

opinion/editorial

Human error problem persists in nuclear industry

Last week the President's commission on the accident at Three Mile Island released its report. And the nuclear industry breathed a sigh of relief. The findings, officials said, were good to them. After all, the report indicated that the industry itself wasn't at fault, that there were no major design errors, that nuclear plants themselves are basically safe.

The report said, in essence, that the errors were people errors—that the weaknesses were in the humans not the hardware involved.

And the nuclear industry was happy. Now apparently they plan to tell the world, "See, we're really not all that bad. We're basically OK. The report says so."

But allowing the industry to gloss over those human errors as if they are insignificant would be a gross injustice to the commission and to the people of the United States.

In an effort to eliminate the potential for

future mistakes the report recommended that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission be abolished and replaced with a restructured federal agent which would be run by a single administrator.

John G. Kemeny who headed the commission's seven-month investigation told the Christian Science Monitor that that recommendation was an effort to correct attitude problems at the NRC.

He said the human element in safety concerns were almost totally ignored by both the NRC and nuclear power industry—both of which seemed "hypnotized" by complex equipment.

Also, the NRC when selecting safety features for equipment prepared for large accidents rather than smaller ones like those at Three Mile Island.

Finally, he added, federal regulators equated regulation with safety and were fascinated with the complexity and voluminosity of regulations at the expense of realistic measures.

Those are serious problems and correcting them, of course, would do much to improve the safety of nuclear plants. But those mistakes are just a small part of the "human error" problem. The report, for example, also said the power plant operators were at fault and recommended better training programs for them.

But still, even that would not solve the problem. One cannot regulate the amount of sleep an operator gets before coming to work. One cannot be sure that a person who is having personal problems is not going to be thinking more about them than about his job.

In short, the human error problem has no solution. Even the most highly trained worker is going to make mistakes.

The dangers associated with human error in nuclear plants, however, are too great to risk. And the failure of the commission to recommend a moratorium on the construction of nuclear plants was perhaps the biggest human error of them all.

Eleanor Roosevelt turned disappointment to strength

BOSTON—Now it is Eleanor Roosevelt's turn to have her private life exhumed. Someone has said that the woman we buried was not who we thought she was, and so they have disinterred her letters, dissected their vital organs and sent them to the cruelist coroner of all, the public.

Those who think her prose was purple are arguing with those who think her life was tinged with lavender. Across the table-tops and country, people are talking about her "sexual preference" as if it were hair color: Did she or didn't she?

ellen goodman

Well, they say that every generation writes its own history. Ours, it appears, is sexual. We thrust our own obsessions back into time and came up with JFK's promiscuity, Thomas Jefferson's black mistress and, now, Eleanor's friend Lorena Hickok.

It seems, however, that we have greater taste for suspicions than for facts, for the unknown for the known.

IT IS ODD in this case, especially, because what we do know about Eleanor Roosevelt is so much more vital than what we don't know.

We know that by all accounts, including her own, she had a miserable childhood. Regarded coolly by her mother, who called her "granny," she was told that, "In a family that had great beauty, you are the ugly duckling of that family."

We know, too, that she worshipped—and struggled to please—her father long after that attractive, self-destructive and unreliable man was gone.

FROM THE TIME she was ten and an orphan, she spent a neglected childhood with her grandmother in a dark gloomy house where, as a cousin recalled, "We ate our suppers silently."

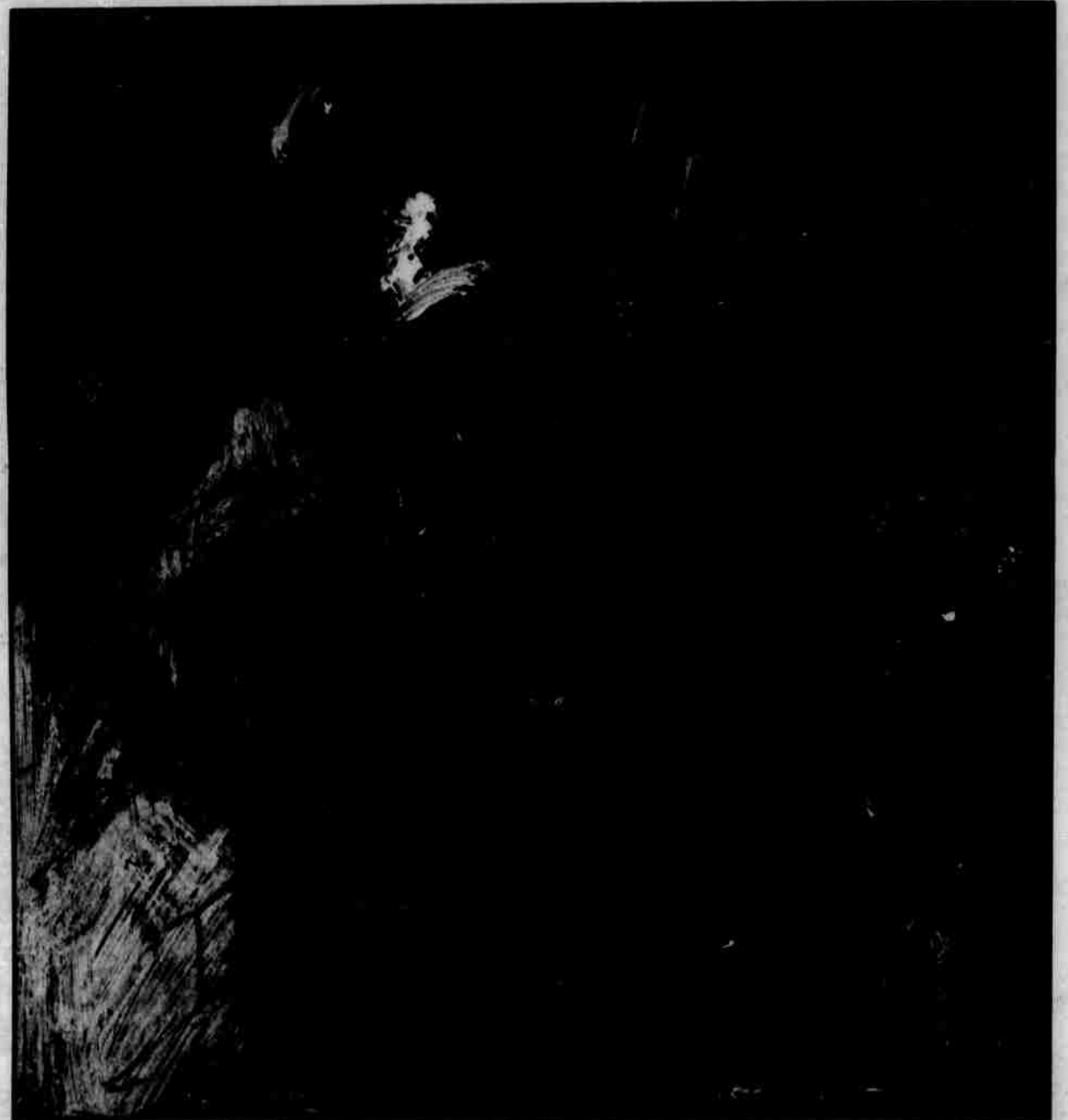
At a very young age, then, Eleanor knew too much about life's blows. As a young wife, she learned more. After ten years of marriage and six children, her husband fell in love with Lucy Mercer, and: "The bottom dropped out of my particular life, and I faced myself, my surroundings, my world, honestly for the first time. I really grew up that year."

Even when her husband died, Eleanor knew, "he might have been happier with a wife who was completely uncritical. That, I was never able to be . . . Nevertheless, I think I sometimes acted as a spur even though spurring was not always wanted or welcome. I was one of those who served his purposes."

SHE BECAME a great lady, then, not because she was a first lady, but because she was able through enormous will to turn her pain into strength, to turn disappointment into purpose.

The facts, just the facts, of her life might have defeated any of us. Add to that list a dead child and a husband stricken with polio. But she used them, the way she used them, the way she used her rigorous disciplines of calisthenics and ice-cold showers, to make herself stronger.

With this gutsiness, she cared about the poor even when the press accused her of interfering, and supported civil rights in the days when an anti-lynch law was highly controversial with southern Democrats. She promoted women in government when others disparaged them and, as a widow, worked for human rights in the world and the United Nations when others grew resigned.



All this, the important facts, the fundamental truths, are known, not suspected. As Arthur Schlesinger once added them up: "Her life was both ordeal and fulfillment. It combined vulnerability and stoic-

cism, pathos and pride, frustration and accomplishment, sadness and happiness." That is still the best epitaph.

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Corrections

One sentence from the Guest Opinion of Oct. 31 was inadvertently omitted. At the end of paragraph three, after discussing the unhappiness of classified staff about the four-day Christmas layoff, the opinion then should have read, "The protests reached the Governor's office and Gov. Thone declared 'Energy Holidays' to cover two of the projected four days of the layoff."

Due to a typographical error, the guest opinion of Nov. 1 contained an error. The sentence concerning the establishment of the Zionist community in Palestine, said that Britain permitted the Zionist community, which was a small majority to maintain its military establishment. The sentence should have read the Zionist community was a small minority.

The Daily Nebraskan apologizes for the errors.

On Oct. 30, your newspaper featured an advertisement from the Central Intelligence Agency. That ad was written in code. Following is a translation of what it really said:

Not everybody can work for the CIA, but you may be one of them. Learn treachery, bribery, subversion, espionage, torture, murder. You can participate in repeating the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran, Arbenz Gusman in Guatamala, Juan Bosch in the Dominican Republic, and in the destruction of Chile (the oldest democracy in Latin America).

You can be a member of the Phoenix Program (20,000 dead under the CIA supervision from 1969-74) in southern Vienna. Support military dictatorships in 80 of the countries now receiving U.S. foreign aid.

You must be willing to undertake assignments within the United States, including surveillance, mail openings, liaison with exiled Cuban terrorists, other matters of extreme delicacy: since these "covert operations" far exceed "intelligence gathering" as the Agency's activity, experience as bag-man, wire-man, hit-man or other "contact" relationships very helpful.

Ph.D.s needed in these fields: "My country (i.e., Fortune magazine's list of the 500 wealthiest corporat-

ions) Right of Wrong" and "The Nuremburg Defense (i.e., "I was only following orders")."

Salaries are markedly superior to academic and most business careers. Gratuities, emoluments, and sidelines are also available; for information on the latter, see Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

Recommended reading before intellectual, psychological, security testing begins: Philip Agee, *Inside the Company*; Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*; *The Pentagon Papers* (especially the early volumes).

The CIA is an equal opportunity/affirmative-action employer: ask the dead and the victims in Argentina, Chile, Iran, Indonesia, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Uruguay, etc., etc.

Finally, I expect next to see ads in the Daily Nebraskan for the Mafia. Surely the same ethical standards that ought to forbid promoting pornographic movies also apply here: wading through such trash, one feels unclean.

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letters