REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*

2. REPORT TYPE
Technical Papers

3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)

5d. PROJECT NUMBER
2303

5e. TASK NUMBER
M2C8

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Air Force Research Laboratory (AFMC)
AFRL/PRS
5 Pollux Drive
Edwards AFB CA 93524-7048

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Air Force Research Laboratory (AFMC)
AFRL/PRS
5 Pollux Drive
Edwards AFB CA 93524-7048

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

1121 029

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:

a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	A		Leilani Richardson
					19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(include area code)* (661) 275-5015

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239.18

62 separate items are enclosed

TP-FY99-Ø125

C8

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MEMORANDUM FOR PRR (~~Contractor~~/In-House Publication)

2 June1999

FROM: PROI (TI) (STINFO)

SUBJECT: Authorization for Release of Technical Information, Control Number: AFRL-PR-ED-TP-FY99-0125
Jeff Mills, "Hydrocarbon Fuels Optimization"
Poster Session – HEDM Conference **(Public Release)**

Hydrocarbon Fuels Optimization

J.D. Mills

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Introduction–

Hydrocarbon fuels, as a class, are investigated using the minimal set of parameters determinative of oxidizer-optimized specific impulse and common density-specific-impulse analogues. In this context specific families of promising candidate fuels can be systematically compared, the performance trade-offs among the relevant chemical and physical properties can be quantified, and the general characteristics of mission-tailored fuels can begin to be elucidated.

Initial Questions–

?

- Why do I sometimes get relatively poor theoretical performance from a high-energy hydrocarbon?
- Why is RP-1 (kerosene) such a good rocket fuel?
- What are the minimal set of fuel parameters that determine hydrocarbon I_{sp}?
- What are the performance trade-offs among these parameters?
- How can I begin to use this information to search for the "optimum" hydrocarbon fuel and reduce "hunt and peck" methods?

General Concepts/Initial Approximations–

Characteristics of "Good" Rocket Fuels:

- High Heat of Formation
- High "Light-Atom" Content

Specific Impulse:

(Momentum Transfer from Combusted Ejecta)

For an optimal nozzle:

$$I_{sp} \equiv \frac{1}{g}\sqrt{2\left(H_{chamb.} - H_{exh.}\right)}$$

Sometimes approximated:

$$(I_{sp})_{opt} \propto \frac{1}{g}\sqrt{2\,\Delta H_{comb.}}$$

or,

$$(I_{sp})_{opt} \propto \frac{1}{g}\sqrt{2\,\Delta H_{f}}$$

ΔH_{comb}–stoichiometric combustion enthalpy

(per unit mass of exhaust products)

ΔH_{f}–specific enthalpy of formation

More Realistic Model Rocket–

One-Dimensional, Adiabatic, Equilibrated, Isentropic Expansion from the Combustion Chamber

Reference Rocket Conditions for I_{sp} Optimized vs. LOX:

Sea level expansion:

$$P_{chamber} = 1000\,\text{psi},\ P_{exhaust} = 14.7\,\text{psi}$$

"Vacuum" expansion:

$$P_{chamber} = 1000\,\text{psi},\ \epsilon = 40$$

Sole determinative parameters of LOX-optimized specific impulse and its density variants:

$$(I_{sp})_{opt} \Leftarrow \Delta H_f(/g) \text{ and } r\left(\frac{H}{C}\right)$$

$$(\rho_{of}^{a}\, I_{sp})_{opt} \Leftarrow \Delta H_f(/g),\ r\left(\frac{H}{C}\right),\ \rho_f,\ \text{and } a$$

$\Delta H_f(/g)$–specific enthalpy of formation of the fuel

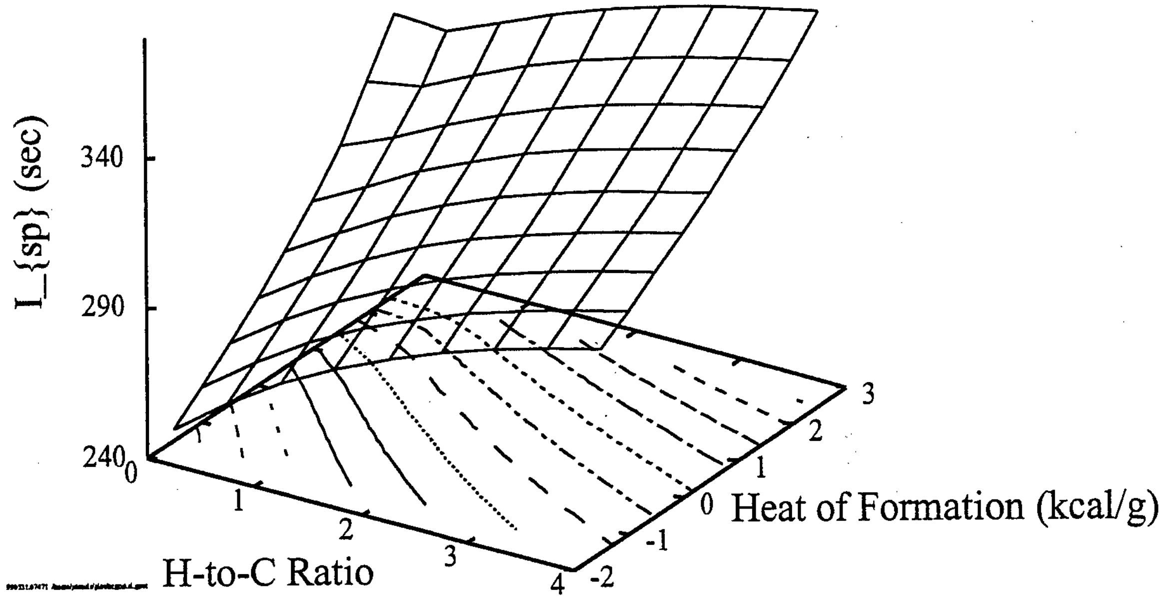
$r(\frac{H}{C})$–atom ratio of fuel

ρ_{of}–oxidizer-fuel bulk density

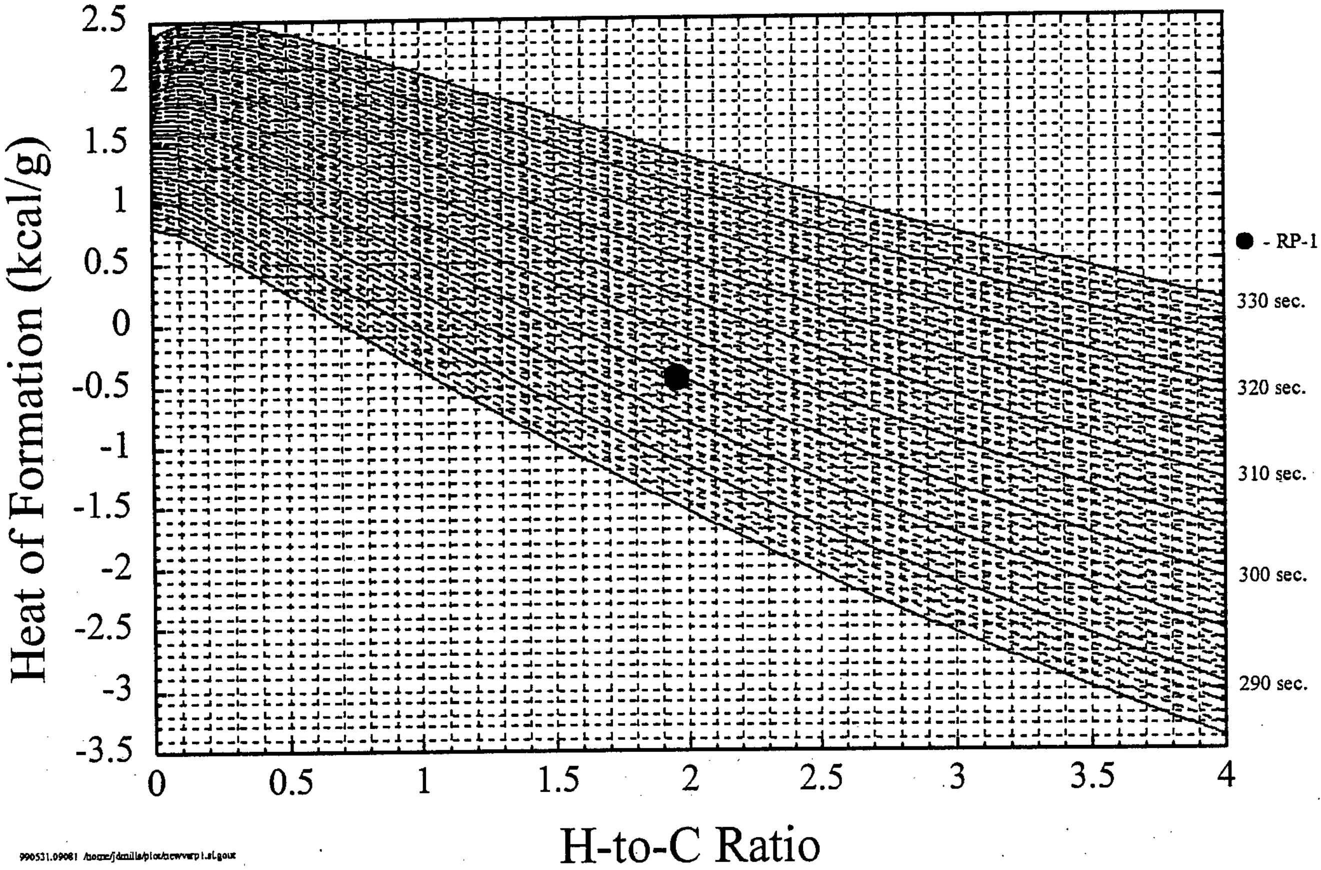
ρ_f–fuel density

a–density exponent (often, mission-specific constant)

Optimium Hydrocarbon I_{sp} vs. LOX
Sea-Level Expansion (14.7 psi, P_c=1000 psi)



Optimium Hydrocarbon I_{sp} vs. LOX
Sea-Level Expansion (14.7 psi, P_c=1000 psi)



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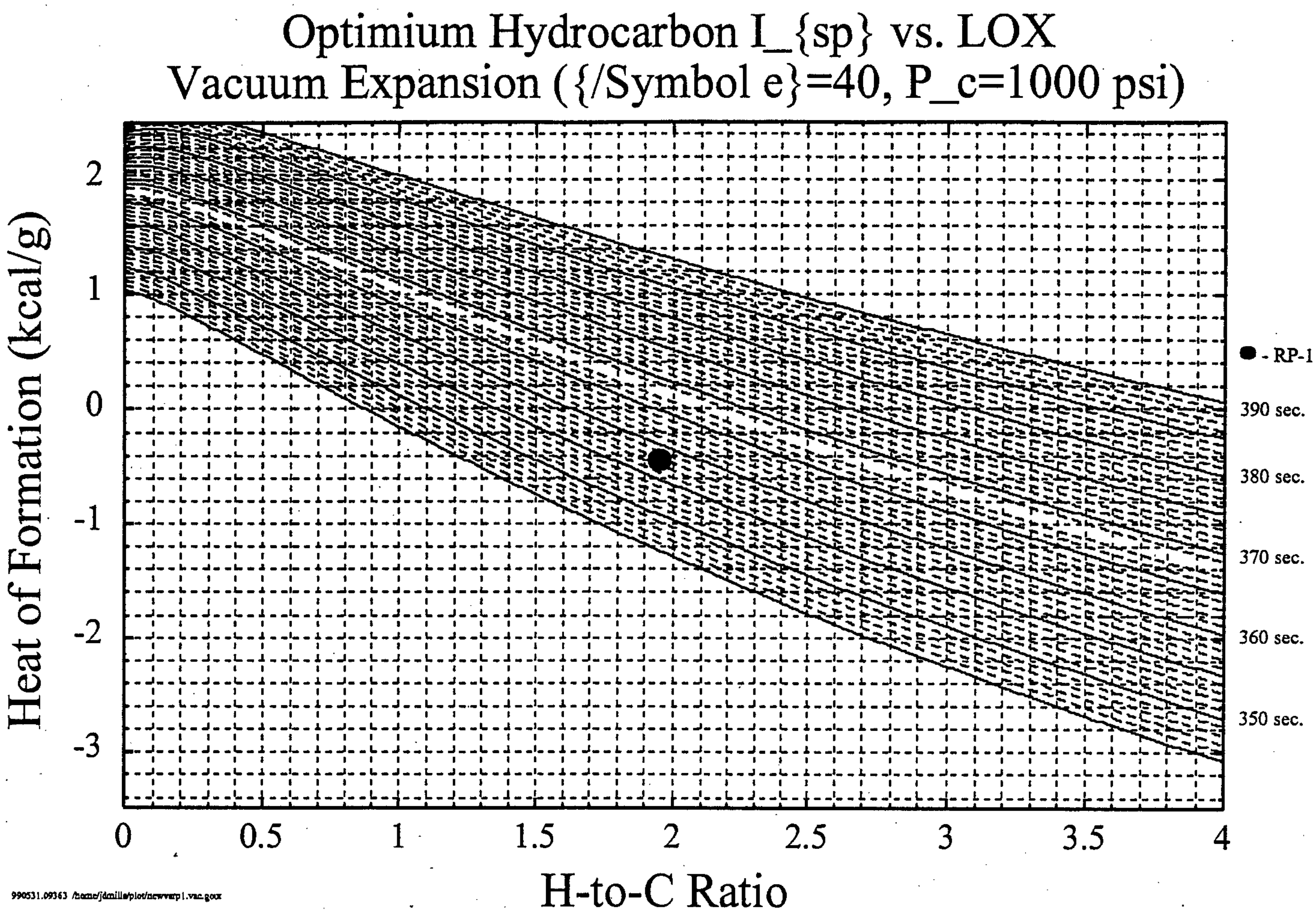
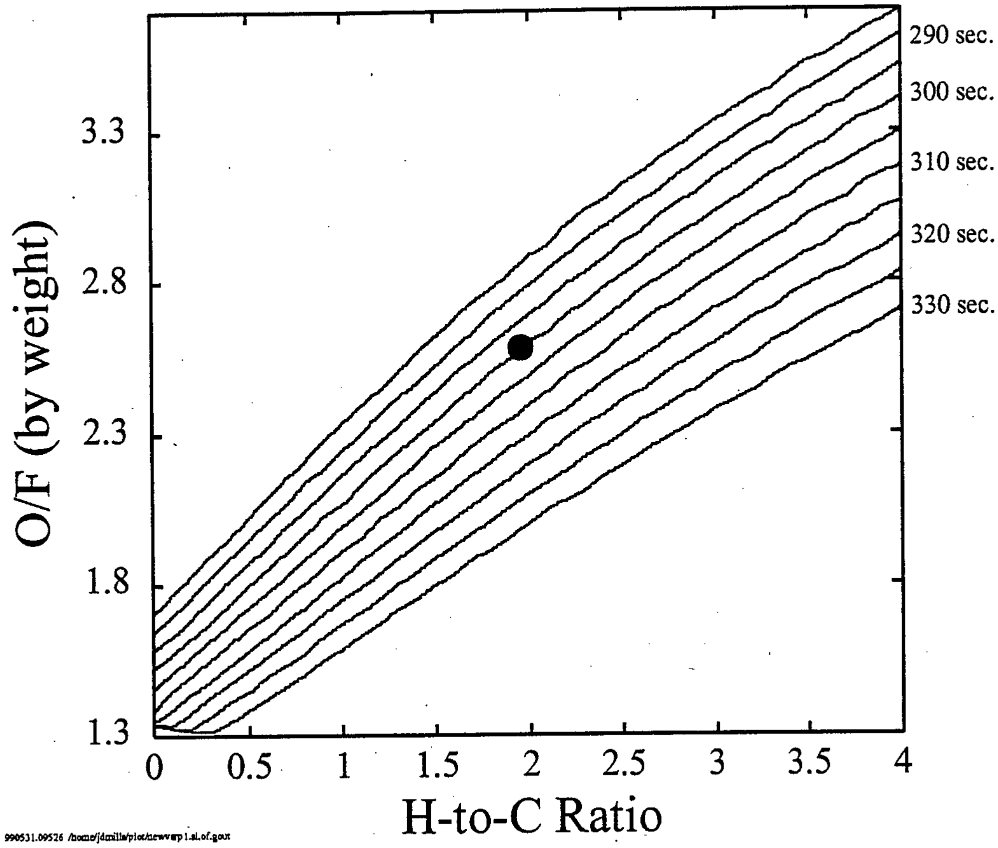
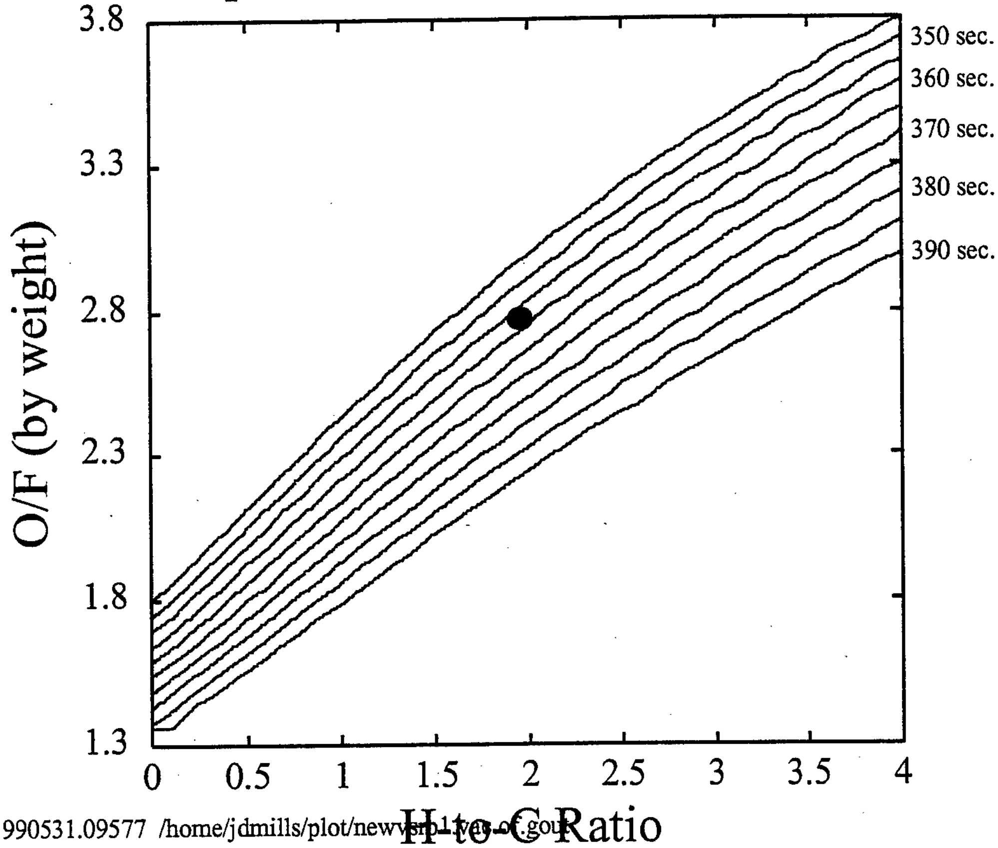

Optimium Hydrocarbon I_{sp} vs. LOX
Vacuum Expansion ({/Symbol e}=40, P_c=1000 psi)
Heat of Formation (kcal/g)
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
H-to-C Ratio
- RP-1
390 sec.
380 sec.
370 sec.
360 sec.
350 sec.

O/F at Optimium I_{sp}
Sea-Level Expansion (14.7 psi, P_c=1000 psi)



O/F at Optimium I_{sp}
Vacuum Expansion ({/Symbol e}=40, P_c=1000 psi)



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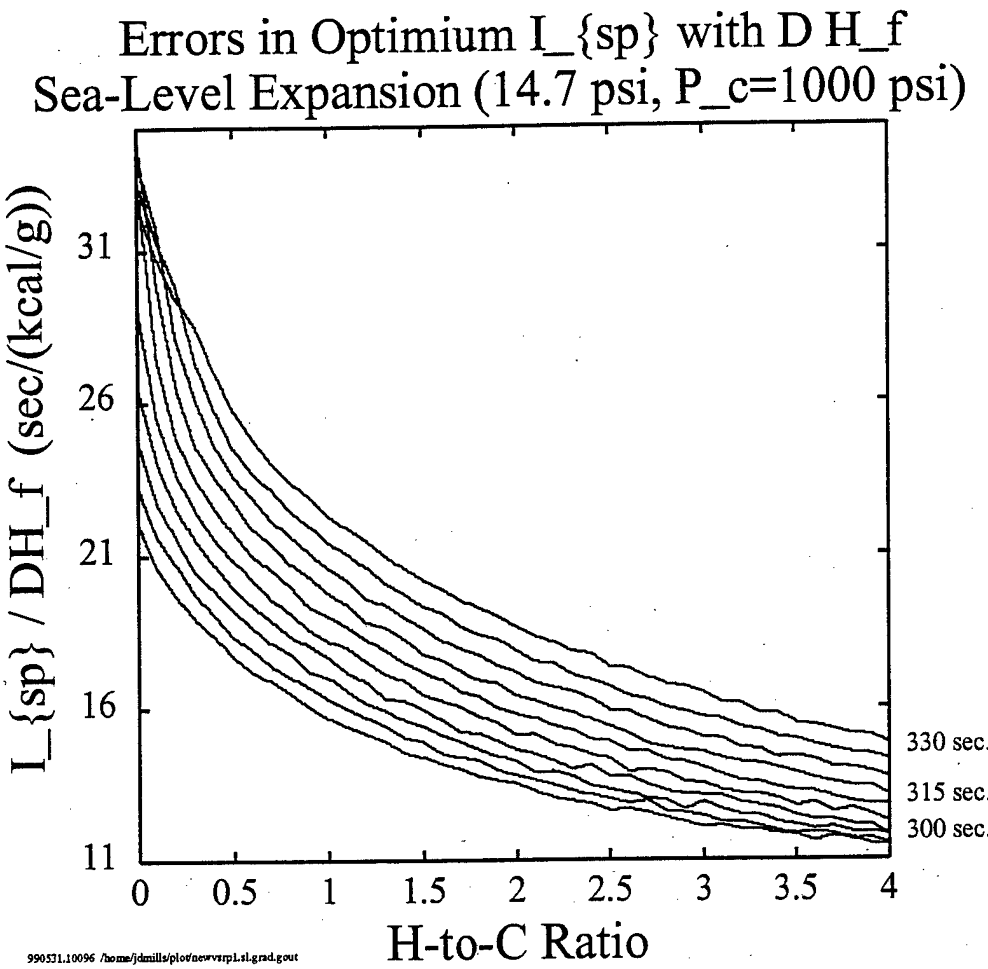
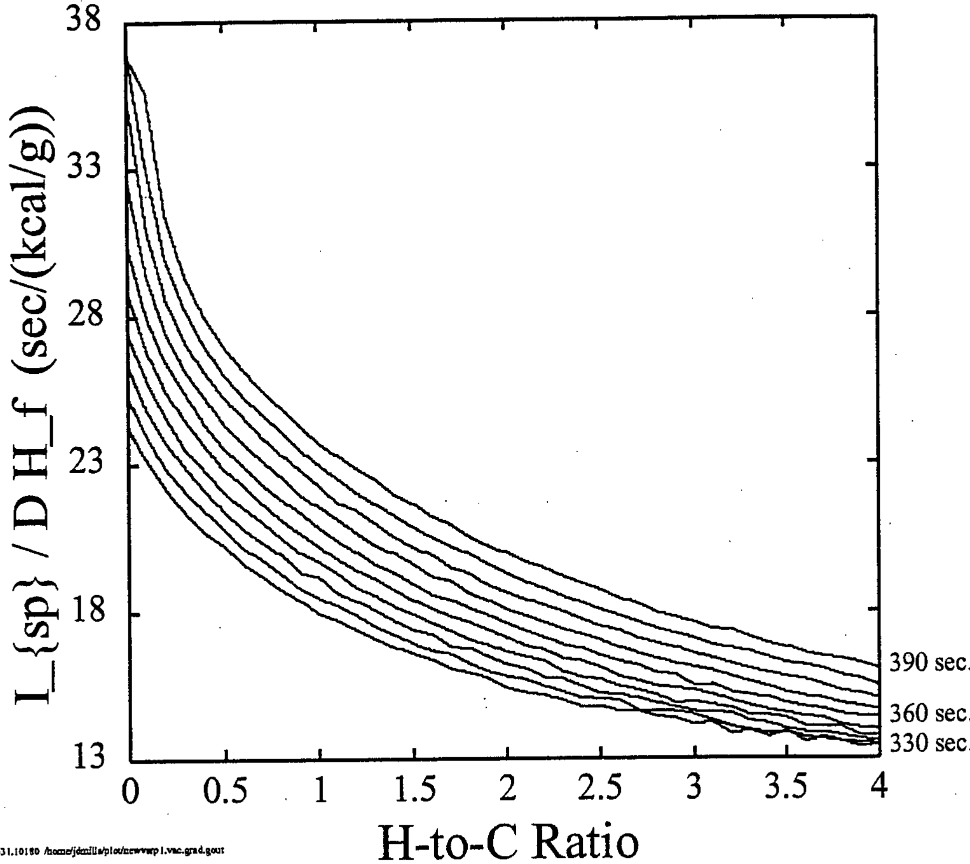


Errors in Optimium I_{sp} with D H_f
Sea-Level Expansion (14.7 psi, P_c=1000 psi)
I_{sp} / DH_f (sec/(kcal/g))
31
26
21
16
11
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
H-to-C Ratio
330 sec.
315 sec.
300 sec.
990531.10096 /home/jdmills/plot/newvsrp1.sl.grad.gout

Errors in Optimium I_{sp} with D H_f
Vacuum Expansion (e=40, P_c=1000 psi)



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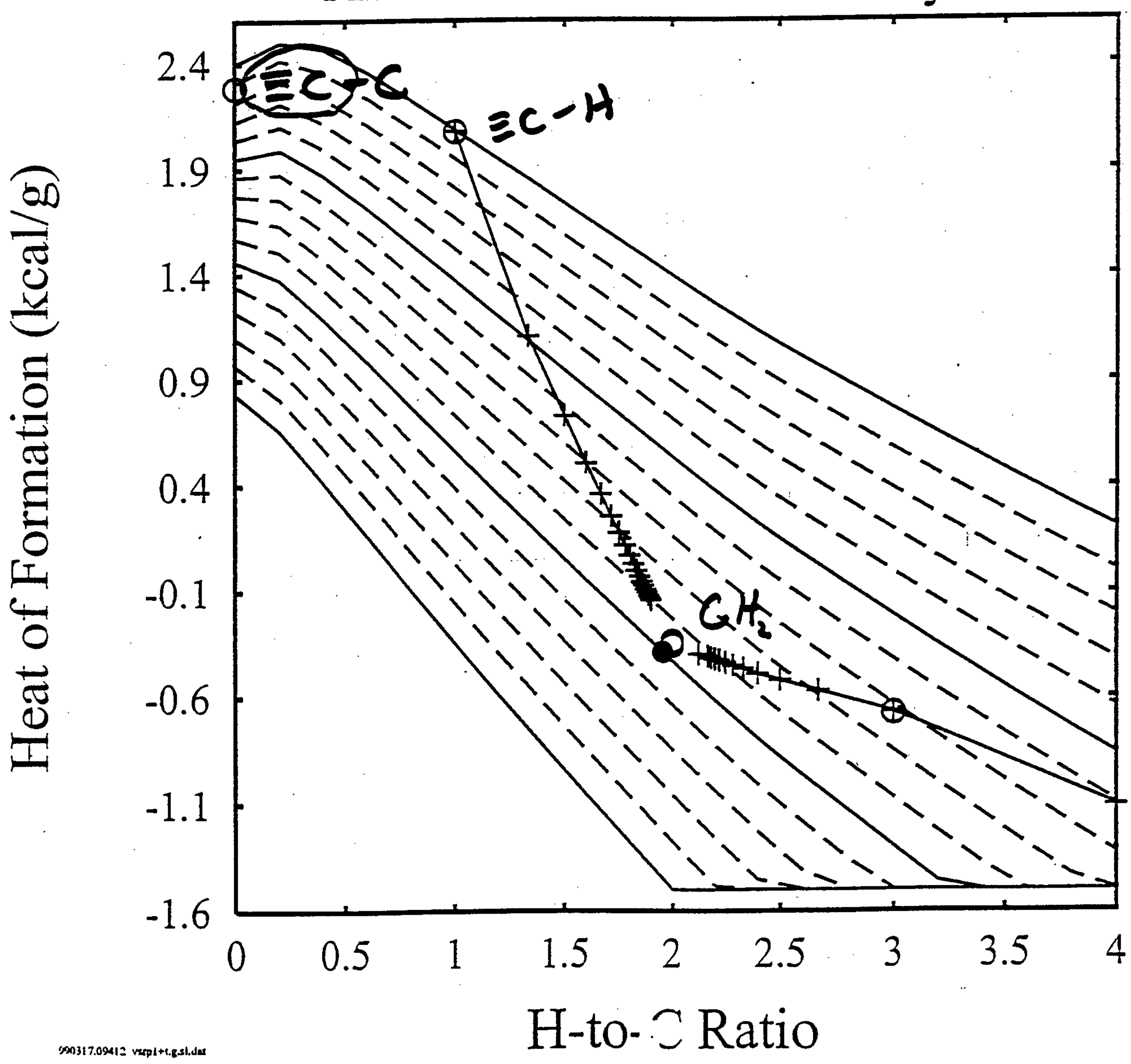
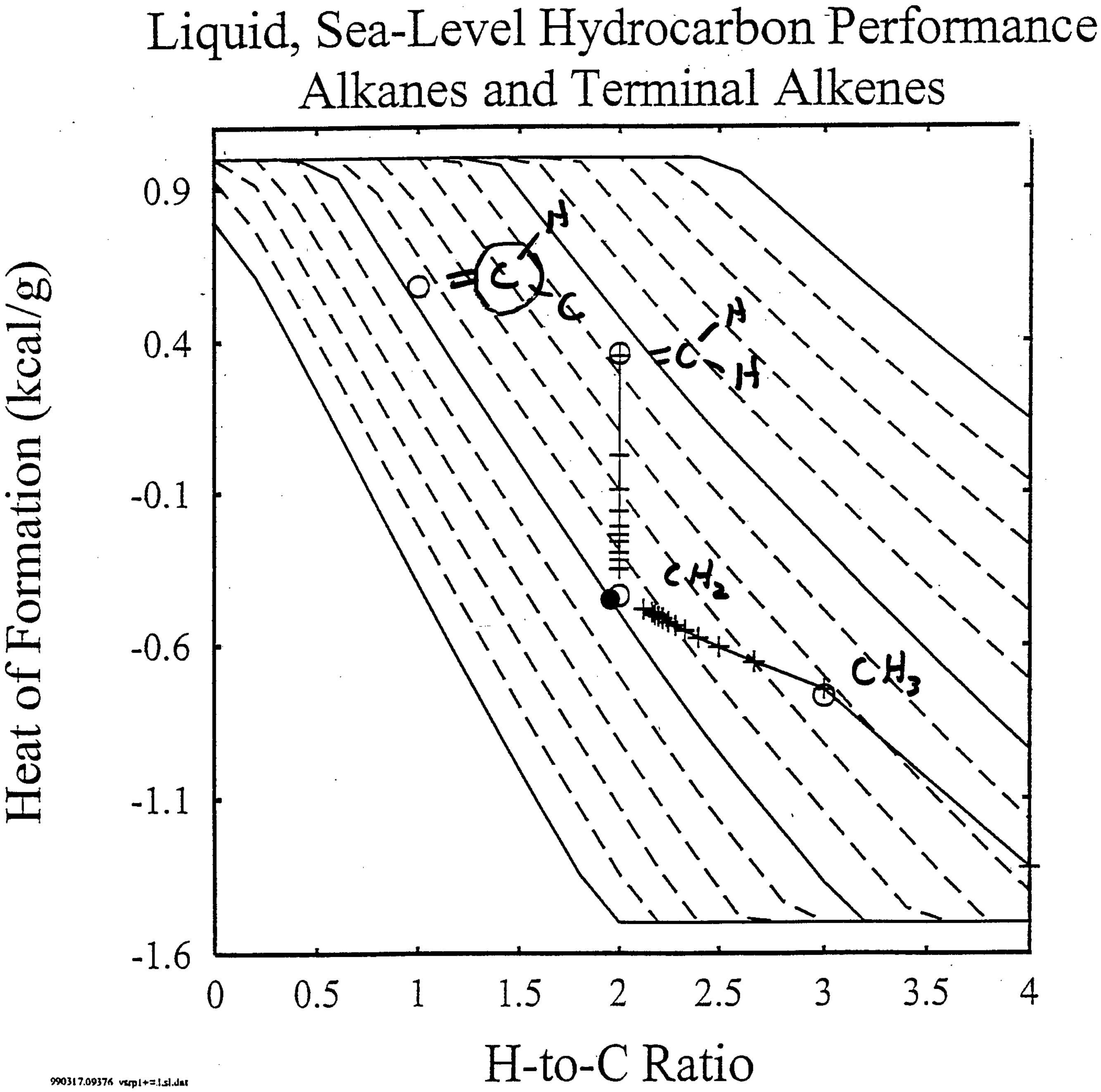
A Specific-Impulse Survey of Chemical Families–

Gas, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Alkanes and Terminal Alkynes

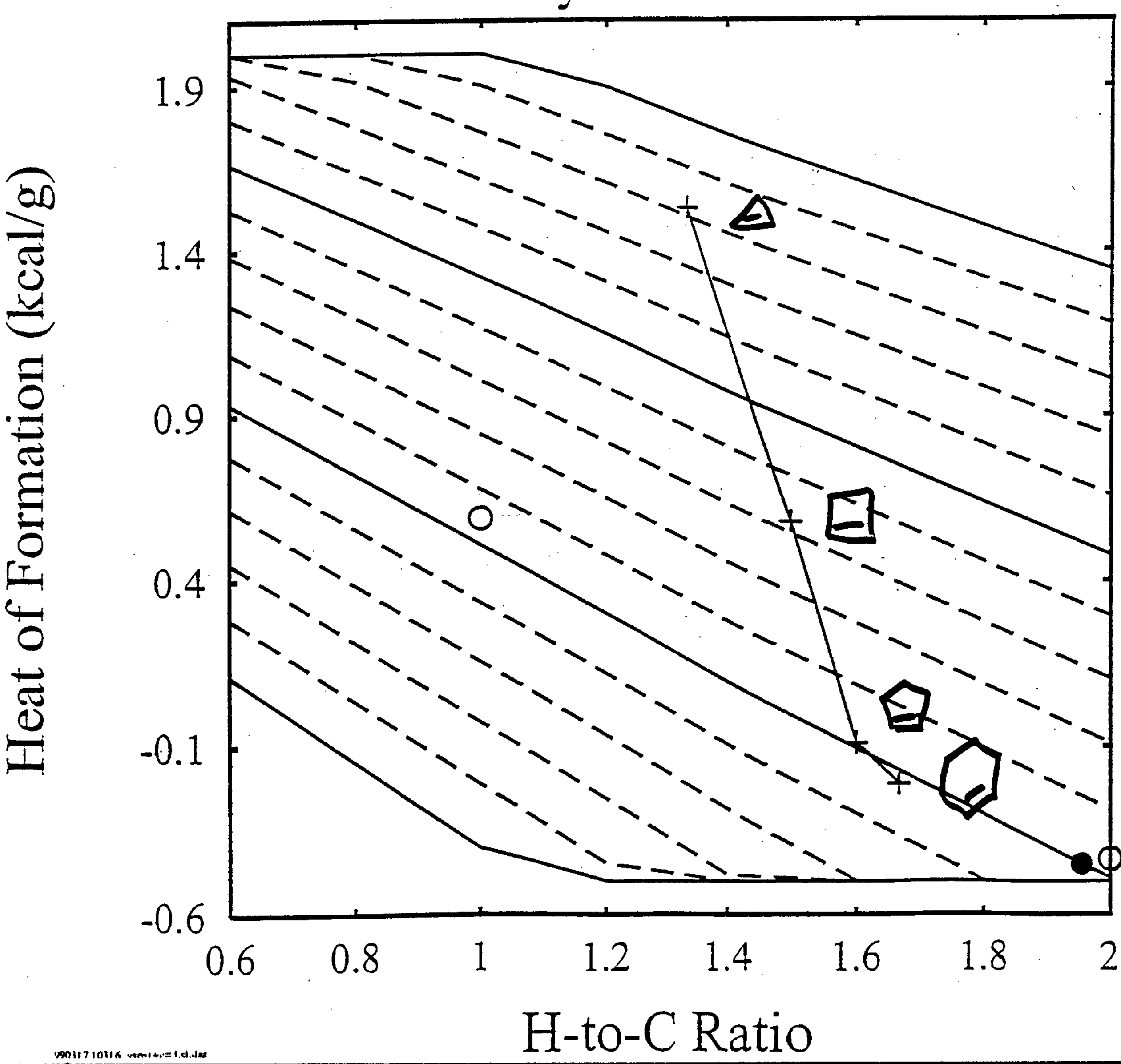


990317.09412 vsrp1+t.g.sl.dat

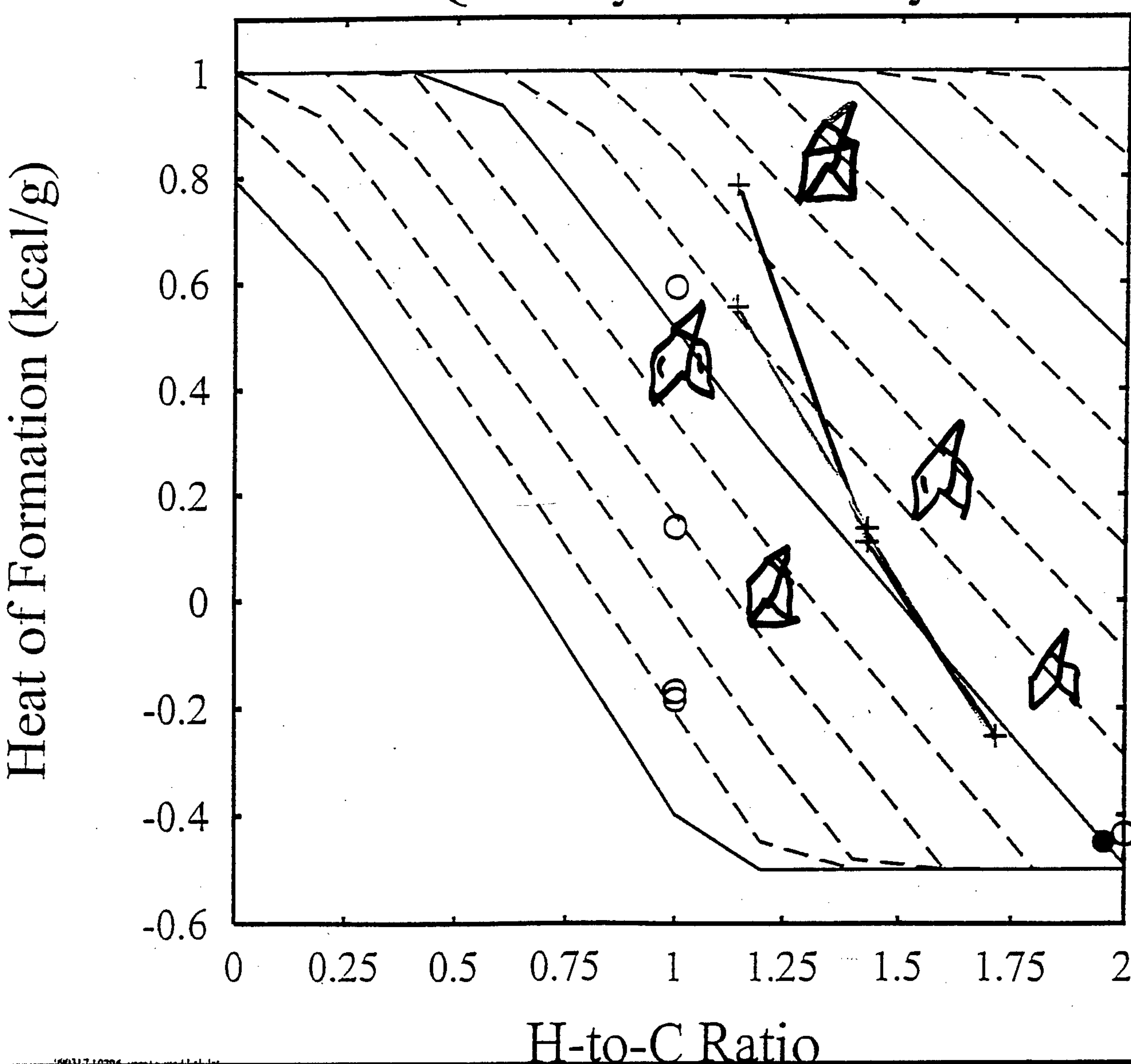


990317.09376 vsrp1+=.1.sl.dat

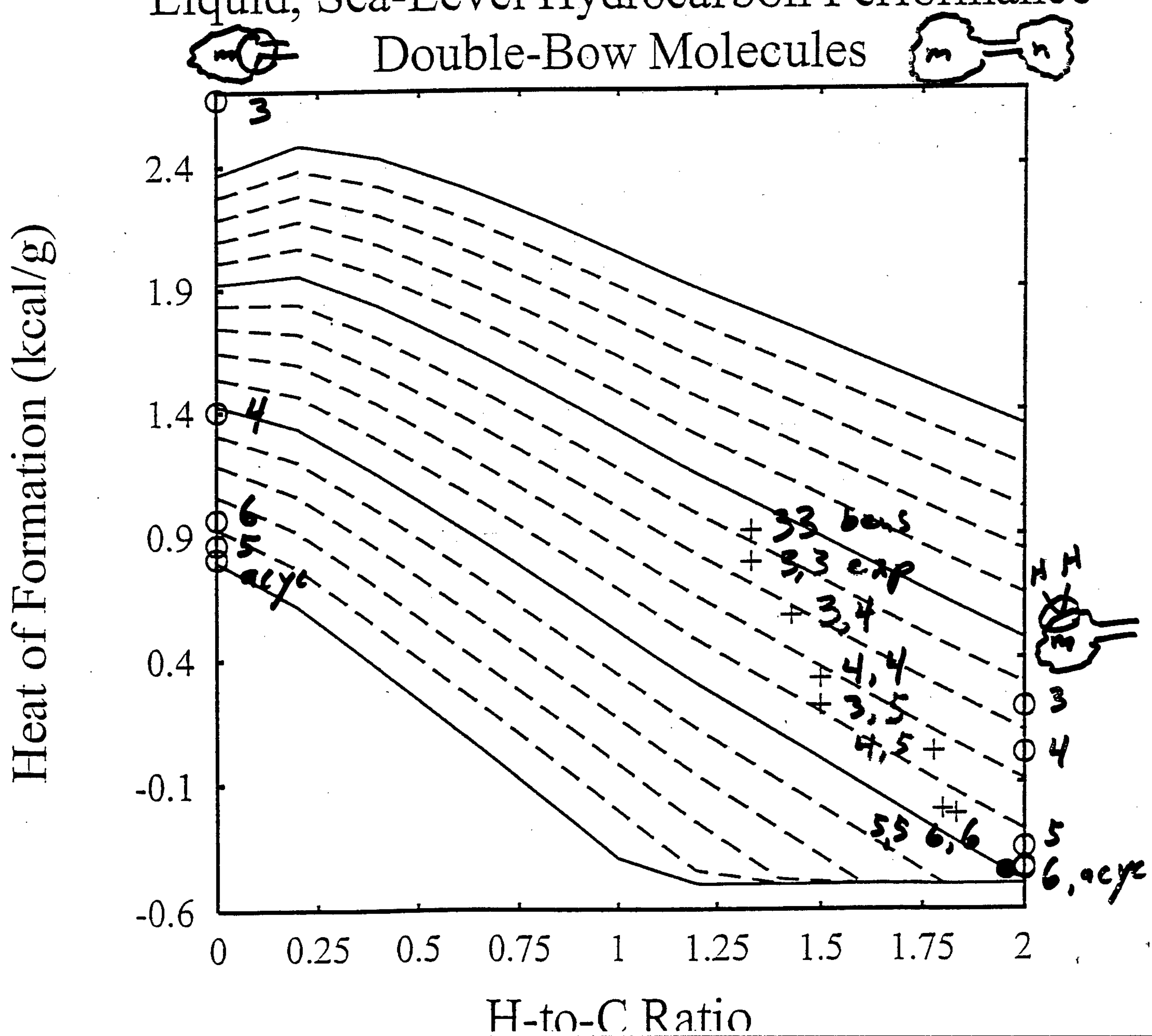
Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Cycloalkenes



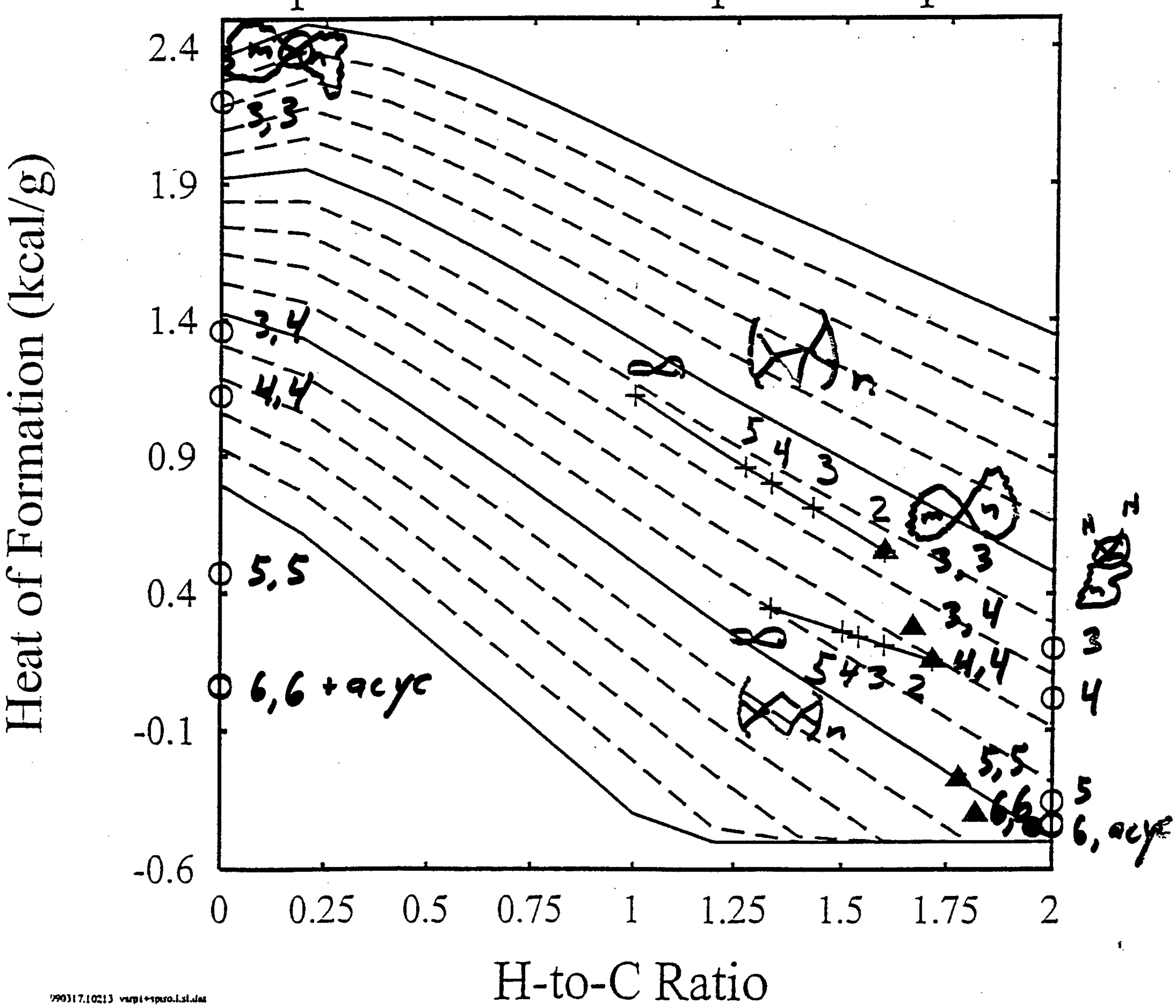
Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Quadricyclane Family



Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Double-Bow Molecules



Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Simple and Catenated Spiro Compounds



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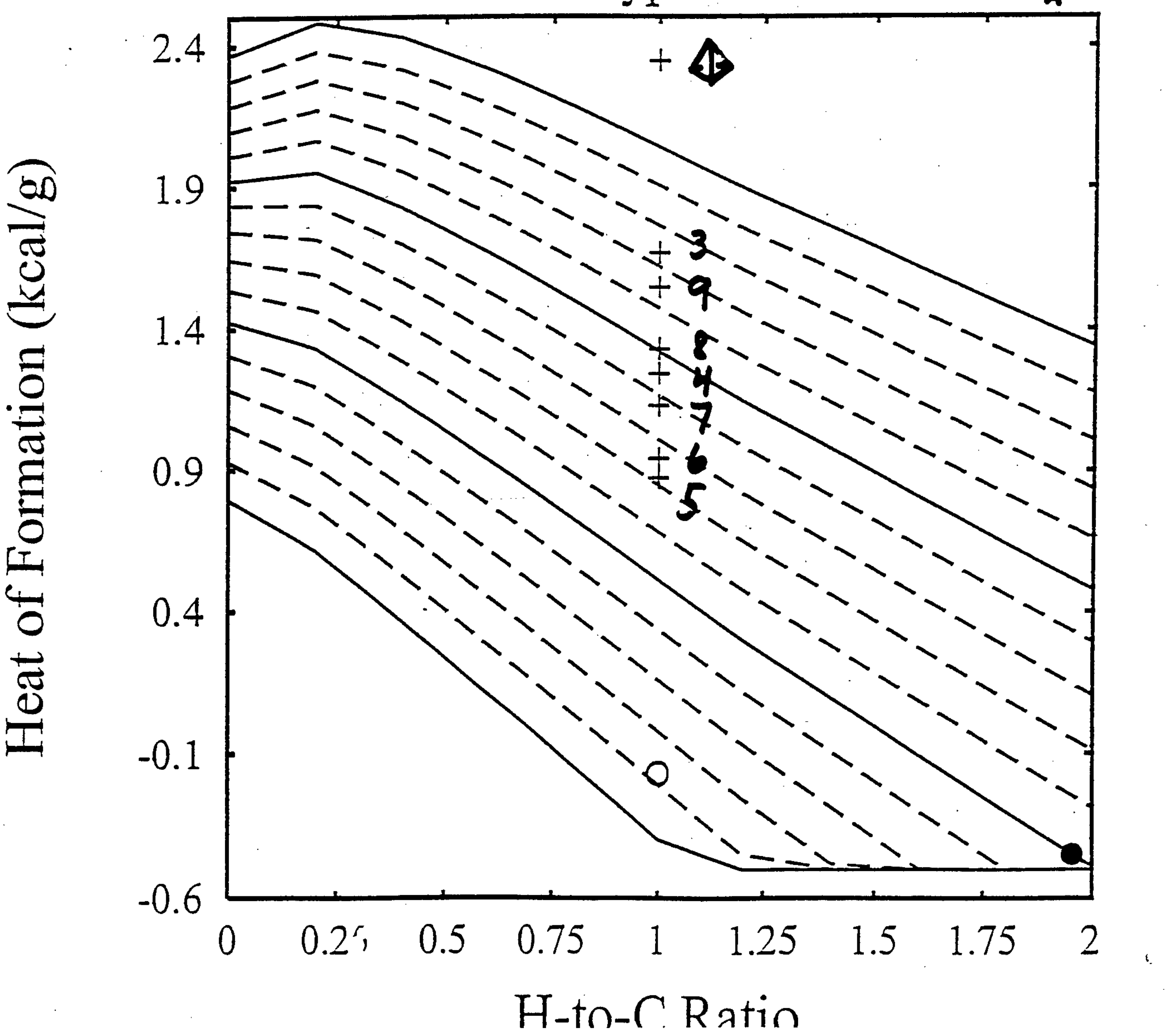
Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Prismane-type Molecules



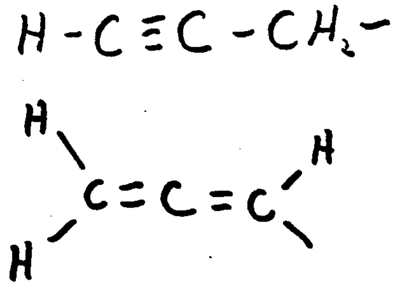
"Benson-Group" Specific Impulse–

Additional Approximation: Benson-Group *Gedanken* Rocket

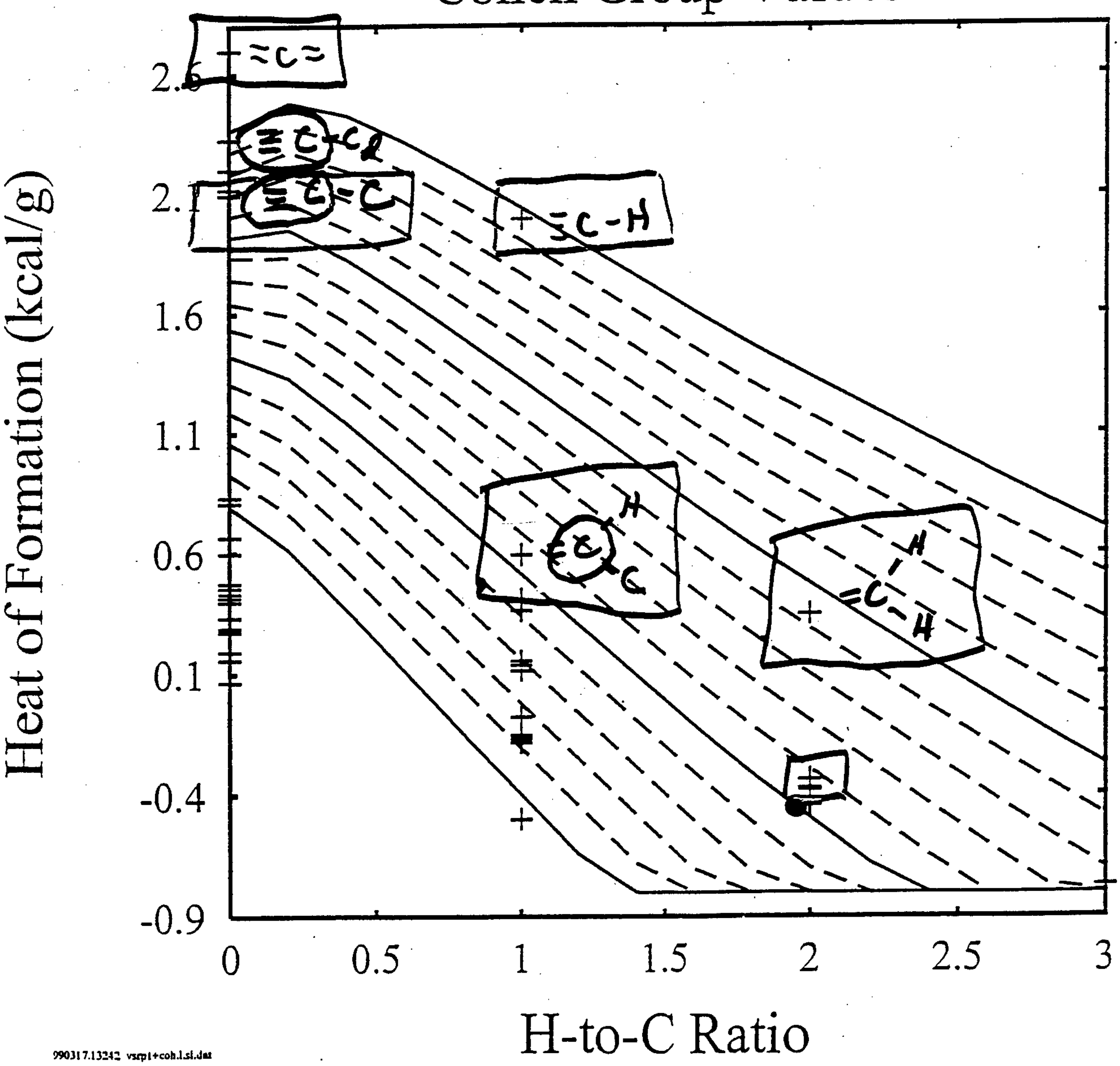
$$(I_{sp})_{opt} \approx \sum_{\substack{i \\ \text{groups}}} \frac{m_i}{m_{tot}} (I_{sp,i})_{opt}$$

$\frac{m_i}{m_{tot}}$–group mass fraction

$(I_{sp,i})_{opt}$–optimized specific impulse for the chemical group, alone

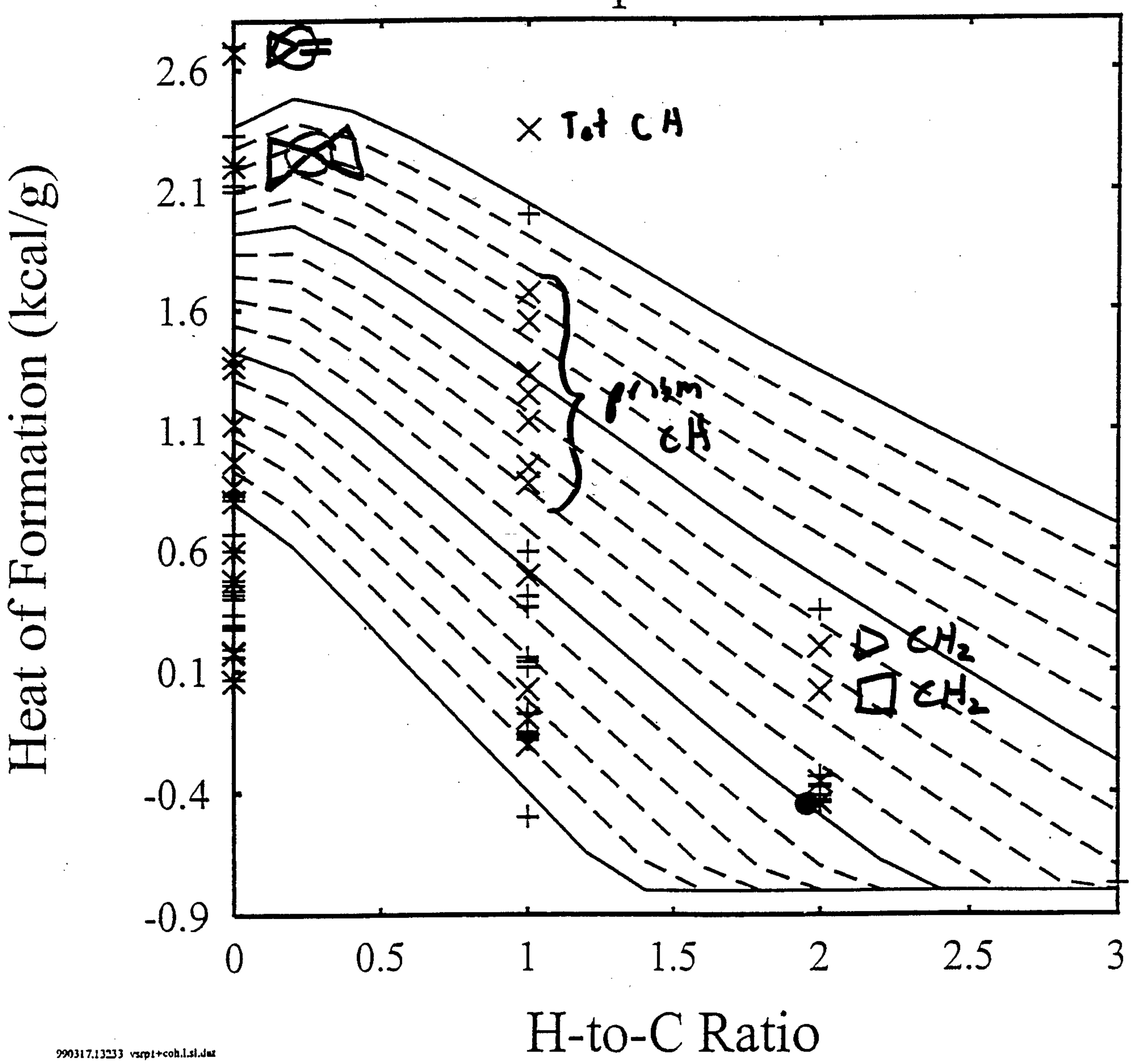


Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Cohen Group Values



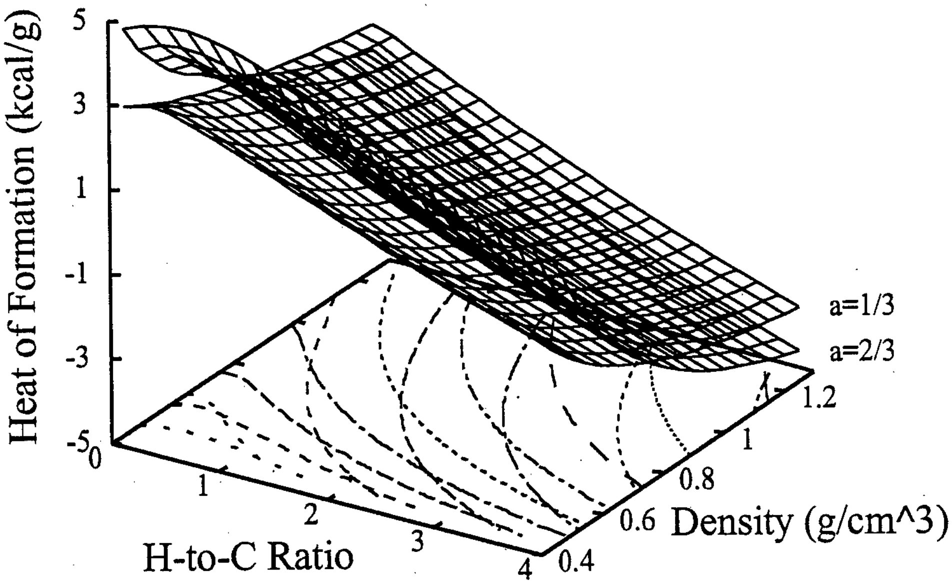
990317.13242 vsrp1+coh.l.sl.dat

Liquid, Sea-Level Hydrocarbon Performance
Cohen Group Values + Extras



Effects of Fuel Density–

Optimium Density I_{sp} vs. LOX
Sea-Level Expansion



Summary and Future Directions–

- Specific ΔH_f, $r(\frac{H}{C})$, and fuel density, alone, determine model, LOX-optimized rocket performance of hydrocarbon fuels
- Performance trade-offs among these parameters have been quantified and illustrated for ready reference
- Hydrocarbon fuels can be sought among known molecules in the parameterized performance space herein described
- The "Benson specific impulse" provides at least a semi-quantitative guide in the search for new, unknown rocket fuels

- **Other chemical systems may be explored using these insights (C,H,N; doped H_2)**

Acknowledgments–

These calculations were performed on local IBM RISC workstations using a modified version of the Air-Force specific-impulse rocket code written by C. Selph, R. Hall, C. Beckman, R. Acree, T. Magee and others.