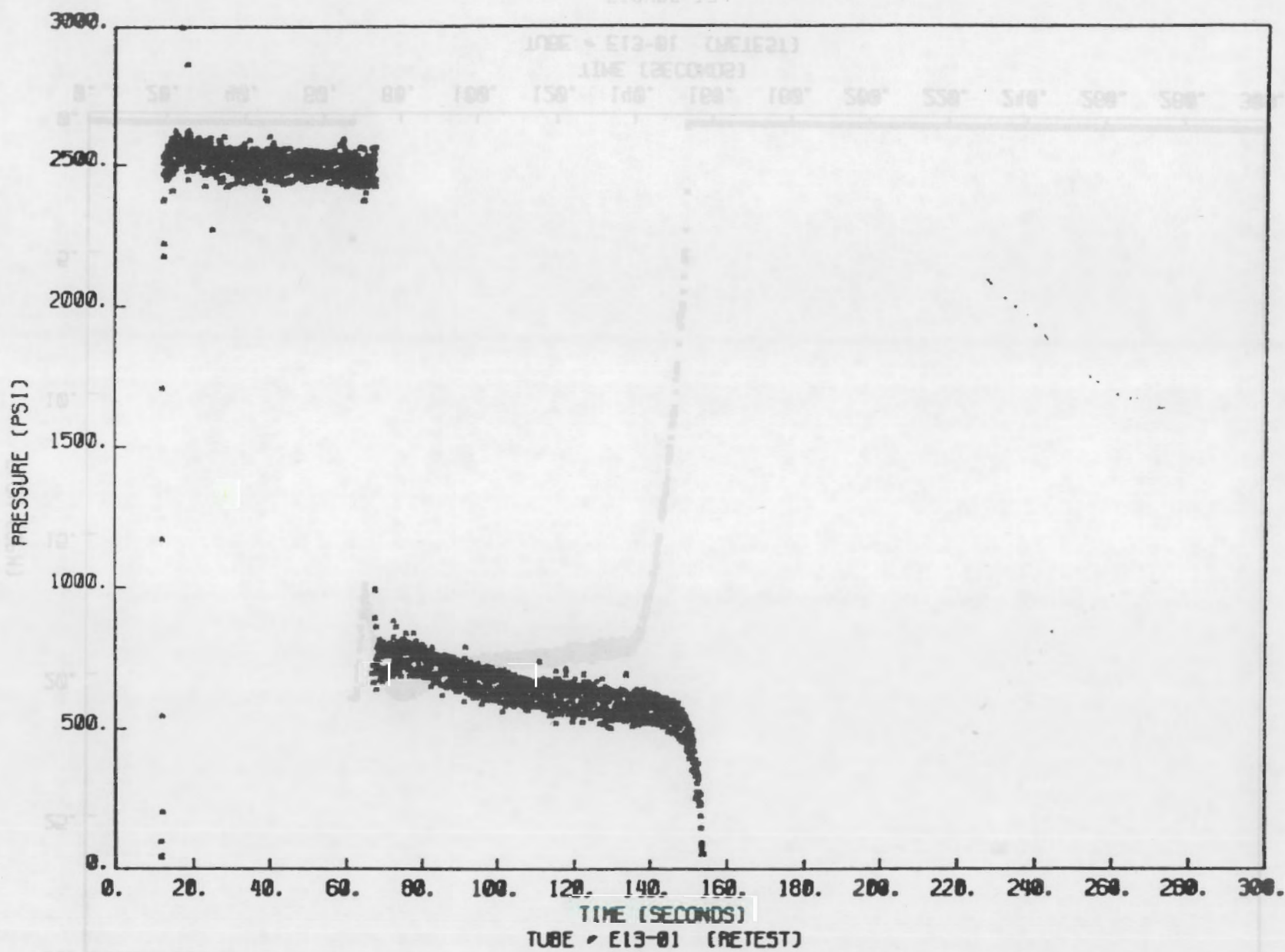


FIGURE 18

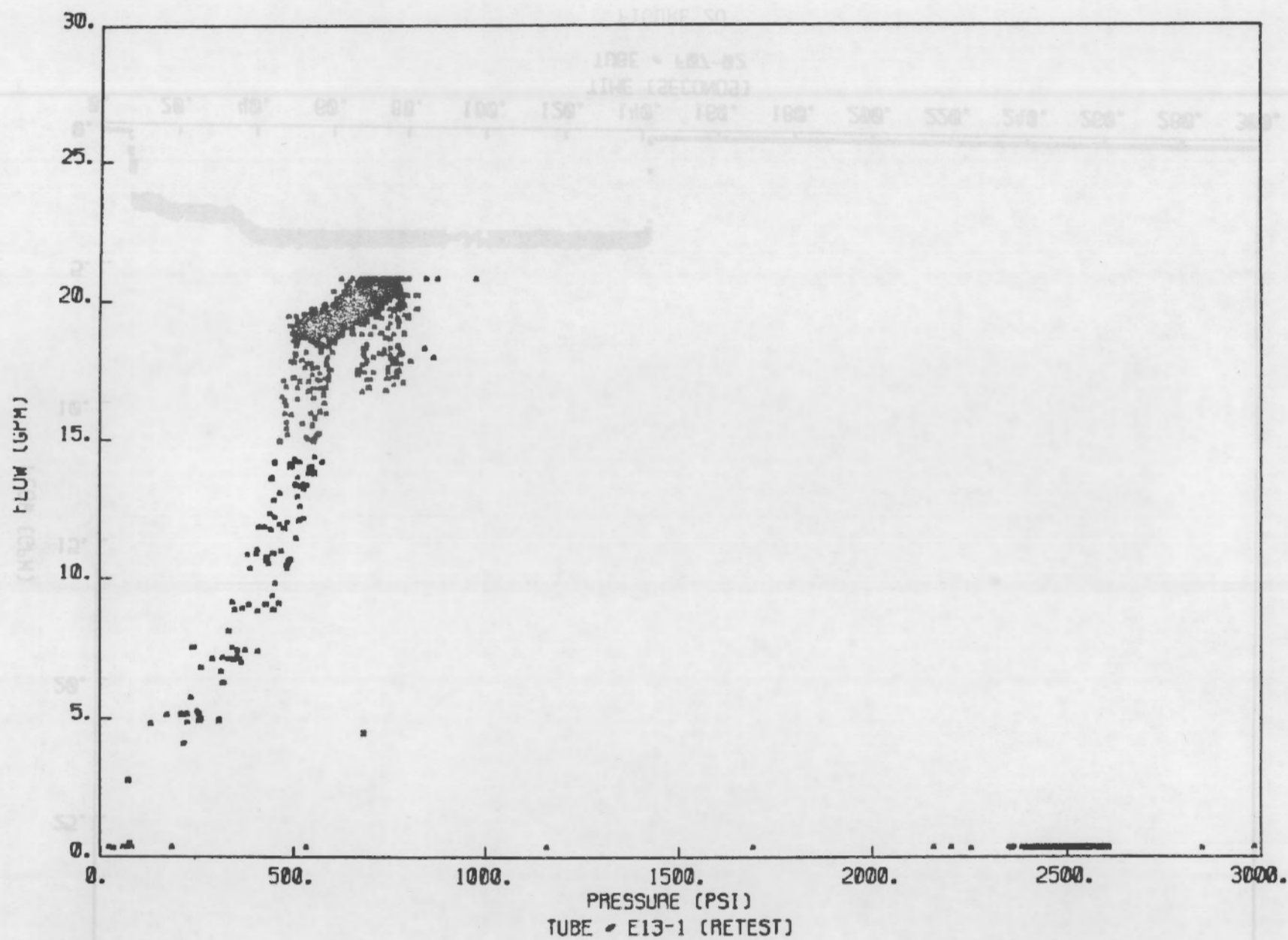


FIGURE 19

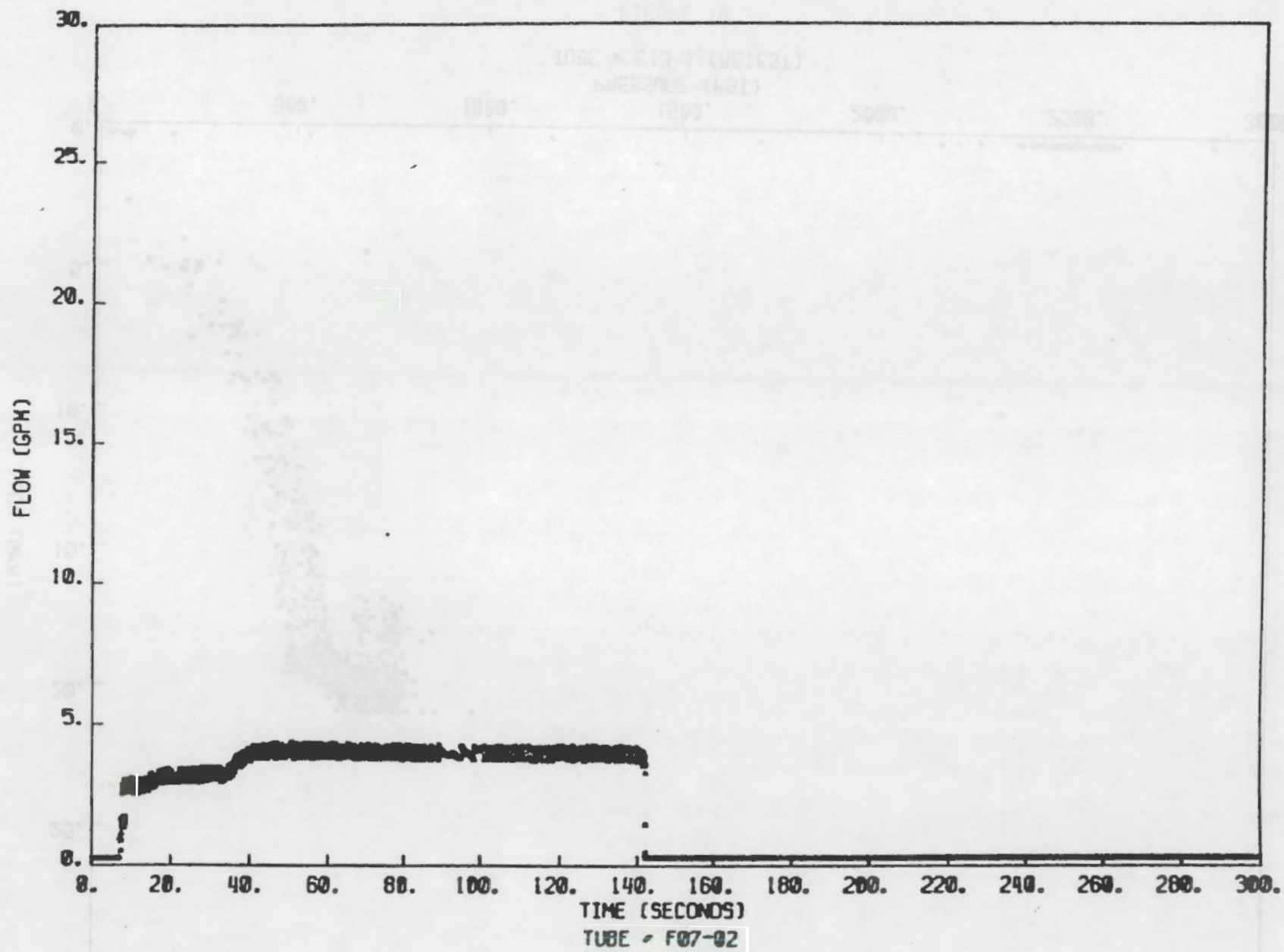


FIGURE 20



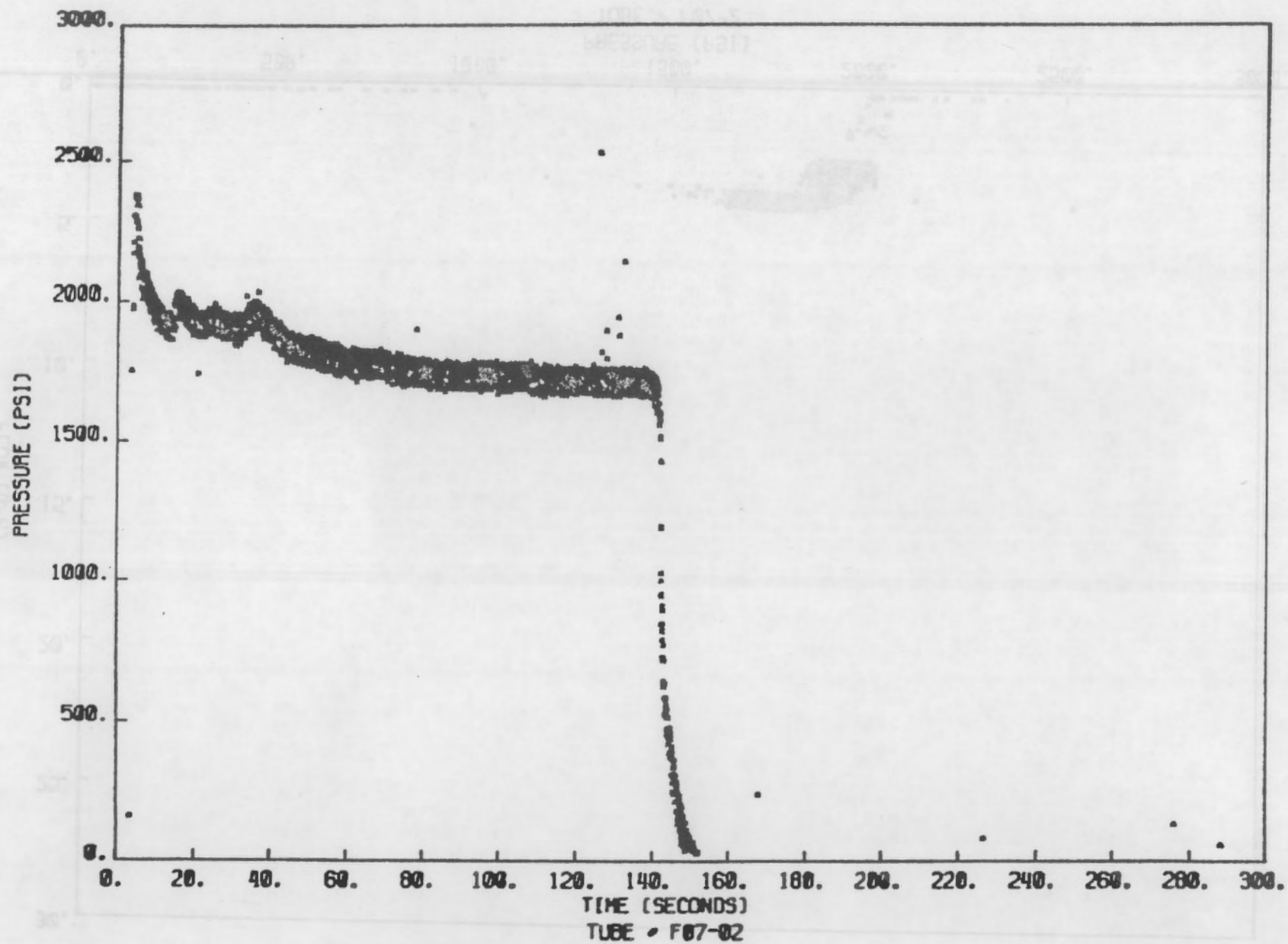
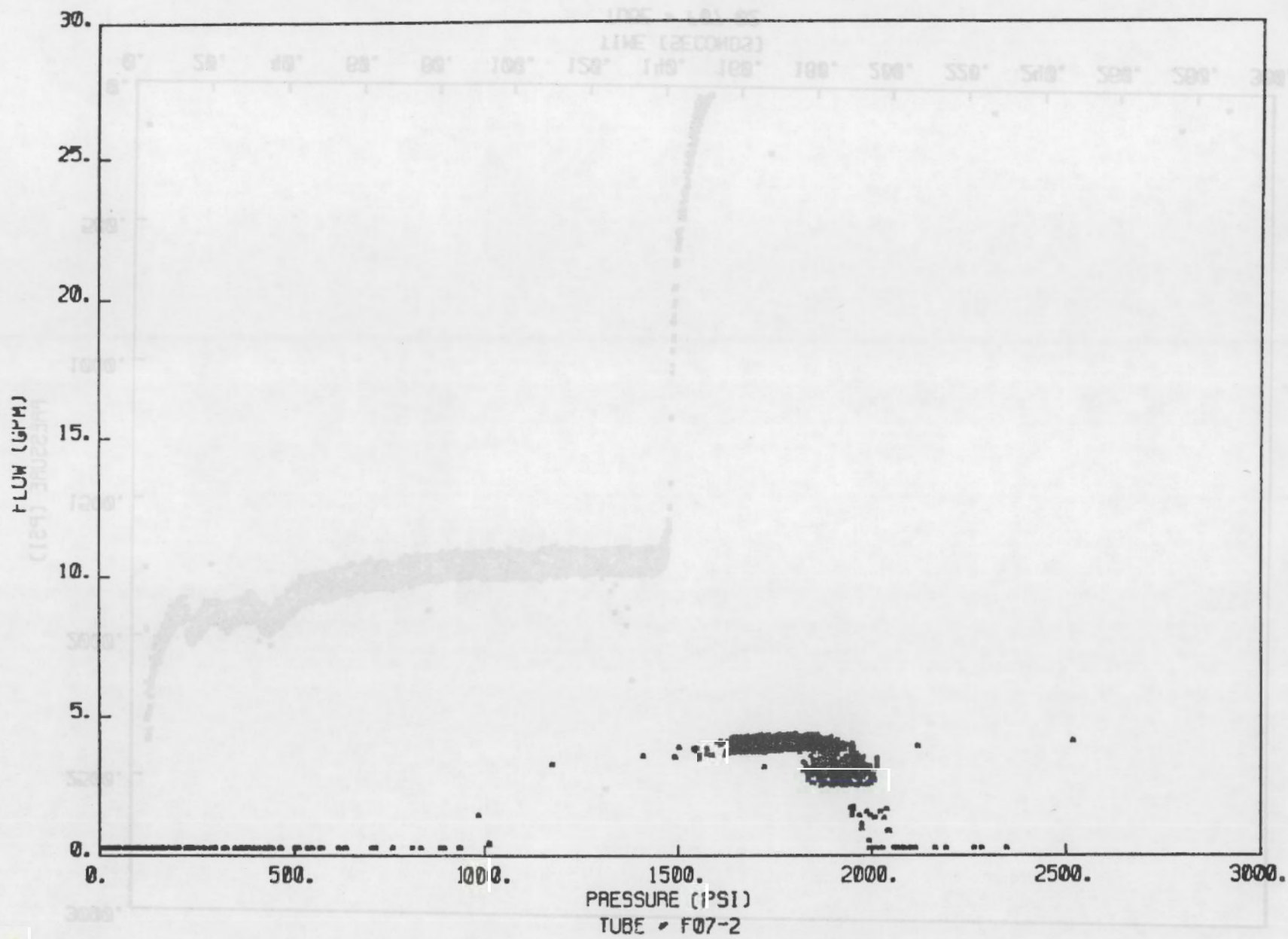


FIGURE 21



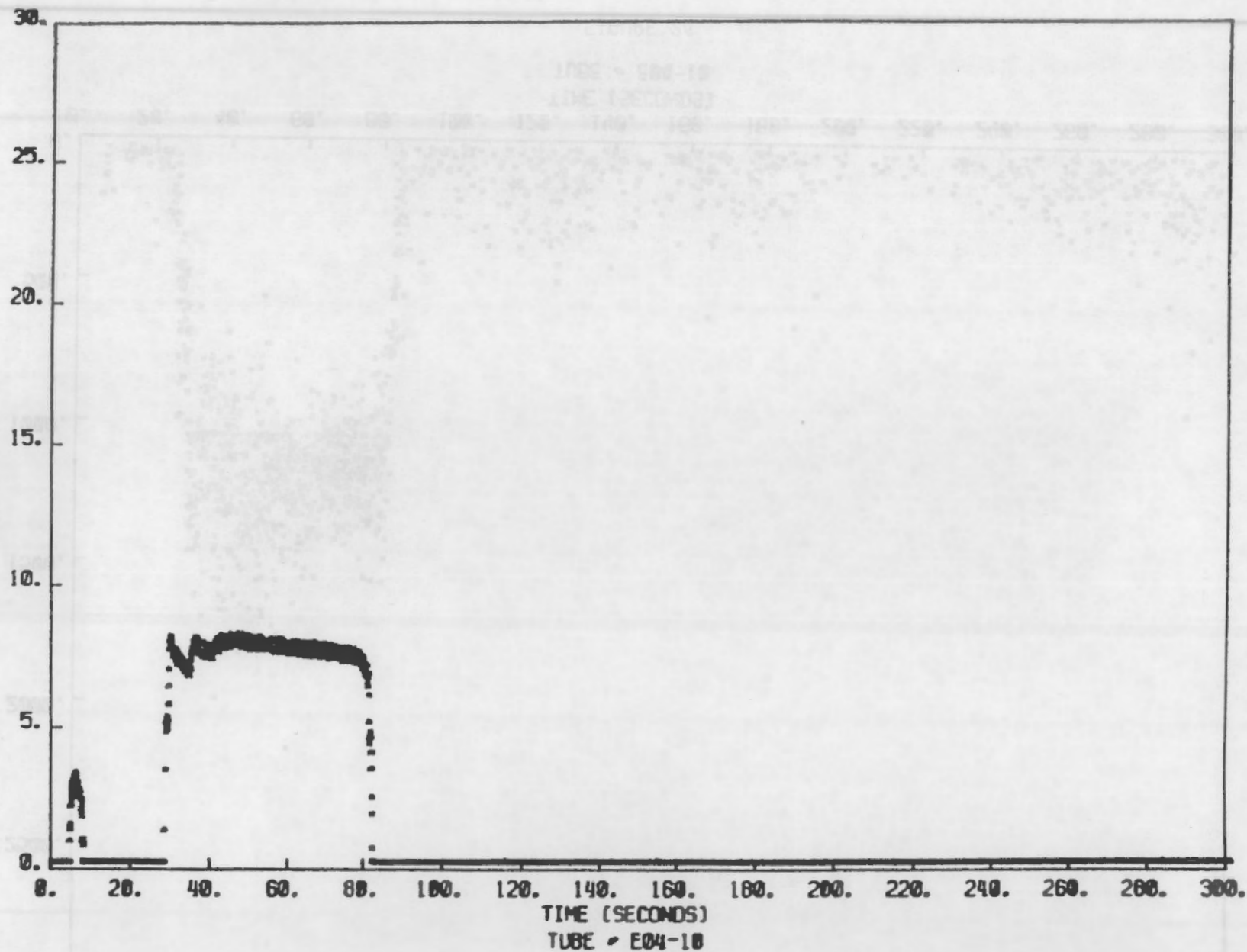


FIGURE 23



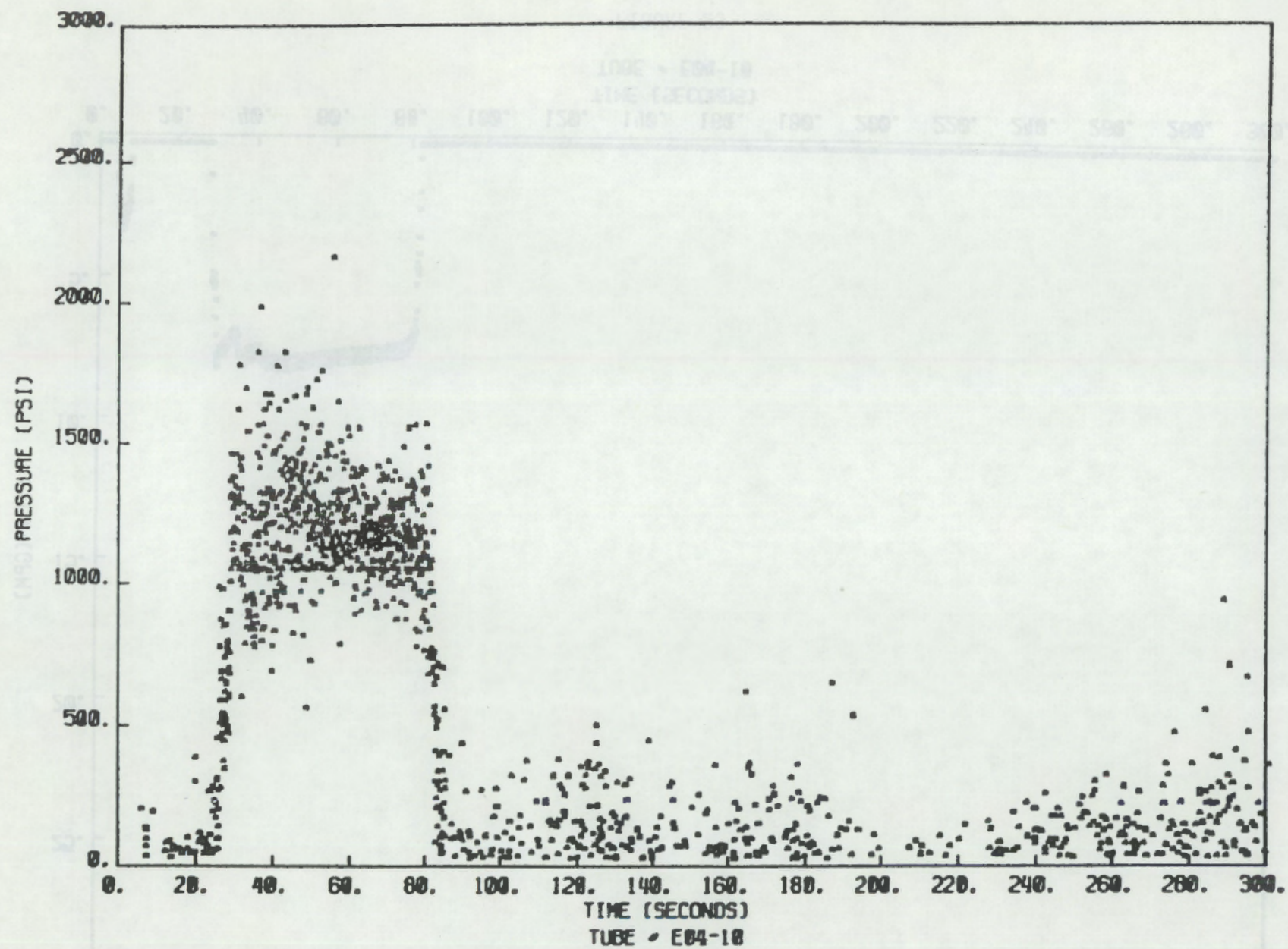


FIGURE 24

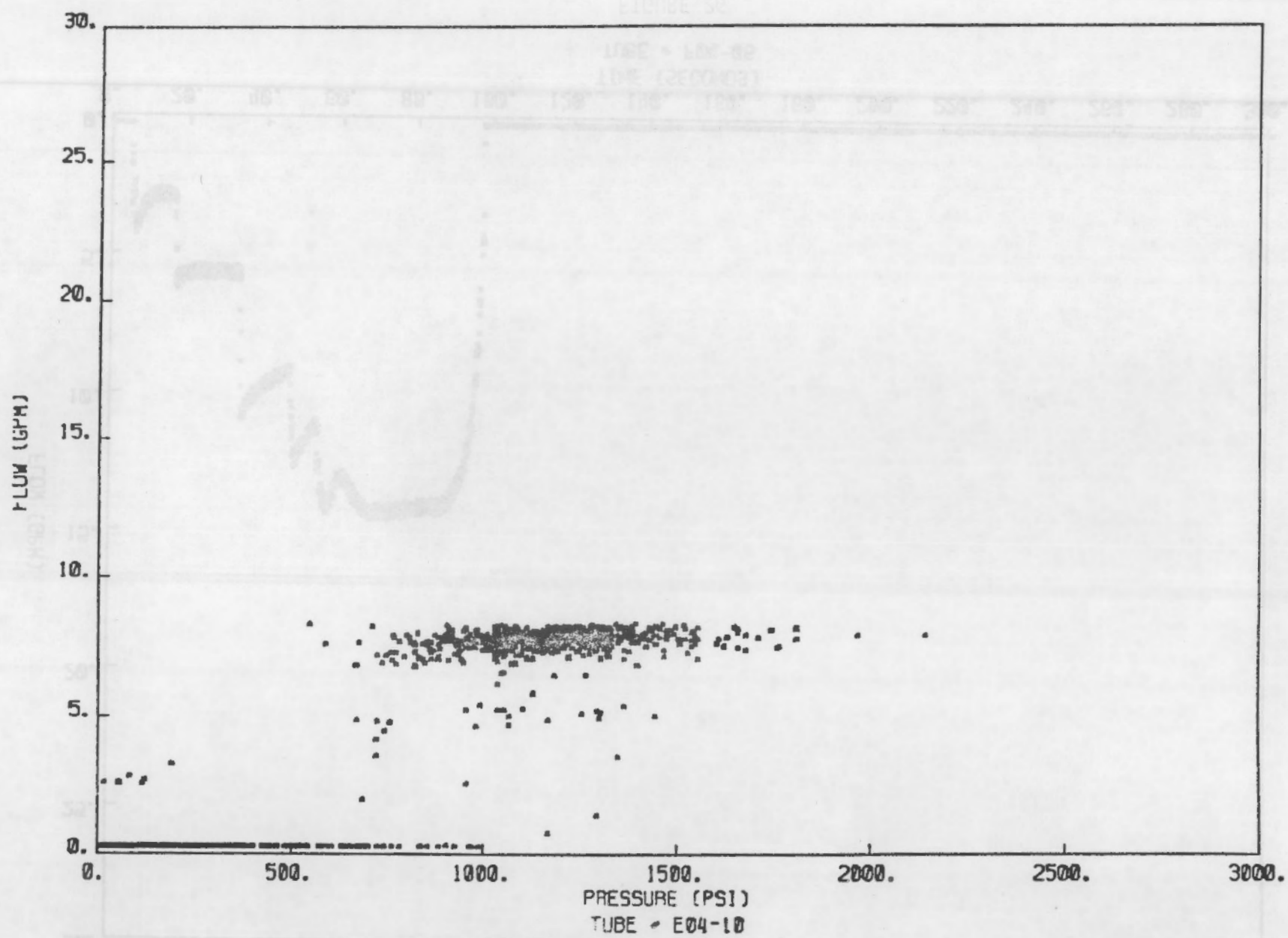


FIGURE 25

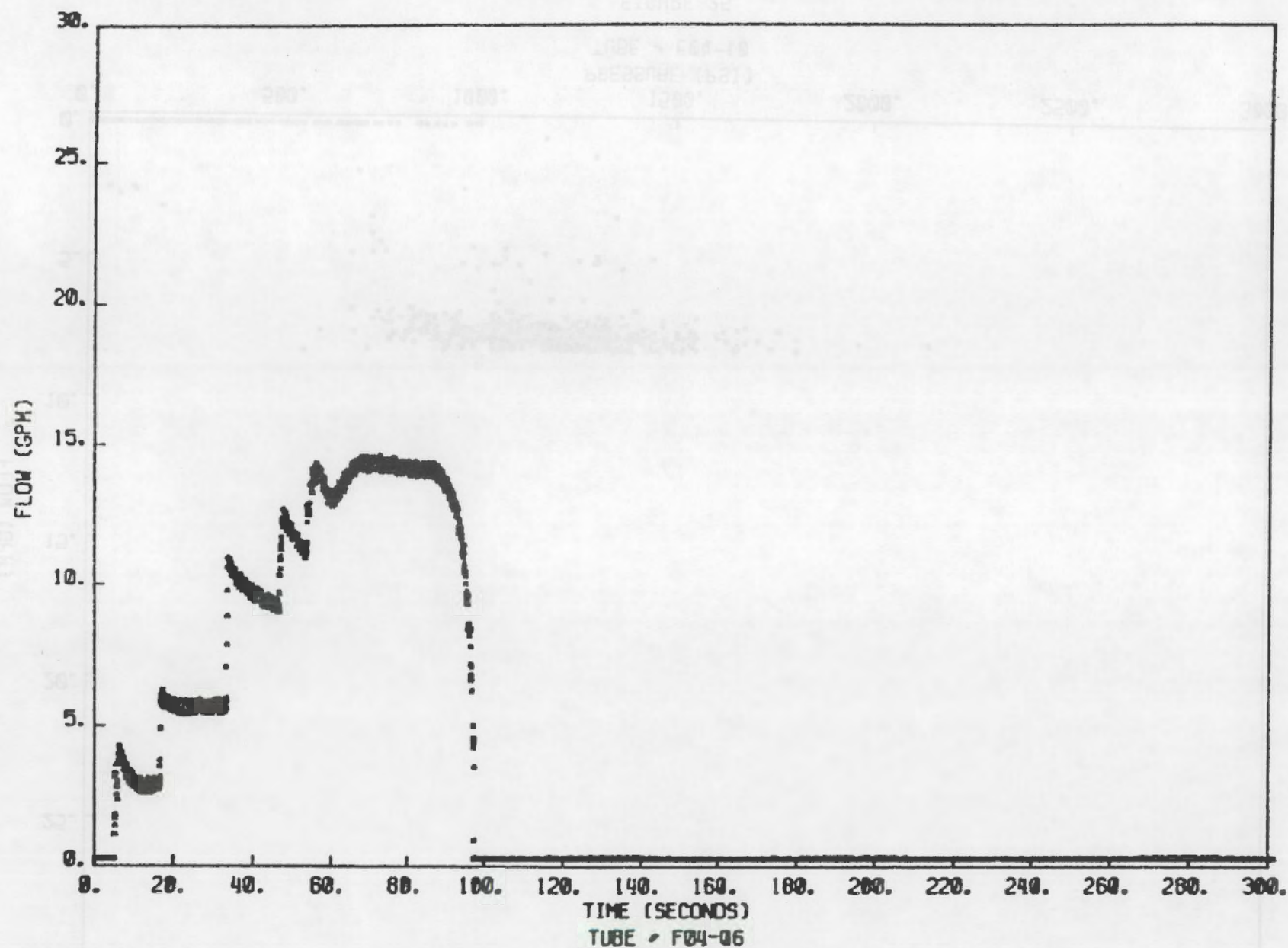


FIGURE 26



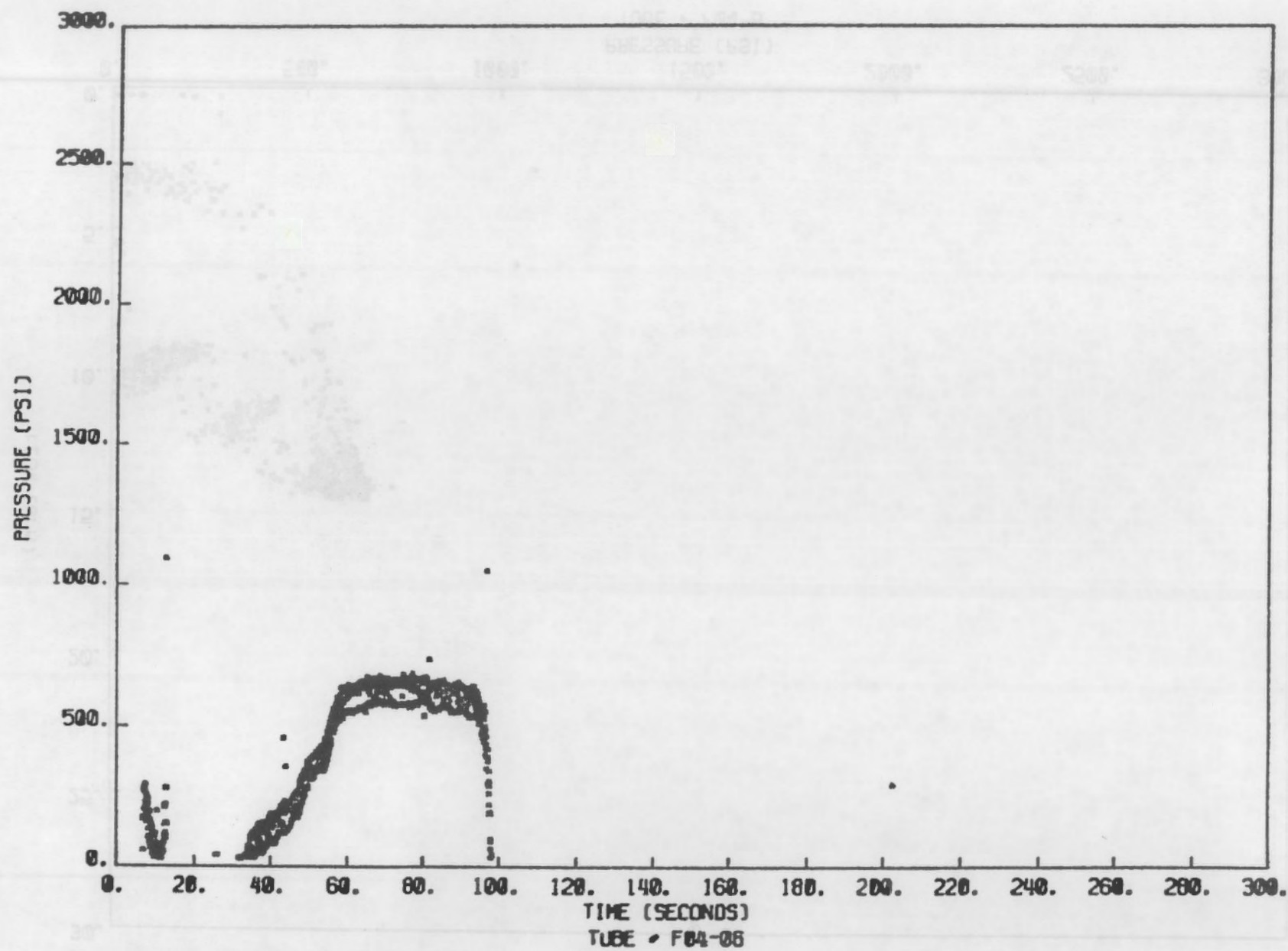


FIGURE 27

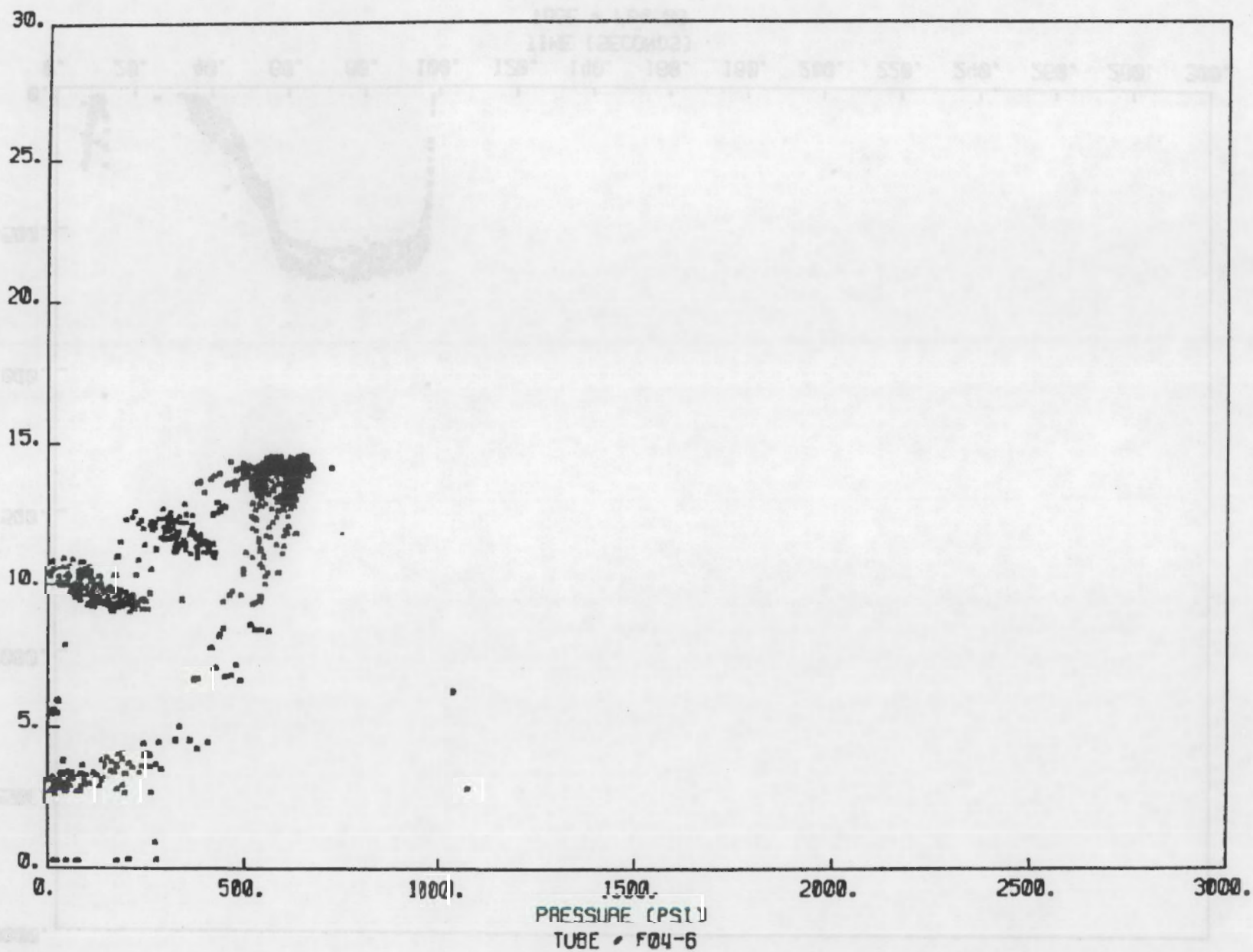


FIGURE 28

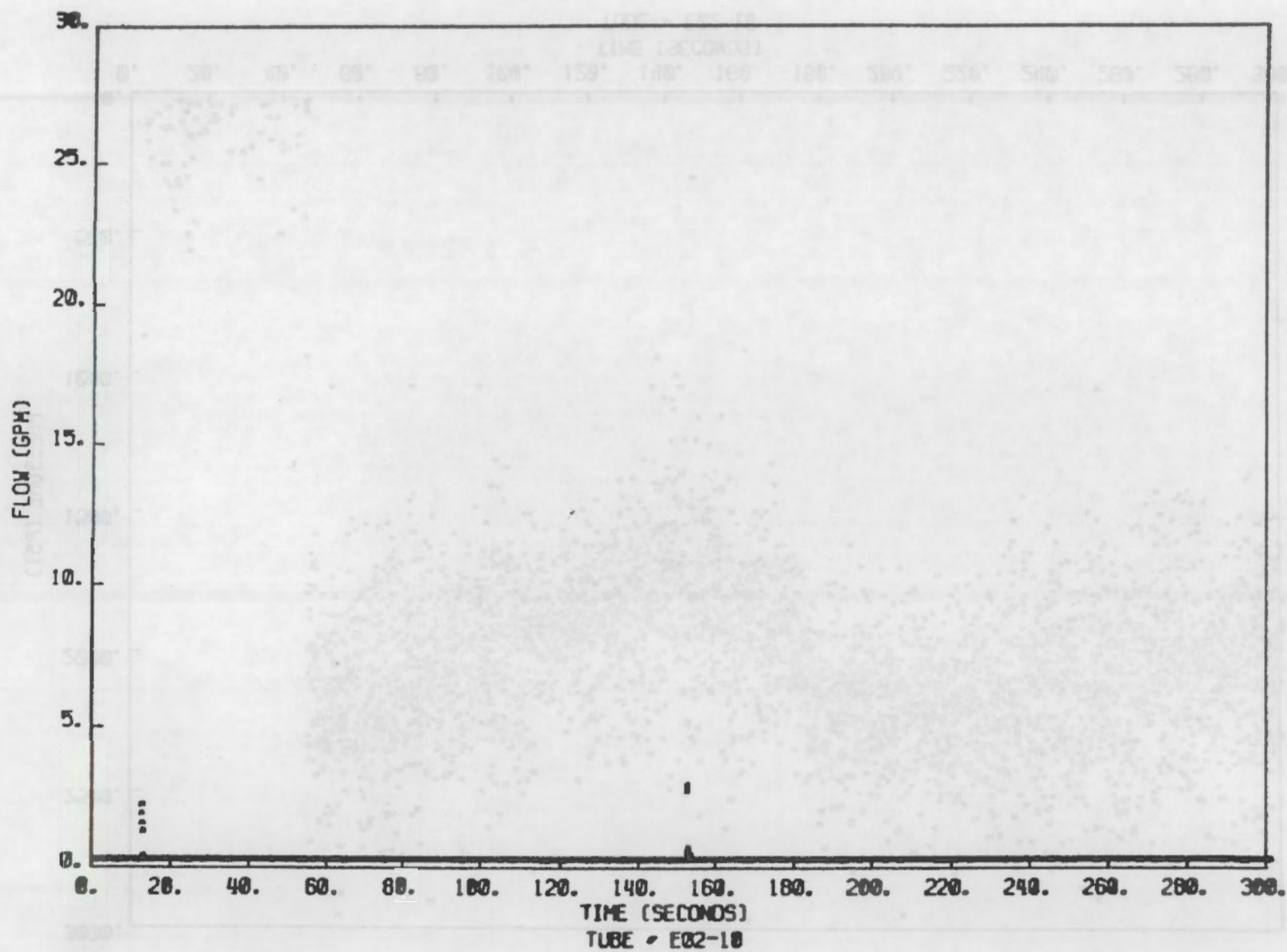


FIGURE 29



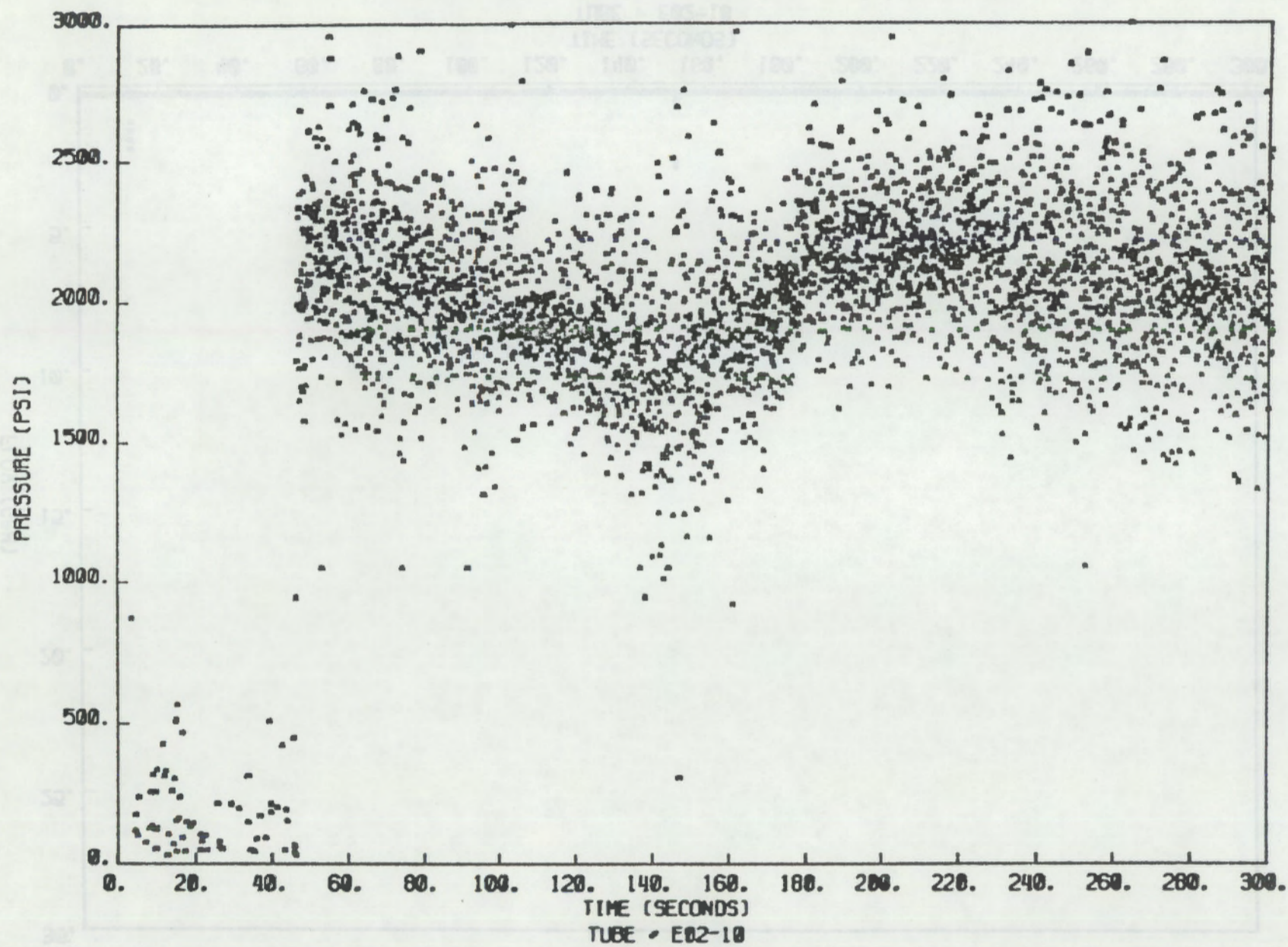


FIGURE 30

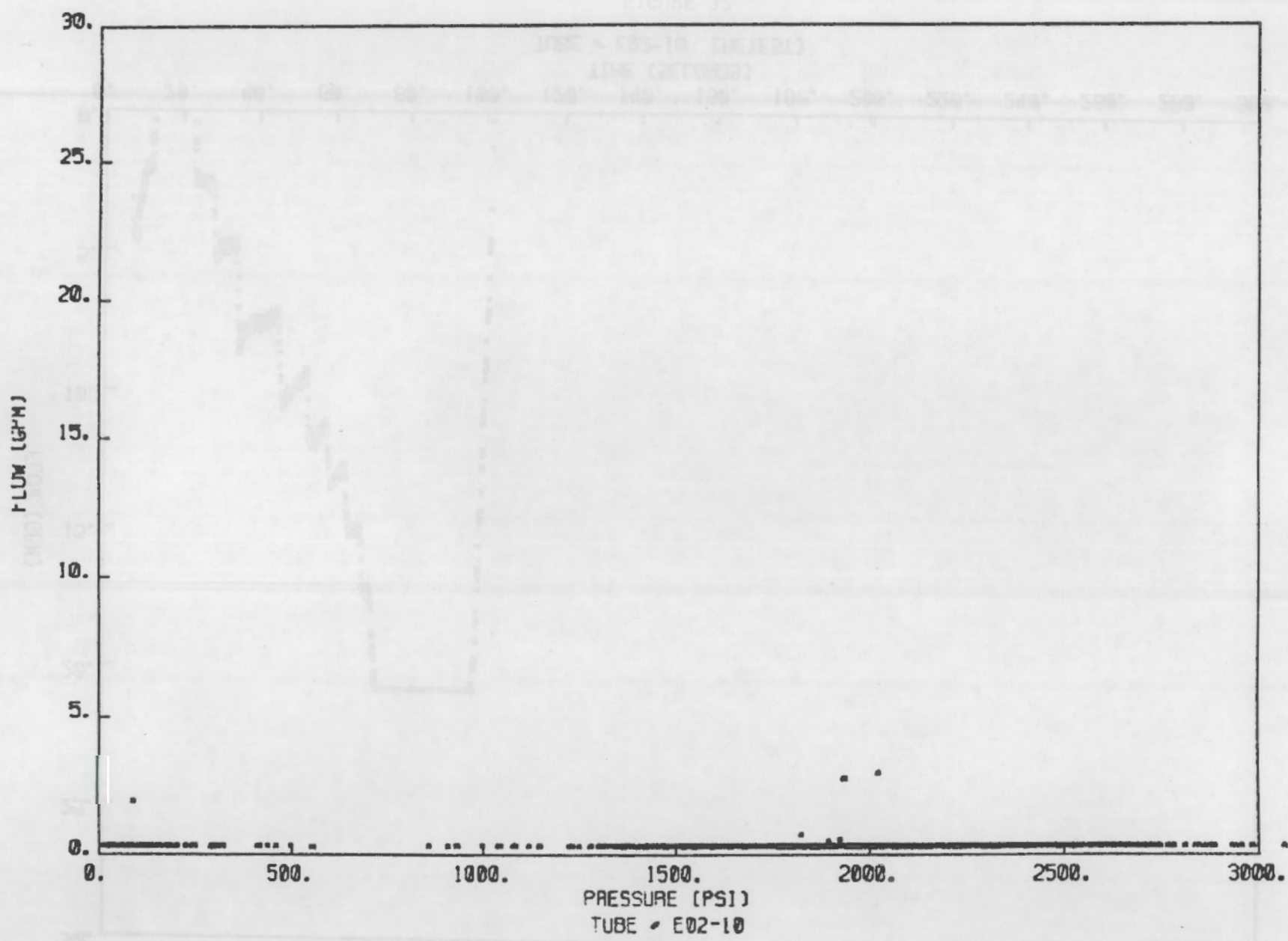


FIGURE 31



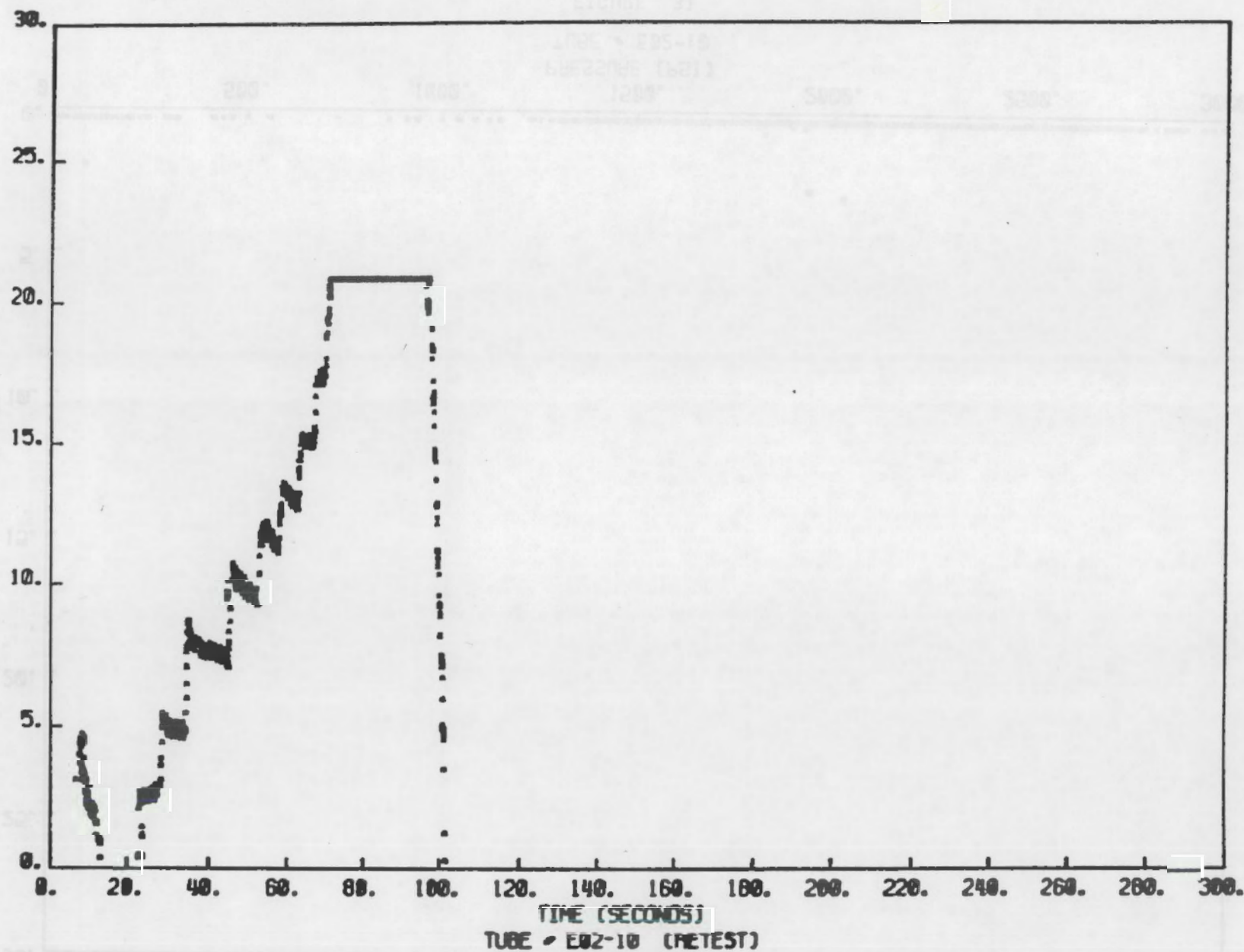


FIGURE 32



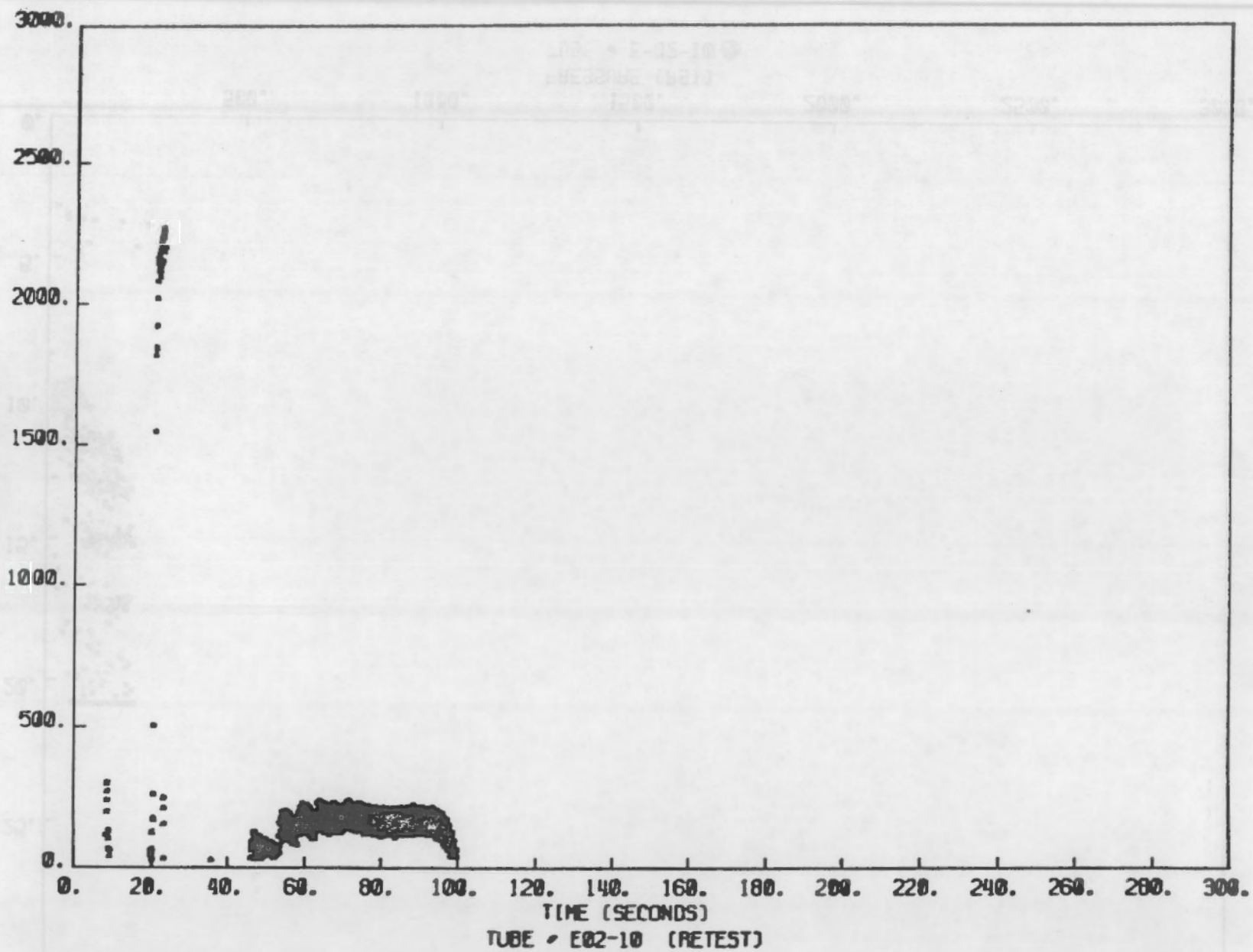


FIGURE 33

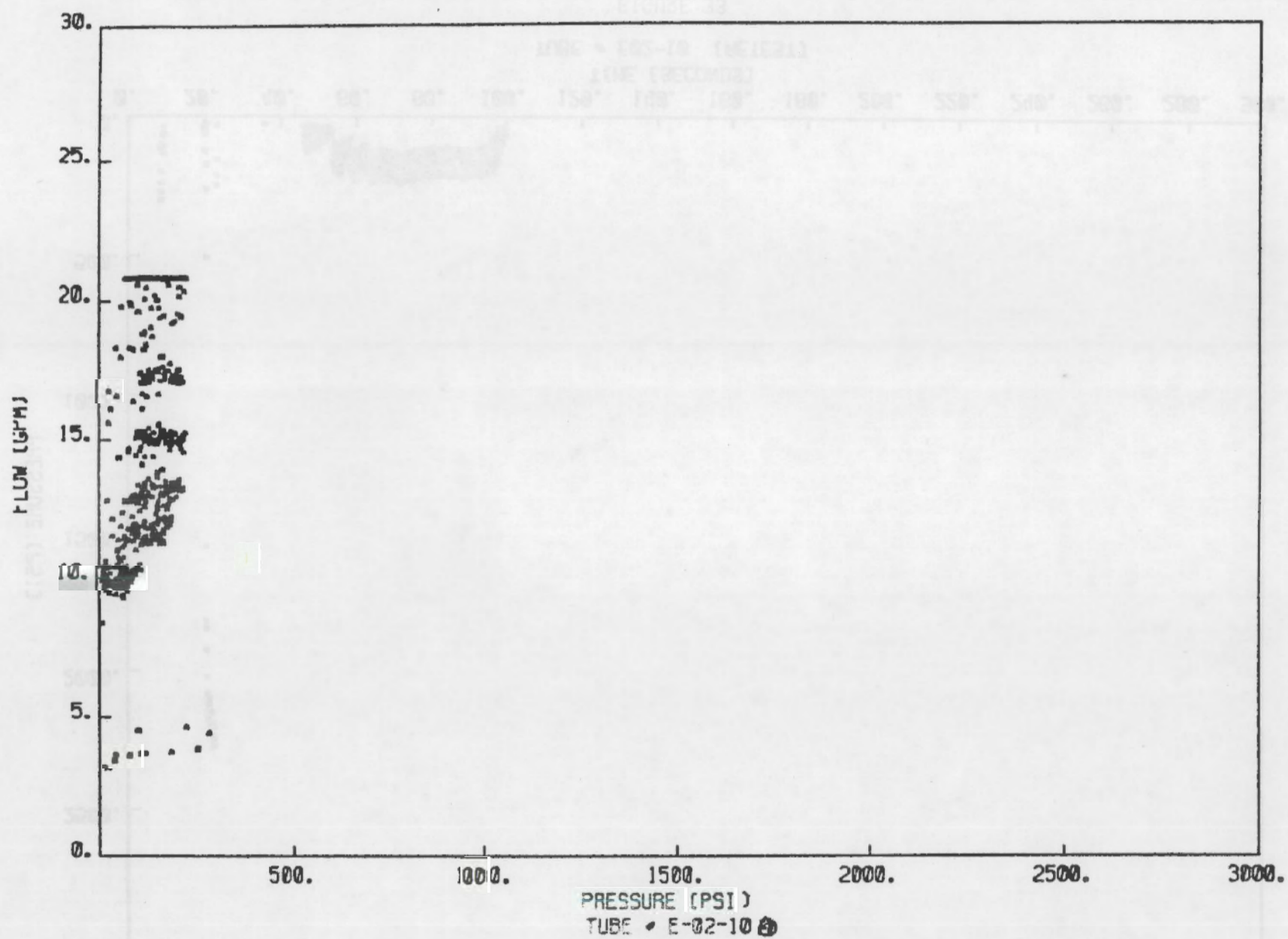


FIGURE 34



FIGURE 35. After Test Photograph of Specimen E01-3



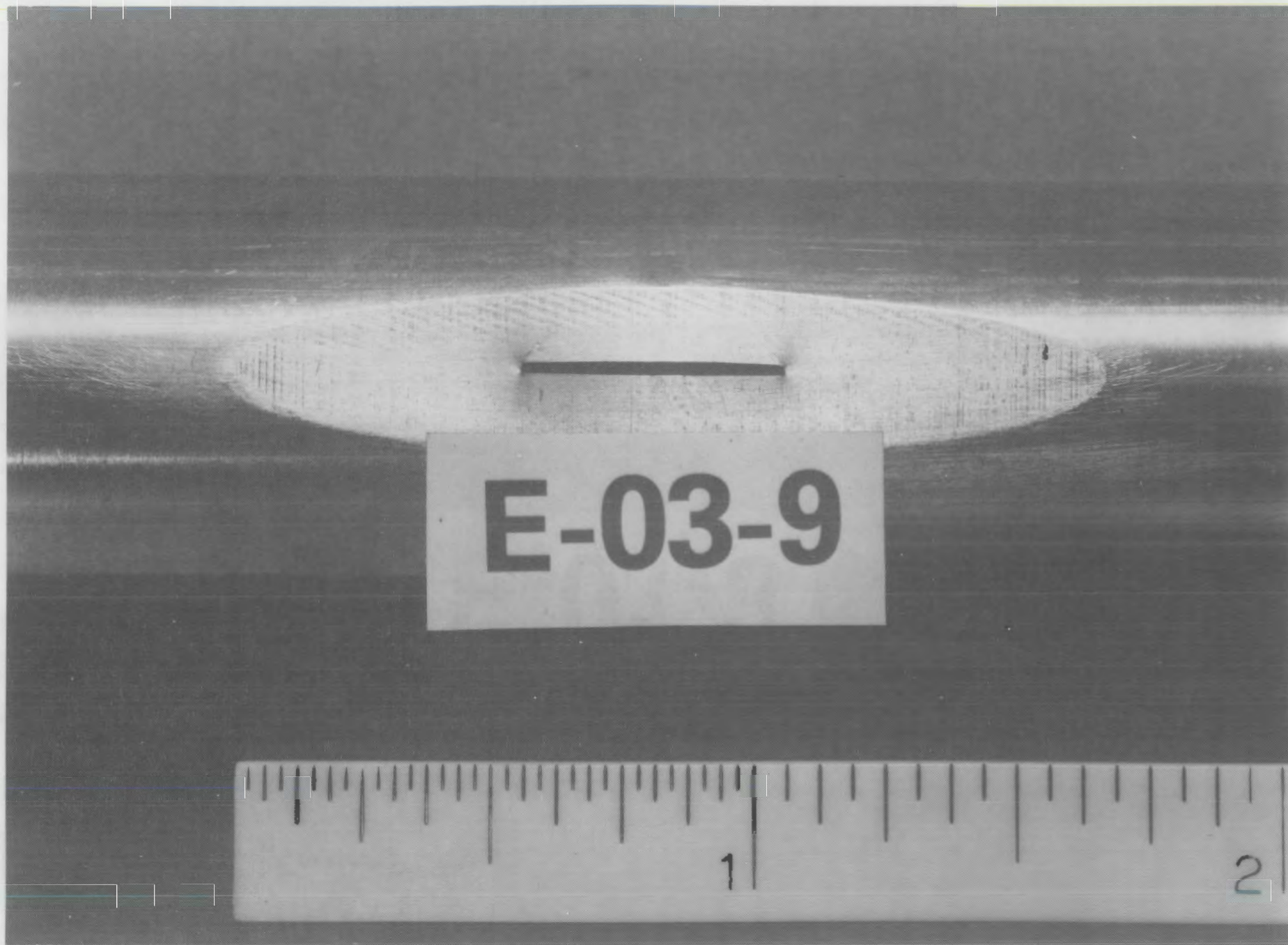


FIGURE 36. After Test Photograph of Specimen E03-9



FIGURE 37. After Test Photograph of Specimen E13-1





FIGURE 38. After Test Photograph of Specimen F-07-2



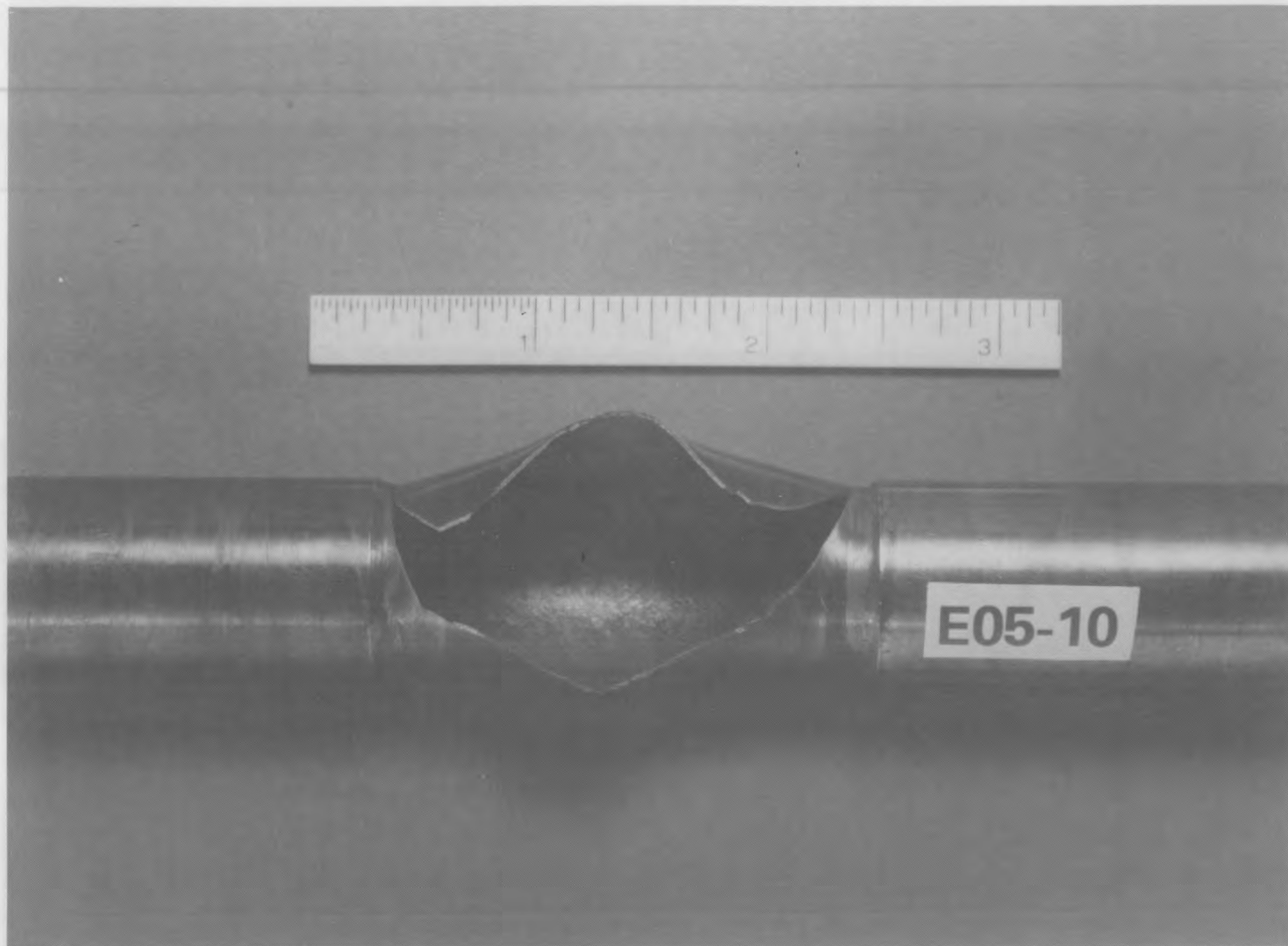


FIGURE 39. After Test Photograph of Specimen E05-10





FIGURE 40. Before Test Photograph of Specimen E-04-10





FIGURE 41. After Test Photograph of Specimen E04-10



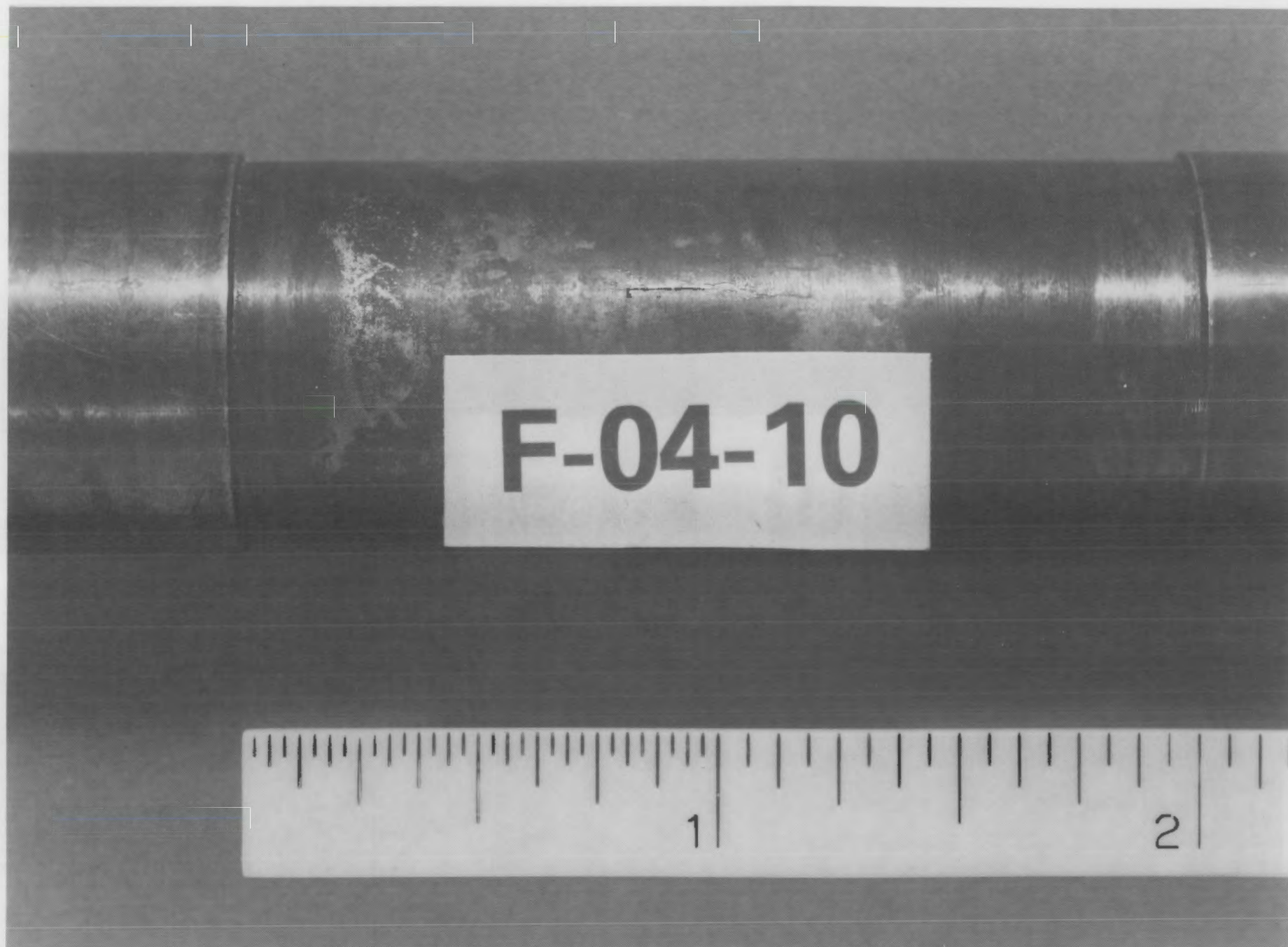


FIGURE 42. Before Test Photograph of Specimen F04-10



FIGURE 43. After Test Photograph of Specimen F04-10





FIGURE 44. Before Test Photograph of Specimen F04-6





FIGURE 45. After Test Photograph of Specimen F04-6



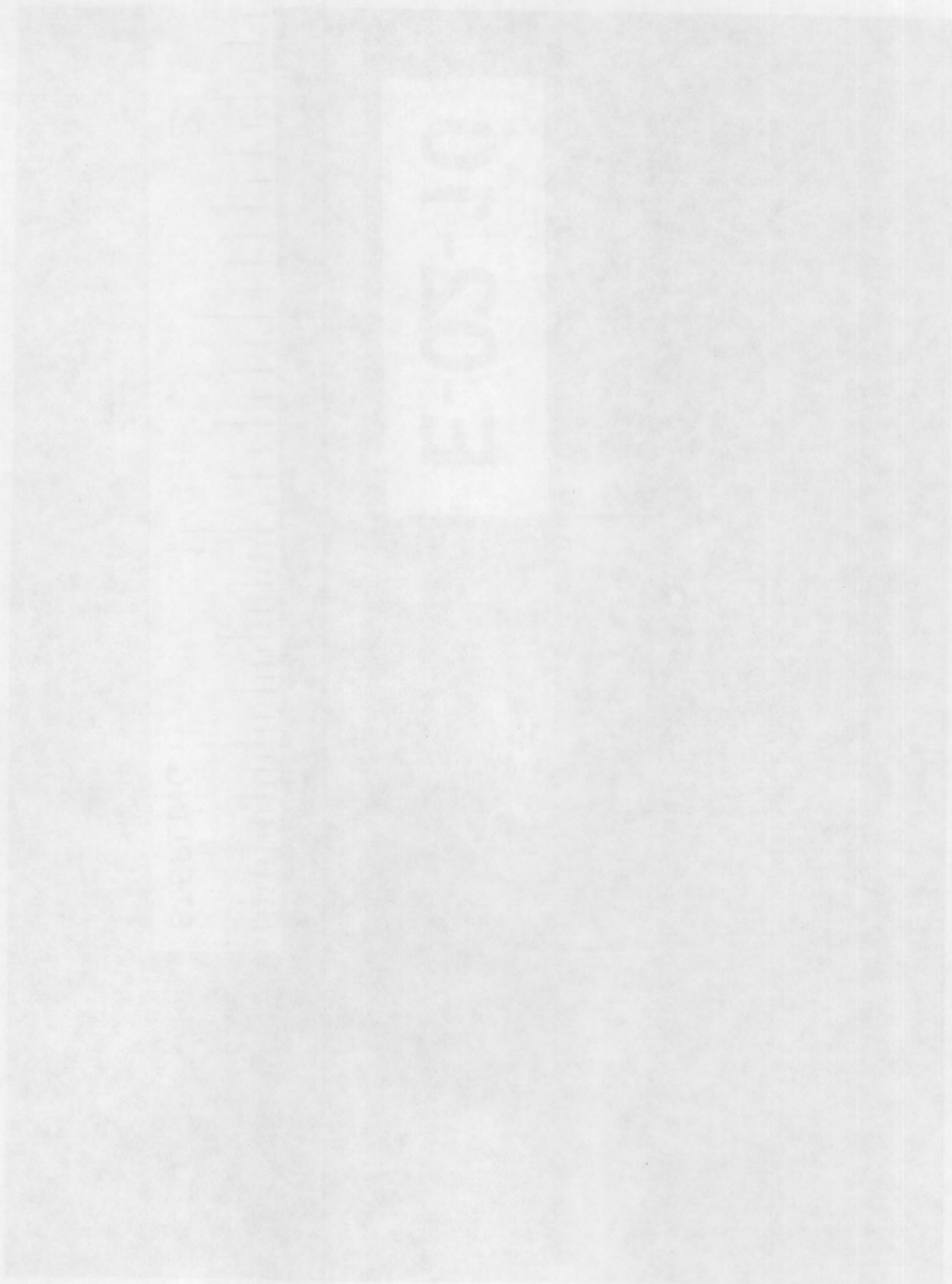
FIGURE 46. Before Test Photograph of Specimen E02-10





FIGURE 47. After Test Photograph of Specimen E02-10





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