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## **Three Mile Island Resources**

**Title:** Three Mile Island Alert Newsletter (March 2015)

**Date:** March 2015

**Location:** TMI-TMIA2

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# THREE MILE ISLAND ALERT

A publication of Three Mile Island Alert

March 2015

## PUC Approves PPL Spinoff, Epstein Seeks Shareholder Vote

On March 11, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved the transfer of PPL Electric Utility Corporation's indirect ownership interests in PPL Interstate Energy Company (PPL IEC) to a new entity called Talen Energy Corporation (Talen Energy). The approval also authorized the acquisition of Riverstone Holdings LLC of an indirect 35 percent ownership interest in Talen Energy.

What all that means is that PPL shareholders will own 65% of a new company, Talen Energy, which on its first day of operation will be one of the nation's largest independent power producers and one of America's biggest companies. The other 35% will be held by Riverstone, a private equity firm focused on leveraged buyout and growth capital investments in the energy and power sectors.

PPL, which for years was our locally owned and operated neighborhood utility, is now operating internationally and keeping company with venture capitalists like Riverstone, an enterprise with historic roots in companies like Enron and Goldman Sachs.

Interestingly, this is all taking place without the action being put to a vote of PPL shareholders. One of them, TMI Alert Chair Eric Epstein, says the transaction should be reviewed by shareholders. He requested

that the company provide information to shareholders relating to a vote in materials circulated prior to PPL's May 20 annual meeting. The company and the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) opposed the request, but Epstein will appeal.

Related to this, at the NRC, PPL requested a license transfer for the Susquehanna nuclear plant in Berwick, which TMI Alert and PPL retiree Douglas Ritter, who lives 3.25 miles from the plant, have opposed. TMIA and

Ritter raised concerns regarding Talen's ability to properly operate and maintain the plant and provide funds to ensure its proper decommissioning. Epstein noted that the NRC downgraded PPL's license status because of recent unexpected shutdowns at Susquehanna and noted, "It shouldn't be about capitalization, but operating a plant efficiently, safely, and reliably."

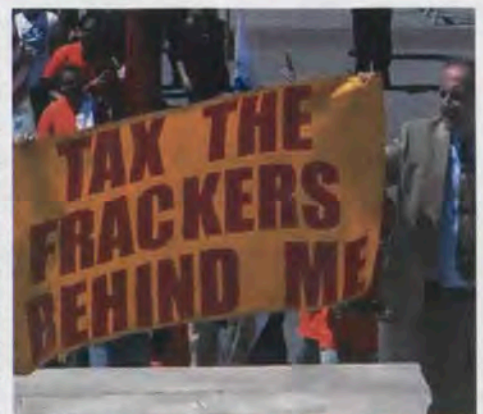
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## Vigil Set for 36th Anniversary

Like every March 28th, safe energy activists will gather this year at the north gate of Three Mile Island at 3:15 a.m. to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the beginning of the nuclear accident. According to vigil organizer Gene Stilp, the group will be there for approximately one hour. Traditionally, the group meets for breakfast afterward.

## Stilp Retires, sort of...

Though he'll be at the annual vigil at TMI's north gate, political activist Gene Stilp announced in February his retirement from pro-bono activism. His eye on the powers that be will be missed, as will his creative, thorn-in-the-side tactics. For example, when the Marcellus Shale Coalition staged a march last May to rally on the Capitol steps, Gene jumped in front of the march with a banner of his own reading: "TAX THE FRACKERS BEHIND ME."



Please use the enclosed form to pay your dues or make a contribution.

# Radiation and Health

## Chernobyl Linked to Aggressive Thyroid Cancers

For the first time, researchers have found that exposure to radioactive iodine is linked to more aggressive forms of thyroid cancer. A study looked at people in Belarus who were exposed to fallout from Chernobyl when they were children or adolescents. Researchers examined thyroid cancers diagnosed up to two decades after the accident and found that higher doses of radiation were associated with more aggressive tumors. According to the National Cancer Institute, among adults, about 13 new cases of thyroid cancer will be diagnosed for every 100,000 people. In the Belarus group, researchers diagnosed 158 thyroid cancers among 11,664 subjects.

## Chernobyl Clean-up Workers Show Leukemia Increase

A study of Chernobyl cleanup workers showed an increased risk of leukemia associated with chronic protracted exposure to low doses of ionizing radiation. Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL) is the most common type of leukemia in the cleanup worker population and, as the workers age, CLL cases will rapidly increase, raising concerns for medical consequences. Researchers said their findings were statistically consistent with estimates for the Japanese atomic bomb survivors. The study was jointly conducted by an international consortium which included the National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, and Columbia University.

## U.N. Report on Fukushima Risks Panned as Unscientific

A British scientist who once headed the World Health Organization's radiation-protection program in Europe panned a United Nations report that dismissed the possibility of higher cancer rates caused by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis.

The report, authored by the U.N. Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), was "not qualified to be called 'scientific' because it lacked transparency and independent verification," according to Dr. Keith Baverstock. He also questioned UNSCEAR's neutrality, given that members are nominated by nations that have a vested interest in nuclear power. He noted that such nations provide funds to the committee. He added that when he was working for WHO, he felt constant pressure from the International Atomic Energy Agency, a major promoter of nuclear power.

## PA Nuclear Plant Briefs

Last October, the **Limerick Generating Station** leaked 100 gallons of sodium hypochlorite into the Schuylkill River. The chemical, similar to laundry bleach, was said to have posed no threat to the river, a drinking water source for more than one million Pennsylvanians.

The 60-year clean-up clock for the complete decommissioning of **TMI Unit II** didn't start in 1979 when the plant stopped operating, but in 1993 when 99% of the nuclear fuel was removed, according to an NRC response to a letter of inquiry from TMI Alert Chairperson Eric Epstein.

**\$412 million** will be the bill for cleaning up a nuclear waste site in western Pennsylvania. The Army Corp of Engineers says the project will take ten years. The suburban Pittsburgh site, once generated fuel for nuclear submarines and left behind uranium and plutonium. The project gets underway next year.

In January the NRC rejected a petition filed one month after the March 2011 Fukushima tragedy to close the country's 22 nuclear reactors that are identical to those that exploded and melted down in Japan. These include **Peach Bottom Units 2 & 3** (General Electric Mark 1 reactors) and **Susquehanna Units 1 & 2** (GE's Mark 2s). It only took the NRC four years to conclude the designs are safe.

## Japanese Photojournalist Publishes Fukushima eBook

In an effort to break through the barrier of the Japanese media's self-censorship, Hiromichi Ugaya has written a book with 200 photographs that provide glimpses into the daily lives of evacuees, their adopted hometowns, the clean-up, and photos of animal and plant life in the exclusion zone. The book, *Portrait of Fukushima: 2011-2015: Life After Meltdown*, is available from Amazon in a Kindle edition for \$9.99.

# Members Mourn Passing of Leaders

Anyone active in Three Mile Island Alert at anytime over the last 36 years probably met and became instantly fond of Beverly Davis. She, and her husband of 64 years, Frank, spent decades on the front lines of the environmental movement. Bev served on TMI Alert's Planning Council, was president of the TMIA Legal Fund, and also served as TMIA's representative to the TMI Public Interest Resource Center, an umbrella for the region's safe energy groups. Naturally warm and compassionate, Bev used those traits professionally in her work as a citizen advocate for the Governor's Action Line. Bev died in January at the age of 90.

Dr. Judith Johnsrud, who died last year, spent 50 years fighting the nuclear industry. She was an active opponent to the siting and licensing of TMI in the 1970s and had since worked tirelessly out of a concern for the future of our species in an increasingly radioactive environment. She was a founder of the Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power in 1970 and was a founder of Beyond Nuclear in 2007. This former geography professor sacrificed her own academic advancement, health, and financial well-being for her cause and, in so doing, won the admiration of safe-energy activists around the world.

Dr. Ernest Sternglass was a physicist and inventor whose TV cameras sent the first live pictures back from the moon's surface. He went on to a distinguished career as a professor of radiological physics at the University of Pittsburgh

School of Medicine. He spent much of his career warning policymakers on the dangers of low-level radiation to human health and, in one paper, argued that radiation from the TMI accident resulted in at least 430 infant deaths. He and his colleagues were the first to warn of the dangers of radiation

to developing fetuses. His work led to x-ray examinations that exposed patients to dramatically lower doses of radiation and to the founding of the Radiation and Public Health Project. His obituary in the *New York Times* makes note of his friendship with Albert Einstein. TMI Alert's Mary Stamos, who focuses on radiation and health issues, recalls the arrival of Dr. Sternglass in Harrisburg during the early stages of the accident. "He was the first to report high



*Dr. Sternglass is pictured above left with investigative journalist Karl Grossman and TMIA's Mary Stamos.*

radiation readings at the airport, recommended evacuation to Gov. Thornburg, and educated all of us about the dangers of radiation. He was a friend and mentor to so many of us. Whenever we needed him, he was there. Ernie was brilliant and I'll miss him." Dr. Sternglass died in January at the age of 91. Memorial contributions may be sent to the Radiation and Public Health Project, P.O. Box 1260, Ocean City, NJ 08226.

## Epstein Appeals Approval for Peach Bottom to Up Power Output

TMI Alert Chair Eric Epstein has filed an appeal with the Environmental Hearing Board to reverse the Department of Environmental Protection's approval of Peach Bottom's request to increase its power output. According to Epstein, DEP failed to address "unresolved environmental, health, and safety issues" associated with a power hike.

DEP exempted Exelon, Peach Bottom's owner, from preparing a final environmental impact statement for the project, instead relying on a plan filed by

the utility in 1973, before added environmental safeguards were adopted. For example, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has since passed regulations to make owners of water-intake structures take steps to reduce the numbers of fish and shellfish getting killed when sucked through the water intakes. Also at issue is the demand of water withdrawals from the Susquehanna which may make the amount of water available for power generation unreliable.

# Design Student Creates "TMI 35 Years Later"

Last summer, Gabriela Epstein, an illustration student at the Rhode Island School of Design, received a fellowship to research and create an artistic re-telling of the TMI story. As part of her research, she conducted extensive interviews with reporters who covered the TMI story, the power plant's spokesman, a local mayor, a TMI worker, local activists, and others. According to David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists, "She interviewed people directly involved in and

affected by the accident. She accompanies their narratives with talented artwork. It's like an oral history project, but with very effective graphics." See for yourself at [www.tmi35project.com](http://www.tmi35project.com).

*The graphic at right illustrates Gov. Thornburg ordering the evacuation of pregnant women and children.*



## Thank you, Senator Boxer

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, who has represented California since 1993, has announced she will not seek re-election when her term expires in 2016. When the Democrats controlled the Senate, she served as Chairman of the sub-committee with oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Just to get an idea of her tenacity, check out the YouTube videos of her conducting hearings on the lessons learned from Fukushima. Her voice, passion, and commitment to public safety will be missed.

## Community Calendar

**March 28 - 3:15AM** — Vigil commemorating the beginning of the TMI accident at TMI's North Gate.

**April 7 - 7PM** — Author Eileen Flanagan will be signing her book, *Renewable: One Woman's Search for Simplicity, Faithfulness, and Hope*, at the Harrisburg Friends Meeting House, 1100 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Refreshments will be served.

**April 25 - 7PM** — *The Throwaways*, an award-winning film that explores one of the most pressing racial issues of our time, the mass incarceration and profiling of poor people and people of color, will be shown free at the Widener University School of Law, Administration Building, Moot Courtroom. Reception at 7PM, film at 7:30PM. Q&A with co-producer/director Bhawin Suchak after the screening.

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