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Book Reviews

Fallout: An American Nuclear Tragedy, by P.L. Fradkin, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AR, ISBN 0-8165-1086-5, 300 pages, 1989, $14.95 (paperback) or $24.95 (cloth).

This is a most unusual and disquieting volume. It documents the many human aspects which resulted from actions and cover-up of information which followed the nuclear devices atmospheric tests in Nevada during the 1950's and 1960's. Unfortunately, significant amounts of radioactive fallout (containing such isotopes as strontium-90, iodine-131, and cesium-137) contaminated major areas, not just in Nevada, Utah and Arizona, but further east and south. This reviewer was one of many who sampled and counted the air and water in the upper New York State area, and found ten to twenty times background radiation in many test fallouts during the test period.

This volume is written in the style of a novel, but is documented with 54 pages of scientific references. Beginning with a test called "Dirty Harry" (due to its high fallout), it follows both the operational and academic aspects of the test series. The effect on the general population, especially in the downwind areas, is noted in detail, and the inadequate precautions which Fradkin documents during and after each test is given much space. The diseases, including cancer, which may have resulted eventually lead to a trial called *"Irene H. Allen and others vs. The United States of America"* for tort damages to Ms. Allen and thirteen others. After three years in pretrial, the trial began in Salt Lake City on September 14, 1982, with plaintiffs who claimed disease (or death) from the fallout effects. After two months, ten of the plaintiffs were tentatively awarded damages; fourteen others were denied due to proof of causation being inadequate. Appeals followed, but the issue was closed when the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal. The government, in essence, had no further liability for diseases and damages from the fallout. Sovereign immunity had prevailed.

HOWARD H. FAWCETT

Engineering Safety Assessment – An Introduction, by J.R. Thomson, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1987, ISBN 0-471-20712-4, 221 pages, $33.95.

The author states his intention as having the book introduce the subject of safety assessment in plants for seniors or graduate students in chemical, mechanical and nuclear engineering, as well as practicing engineers and scientists. This may be too broad an objective for the typical curricula in the United States. In particular, the subject matter of Chapter 4, as presented, is too ele-