National Committee for Radiation Victims

317 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003, 202/543-0222

The National Committee for Radiation Victims is an independent organization established to serve the needs of veterans, workers, and other members of the general public exposed to unsafe levels of human-made ionizing radiation. The Committee was formed to continue the work begun at the Citizens' Hearings for Radiation Victims, held in April 1980. Because there has been only limited recognition of the health effects of radiation exposure, the Committee will act as a center for assistance to radiation victims and information to the general public.

The Committee will actively encourage, assist and coordinate organizing on the community level. Specific National Committee for Radiation Victims activities include:

- Assisting Citizens' Hearings in local areas
- Coordinating National Radiation Victims Day
- Initiating a major media campaign
- Publishing a monthly newsletter, {Name of Newsletter}
- Distributing radiation health information
- Directing The Buck Stops Here campaign

Steering Committee

Robert Alvarez, Environmental Policy Center
David Corrigan, SANE
Valerie Heinonen, Interfaith Coalition on Corporate Responsibility
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NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RADIATION VICTIMS

Scenes from the National Citizens' Hearings for Radiation Victims. April 10-14, 1980
Introduction

The Citizens' Hearings for Radiation Victims were unique. They were historic. For those radiation victims, crowded into a Washington, D.C. hotel lobby, they represented an end and a beginning of immense importance.

The Hearings were an end to the isolation of those people – atomic veterans, nuclear workers, downwind residents and others who have suffered from human-made radiation and have then faced a brick wall of government and corporate indifference.

They were also a beginning. A new coalition – the National Committee for Radiation Victims – was created, forged in the commonality of painful experience, which declared itself in an intense resolve to struggle on toward justice for the victims of radiation and protection for future generations.

The Hearings participants were from America's heartland: the soldiers, the parents, the workers. Not protestors, not skeptics to begin with. But their bruising collisions with government and corporate irresponsibility documented in the following pages have prompted an unmistakable transformation. They have become activists, researchers, reporters, leaders. They are now among the most acrimonious critics of the nuclear industry. They know only too well the devastating power of nuclear energy. Their story is oftentimes difficult to listen to, yet, it must be heard.

April 11, 1980

On Friday, people began arriving at a downtown hotel in Washington, D.C. The gathering, in many ways, resembled other conferences and conventions: people strained to read name tags and awkward silences punctuated the small talk so common between newly-introduced neighbors.

April 12, 1980

The crowds came early and stayed until dusk to listen to and absorb the impact of the Hearings (testimony begins on page 2). The auditorium stage, bathed in television lights, was the focus of attention as one by one, victims came forth to tell their story of the effects radiation exposure has left on them and their families.

April 13, 1980

That evening, people again gathered in the hotel lobby. This time, however, there were no awkward silences. In less than 24 hours, no one was alone again. The conversations and informal meetings continued until the morning hours.

April 13, 1980

April 14, 1980

A morning press conference was used as a forum for releasing the Panel's report (see page 26). Afterwards, the victims and others gathered outside the hotel, in the rain, to begin the five-block march to the White House. While a delegation met with White House officials and delivered the Panel's report, the others stood in a quiet vigil near the White House gates.

The delegation returned and reported on the slight "progress" made at the meeting. Then slowly the crowd began breaking up, but at the same time the people were joining together with others across the country for the long battle ahead.
Edited Excerpts from
National Citizens’ Hearings for Radiation Victims

Mendelsohn: Albert Einstein, one of the world’s great scientists, and a man whose own theoretical work had provided a basis for what was to come, caught something of the problem and the prospect. Writing shortly after the release of those two bombs, he said the following: “Through the release of atomic energy our generation has brought into the world the most revolutionary force since prehistoric man’s discovery of fire. This basic power of the universe cannot be fitted into the outmoded concept of narrow nationalism. For there is no secret, there is no defense, there is no possibility of control of atomic energy except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world.” And in part at least, we represent part of those peoples of the world looking back now three and one-half decades later at what has followed that most revolutionary of human discoveries. For what we’ve witnessed has been a long, slow process of the realization of the dangers of exposure to radiation the cancer produced, the genetic damage which becomes visible in many cases only many years later. We’ve lived through a period of conscious deception, not wanting to face up to what we’ve invented.

...together with some of my colleagues, we’ve begun to ask that hardest of all questions of nuclear energy and nuclear power, and that is whether it may actually be an unprecedented technology. There had been that sense that somehow any technology can be used either for good or evil, if only we could turn to the good. And in the years just after the Second World War, scientists had early hopes, hopes that somehow what they had created in warfare with its enormous damage might turn in the civilian sector to be beneficial at a human level. We can look back and remember...what they called in 1946, “the search for electricity too cheap to meter,” the feeling that somehow they would be able to relieve all sorts of human problems with their discovery which had been born with such disastrous consequences. Would there be a silver lining to the mushroom cloud, they seemed to ask. And it’s turned out that that silver lining has been, at each turn in the course of history, illusory. Nuclear technology may turn out to be technology holding deep, innate problems.

What we’re left with then, is a responsibility for society as a whole, responsibility for government, which has been the major inventor, designer, builder and tester of weapons, and the government which has been deeply involved in the design, the development, and the production in the civilian sector. We’re left with a deep responsibility to the victims of exposure to radiation. Unwittingly for many years, and unwittingly at other times, our fellow human beings suffered exposure which with each passing year we learned was more dangerous than we knew in any previous time. To the hundreds of thousands of members of the armed forces who were engaged at the test sites or at the cleaning up operations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki exposed to large amounts of radiation, to the civilians who were victims of the fallout from nuclear weapons tests, to the people exposed in industrial and commercial establishments this is the group we have brought together today. And this represents an historic occasion, for this is the first time that victims of radiation exposure from all parts of the United States have come together to share their experiences, their understanding, and to share their search for remedial, meaningful actions.

These Hearings have been called and organized because a number of groups with an interest got together with a number of individuals with deep concerns and problems. Let me tell you quickly who the sponsoring groups are: the American Friends Service Committee and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, working jointly through their Nuclear Weapons Facilities Project, the Black Hills Alliance, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the Committee for Veterans of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Environmental Policy Center, Friends of the Earth, the Health and Energy Learning Project, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the Institute for World Order, the National Association of Atomic Veterans, the National Council of Churches, the National Veterans Law Center, Physicians for Social Responsibility, SANE, War Resisters’ League, and Women Strike for Peace.

We have brought together a Panel, a Panel of citizens and experts to hear the discussions that will be brought forward by victims of radiation and their families, to help the exploration of these issues that will be raised, and the problems and the search for remedial action. Let me introduce the Panel that is with us today: Jean Ralph, who is the widow of Harold Joseph Ralph, a member of the U.S. Marine occupation troops involved in the cleanup following the Nagasaki bombing; Karl Morgan, Professor of Nuclear Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology and one of the country’s leading authorities on the effects of ionizing radiation exposure; Frank Silverstil of New Orleans, an attorney working for the National Association of Atomic Veterans; Robert Jay Lifton, Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University and author of that pioneering study, Death in Life, which dealt with the survivors of Hiroshima; Hilda Mason, a member of the District of Columbia City Council; Vivian Waterman, a resident of Colorado who lives downstream of the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant and has documented cancer incidences in her own neighborhood; Patricia Smith, who lives in the immediate area of Three Mile Island and chairs the Newberry Township Three Mile Island Steering Committee; Mabel Ann Chasing Hawk, a Lakota Indian from South Dakota, a resident of the Cheyenne River reservation and a member of Women of All Red Nations; Mary Lou Melling, who lived her entire life in southern Utah and Nevada, where people were exposed on a
regular basis to the fallout from atmospheric weapons testing; and Steve Wodka, the International Representative of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, and a health and safety expert.

**Citizens' Hearings for Radiation Victims**

![Image of a meeting with people sitting around a table]

Wodka: Our union represents about 10,000 workers in the nuclear industry. These workers are dependent on the future viability of that industry for their jobs and their livelihoods. At the same time, these workers are also people who are bearing the brunt of the callousness of this industry, of the lack of concern by government regulators, more so than any other group in the United States. The workers know first-hand about the irresponsible attitude of this industry towards the protection of their workers from radiation. Our workers have been at the forefront of trying to get information to the American public as to the cover up that is going on inside this industry. Karen Silkwood, for example, was a member of our union. She was working with herself and this international union. She was on her way to provide information to a New York Times reporter on the night of her death, because she could not trust the federal regulatory agencies to get the information out to the American public or to do anything with it.

Most of our workers, these 10,000 workers in the OCAW, are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy (DOE). You have to understand from a worker's standpoint that nuclear workers are one of the few groups of American workers that do not have the basic rights afforded to other industrial workers in the U.S. when it comes to their safety and health. Most industrial workers in the U.S. are covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Nuclear workers are not. Workers under the DOE who work in government owned, contractor operated facilities are in the worst situation for any of these groups. The DOE is the owner of these facilities and instructs the contractor as to what the rate of production is going to be. The DOE at the same time is the regulator of health and safety in those plants. The DOE, even when we have been able to get them to uncover serious violations in these facilities, serious exposure to radiation has never fine any of these contractors one penny, even when serious violations have been uncovered. So the reason why I'm here today is that several of the victims who are going to testify before the Commission come from these DOE operated plants, and it is our hope that after this testimony comes in this will help our union in getting these workers under the protection of the OSH Act, which is a position that our international union has taken now for the last five years.

Mendelsohn: Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder from Denver, Colorado is one of the sponsors of these Hearings; she has asked us to read the following statement into the record:

I support the National Citizens' Hearings on Radiation Victims. The opportunity for the victims of our nuclear hazards to tell their stories is long overdue. These are stories we must hear if we are to deal with the real consequences of the nuclear age.

Questions on compensation, public and occupational exposure standards, and government responsibility for health effects associated with radiation are now arising. We did not foresee these problems in the dawn of the nuclear age, so today we are not prepared with the answers.

Our nuclear program was built in the name of national security, protecting the lives of Americans. However, as you hear these witnesses relate their experiences, one can't help but wonder who was protected, and at whose expense.

As the Congressional representative of Denver, Colorado, this issue is particularly significant to me. The Denver area has the Rocky Flats plant, uranium mining, and high levels of background radiation, to mention just three reasons why I'll be interested in the Hearings' findings. However, as the witnesses who have come from all parts of the country will tell you, this is a national issue deserving of national attention.

These Hearings are a small step toward completing a huge, unpleasant task. Future generations will applaud us for the work we start here today.

Elizabeth Catalan, former resident of Southern Utah, downwind from the Nevada Test Site

Catalan: I'm here to tell you what happened to my family. . . . One of the things I always wanted to be was a mother, and I grew up in St. George and I watched the bombs go off. When you run a geiger counter over my body, it'll click. One of the neat things my body does is it dissolves babies. But I'm a very fortunate lady because an adoption agency saw fit to
let me, as a single mother, adopt not one, but two beautiful, healthy little girls with olive skin and dark eyes and masses of curly hair. But they're not a replacement for that baby that dissolved, nor will they ever be.

These little girls as they've grown up say, "Tell me about grandpa," because they don't remember grandpa. They would ask: "Would he like us? What was he like? Well, did he write near poems? Or was he a good teacher? When he took you out on picnics, what did he do with you?" And they remember Aunt Marilyn, and they ask questions about my niece Hillary, and how come she has scars on her neck from a birth defect. And they ask about the baby that dissolved.

I try to answer their questions and in the back of my mind, over and over again, I think what a less, more than anything that cannot be replaced, what a tremendous loss of human energy and potential each and every one of these deaths represents. Every one of them: for my father who was an intellect, who was an educator, who was a writer, who was a poet, and who died way too young, when I think of the contributions he could have made. When I think of my younger sister and the beautiful toys she made and joy and love that she brought into the world and the contributions she could have made, and then you multiply that not once or twice or three times, but you multiply that around the country, thousands of times.

Southern Utah has suffered a tragedy I think unparalleled in the U.S. We just happened to be sitting in the wrong place when the winds blew. And still are... a bomb was detonated underground yesterday morning... death is not a very valiant legacy to leave our children for the future.

We lived in St. George. My father was president of the Junior College in St. George... Daddy would take us out in the desert with him and we would watch the blast. When Dirty Harry went over, they warned us to stay indoors and the cloud went over — you saw a cloud and they kept saying there was no danger.

The day Dirty Harry went over, (Daddy) called my mother and said, "Keep the children indoors." He went ahead and went about his work, because he had been told that possibly the only effect of exposure would be sterility, and he wasn't particularly worried about that because, as he told my mother, "We already have our family." He also was horseback riding with three other friends when a cloud from a test that had not been announced went directly overhead, and the daughter of one of these fellows that he was riding with said Daddy looked up and said, "It looks like the clouds of doom. They turned around and rode back into town, and of those four men, three have died of cancer... He (Daddy) died of leukemia.

Morgen: Except to stay in the house on that one occasion, that was the only warning they gave you?

Catalan: Right.

Preston Truman, former resident of Southern Utah

Truman: I cannot remember a day when the atomic bomb and the threat of atomic war has not loomed very close. The testing started in Nevada on January 27, 1951. I was born that same year. I can remember several times getting up with the rest of the family and driving out to my father's
farm in the moments before dawn and watching the western sky light up with the flash from the bombs in Nevada approximately 120 miles away. I remember on occasion hearing the sound waves come over. I remember later in the mornings watching on a couple of occasions clouds come over.

It was kind of almost a carnival atmosphere in the beginning with the radio telling us where the clouds were going, following the tests, and always assuring us there was no danger.

I remember one morning going to the store with a friend of mine to cash in pop bottles... and listening to some people from the town talk about a boy our age who was dying of leukemia and listening to the details of the nose bleed and the suffering he was going through... I remember asking some people why the little boy was dying. We were told it was his time and that God wanted the little boy back in heaven. We asked if we could get the same thing and we could die, too. And we were told that yes, if it was our time to go.

I remember when the little boy died, and I remember within a couple of years of that time there were the stories of similar cases in the surrounding areas... the suspicious began to grow then, and those of us who used to ride horses together, we started to refer to the atomic bomb as a demon.

We knew what fallout was but that was the first time I knew it could kill... we were told how we would have to go into fallout shelters for maybe up to two weeks if an atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Los Angeles. I remember the puzzled look on the face of our instructor when I asked him why we have to go into a fallout shelter if a bomb hits Los Angeles when we don't do anything when they test them in Nevada.

I found copies of minutes of Atomic Energy Commission meetings in 1955 and we hear commissioners of the AEC saying things like: "People have got to learn to live with the facts of life and part of the facts of life are fallout."

Atomic bombs weren’t the only things that exposed us to radiation. There were some hideous plutonium and uranium dispersal experiments that were carried out. And there were also tests on an atomic rocket engine which leaked radiation into the atmosphere... the dangers of radiation to the citizens of Utah and downwind from the Nevada Test Site did not end in July of 1962. They persist until this day with venting, with the cratering tests that went on until 1968 and it's got to end. Enough is enough. If the government doesn't believe us, and doesn't want to help, that doesn't matter to us. We bury the dead, they don't.

Smith: Have you had many medical expenses, sir?

Truman: Yes.

Smith: Could you put a figure to it?

Truman: Probably in excess of $100,000... an expected incidence of thyroid cancer in St. George, Utah would be 36 cases of thyroid cancer. Yet the government's task force on radiation just said that the tests may have caused up to 96 cases...
the Shot Smokey veterans, not one cent has been allocated to do a medical study on any of us... The Defense Nuclear Agency...tells us they were established to assist the veteran, yet they make statements as, "These guys, the veterans, are getting old enough so that they are just getting sick from being on the good old earth. The veterans are simply developing the diseases that normally accompany middle age or old age. They have just become anti-nuclear torch bearing. We simply are unwilling to concede that 3200 of every 10,000 test participants who die of cancer should be compensated. Somebody has convinced them to blame it on radiation." I think that is a very pathetic group of statements pertaining to those of us who are suffering from what we consider radiation-induced illnesses.

And finally...the Veterans Administration has made it extremely difficult for a veteran to provide all of the supporting documents that are necessary to support his claim. Much of the information they ask us to provide is either non existent or is maintained by agencies that refuse to reveal it. We maintain that the film badges do not tell the story and should not be used as the measuring device between health and illness among us. Many participants in these (nuclear) tests wore no badges. The badges measured external gamma radiation only, there was no method of measuring what one inhaled or ingested...there is no denying that there is an alarmingly high mortality and morbidity rate among the atomic veterans...

Money...is the problem, not the national conscience...the injustice continues. We feel it is time to reverse the injustices. There is not one of us in the Association who does not love his country or who would not put on the uniform.

ATOMIC VETERANS

The United States detonated 600 nuclear weapon during the years from 1945 to 1977 including 184 atmospheric tests and five underwater tests. The Pentagon estimates that 250,000 to 500,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and civilians were exposed to the atmospheric tests alone. In addition, unknown thousands of military personnel and civilians have been exposed to radiation from the atomic weapons fuel and manufacturing cycles and the continuing underground weapons testing program.

Americans were exposed to radiation in Japan, the Marshall Islands, and the United States, particularly Nevada. Veterans have testified before Congress and have shown medical records to attest that they are experiencing radiation-induced health problems. Blood and bone marrow diseases (including leukemia), cancers of other radiosensitive tissues, respiratory diseases, chromosome damage, general deterioration of health, and sterility have been reported.

No attempts at long-term health follow-ups of atomic veterans were made by the federal government until 1977. That year, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's (now the Department of Health and Human Services) Center for Disease Control began an epidemiological (health study) observing the incidence, distribution, and control of a particular disease in a selected population survey of the 3,224 men present at the 1957 "Smokey" test. The findings, released in October, 1980, found nine cases of leukemia among the test participants. The expected incidence for leukemia in this group of men is 3.5 cases.

In December 1977, the Defense Nuclear Agency (a Department of Defense agency) began its Nuclear Test Personnel Review program. Among the features of this program is a morbidity/mortality study funded in conjunction with the Department of Energy by the National Academy of Sciences of about 40,000 test participants. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is an increased incidence of disease among these individuals. The study is expected to be completed in 1982.

The 2nd Marine "Pioneer" Engineer Battalion and a detachment of U.S. Navy Seabees entered Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in September 1945, as part of the U.S. occupation forces. These men lived and worked near or at ground zero without protective clothing and no radiation monitoring was conducted. Some of the veterans were involved in clean-up and recovery operations in the area. Physical weakness or collapse, thirty-five years later, an independent organization has identified five confirmed cases of multiple myeloma (a radiation-induced disease) among former marines stationed in Nagasaki.

The Veterans Administration maintains that the servicemen serving in Japan in 1945 suffered no biological harm from the radiation. More than thirty claims for medical compensation benefits have been filed with the VA by these men during the past two years; none has been granted.

Testing new atomic devices in the South Pacific Marshall Islands began in 1946. The Atomic Energy Committee (later re-named the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)) was empowered to oversee the U.S. atomic weapons development program. When the testing halted in 1958, 96 shots had been conducted. The 15-megaton Shot Bravo on Bikini atoll on March 1, 1954, was the last U.S. bomb ever detonated. Fallout was measured more than 300 miles away.

American servicemen in the area were exposed to significant levels of radiation while observing the blasts and conducting experiments on the target islands. Monitoring equipment, measuring only the gamma radiation present, consistently recorded high radiation levels throughout the area. Officials have described some of the small islands in the testing area as ideal locations for studying how plutonium and other radionuclides enter and remain in an ecosystem.

The escalating cold war and negative world reaction to the South Pacific tests transferred part of the weapons testing program to the continental U.S. to determine whether soldiers would be adversely affected by the rigors of nuclear war. The test site, located in Nevada, was approved and used before complete radiological safety and security analyses were completed. Maneuvers consisted of platoon and helicopter movement toward ground zero within minutes after detonation. Instances have been reported that some groups stopped less than 200 yards from ground zero. Measuring devices for some detonations recorded 100 rems an hour, dropping to one-fifth of that within minutes.

The AEC was in charge of the radiological safety program in 1951. Each man wore a film badge and a one-rad exposure limit was set. Led by an AEC monitor, GIs marched single file to within 900 yards of ground zero. Citing the "unrealistic maneuvers" resulting from this, the Defense Department gradually gained control over the radiological safety program, so by 1955, it assumed full responsibility for permitting troops to maneuver closer to the blasts.

The maximum permissible exposure for ground troops over a 13-week period was raised to six rads. Only one film badge per platoon of men was required; complete exposure records were not kept because one-time exposures were considered "insignificant." This decision was also based on the lack of trained personnel at the test site to develop and read radiation dosage data. Many veterans exposed to radiation during these tests claim they have cancer but do not have any proof they were at the tests because no radiation exposure was recorded for them. A fire at a Veterans Administration record center also destroyed many records.

The signing of the 1963 Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty halted the use of soldiers as guinea pigs for atmospheric testing. Testing underground continues today and people, civilians and military personnel, are still being exposed.
again to defend it. We ask that we reverse the situation: the burden of proof should not be on us. It should be on the government. Allow the atomic veteran to die a noble death. We men who should have been decorated for our valor in partaking of what we were forced to do are dying as rejected and forgotten persons.

We are the living and dying examples of the effects of nuclear weapons testing and exposure to low-level ionizing radiation. Unfortunately, time is not on our side, because one day our voices will be stilled and quieted by our demise. We cannot reverse what happened; we only wish and pray and insist that it never happen again. What has become of this nation that extols humanitarianism as a way of life? The situation of the atomic veteran is indeed tragic; it is a national disgrace.

Silvestri. I'm wondering if you could explain to us a little bit more about how these tests actually worked.

Saffer. On Shot Hood... it was a 77-kiloton bomb we were just a little over three miles from Ground Zero. After detonation, there was a heavy incidence of trench line collapse. Many Marines had to be dug out of the trenches. It took the emergency rescue force approximately 40 to 50 minutes to complete the extrication of Marines from the trenches... It was a pathetic sight. And then, we attacked towards Ground Zero and ended up approximately 500 yards from Ground Zero after the detonation.

Morgan. At the time of the detonation, did any of the Marines have portions of their bodies above the trenches?

Saffer. We had our left arms over our eyes and, at the time of detonation, we did see our bones as though it were a colored X-ray in our left forearm.

Lifton. In listening to these first three witnesses, I felt myself having a strange deja vu experience. It sounded just like what I heard at Hiroshima when I interviewed people there back in 1962. And the special feature of what we've been hearing has to do with the physical and psychological nature of radiation effects and especially the physical effects and psychology of invisible contamination. You don't have to have any marks on your body when you are exposed to this substance. You can still derive a continuous fear of after-effects a fear that doesn't go away over the years and the sense of having something left in your body, a fear of a poison that may take effect at any time, and strike you down, may cause some kind of debilitating illness or death. It's a dimension of fear that is unique and specific to nuclear technology and to radiation effects.

Pat Broudy, widow of atomic veteran

Broudy... When my husband was diagnosed 20 years after his exposure, it was a very, very traumatic experience for our whole family. My son, who at the time was 14 years old, ran away from home because he couldn't face the problems that he was faced with. He dropped out of school, and could not communicate with anyone. We all went for counseling and fortunately after a few months of that we were able to handle it ourselves...

I have been denied five times by the Veterans Administration because of the burden of proof being upon the claimant: we must prove that their radiation doses caused their cancers. We must prove that they are dead or ill because of that certain exposure. The government has all these records at their disposal, but they will not give them to us... the documents are still classified. The government has destroyed the records of most of the veterans we have been in contact with. There are no orders sending these men to the tests, there are no medical records to prove that they've had chromosomal wreckage, that they have had urinalysis and blood work which would prove the content of the cesium and strontium and plutonium in their bodies...

We are fighting a tremendously hard uphill battle. A bill was introduced... to compensate the civilians exposed downwind from these tests, the uranium miners and the sheep herds... nothing about the veterans. We always knew that we were second class citizens, but we didn't know that we were below the status of sheep... In addition to all of the foregoing problems that we veterans are contending with, we have the Fores Doctrine which forbids the veteran or his family to sue the United States Government...

In addition, if we pay an attorney more than $15 to represent us before the Board of Veterans Appeals, that attorney is subject to a prison term...

In closing, I would like to say that it seems as though this thing has come full circle. The government murdered our husbands... now they want to take our children into the armed forces...
John Knights, atomic veteran

Knights: I was a Major in the Army when I headed a small contingent from Aberdeen Proving Grounds to Eniwetok in 1948. We helped design a remote control vehicle that went in after the blast and picked up the sample of the residuals right from the center of the crater. The first tank I sent in got stuck right in the center of the crater, and we had a reserve tank which I sent in and we got the sample. Several days later, when the radiological safety people thought it was relatively safe, I went into the crater to retrieve the stalled vehicle. I literally dove under the front of the tank and got the tow line through the towing eyes under the front of the vehicle and we pulled it out. Back on board the radiological safety ship, the needle on the radiation meter bounced off scale and I was sent to the showers for a scrubdown with stiff brushes. I was still very hot and in a state of shock after the shower and I was sent back to my stateroom to recuperate. An hour later I suffered severe nausea and vomited.

In 1957, I had pains in my legs that lasted for about 30 days and then disappeared. Early in the 1960s, my gums started to bleed and I lost most of my teeth. I discovered I had cancer of the bladder in 1969, February 1969, just two weeks after I was retired from active participation in the Reserves. I’ve had eight operations on my bladder. I filed my claim in 1979 and I’ve been turned down four times by the Board of Veterans Appeals.

My last appearance before the Board was in April of 1979. On December 20 they denied my claim. During this three-quarters of a year, the Veterans Administration has been talking to experts in the field to determine how they could turn my claim down. We have no way of cross-examining the people and seeing how well qualified they are. I have proved that they were wrong on two previous denials by being able to obtain a medical report from the Journal of Urology, which disproves their claim against me.

O.T. Weeks, atomic veteran

Weeks: First, I have been asked to read a statement from Orville Kelly. He is the president and founder of the National Association of Atomic Veterans in Burlington, Iowa.

It was my hope to be with you. However, my cancer has progressed to the point where I am unable to travel.

I participated in the testing of 22 nuclear devices at Eniwetok Proving Grounds, Marshall Islands, located in the South Pacific. I served as Commander on one of the islands in the atoll for a period of one year. Several of the weapons were in a megaton classification, including one two-megaton weapon. We drank water from the lagoon where much of the testing took place; we lived in the same lagoon and breathed the radioactive dust caused by the shots. We were involved in several fallouts during the testing.

I had no major health problems until my cancer was discovered in June of 1972. I immediately filed a disability claim with the VA and my claim was denied in 1974. For the next five years, I continued to gather all the information pertaining to radiation exposure in my case that I could find.

Many, many times I became frustrated because I was sent from one agency to another to obtain information which I later discovered should have been readily available to me. I found little or no cooperation from the Defense Department, Department of Energy, or from the Nevada Test Site.

In April 1978, I reopened my claim to present new evidence. After several months my claim was once again denied. Meanwhile, I had accumulated new evidence and my claim was reopened. It was again denied.

In June 1979, my claim was sent to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C. On November 23, 1979, I received word that the Board of Veterans Appeals had approved my claim with the final conclusion that "the probable cause of Mr. Kelly’s cancer was exposure to radiation at Eniwetok Atoll.”

It took six years for me to win my battle to establish service-connected disability for radiation exposure.

Our final mission is to assist atomic veterans and widows as they continue to seek compensation for deaths through injury alleged to have been caused by radiation exposure. The compensation they seek has far many years been granted to veterans who have been injured and killed through conventional warfare, and to their widows. Although our claims are difficult to prove because we cannot feel, taste, hear or smell radiation, it is more deadly than bullets or shrapnel.

Even though I won my case, I have still lost the overall battle because doctors have told me I have but a short time to live. I had hoped to watch all my children grow up and to grow old with my wife, so I find it very frustrating to have become bedridden, unable at this point even to sit in my yard or drive a car. I believe I should have been warned about the possible dangers of radiation exposure.

It is my hope that my own children and all other
human beings be spared from the ordeal I have had to go through during the past six years.

Through your efforts and the efforts of other interested people in America, I believe we can prevent further tragedy from occurring.

I was an electronic technician assigned to the ballistic research laboratories of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, in conjunction with the work they were doing for the old Atomic Energy Commission to set up, calibrate, assemble and conduct surveillance work on materials that were being tested in the 1953 series of atomic bomb tests at the Nevada Test Site. . .there were 12 weapons detonated within the total test site area, and we were able, out of curiosity more than anything else, to go and watch those weapons being detonated even at Yucca Flats.

We worked in the immediate area known as Ground Zero prior to and immediately after detonation. We would go in within 24 hours. . .the first effect that we knew was after I married in 1954, was the series of miscarriages that. . .we had . . .then the birth of my first child, who is with me today; she has five birth defects. . .keeping her from holding a job or ever making a substantial living. This is the thing that we are concerned about. . .My next child had one birth defect, my third child died from an unknown reason. . .From all this, it ruined the health of me and my wife, today she's unable to function normally because of all this.

I lost my strength, but through sheer determination I've continued to probe on and hope that through my efforts and the efforts of others someone will be compensated.

I wore two film badges at Frenchman Flats. That was the only time at my stay in the Nevada Test Site that I was monitored. . .no monitoring was done when I was running surveillance on the weapons or years later in my handling of the detonators, checking internal components in the core of the weapons.

Bettye Hawthorne Frontierhouse, widow of atomic veteran exposed during South Pacific weapons testing

Frontierhouse: I'm a widow of an atomic veteran. He spent eight months on Eniwetok while testing the atomic bombs in 1950. And it has been hard for me to get (his) records. . .

In 1962, he died. the 22nd of January . . .three months before he died, I found out he had cancer, cancer of the pancreas. This wasn't an easy thing to do, to see a thirty-year old man die . . .

I have three boys. My oldest son has prostate trouble and they watch him all the time for cancer. My middle son . . .has had four tumors removed. . .my youngest son has had two-pound mass tumors taken from his groin. . .I have five grandchildren, three anemic, one still on the borderline . . .Two with tumors like his Uncle Steve, my youngest son. And one little girl, two and a half years old, has one on her back. This is all frightening to me.

I argued with the VA hospital in Amarillo and asked them if the atomic bombs, if the radiation from that could have caused his cancer, and they said there is no evidence. But I believe this with all my heart, that is why my husband died. He was a healthy-looking man, but when he died he wasn't nothing but a skeleton. He weighed only 70 pounds.

It's upsetting to me because he died for our country. . .he went to Korea after that. . .My children are suffering and my grandchildren are suffering from this.

I think we have a right and I think my husband should have had a right to know when we went there that he might die ten years later from cancer at 30 years old and never have a chance to see his children grow and his grandchildren. Because we had plans for our future. . .I think anyone should be given a choice if they're going to be involved in something like this.

Masen: Are you still having financial problems with the federal government?

Frontierhouse: Yes. . .we had no health insurance. . .it has been a financial strain.

Dr. Edward Martell, researcher of biological effects of ionizing radiation with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colorado

Martell . . .the Defense Nuclear Agency's most recent fact sheet, which is sent to all the claimants all who suggest they have serious effects from radiation exposure at nuclear tests is a masterpiece in misleading statements about the serious effects of radiation of various types that these people were exposed to. And (the federal government) leans heavily on another document. The International Commission on Radiological Protection in its most recent publication on radiation standards, Publication 26, attempts to promulgate standards that will make the world safe for nuclear energy. It's unrelated to concerns about the legitimate health effects, delayed health risks of external and internal radiation exposures.

I submit that we are going to learn more about the delayed radiation effects, external and internal, from a careful follow-up of the experiences of everyone who has been exposed, civilian and military, to past nuclear tests, and more recently, to those increasing numbers that are exposed occupationally in the nuclear industry.
RADIATION SOURCES & MEASUREMENTS

The type of radiation emitted from nuclear power facilities is called ionizing radiation; it has the energy needed to remove one or more electrons from an atom. The ionization of an atom creates a free radical which is chemically reactive and can damage living tissue. Ionizing radiation includes x-rays, gamma rays, and alpha, beta, and neutron radiation. Cosmic radiation and naturally occurring radionuclides (radioactive elements) such as uranium, radium, and thorium are all ionizing radiation and are referred to as natural background radiation.

Ionizing radiation is also the type used in medical x-rays, and the type found in atomic weapons fallout and all phases of the nuclear fuel cycle from mining and milling to waste storage. The radionuclides are unstable and eventually decay through a decay chain to a stable element. Radiation is emitted during this process. The half-life of a radionuclide refers to the time necessary for one-half of a given amount of it to decay.

When radiation strikes a person, one of four events may occur:
- It may pass through a cell without causing any damage;
- It may damage the cell, but the damage may be repaired;
- It may damage the cell, but the cell may divide before being repaired;
- It may kill the cell.

The last two events are of concern to human health. Cell killing is often harmless unless enough cells in a particular tissue are killed, rendering it incapable of functioning. Medical radiation therapy uses the cell-killing effect of radiation to kill cancerous cells. The third effect, incompletely or incorrectly repaired cell damage, may eventually result in delayed health effects such as cancer or be passed on to future generations as a genetic defect.

Total body radiation involves the exposure of all organs. Gamma radiation is the most highly penetrating form and creates the most damage as it passes through the body. This is also true of x-rays and neutron radiation. Alpha and beta radiation, which have low energies, are not serious external threats, but if ingested or inhaled they are extremely dangerous to the organs or tissues in which they lodge.

The most common measurements of radiation exposures are the rad and rem. Both refer to the actual amount of radiation absorbed by the body. The rem is a more precise measurement of the actual biological damage done. Because the rem is an inconvenient large unit for radiation protection purposes, doses are often expressed in millirem (mrem). One rem equals one thousand millirem. When referring to the collective dose received by a certain population the dose is generally expressed in person rem. This is calculated by multiplying the total number of people exposed times their average individual dose. For example, 10,000 person-rem is the dose received by 5,000 persons each exposed to 2 rem or by 10,000 persons each exposed to one rem, or by 20,000 persons each exposed to 0.5 rem.

Let me point out just what is wrong with this "fact sheet" of the Defense Nuclear Agency. There are in general two types of radiation and there are two classes of radiation effects resulting from these. We have, on the one hand, penetrating radiation, x-rays and gamma rays, which are measured by dosimeters, and such radiation penetrates to the germ cells, to the nerve cells, to the brain cells. And the expression of the damage to these cell populations is slow to develop. We see rising evidence that suggests serious genetic disorders of those exposed. We see cell damage, the diseases of aging, paralysis, loss of faculties. I never realized until I talked to many of the victims that are present here how many remarkably related delayed effects they seem to exhibit.

What does the Defense Nuclear Agency do? They take film badge records, which are a measure of penetrating radiation, and they discuss the small degree of effects expected in the way of cancers and leukemia. Now, most cancers and leukemia are due to internal emitters - alpha contaminants, beta emitters. And so, the best way of deceiving all of you about the effects of radiation is to talk about the effects of one class of radiation when you are measuring the other ...

I think it's a national disgrace that some of the serious possibilities related to the chronic health effects and mechanisms of chronic health effects are being ignored, because if they prove to be true, nuclear energy would be, obviously, less acceptable than it is now ...

They (ICRP 26 authors) represent a whitewash of the effects of nuclear technology and nuclear energy. And I think it's time we began a serious search of the legitimate health effects of all exposed groups - military, civilian, occupational, weapons testing and others.

Morgan: There are numerous epidemiological studies, some of them you will hear from here, which give strong evidence that our present levels are too high, and they should be reduced.

Dr. Henry Vynne, psychiatrist, and member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, who has done research on atomic veterans

Vynne... the atomic veteran syndrome is a collection of the psychological consequences of having delayed radiation illness at this time in history... maybe 15, maybe 20 years later, physical symptoms begin to emerge. Now in some cases, the symptoms led to a diagnosis - the man has lymphoma, multiple myeloma or leukemia. In quite a few cases, it's difficult and impossible to get a diagnosis because of the nature of the symptoms involved, such symptoms being debilitating fatigue, debilitating weakness, muscle weakness that is... para-seizures without typical nerve distributions, and that kind of thing ...

Once he (the atomic veteran) realizes that the VA is not going to give benefits, is not going to consider his illness as service-related, and once he realizes that his body is in fact still deteriorating and that he has a wife and family to take care of and friends, he becomes very angry... He becomes angry with the government. He becomes obsessed with proving that his illness was caused by radiation. He becomes isolated from his friends and family because he's... preoccupied with his illness, and quite frequently comes to assume he is going to die a premature death ...

The atomic veteran has but one choice - to devote himself to proving that his illness was caused by radiation... A whole series of mysteries surround the (atomic) tests... veterans did not know at the time of the tests that they were going to be involved in nuclear tests; they didn't
know what the bomb would do. They didn’t know that the radiation would be harmful, they don’t know now what disease they have, they don’t know if the radiation caused their disease, they don’t know what is going to happen to their wives and family, and finally, they don’t know what will happen to their bodies.

In terms of the identity conflicts that are found amongst becoming atomic veterans means making some very serious changes in your life... First, a healthy man becomes an unhealthy man. Secondly, an unquestioning patriot becomes angry at the government and focuses his life on that anger. Third, his social person becomes an isolated person. In a sense, an atomic veteran experiences not only a confrontation with biological death, but with a death of who he is psychologically, a death of identity...

I think we have a glimpse here of what World War III would be like, and if we all sat down and took a look at this and thought about what the consequences of a nuclear war would be, I think a lot of people would be demanding an end to the arms race.

Clara Harding and Martha Harding Alls, widow and daughter of nuclear worker Joe Harding, who was exposed to radiation in an uranium enrichment facility.

Harding. My husband worked at the Paducah uranium plant for 18 1/2 years. He started in 1952. He took his training there and he worked in the product withdrawal room, which was the dirtiest place there. He waded in uranium on the floor; you could see the footprints in it. He had to eat there, they had no lunchroom. In 1954, he started developing sores, on his legs, on his ankles.

They (Paducah workers) wore the badges, but those badges were sent to Oak Ridge and they never heard how much radiation they were getting. They were supposed to when they saw someone getting too much radiation change them over to another place. But they never changed him. He stayed in the same place and worked in these contaminated places for 6 1/2 years straight.

In 1955, he started (having) stomach problems. He had stomach surgery and the doctor removed 95 percent of his stomach. When he started at the plant, he weighed 175 pounds, and after his stomach surgery, 112 pounds.

The sores moved up on his body constantly. And they moved up until they were on his face and on his body, and later he started having these fingernail-like things growing out of his legs. He went to doctors in St. Louis. He went to doctors in Memphis. He went to doctors in Louisville. I don’t know. I guess in all 20 or 80 doctors. But none of them, I mean they would tell him that he had radiation damage, but none of them would put it on paper...

Two of them (doctors) told him that he had radiation damage. The first one went to tell him that this shaking that he had in his neck and all was nothing but deterioration of the nervous system and it was radiation damage. Well, so later (Union Carbide) called the doctor and they told him that they were going to take steps to revoke his license if he said anything further. So he had to shut up.

We went to another urologist. And this one told (Joe) that he had the worst case of radiation damage on his legs; that his skin was completely gone from his ankles up. He said, “I guess you wonder why you don’t have any hairs on your legs?” and Joe said, “Well, I guess my pants rubbed them off.” He (the doctor) said, “The outer layer of your skin on your legs from your ankles to your knees is off.”

He said that’s radiation damage. He (the doctor) is now (working) in another town.

When my husband went to the hospital this last time... we took him to Memphis so we could send him to a group of doctors, 18 different doctors. Of course, they put him on codine for a week and that did not do any trouble, it did not help him any. He still had his pain. Very much pain. Severe pain. And he was begging them to remove his legs so that he would get rid of his pain...

They did another scan on his entire body, which showed that he had an abdominal tumor. They estimated it at 30 pounds, spread in his tissues in his back... and that he should have been dead at least 10 to 20 years ago. Where 30 to 50 of the other guys had already died at an earlier age, they told Joe that he should have been dead years earlier than he was...

He kept pushing himself, fighting this thing... He got him a lawyer in town, and the lawyer met with the local officials from Union Carbide and the lawyers from Union Carbide in New York, and they went up and talked to the judge and the judge said the case was dismissed, that Carbide had not made up their mind yet. So, they terminated my husband... He injured his knee, and he had to go on restrictive duty for three months. And when his doctor gave him permission to go back to work, but he restricted, he went back to work and they did everything, discriminated against him in every way they could... they got rid of Joe because Joe
had mentioned to his doctor at the plant, he told him, he said: "Dr. Rooker, I have radiation damage." And Dr. Rooker said: "Oh no, you don't Joe, so don't even mention that." And Joe said: "Well, I know that I have."

When they terminated him, he wrote a letter to them that morning. He said, "I am not asking to be terminated. If I do, it's for a hundred per cent total disability. I will receive my pension and all that I am supposed to get." And they signed papers and he signed them and they put them in their bags, sent them to the New York home office. We have never seen them, and we still can't see them. And they have been kept away from us, which is not right. We think we should be entitled to see those termination papers. And if the government can find out any way of getting them, I think it should be done. We still have doctors' bills to pay. Hospital bills to pay, and I have no help.

Alls: Daddy planned to be here today.

Harding: He has a list of the names, when they died, the date and all. And what they died with, and how long they had worked there, and the places they worked.

Alls: This last time when he was in the hospital for 48 days, the hospital bill alone was over $18,000. And doctors' bills are still coming in, but just this time they could go as high as $32,000-$40,000. And all the other times, maybe up to a quarter of a million (dollars).

Wodka: Has your husband's case had any effect on the other nuclear workers down there in Paducah?

Harding: They resent him. They think he was a crackpot and he didn't know what he was talking about.

Morgan: Mrs. Harding, did your husband ever have uranium dust on his hair or his body or his shoes when he came home from work?

Harding: Yes sir, I suppose that he did.

Morgan: I guess you know that the risk would probably be to the tracheo-bronchial region from inhaling radioactive dust, and to the stomach and the small intestine in particular, where these large particles would be brought up by the eilia in the bronchias and swallowed. So, if I were to make a guess on where malignancies might appear, certainly the stomach and the abdominal region would be where I would look for it.

Alls: I'm aging at a rapid rate already. I have something in my stomach just like Daddy started with. I was 11 years old when Daddy went to work out at the plant. He brought home his work clothes, and of course they were washed with our clothes...

WORKERS & RADIATION

Ionizing radiation has a myriad of uses in industry, medicine, research and commerce. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are over 1.5 million workers exposed annually to ionizing radiation in the U.S. This is nearly twice the number of workers exposed in 1972.

Job-related exposure to ionizing radiation includes operating dental and medical x-ray equipment, handling radiopharmaceuticals, operating and maintaining the naval nuclear propulsion plants, working in research and development for federal agencies and their contractors, working in civilian nuclear power industries, using x-rays for construction purposes, and uranium, coal, and other mineral mining.

When radiation is received in high doses (50-500 rem), it can cause human tissue damage through massive cell killing. This type of damage is observed as radiation burns, bone marrow depression, and damage or death of other internal organs. Workers, especially in nuclear-related industries, face this kind of problem when there are serious accidents. Barium accidents, workers are exposed to chronic low-level radiation doses which cause radiation damage living body cells. This damage is not recognized until several years later when a disease such as cancer or genetic effects appears. In the past ten years, human studies, using worker populations, suggest that the risk of contracting cancer from low-level radiation exposure may be as much as 25 times greater than previously believed.

It is thought that women are almost two times more sensitive to radiation than men. This is because of the female predominance in contracting breast and thyroid cancers. The human fetus is ten times more sensitive to radiation than adults. The most damaging time for exposure is during the first trimester; many women are not aware of their pregnancy during this time. Developing an exposure limit which will protect the fetus but not discriminate against the mother is one alternative under discussion. If adopted, it would mean that all occupational radiation exposures would be dramatically reduced.

Federal agencies are currently revising exposure limits for workers. A controversy is emerging over the adoption of recommendations made by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. The ICRP is advocating dramatic increases in radioncurriculum that are inhaled and ingested. If the recommendations are adopted in the U.S. (some European countries have already adopted them), it will mean a major setback in improving workplace health and safety.
put it into a ship-type work and they turned it over to the operators instead of myself and our technicians.

One of the first nights when they started the machine up, it broke down and they had been told how to stop it or work with it like we were, so they started this and, when it hit the air, it began to burn. One of the people decided to grab the fire extinguisher...it put the flame out. At the same time, he blew (radiation) all over the big area of the rooms. So the next morning when we came in, we were told that we would have to repair it...I asked if radiation control had been told or called. And they said, no, to go ahead and start working with it. And I refused...So after a good discussion we did get radiation control. And they roped the area off to where we could not go back in it without protective clothing and breathing apparatus.

Doria Rhodes and Tyrel Rhodes, widow and son of nuclear shipyard worker Charles Rhodes, who was exposed to radiation at Electric Boat, Connecticut.

D. Rhodes: My husband, Charles Rhodes, died on November 20, 1974, of aplastic anemia, a radiation-caused illness, after working approximately 15 years at Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics Shipyards in Groton, Connecticut.

T. Rhodes: (reading from a letter by Mrs. Rhodes to Senator Pastore, October 1970)

...my husband was working on a coolant pump coming out of a 600 boat. He was not given a film badge...after working on the pump for over three hours, the Health Physics Inspector checked the pump and informed my husband to keep away from it as it was “hot,” meaning radioactive. My husband complained of feeling ill when he arrived home, but as we were not familiar with this condition, we really did not become alarmed until he returned to work the next morning. When the blood count was taken, it was down, and he was pulled off anything radioactive for the time being, as he had previously been on different other occasions. After a period of time, the blood count was again taken, but it still had not come back to normal. He was advised by Electric Boat to see his family doctor, which he did, and was advised to definitely keep away from radioactive objects. After more blood tests at the Electric Boat he was once again advised to consult his family doctor.

After my husband’s spending nine days in the hospital, Dr. Chimento (Rhodes’s personal physician) with a consultation of doctors, came up with a decision that he had been injured from this exposure. Dr. Chimento sent his report to Dr. McDougall at the Electric Boat, and was informed that this could not possibly be, because there (was) no such thing at Electric Boat...

When my husband returned to work, he and some of his co-workers tried to find records proving that he did work on this pump which was throwing off so much radiation that they had to lead the cab of the truck to protect the cab-driver belonging to the Merchants Trucking Company, only to find no records available. Shortly after this, Electric Boat discontinued taking blood counts in the Shipping Department...

My husband’s life is at stake, and this is the reason I am pleading for help...

We have a death certificate here that I’d like to read to everyone. It’s certified. It says: “Death was caused by aplastic anemia, due to or a consequence of radiation exposure.”

Wodka: You said that you did file for workers’ comp?...and it has been denied so far, or hasn’t been heard?

Dr. Rhodes: It’s been denied. The first hearing was denied, and he has appealed it, and now is in the Court of Judges in Boston and we are waiting for a trial now.

Dr. Thomas F. Mancuso, Professor of Occupational Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, who has researched occupational exposure to radiation.

Mancuso: The findings that we have reported on low-level radiation pertain to the Hanford atomic energy plutonium facility in Richland, Washington. This study is concerned with approximately 35,000 workers who were employed in that Hanford operation since 1944. The basic observations and implications of the findings of this study are: (1) that low levels of ionizing radiation do cause cancer contrary to all assumptions in the past; (2) that the so-called “safe standard” used for over 20 years for industrial workers was not safe at all; (3) that the cancer risk is at least ten times greater than had been recognized before; (4) that the guidelines and standards assumed over the years to protect the industrial workers and the public around nuclear facilities should be reduced, in my opinion, tenfold, so that they will not fall victim to the cancer risk in the years ahead; (5) that other types of cancer and biological effects can occur following chronic, repeated exposure to low-level radiation in contrast to the biological response to high, instantaneous radiation exposure; and (6) that low-level radiation represents a common contributing factor to the development of some percentage of cancer in the general population exposed to medical x-rays, which can be reduced and prevented.
For decades, the atomic energy industry and the government supporting agencies were saying that the nuclear industry was extremely safe. Yet, that statement related solely to accidents... In essence, all prior statements and assurances about a safe industry related only to accidents and were grossly misleading because no long-term follow-up study had ever been done... The particular cancers we identified as caused by radiation were multiple myeloma, cancer of the pancreas and cancer of the lung... In our Hanford study, we are detecting the beginning of the cancer problem and not the end of it... the history of radiation standards has shown that the risks relative to radiation have been consistently underestimated during the past 35 years. Each succeeding time period has shown that the radiation risk has been greater than previously recognized...

The compensation laws must be changed. It is most important that the time limits for the filing of compensation claims should be removed because of the long-term delayed effects such as cancer that may occur several decades after the exposure to radiation. Under the present system, unless a claim is filed within a specified period, the claim is forever barred, regardless of the validity of the claim. It must further be recognized that low-level radiation exposures below a prevailing industrial standard can induce harmful effects and restrictive dependence on high level radiation exposures in compensation claims should be removed...

In conclusion, there is strong reason to believe that there is an interlocking relationship, an interdependence upon various governmental organizations and their scientific consultants, a concerted effort to deny the recognition of cancer effects due to low-level radiation in order to avoid the tremendous liability for the compensation claims for those exposed during the past several decades. It is a national tragedy and disgrace to ask the families of the veterans, the uranium miners, the atomic workers, the shipyard workers, the civilians exposed to radioactive fallout, and all who were exposed to radiation to bear the burden of the deception and irresponsibility by the respective governmental agencies during the past several decades. The basic national concerns about radiation are the difficulties in obtaining the truth...

Finally, I should like to add one plea for the defense of the worker exposed to radiation. The right of choice of a worker should be protected relative to the degree of risk to radiation that the worker chooses to accept in his job that may involve serious damage to his health, whether immediate or delayed. Radiation can and does provide physical injury which is invisible. The worker should have the right not to forfeit his life or his health in order to retain his job...

I do not believe that the veterans were exposed to low level radiation at all. They were exposed and exposed and exposed and they were never never had any measurements of internal radiation. They would have never had any measurements, there was no medical surveillance, no environmental surveillance of what individuals inhaled. In the absence of this, how can they honestly say that the veterans were exposed only to the amount of radiation to which they
measured one film badge for one person in each platoon. This, unfortunately, is the ridiculous situation and I think they are misleading the country and misleading everyone else to say in effect that the veterans have been exposed to low level radiation.

John Ridgeway, exposed to radiation while employed by Lawrence Livermore Lab in nuclear testing

Ridgeway: I was employed by the University of California Lawrence Livermore Lab for ten years in nuclear testing. I have cancer now. We were given the word that possibly you might become sterile, but since my children were both in college at the time, I didn't think too much about that...

I am a Navy veteran from World War II. The Navy gives me a non-service-connected disability, which is a pittance of about $64 a month. We have no insurance...

I've asked you people to question me rather than let me explain my job to you because I could possibly divulge something I shouldn't. I've been in the total picture of nuclear testing and what we could also do with (nuclear tests) for peacetime use. I've done the work on the Plowshare program...

I was in charge of all DOD events, which was on the line of sight shots, which was for the development of the ABM system. Also, I worked on the Polaris warhead, on the safety devices of it, plus all of the primaries that we had in between...

We have to maintain the nuclear capabilities, but I feel that we can clean up the act...

I don't know who sets the standards to the amount of radiation we could have. As I say, the effects shots are still going on to a certain extent in the tunnels. You have a very good chance of a radiation contamination of personnel who are going in on recovery. If you're using a line of sight shot, there you have a tremendous amount because you have to go in and recover material from Ground Zero.

Bennie Levy, President, Nevada Test Site Radiation Victim Association, accompanied by Max Baxter, a security guard at the Test Site

Levy: ... I worked at the Nevada Test Site for 27 1/2 years. ... During that time as I worked through the years, I worked with people who had died of cancer... Finally in 1956, when I lost two very good friends of mine in the Area 11 event, which is plutonium, I started wondering. I was working in that area two days prior to that. And I was removed from that area and as we left I asked them how come they removed me. They said, "Well, you're in a highly contaminated area and that's plutonium and that will kill you." Sure enough, a few days later, I lost a very good friend and his death certificate said that he died of a ruptured aorta. Then, 27 days later, I lost another friend who was working in the same area — cerebral hemorrhage...

I have a list of 95 people that have died of cancer, different types, documented by death certificates. I called home last night and two more have died since I left home... Ninety-five deceased cancer victims, people who have filed claims: people who don't want to file, are reluctant to for fear of the U.S. government, there's 23. That gives a total of 118 cancer deaths. When we filed with the Department of Energy on February 26, we had 55 deaths, cancer deaths. Now we have 118.

Baxter: I was security for Federal Services Incorporated, which was the prime contractor for the security of the AEC at the Nevada Test Site. There are hundreds and hundreds of miles that we travelled over daily that were Ground Zero areas that they'd set the shot off the day before. There were originally about 46 of us and there's a large amount of them that are dead. On June 10 of 1958, they set a detonation off in the tunnel area, B Tunnel. Five minutes later, they sent three of us... into the actual detonation area. After going back several hundred yards... we were overtaken with radioactive gas; we passed out. There was no first-aid equipment on the site... I worked there two and one-half years; in 1964 I came down with cancer. I've had my lymph glands removed. My lungs are full of radioactive particles. I have bone degeneration. I have been lucky. I've been one; I am a disabled veteran of two wars — Second World War and the Korean War and I am one that has had the VA to fall back on. But there's thousands that haven't.