

GANESAYER

GEORGIANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ENERGY

APRIL/MAY 1996

GOLIATH BLINKS

GANES Shuts Georgia Tech Research Reactor for Olympics

by Rob Johnson

After a year-long campaign waged entirely by a handful of volunteer activists, what many had said was an impossible dream has become a reality: Georgia Tech has removed all fuel from their research reactor and shut it down for the Olympics! While the long-term goal of permanently shutting down this badly run and dangerous facility still remains as our next challenge, we hope you will join with us in celebrating this crucial intermediate victory. Without the support of GANE members like yourself, it couldn't have been done.

When GANE member Glenn Carroll first undertook this crusade in October 1994, local activist Pamela Blockey O'Brien had already been campaigning against the Neely Research Reactor for some 15 years. However, despite her tireless work and meticulous documentation of numerous safety violations at the facility, the bureaucratic monolith known as the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) was proving tough to crack. Enter Glenn, who, upon hearing about a 30-year-old nuclear reactor nestled snugly within the Olympic village, and then hearing that said reactor's license was due for renewal, decided to take action. Glenn filed an intervention with the NRC on behalf of GANE in an effort to stop the permit from being renewed, or barring that, at least have the reactor put off-line for the Olympics.

What Pamela had uncovered in her years of tireless research was nothing less than a genuinely frightening pattern of serious safety violations, almost all of which had occurred during the 12-year tenure of current reactor director Dr. Ratib Karam. The most serious incident occurred in 1987, when reactor operator Bill Downs irradiated himself, and then rode a MARTA bus home,

possibly irradiating the bus and passengers. Georgia Tech's reaction to this highly disturbing incident was to give Karam, who was already almost wholly responsible for the procedures and policies that made such an accident possible, even more power and authority at the reactor! It should come as no great surprise that the

safety violations did not stop. Serious leakage of the cobalt-60 storage pool, irradiation of undergraduates by faulty X-ray equipment, failure to repair a leak in the bismuth block shield—all these incidents and more like them happened AFTER Karam gained increased control over the reactor.

Unable to raise serious questions or take corrective action because their job had been reduced to figurehead status, safety officers such as Brian Copcutt and Bob Boyd resigned in disgust following Karam's "coup de reactor," which left him as the only reactor director in the country with a superior relationship to his safety oversight committee. GANE has evidence showing safety oversight committee members asking for permission to investigate safety violations! If there was such a thing as a habitual offender law for reactor safety violations, the Neely Reactor would have been shut down years ago and Dr. Karam barred from the nuclear industry, but under the NRC's "business as usual" mentality every incident, no matter how serious, was resolved with the proverbial slap on the wrist.

It should be noted that there were those



The Georgia Tech Research Reactor at 900 Atlantic Drive in the middle of Olympic Village (photo by Glenn Carroll)

who tried to bring the sad state of affairs at Neely to light, such as NRC inspector Rebecca Long, but her story is all too typical of what happens when you challenge the nuclear industry. Her reports of unsatisfactory conditions at Neely were repeatedly ignored and belittled because she was a woman, leading her to file a lawsuit for sexual harassment against her male superiors, claiming that a "good old boy network" was covering up problems at Neely. Karam also has enjoyed protection from within Georgia Tech, where everyone apparently respects him, or maybe his long tenure at the reactor has given him an impenetrable mantle of authority.

Taking all this in mind, it is understandable that Karam and Georgia Tech did not take GANE seriously at first. GANE had to fight fairly hard just to establish "standing," meaning that we had to prove we have a stake in safety practices at the reactor and therefore were justified in attempting an intervention. At the first preliminary hearings, reactor personnel claimed that even a worst-case scenario accident could only

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NRC Grants GANE Public Hearing

*Georgia Tech Reactor
License Renewal to be
Decided*

The NRC will hold a public hearing the last two weeks in May to decide whether to renew Georgia Tech's license to operate its 30-year-old reactor in downtown Atlanta. We need your voice at these hearings! The more concerned citizens that speak out against this dangerous reactor, the better our chances of winning this long and difficult struggle.

NRC HEARINGS ON GEORGIA TECH LICENSE RENEWAL

MAY 20-24, 1996

MAY 29-31, 1996

9AM - 5PM

Federal Trade Commission
1718 Peachtree St. • Suite 1010
(across from IHOP near AMTRAK)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

MONDAY, MAY 20

10 - 11 AM

Federal Trade Commission
1718 Peachtree St. • Suite 1010

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

7 - 9 PM

Georgia Tech
Student Center Theater

*Directions to GA Tech Student Center:
Take 10th Street exit west from I-75/I-85.
Turn left onto Atlantic Drive, (note reactor on your right). Turn right onto
Ferst Drive. Follow Ferst and enter at
the A-frame on left where there is plenty
of parking for visitors to the Student
Center. Theater is in Student Center.*

**Thanks for your response
to our fundraising letter.
We have 60% of our goal.
Please give generously!**

GOLIATH BLINKS

Tech Reactor Renewal Under Question



Atomic Safety and Licensing Board judges hearing GANE's case against relicensing the Tech Reactor. (Left to right) Dr. Jerry Kline, environmental engineer; Chairman Charles Bechhoefer, attorney; and Dr. Peter Lam, nuclear engineer. Photo by Patti Richardson.

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harm people within 100 YARDS of the reactor! However, the NRC judges were rightly skeptical of those figures, and the affidavits of Greenpeace employees, Georgia Tech students, neighbors of the reactor, and GANE members who were currently living or working within a mile of the reactor were judged sufficient to grant GANE standing. Even so, only two of GANE's many serious concerns about the reactor were admitted: security during the Olympics and management.

At first, the news that the contention concerning broad security issues was not accepted was disappointing, as the security issue seemed to have the most potential to close the reactor for good. Georgia Tech avoided a legal battle over the security issue for the weapons-grade uranium fuel when it committed to removing the fuel out from Atlanta prior to the Olympics. GANE thinks this is an important strategic step towards shutting the facility permanently, as the reactor will have to go through a good amount of regulatory battles and paperwork (not to mention spend a lot of money) in order to start up again once they powered down.

Finally the media began to take an interest. Creative Loafing ran a full-blown cover story on the reactor, and the Atlanta Journal & Constitution picked up the story. Although these local publications brought needed attention to the story, the real knockout blow was delivered when a camera crew from the national TV show A

Current Affair waltzed into the facility unnoticed and captured the atrocious security at the Neely Reactor on videotape. The crew members walked into restricted areas and even climbed onto the roof and over the fence — eventually leaving when it became apparent that nobody was going to notice them, let alone stop them. Within days of the broadcast of the show on November 15, 1995 an embarrassed Georgia Tech administration committed to a schedule for shutting and defueling the reactor in time for the Olympics. It is worth noting that even after this latest incident, Georgia Tech officials continue to profess faith not only in the future restart of the facility, but in the man ultimately responsible for all the various misdeeds at the reactor: Dr. Karam. This dysfunctional relationship clearly needs to end. A man with Dr. Karam's track record does not need to be operating a nuclear facility, and this is the nutshell version of the management contention that GANE continues to pursue through the NRC hearing process.

The next step at this point is a two-week series of public hearings beginning May 20th. We need your voice at these hearings! The more concerned citizens that speak out against this dangerous reactor, the better our chances of winning this long and difficult struggle. For more information on how you can participate and make a difference, see the box at left about the NRC hearings. Written comments will be considered as well. Send written comments to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555.

GANE Seeks to Remove Terrorist Attraction from Olympic Village

GANE is proud of its role in defueling the Georgia Tech reactor for the Olympic Games this summer. But we remain concerned about an even more dangerous security threat — a large stash of high-radiation metal on Georgia Tech campus which is vulnerable to a terrorist explosion like Oklahoma City or the World Trade Center bombings.

Tech holds a Georgia license to house 250,000 curies of cobalt-60 in an easily accessible storage pool — smack-dab in the middle of Olympic Village. Cobalt-60 is an extremely hot gamma radiation source used by Tech for irradiation experiments. The cobalt-60 is nuclear waste, a by-product of nuclear weapons production, from the Savannah River Plant. Ten years ago, Savannah River Plant GAVE the cobalt-60 to Georgia Tech to get it off their hands. Any person exposed to even one of the five-curie sources would die immediately.

GANE has raised the question of a terrorist explosion involving the cobalt-60 with both the NRC and the State of Georgia. GANE has prompted the two regulatory bodies to engage in a leisurely dialogue about security for the facility — but this is an urgent matter. It is obvious to GANE that even with terrorism stories in the news every day, that the situation is not being adequately dealt with by the authorities. GANE believes that the only certain way to protect Atlanta's resi-

The cobalt-60 storage pool is vulnerable to terrorist explosives

dents and visitors from radiological sabotage during the Olympics is to remove the material immediately. We have spoken with J.L. Shepherd, the only U.S. contractor that can conduct this type of removal, and he has estimated that permanent removal of the material back to Savannah River Plant would cost only \$70,000. But time is running out — we need to take ac-

tion immediately to complete the removal prior to the Olympics.

GANE believes that the administration of Georgia Tech has been lulled into complacency on this urgent matter by the casual reassurances of the regulators that everything is under control. GANE still has NRC process that it is using to resolve this issue, but we think it would be effective for the nuclear facility's Georgia neighbors to express their feelings about the possibility of radiological sabotage during the Olympics.

Please communicate your concern by writing to Dr. Wayne Clough, President, Georgia Tech, Atlanta, GA 30332-0325. You may prefer to call 404-894-5055, FAX: 404-894-1277, or send your e-mail comments to daniel.papp@carnegie.gatech.edu (Dr. Papp is Executive Assistant to President Clough).

GANE WITNESS PROFILES

DR. BRIAN COPCUTT was Manager of the Office of Radiation Safety for Georgia Tech for four months in 1990, having previously run the exemplary radiation safety program at University of Virginia. In his resignation letter to Tech he states, "it is impossible for me to work effectively within the structure of the radiation safety program at Georgia Tech. . . . I also object to suggestions . . . that I should not . . . document observed regulatory violations . . ." **Testifies Mon., May 20, 11AM**

JOHN GALLOWAY is a computer science major at Georgia Tech and has had several conversations with campus security which raise concerns about gaps in Georgia Tech's ability to protect the public from nuclear releases from the reactor and research facility. **Cross-examination by NRC and Georgia Attorney General Tues., May 21, 1PM**

GLENN CARROLL is a Decatur artist, and a volunteer member of GANE. She has lay expertise on Georgia Tech's radiation program from 18 months in the NRC process, studying the NRC inspection reports, violations, and allegations, and Georgia Tech's personnel and safety committee documents. **Cross-examination by NRC and Georgia Attorney General Tues., May 21, 9AM**

REBECCA LONG is an NRC inspector. In 1987 she cited numerous violations in her inspection of Georgia Tech. She found Georgia Tech had repeatedly failed in its commitments to remedy chronic safety problems. Improper NRC handling of her report became a significant part of a sexual discrimination suit filed against the NRC. Ms. Long cites improprieties in the NRC's relationship to Georgia Tech, and a good-old-boy network cover up of safety problems at Tech. **Testifies Tues., May 21, 2PM and Wed., May 22, 9AM**

BOB BOYD was health physicist, then Radiation Safety Officer for Georgia Tech for 20 years. He fought significant unsafe changes to the radiation management structure then resigned in disgust when the problems degenerated to the now-notorious MARTA bus incident. Mr. Boyd went to Georgia State University where he is semi-retired from the Radiation Safety Officer position. **Testifies Thurs., May 23, 9AM**

SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

YES! I'd rather be active than radioactive!

I am a "Georgian Against Nuclear Energy."

I support the goals of phasing out the use of nuclear energy as soon as possible, optimizing the use of energy conservation and renewable energy, and opposing the use of nuclear weapons.

Signature _____

Date _____

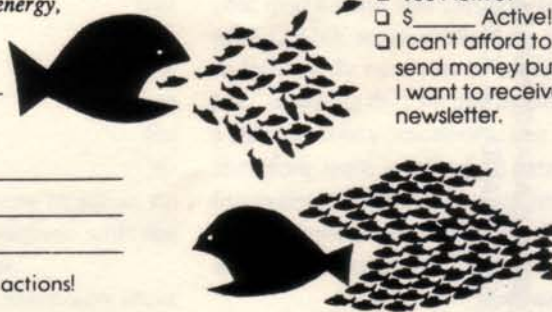
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Call me about actions!

- \$10 Active!*
- \$25 Active!
- \$50 Active!
- \$_____ Active!
- I can't afford to send money but I want to receive newsletter.



Fill out and return today before it's too hot! **Georgians Against Nuclear Energy**
P.O. Box 8574 • Station F • Atlanta, GA 30306

*minimum membership donation to receive newsletter

CHERNOBYL OBSERVANCE AT WATTS BAR LEADS TO ARRESTS

Nuclear Nations of the World Observe 10th Anniversary of Nuclear Disaster

APRIL 26, SPRING CITY, TN – Twenty-five peaceful anti-nuclear protesters were arrested at TVA's Watts Bar nuclear power plant, following a rally earlier in the day calling for the shutdown of the facility, which has been plagued by safety problems.

The protesters were followed by police as they trespassed onto the facility grounds and arrested shortly thereafter. Arrests included activists from Greenpeace, Katuah Earth First!, and from a broad coalition of state and national anti-nuclear groups.

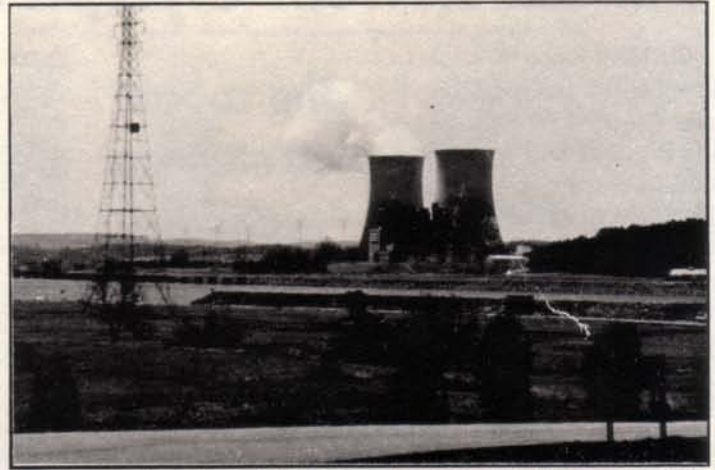
Some 200 citizens from across the state participated in the morning rally near the Watts Bar plant. Survivors of the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island nuclear disasters called for the end of nuclear power, and spoke of their experiences as victims of nuclear catastrophes. The rally also commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl explosion in April 1986.

"The best way to honor the millions of victims of nuclear disasters around the world is to shut down all reactors now, and embrace safe, renewable energy," said Greenpeace's Beth Zilbert, who was among those arrested. "That's the only way to ensure that there will be no more victims, and no more 'Chernobyls.'"

Watts Bar took more than two decades and over \$8 billion to build, has the most

whistleblower allegations of any nuclear power plant in the nation, and has been shut down over a dozen times for malfunctions and operational problems since going on-line in February 1996. Watts Bar has not yet received its full-power license.

– Deborah Rephan
Greenpeace



Watts Bar nuclear plant. Kind of messes up the beautiful Tennessee Valley landscape, doesn't it? Photo by Patti Richardson.

ELSEWHERE ON EARTH

SWEDEN – Activists climbed on to the roof at Ringhalls 2 and hung a banner. Thirteen people were arrested.

THE NETHERLANDS – During the night, activists projected a windmill onto Dodewaard nuclear reactor. A high-tech laser was used, and the sails on the windmill actually moved around. In the morning, activists climbed on to the roof at the Petten research reactor and hung a banner. As radioactivity levels were higher than expected, the activists stayed only a few hours. New questions are being raised about

radiation levels at the plant.

BELGIUM – 1,000 crosses were placed at the Tihange reactor. Dramatic photos of the field of crosses were shown on TV with a banner reading "Nuclear Power is a Dead End" and the reactor in the background.

THE UNITED KINGDOM – Activists projected "Remember Chernobyl" on to the Big Ben clock in central London. At Sizewell "Remember Chernobyl" and "Thank God, the Future's Solar" were projected onto the reactor dome. Local groups also demonstrated at all the reactor sites in the UK.

EARTH HAS A NEW NUCLEAR FREE ZONE
DECATUR, GEORGIA
GEORGIA'S FIRST!

GANESAYER

GEORGIANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ENERGY

P.O. BOX 8574 • ATLANTA, GA 30306 • 404-378-GANE

