

Painful Truth About TMI

excerpts from the Katagiri study

He described himself as kind of a macho type. He owned his own auto body shop and raced stock cars on the weekends. But 50 year old Bill Peters got a sunburn on March 29 while working all day in an open garage. It was a very tender burn, he said, the kind you get when you electric weld without a shield--but he wasn't welding that day! Bill awoke on Friday with blisters on his lips and nostrils, with a burning sensation in his lungs and nausea. Everyone in Bill's family had a sore throat that morning and they talked about the metal taste in the air, like burning galvanized steel; the same taste Bill and his son had noticed while working in the shop on Thursday. Now everyone tasted it. Later that day the police urged everyone to evacuate. Still Bill was not scared. Although he did evacuate his family, when he heard about the possibility of a total meltdown, he went back to get his racing trophies. In fact, Bill didn't feel afraid at all--until he and his family returned to their home a week later to find their German Shepherd and four cats dead. Then Bill began to get scared.

Becky Mease and her 8 month old daughter, Pam, pulled onto the shoulder of the Interstate overlooking TMI and waited for her husband, Dave, to meet them. Looking down at TMI, Becky noticed an orange haze emanating from the nuclear plant wafting up the valley and over the highway. Even though they were evacuating, Becky did not think of the haze as a radioactive plume, but rather as smog. As soon as Dave arrived the family left for Ocean City, Maryland. Two days later, Pam became violently ill. First came the projectile vomiting and then the severe diarrhea that was to last for three weeks. The hospital test indicated no bacteria or foreign organism that could cause such illness. The doctors considered where the Mease's lived and could arrive at no other diagnosis than radiation sickness. At the recommendation of the doctors, Becky and Dave went to the nearest civil defense station to check for radiation. Their 1966 Pontiac was so contaminated that the geiger counter went crazy. Even Becky's purse was radioactive.

During the first few days of the accident, the people around TMI saw certain phenomena; they felt and tasted things. Those things have been described before by servicemen who witnessed atomic blasts and by the residents around the nuclear weapons testing grounds in Nevada. The human experiences in all three places have undeniable parallels. The livestock problems experienced by ranchers in Nevada and Utah--the rash of unexplainable deaths; the leap in stillbirths and delivery problems, the cancer rate among animals--are the same problems that have plagued livestock and domestic pets in the area around TMI. In all three cases people have reported a metallic taste in the air and a vaporous, vaguely iridescent haze. In all three cases people became sick and have died at alarming rates.

Yet General Public Utilities (GPU) claims that no one was injured by the accident, and the government has not even initiated an epidemiological study of the people around the plant. It seems as though the medical community is locked within sterile laboratories by their highly systematized methodology that is too sophisticated to measure human beings in the real world. They accept totally inadequate data from GPU and the NRC, extrapolate meaningless projections on health effects, and find it unforgiveably rude of people to get sick in spite of their computations.

Make no mistake about this--the residents around Three Mile Island are not merely displaying the effects of low-level radiation exposure. They have the symptoms of radiation sickness. It was a highly radioactive plume that settled on the ridge where Bill Peters lived. It was a highly radioactive plume that wafted up the valley and surrounded Becky Mease's car.

Over two hundred area residents have been interviewed by Mitsuru Katagiri and Aileen M. Smith-Katagiri (co-author of the book MINAMATA) and the TMI story goes like this...

* hundreds of people experienced a strong metallic taste

(OVER)

in their mouths, some people noticed that the air seemed heavy and that voices sounded flat;

- * dryness of the mouth and throat was experienced often, soreness and burning sensations, persistent thirst;
- * hot sensation on the skin, particularly on the face and arms, often resulting in a "sunburn",
- * irritation of the eyes, burning tearing;
- * tight chests, shortness of breath, burning in the lungs;
- * nausea and sometimes vomiting, anxious feeling in the stomach;
- * diarrhea that persisted in some cases for weeks and months;
- * an area nurse who became very ill after the accident has had recurring splotching of the skin and burning of her cheeks and nostrils. Those 45 recurring outbreaks correlate exactly with radiation ventings that were later admitted by GPU;
- * Two dentists practising in Lewisberry Township (on the west shore across from TMI) noticed a fogging or banding of x-ray film exposed on Wednesday and Thursday. Film of the same batch that was exposed before the accident was normal. Neither dentist knew of the accident until Thursday night.
- * One physician in Glodsboro reports a pronounced increase in leukemia and lymphoma starting about one year after the accident.
- * A physician in New Cumberland reports increases in under-active thyroids, rashes and other dermatological problems, and 2 1/2 years after the accident observed a doubling of colon cancer.

Local farmers and a veterinarian report:

- * hundreds of cases of feline leukemia;
- * increases in cesarian deliveries for goats and sheep from 1 or 2/year to 1 or 2/week for a period beginning in January, 1980;
- * stillbirths in goats, sheep and pigs increasing to 10% of total births;
- * Increases in cancer for horses, cows, dogs and mules.
- * Claire Hoover wanted to know once and for all what was wrong with his animals, so he hired the New Bolton Center to do thousands of dollars worth of laboratory work. The bill didn't come. Later he found out that the state paid the bill and that he would not be allowed to see the results.

The government refuses to acknowledge the tremendous cost of this accident in human suffering when the truth is that the death toll is mounting and the agony of these diseases have human faces and names. We know these faces and names. They are our friends and families.

NEVER AGAIN!

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