

# GAINSAYER

NEWSLETTER for GEORGIANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ENERGY

FALL 1993

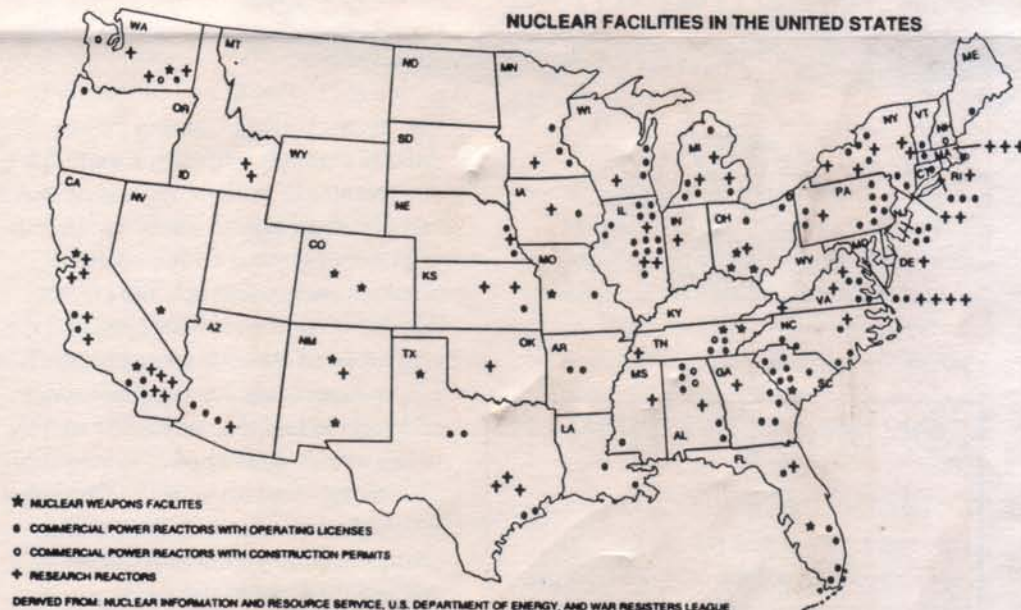
## HOW WILL WE WALK AWAY FROM THE NUKES?

April in Atlanta this year brought not only the famous dogwood blossoms and rising temperatures, but the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) came to town to hear from GANE and others about matters surrounding the decommissioning of nuclear facilities. Now that we are 50 years into the Atomic Age, nuclear facilities are reaching the end of their service in ever-increasing numbers and clean-up and containment criteria are needed.

Volunteers from GANE studied the issues for months, receiving briefings from groups all over the country as the NRC held discussions in 5 designated cities nation-wide. In March, GANE organized a very energizing regional meeting with presentations by Fran Macy of the Nuclear Guardianship Project and Harvey Wasserman, well-known author and current Greenpeace nuclear consultant. The effective networking showed in the confident, informed presence of over 40 environmentalists at the meeting.

On April 29 and 30, we all sat down together: nuclear plant managers, clean-up contractors, state environmental and health officials, health physics professionals, environmentalists, and of course, the NRC. The EPA was present too, using the information to write its own clean-up rule.

Although there are many views on what really happened, GANE members present have agreed that we feel the experience was surprisingly positive; that the EPA and NRC were listening to us and that industry professionals



seemed open. State officials often sounded like environmentalists in the concerns they expressed. Naturally, industry and environmentalists tended to take opposite views. The NRC and EPA appropriately came across as neutral. Of course, the final result will be in the rule itself, written by the NRC.

GANE members can be proud of our impact. Although I was the lucky one in the hot seat at the table, I was helped throughout by feedback from others present. GANE stole the show right from the start when Bill Fleming and Craig Rafuse sang a witty song about Crystal River Plant. It was especially apropos since Steve Garry from Crystal River was present to participate formally for the two days of meetings. Carol Stangler highlighted the poor example of decommissioning at the Dawsonville

reactor and Dekalb County Commissioner, Gale Walldorff, raised the issue of the accident at Radiation Sterilizers, Inc. five years ago in Decatur. Alex Vontillius, age 12, read a poem which GANE printed and distributed on a paper fan. WAND, The Atlanta Greens, Clergy and Laity Concerned and Physicians for Social Responsibility were all out in force throughout the three-day event.

On the topic at hand, "Criteria for Residual Radioactivity", which is to ask "How clean is clean?" the three broad approaches discussed were:

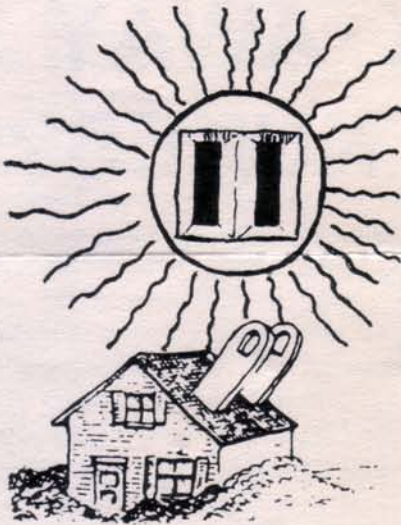
1. back-to-background (zero man-made radioactivity)
2. ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable)
3. a measurable limit.

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# OFF THE GRID DAY

A DAY TO APPRECIATE OUR POWER

Courtesy of Tom Chalkey Graphics,  
Washington, D.C.



Off the Grid Day, to be held on October 16th of this year, is a nationally celebrated day set aside to help us appreciate the power we so often take for granted; our power to use commercially generated electricity more efficiently, our power to use our fossil fueled automobiles less and our power to turn off the "juice" and turn on the sun.

It's also a day to use our power to say "thank you" to Georgia Power, Atlanta Gas and yes, even Exxon for our seemingly endless sources of energy. Off The Grid Day is a time to commit to evaluating our own use of these precious energy sources, the effects they have on our environment, and the efficiency of how we energize our lives.

As Americans, we consume more and recycle less than any other society in the world. This applies to consumable energy sources as well. The solution to fuel shortages in the past has always been to go out and buy more without thinking of the consequences. Off The Grid Day is a time to reflect on our lifestyles. I believe that when people take a deeper look into their own lifestyles they will stop and consider alternatives to this overuse and abuse of our resources.

Here are a few ideas for preparing for Off The Grid Day:

- Turn the lights off each time you leave the room.
- Turn the thermostat down 2 degrees from your current setting.
- Wash with cold water.

**G.A.N.E. now has a Geiger Counter of its very own! Call us if you suspect nuclear contamination or radiation leaks in your area! 378-GANE**

- Wake up with the Sun and go to bed with the stars.
- Turn off the TV, sit outside and enjoy your environment.
- Choose one electrical appliance you can live without and unplug it.
- Check your insulation and upgrade if necessary.
- Close off vents in rooms you are not using.
- Use a clothes line for drying laundry.
- Be creative in finding ways to use the sun, the wind and the rain to help us in our daily endeavors.

Start now by checking your gas and electric meters. Keep a daily log of fuel use. Then on Off The Grid Day you will know exactly what you have saved. Being energy efficient today will give us a better world for tomorrow.

Kay Vontillius

## CONGRATULATIONS!

To Glenn Carroll and Carol Stangler who were nominated for the Special Achievement Award from the Georgia Environmental Council for their recent participation in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Meetings. The recognition is more specifically for their efforts to involve citizens in the public hearings and comment period during the NRC's scheduled visit to Atlanta. Glenn and Carol are strong leaders in GANE's activities and their endless efforts to keep GANE going are most appreciated.

And a special "DING" to Carol whose presentation of the infamous "clean-up" bell to Chip Cameron of the NRC was priceless.

Thank you Glenn and Carol and the other GANE supporters who were so very present at the NRC meetings in April. Our voices together can make our dreams of a nuclear free world a reality.

Kay Vontillius

## GAINSAYER SUMMER/FALL 1993

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# HAVE GEIGER COUNTER . . . WILL TRAVEL . . . .

1992 . . . The year we stopped nuclear testing for all time... almost. Certainly it was a dramatic year for anyone connected to the testing issue (which ultimately is everybody on this planet!). Beginning in March with the European Peace Pilgrimage Walk from Georgia to the Nevada Test Site, to the announcement of a French moratorium on weapons tests, to anti-testing activist Rick Springer's run-in with Ronald Reagan on a podium in Las Vegas, to our own Congress voting in the first nuclear testing moratorium in 30 years, 1992 was a year not only to be remembered, but celebrated.

For yours truly it was a special year as well. Feeling the need to do something out of the ordinary about this issue, I undertook a 10,000-mile motorcycle trip to the various sites of the DOE weapons complex; Savannah River; Rocky Flats; INEL; Pantex; and Oak Ridge. It was to be a "vision quest" of sorts; instead of a medicine bag, though, I took along a Geiger counter. However, despite my intentions and the recurrence of imagery which undoubtedly would have meaning to a Native American (coyotes kept appearing, for example) most of the time I felt less like an Indian and more like a cowboy riding the western range--Have Geiger Counter, Will Travel.

One of the more memorable events of the trip occurred right outside the Test Site in the town of Lanthrop Wells, Nevada. I arrived there late Friday evening, Sept. 18th, after a long day's ride from the California mountains of Yosemite, down into Death Valley, back up over more mountains into Nevada, then down to the desert again. Unable to find a campground, I pitched my tent on some deserted land near the crossroads that comprised the town of Lanthrop, right across the highway from the restricted area.

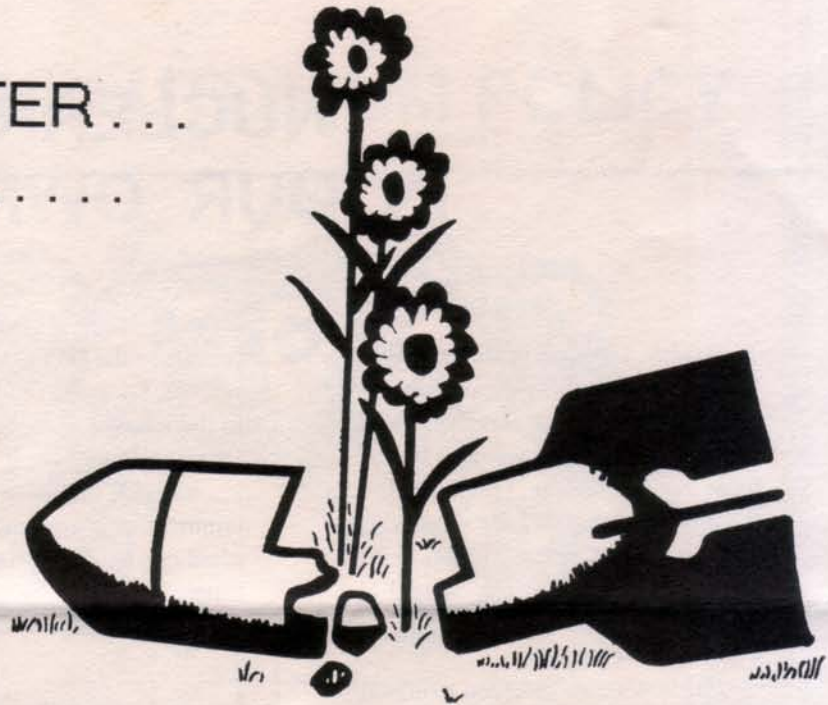
A steady wind was blowing off the testing grounds. As I went about

getting my tent up, I put the Geiger counter out to take a reading to see if there was any detectable radiation in the area. When I checked it a minute or so later, I was surprised to discover the counter had registered a level about three times that of normal background--about what would be expected in the city of Denver, Colorado. Strange, I thought, to be finding that at this altitude. However, with no more information to go on, I shrugged and went to bed.

The next morning when I awoke, the wind had died down. As I broke camp, packing up to hit the road, I ran the Geiger counter as before. This time, however, the readings were running "normal" (about 14-15 counts-per-minute). So I had to conclude there had been something in that wind the night before that had given rise to those elevated readings.

Later that afternoon, reading the newspaper in Las Vegas, I learned what that something was. There had been a nuclear test the previous morning, just hours before my arrival in Lanthrop Wells. To quote the Las Vegas Review-Journal for Sept. 19, 1992:

"Scientists Friday detonated the fifth nuclear weapons test of the year, Hunters Trophy, in a tunnel at the Nevada Test Site.



The Hunters Trophy test, conducted at 10 a.m., produced a yield of less than 20 kilotons and caused no release of radiation,' said Derek Scammell, an Energy Dept. spokesman."

Well, Derek, I think somebody needs to get their Geiger counter batteries checked; I know mine were working. And, if they ever try to tell you underground nuclear tests don't vent radiation, laugh in their faces--as I intend to do.

Kevin Murray  
*Editor's Update: In a surprise last minute policy reversal the Clinton administration has announced a 15-month extension of the 9-month testing moratorium on nuclear testing passed by congress last year. Unless another nation tests its weapons, 1993 will be the first year since 1945 without a nuclear explosion anywhere in the world. Truly this is a victory we can celebrate and be thankful for.*

*Our ultimate goal--a comprehensive test ban--is part of a bill being introduced by Representative Pete Stark of California. Write your congressman, urging him to co-sponsor HR 2076, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy Act of 1993. A letter of thanks to President Clinton would also be appreciated.*

# NUCLEAR LEMONS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

Baxley, Georgia is about 190 miles from Atlanta and is the home of two of the worst Nuclear Reactors in the nation, according to a recent study from *Public Citizen*. Other reactors at the top of the list include: Sequoyah-1 in Daisy, Tn.; Crystal River-3 in Red Level, Fl.; Browns Ferry-1 and 2 in Decatur, Al.; and Turkey Point 3 and 4 in Florida City, Fl.

*Public Citizen* released a thorough report entitled "Nuclear Lemons" citing the nation's worst Nuclear facilities. The data for this report was taken directly from government and industry documents. After compiling data on 111 nuclear plants nationwide, each plant was ranked according to performance and safety. After close study of the report the following facts were too alarming to ignore:

- Hatch-1 is the #1 worst in the nation for SCRAMS. SCRAMS are emergency reactor shutdowns to avoid meltdown. SCRAMS should occur automatically but Hatch-1 has had both auto and manual shutdowns.
- Hatch-1 ranked sixth worst for worker exposure to radiation. Georgia Power officials will boast of the improvement over the past 3 years but the bottom line is that workers at Plant Hatch are still exposed to an average of 488.7 rems annually. Other nuclear plants across the country average about 60 rems annually.
- Overall, Hatch-1 is tenth worst in the nation.

The majority of these lemons are relying on cooling systems designed by General Electric Corp. before current standards of safety regs were devised. G. E. has known for years that their product was faulty and has done nothing. A report from the NRC in 1986 (NUREG-1265) identified specific

areas of danger. Most problems were related to the G. E. Boiling Head reactors. To quote the study in regards to the Mark-1 containment system found in Plant Hatch, "simple analyses . . . indicate that even a large dry containment of a pressurized water reactor plant can be pressurized beyond its ultimate strength. The peak contain-

ment pressure is normally attained within seconds after a melt ejection . . . If the containment should fail from direct containment heating, a massive release of radioactive materials could result." This fact has been known for years and nothing has been done to correct the safety hazards.

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## HAZARDOUS WASTE . . . ON PEACHTREE STREET

While the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was sitting at the round table with GANE, Greenpeace, and other interested environmental groups discussing "acceptable risks" and moral responsibility, GANE volunteers were busy on the street side cleaning up what appeared to be a large pile of nuclear waste. Several spectators looked on with skepticism but no one was sure if those boxes of hazardous waste were truly hazardous or not. Isn't this the point we want everyone to understand? When the nuclear industry "puts the trash" out no one really knows if it's safe or not!

Well, if the onlookers didn't care for the irradiated garbage, they certainly enjoyed the free samples of "Savannah River Water." Volunteers distributed over two gallons of this potentially harmful stuff along with educational flyers explaining the environmental issues surrounding the

Savannah River Site and Barnwell, S.C.

The street scene was somewhat peaceful even though our favorite Boys in blue did show up to escort one volunteer from the Greens to stay overnight in the local jail house. A statement was made. People stopped and asked questions. Some stopped to make contributions to the cause. A few left their voices to be heard.

Overall, the week was quite successful, enlightening the NRC staff as well as the Nuclear Industry folks to the fact that Georgia and the Southeast have a strong group of concerned citizens working for a nuclear free environment. Many thanks to Tom Ferguson and Zack Harrison for the banners displayed on the street side and in the hearing room and to Kay Vontillius for bringing the whole demonstration together. Also to all the volunteers who stepped forward to make our statement stronger.

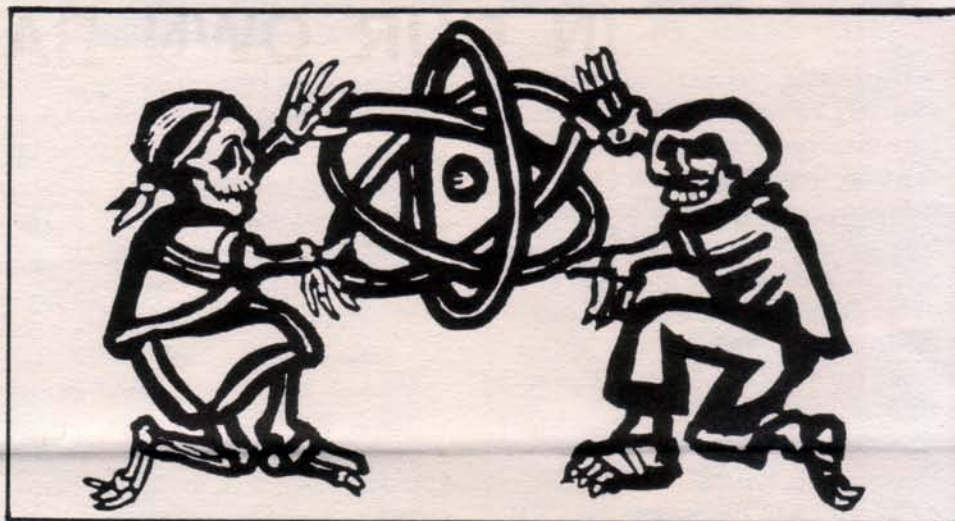
# CLINTON'S FLAWED PLUTONIUM POLICY

Around October 1, President Clinton was expected to issue his administration's non-proliferation policy, a significant part of which is likely to effectively dodge the troubling issue of the growing international plutonium stockpile. Rather than call for a complete international halt to all plutonium separation from spent nuclear fuel, the policy was anticipated to only ask other countries to stop production of plutonium for strictly military uses. The policy will thus give de facto approval of civilian plutonium programs in Britain, France, Japan and Russia.

As all plutonium, even civilian (reactor-grade) plutonium, can be used in nuclear weapons, continued production of this dangerous material threatens the spread of nuclear weapons. In a 1976 "guidance" from the State Department, U.S. embassies around the world were instructed that "even low technology devices employing reactor-grade plutonium will produce high-order nuclear explosions." Yet Clinton's policy will not condemn the trend toward an expanded commerce in this weapons-usable material, as exemplified by the recent shipment of 1.5 tons of plutonium from France to Japan.

Worldwide, the dilemma of what to do with over 300 tons of separated plutonium now faces decision-makers. In the U.S., the discussion has begun on what to do with over 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium created at the Savannah River Site and Hanford Nuclear Reservation. That material is currently being removed from warheads and stockpiled at the Pantex facility in Texas.

Nuclear reactor vendors and plutonium addicts in the Department of Energy are vowing to use this material as fuel for nuclear power plants. Although the U.S. in 1977 rejected reprocessing of commercial spent nuclear fuel at a Barnwell, South Carolina facility and the Congress terminated the Clinch River Breeder



Reactor in 1983; President Clinton has refused to classify plutonium as a waste, thus giving the signal that possibilities for its use will be explored.

In Congress, one plutonium-fueled reactor is already being debated. The Advanced Liquid Metal Reactor (ALMR) would operate on both weapons plutonium and plutonium and uranium removed from spent nuclear fuel, thus sending the signal internationally that it is acceptable to pursue

use of plutonium as a fuel. This program would cost billions of dollars and should be terminated immediately.

*Action you can take: Write to Senators Coverdell and Nunn and ask that they vote to terminate all funds for the ALMR. Tell them that plutonium should be classified as a nuclear waste and that only options for its treatment as a waste should be pursued.*

Tom Clements  
Greenpeace, USA-D.C.

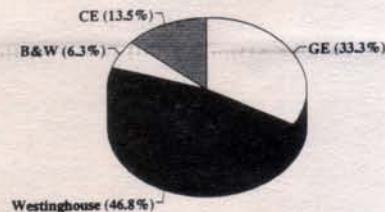
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So who is responsible? General Electric? Georgia Power? The DOE? The NRC? This mess is in our backyard. If we want it cleaned up we better keep a close eye on the industry and the DOE and NRC. Don't let this insane activity continue. Write to the NRC at U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Committee, Washington, D.C. 20555

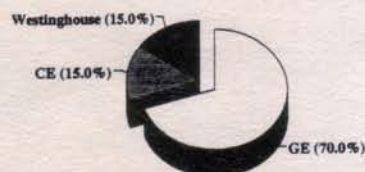
Congress has had a "worst list" in their files since 1986 but very little has been done. The GE reactors should be the first priority. Congress must identify those reactors that pose the greatest threat and immediately suspend the utilities operating license for those reactors. Then safe decommissioning criteria must be set.

Kay Vontillius

## U.S. Reactors by Manufacturer



## Top 20 Nuclear Lemons by Manufacturer



# NUKE NOTES



• (Atlanta Journal and Constitution, May '93) Vilnius, Lithuania: Police have discovered that safe deposit boxes in a bank were stuffed with 4 tons of radioactive material, possibly waste from a Russian nuclear plant, officials say. Some boxes held up to 440 lbs. of beryllium, a rare metal used as a moderator in atomic reactors. Police found the material when the Innovation Bank received a bomb threat. They say it has been traced to a private firm in Ekaterinburg, Russia.

• (Atl. Journal/Constitution, June '93) Aiken, S.C. The future of the Savannah River Site is environmental restoration and finding civil uses for its high tech work, U.S. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary says. "I envision a booming industrial and high technology center on a cleaned up site in 20 years," said Ms. O'Leary. The Energy Dept. is giving \$100,000 to a local citizen's committee that wants to apply high tech developments from nuclear defense work to the civilian sector.

• (Atl. Journal/Constitution, June '93) Nuclear specialists capped two huge holes meant for underground nuclear tests in South Africa's Kalahari Desert. The site was established in the late 1970's, but President F.W. de Klerk announced in March that it had never been used to test any bombs. He also said the white-led South African government had terminated its nuclear weapons program and destroyed its six nuclear bombs.

• (Nuclear Information and Resource Service): 1993 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the last U.S. reactor order of any kind.

• (Greenpeace International News Release, June '93): At the end of May, Greenpeace tracked a Japanese ship carrying spent nuclear fuel as it exited the Panama Canal and traversed the Caribbean Sea, documenting that spent fuel carriers use the Noma Passage, the narrow shipping lane between Puerto

Rico and the Dominican Republic. As required by the 1993 Energy Act, the White House is currently conducting a study on the safety of such shipments. That report, according to a U.S. Dept. of Energy letter obtained by Greenpeace, is expected by September.

• (Fellowship Apr./May '93) U.S. to Deploy Nuclear Space Technology: The U.S. government is moving ahead with plans to deploy nuclear technology in space. Initiated by the Strategic Defense Initiative, nuclear-powered rockets have been proposed as a means of launching heavy payloads into space, including hundreds of thousands of orbiting "battle platforms" along with laser weapons, hypervelocity guns and particle beams powered by nuclear reactors. Nuclear-propelled rockets are also being considered as a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles to carry nuclear weapons and to power flights to Mars. The U.S. also plans to continue launching nuclear-powered space probes that would contain the largest amount of plutonium fuel ever carried on a spacecraft. Enough, if dispersed in an accident, to deliver a lethal dose of plutonium to every person on earth.

• (Greensboro News and Record from Wire Reports, June '93) Cordova, Ill. Pipes in an emergency cooling system burst during a test at the Quad Cities nuclear power plant, burning 5 workers, one seriously, with radioactive steam.

The accident didn't affect the plant's two reactors and the public was never endangered because the radioactivity was confined to one room, said a spokesman for the utility.

Doctors determined the workers suffered some radiation exposure, but said radioactive materials in the steam were at amounts well below life-threatening levels.

• (Atl. Journal/Constitution, July '93) Scientists puzzled by unusually high levels of radiation at a children's camp

in Siberia found the source came from bats that fed from a contaminated lake. Radiation in Chelyabinsk reached 1000 micro roentgens per hour, or 40 times the level that can cause a noticeable drop in white blood cells, according to the local newspaper *Evening Chelyabinsk*. The bats spread their radiation in camp buildings after feeding in nearby Lake Karachai, which had been contaminated by a chemical and nuclear production facility.

• (Atl. Journal/Constitution, Sept. 23, 1993) **Attack of the Blobs:** Florida Power & Light shut one of its two nuclear reactors on Hutchinson Island after thousands of dying jellyfish clogged an ocean intake pipe.

Phil Frank, College Media, Berkeley CA.



• (Atl. Journal/Constitution, Oct. '93) **It floats, it spins, and it makes electricity.** Engineers at Argonne National Laboratory and Commonwealth Edison have designed a flywheel energy storage system that uses superbearings and superconductors to spin suspended disks that store electrical energy. The system is activated when coils at the top of the device generate enough magnetic force on the top disk to spin the entire flywheel. The process turns the flywheel so fast that it builds up and stores energy.

# DOSE RECONSTRUCTION...

As a result of public concern about radioactive releases from nuclear weapons plants and the effects of these releases on public health, the Department of Health and Human Services has been chosen to conduct extensive research on this issue. In collaboration with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the research will address environmental and community related concerns, study hazardous waste at the Department of Energy's Nuclear Sites, and assess the effects of radiation on workers.

A CDC agency, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, is involved in a number of studies around the country. One of these studies is to see if it is possible to duplicate the findings on childhood leukemia as found near Sellafield, U.K. A second study follows the death rate from leukemia of white male employees at the Savannah River Site.

The National Center for Environmental Health is also conducting a number of studies involving sites around the U.S., such as Hanford, Fernald and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. Of particular interest to local Georgians and South Carolinians is the SRS Dose Reconstruction Project. In May of 1992 this study was begun by the Radiological Assessments Corporation (RAC) to gather and re-

view records concerning radioactive and chemical releases. There are over 33,000 boxes of information on SRS and other sites. Much of this information is not pertinent, but all records found to be important to the study will be added to a database. RAC is publishing a newsletter and holding workshops to keep citizens informed and by fall of 1994 will make two reports. One will give the releases of greatest concern. The second will show the value of environmental monitoring at SRS to the project. Future phases will estimate the amounts of these releases, gather information on people living in the path of these releases, estimate doses received and possibly identify follow-up studies.

A separate registry is being developed by the Medical University of South Carolina and the Emory University School of Public Health. This is to record the occurrences of cancer and provide a database for future study. Also, an effort is being made to gather information on birth defects, and fetal and infant deaths.

Whatever results may come from the study are still years away. It is important that citizens monitor these studies to try to ensure that good science is being carried out.

Carol Cain

# LONG MEMORY

BY JOE BRUCHAC  
ABNAKI INDIAN  
NEW YORK

Think back before the word "titanium"  
Think back before the word "uranium",  
the word "missile",  
the word "obsolete"  
Think back before talking machines  
Think back before recording machines  
Think back before machines which think  
like men who think like them

You will find the Long Memory there  
Walking around sharing a story  
with Trickster  
Drawing with a stick in moist sand  
Placing the palm in dye made of bark  
Pressing it flat against dry stone

Place your hand there  
It may fit the lines of your life  
Now listen  
To keep the Long Memory  
Is the hardest, most dangerous  
thing that we can do  
Yet it is all that keeps this world  
for our children

Now listen  
Now remember  
This poem of Long Memory  
Which never will forget you

## YES! I'd rather be active than radioactive!

*I am a "Georgian Against Nuclear Energy."  
I support the goals of phasing out the use of nuclear energy  
as soon as possible, optimizing the use of energy conservation  
and renewable energy, and opposing the use of nuclear weapons.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  Call me about actions!

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- \$25 Active!
- \$50 Active!
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Active!
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\* minimum donation to receive newsletter

Fill out and return today before it's too hot! Georgians Against Nuclear Energy • P.O. Box 8574 • Atlanta, GA 30306 • 404/525-7306

