



NUCLEAR EXPRESSIONS: THE THREE MILE ISLAND NUCLEAR CRISIS OF 1979 MIRRORED IN POPULAR CULTURE

28 March – 30 May 2014



Selected Three Mile Island (TMI) Materials from Private Collections and from Archives and Special Collections at the Penn State Harrisburg Library

This exhibit features an eclectic mix of books, newspapers, rare and unusual ephemera, and everyday popular culture items that illustrate local and contemporary reactions to the TMI crisis of 1979 and its aftermaths. The objects displayed, several of which were produced around Middletown or within Pennsylvania, include a board game and pin-back buttons, t-shirts and postcards. Many of the items reflect the response to the accident by public authorities. Several items capture the psychological anxiety and anguish that the accident created locally and worldwide, while other objects, such as the “Original Canned Radiation” and the “React-or” board game, provide a glimpse into the various ways that people tried to cope with and make sense of the worst nuclear power accident in U.S. history. In commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the TMI crisis, this archival exhibit is comprised of thirty-five objects on loan from private collectors, and includes materials donated by People Against Nuclear Energy (PANE) to the Penn State Harrisburg Library’s Archives and Special Collections.

The exhibit was set up on the occasion of the conference: *TMI@35 – The Three Mile Island Nuclear Crisis in Perspective: Analyses, Stories, Policies*. Penn State Harrisburg, March 27-28, 2014, <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/calendar/event/tmi-35>.

List of Items in the Exhibit

1. "Squeeze Me I Radiate, Kiss Me I Meltdown." Tan cotton, short-sleeve T-shirt, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
2. "Aerial View of 3-Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station, units #1 and #2..." Color postcard printed by Jo-L'ic Enterprises, Harrisburg, PA, ca. 1979. On loan from a private collector. This postcard is considered rare and unique as it depicts all four of the cooling towers in operation.
3. "Nuclear Nightmare." *Time Magazine* 9 April 1979. On loan from a private collector.
4. "TMI Is Not Over." Yellow cotton, short-sleeve T-shirt, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
5. "A Disaster Movie Comes True." *People Magazine* 16 April 1979. On loan from a private collector.
6. Steve Miller. "Three Mile Island." Color postcard printed by Scene-Ics, York Haven, PA, 1991. On loan from a private collector.
7. "Another Year and I'm Still Here." Blue cotton, short-sleeve T-shirt, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
8. "3 Mile Island, Middletown, Pa." Yellow plastic coffee mug, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector. This item was offered for sale at the original Three Mile Island Visitor's Center, which is now closed.
9. John C. Staley and Roger R. Seip. *Three Mile Island: A Time of Fear*. Harrisburg: RFJ Inc., 1979. On loan from a private collector.
10. "I Survived Three Mile Island." Pink cotton, short-sleeve T-shirt, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
11. -12. Brenster Enterprises. "The Original Canned Radiation, Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania." Memorabilia cans made in Goldsboro (Etters), Pa., 1979. On loan from a private collector. This item has been described as one of the most popular and collectible artifacts associated with the TMI accident
13. Joanne Doroshow. *A Decade of Delay, Deceit and Danger: Three Mile Island 1979-1989, A Retrospective*. Three Mile Island Alert, 1989. On loan from a private collector.
14. "TMI 30." Yellow cotton, short-sleeve T-shirt, ca. 2000s. On loan from a private collector.
15. Robert Leppzer. *Voices from Three Mile Island*. New York: Crossing Press, 1980. On loan from a private collector.
16. Philip L. Cantelon and Robert C. Williams. *Crisis Contained: The Department of Energy at Three Mile Island*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
17. "Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station, Middletown, Pennsylvania." Color postcard printed by General Public Utilities Corporation, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
18. Stanley D. Brunn, James H. Johnson, Jr., and Donald J. Zeigler. *Final Report on a Social Survey of Three Mile Island Area Residents*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1979. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
19. *TMI-2: Challenge the Myths*. GPU Nuclear Corporation Communications Department, 1994. Film. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
20. Rachel Swick. "Photographer captured impact of TMI accident on community." *Press and Journal* 11 March 2009: A1. On loan from a private collector.

21. Earl W. Beeman. "1st Annual Public Sale and Auction." Flyer, Three Mile Island Souvenir & Salvage Co. 1979. On loan from a private collector.
22. "Fantasy Island, Three Mile Island, Middletown, PA." Neon green bumper sticker, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
23. Mike Gray and Ira Rosen. *The Warning: A Nuclear Omen for the Age of Terror*. New York: Norton, 1982. Published as Norton paperback with a new preface, 2003. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
24. J. Samuel Walker. *Three Mile Island: A Nuclear Crisis in Historical Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. On loan from a private collector.
25. R. Barber, Adam W. Sandnes, Diane L. Sandnes and Edward S. Sandnes, Jr. "React-or: A Radiating Experience: 2 to 4 players: ages 6 to adult." Board game in a box, 1979. On loan from a private collector.
26. "For Sale: Recreational Property." Flyer, ca. 1980s. On loan from a private collector.
27. -28. Collection of two pin-back buttons, including one designed by artist Jules Feiffer, "They Lie," ca. 1980s. From the People Against Nuclear Energy (PANE) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
29. Correspondence, 1980. Penn State Harrisburg Provost Theodore L. Gross to faculty regarding students' concerns over conditions at Three Mile Island. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg.
30. Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. *Disaster Operations Plan-Annex E*. 1981.
31. Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. *Three Mile Island Nuclear Station Emergency Information for Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, and York Counties*. 1989.
32. "TMI 30" Poster, 2009. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.
33. "Three Mile Island Is Not Over . . . Shut Down TMI Forever." Poster, 1980. On loan from a private collector.
34. "Nuclear America." Poster, 1979. On loan from a private collector.
35. Dick Thornburgh. *Where the Evidence Leads: An Autobiography*. Rev. ed. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2010. From the Three Mile Island Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Penn State Harrisburg Library.

Further Reading

- Gray, Jack, and Ira Rosen. *The Warning: Accident at Three Mile Island: A Nuclear Omen for the Age of Terror*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1982. Published as Norton paperback with a new preface, 2003.
- Houts, Peter S., Paul D. Cleary, and Teh-Wei Hu. *The Three Mile Island Crisis: Psychological, Social, and Economic Impacts on the Surrounding Population*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988.
- Malmsheimer, Lonna M. "Three Mile Island: Fact, Frame, and Fiction." *American Quarterly* 38 (Spring 1986): 35-52.
- Milspaw, Yvonne J. "Folklore and the Nuclear Age: 'The Harrisburg Disaster' at Three Mile Island." *International Folklore Review* 1 (1981): 57-65.
- Osif, Bonnie A., Anthony J. Baratta, and Thomas W. Conkling. *TMI 25 Years Later: The Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant Accident and Its Impact*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.