

## **Media Exploitation of Apollo**

by  
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A year and half ago, KDKA-TV ran a week long series on their news program trashing the Apollo area. The speculation done in their reporting preyed upon the fear and ignorance of people. We were made to look like Chernobyl. If you don't recall, the music was eerie, pictures of a graveyard were shown in black and white with promises that an investigation would be continued throughout the year. Three people of questionable credibility were highlighted in the show declaring that something sinister had been going on and the government was involved. I can still remember getting the phone call from my mother asking me to move. That was it. I blew a gasket.

It was then that I discovered a group of people that called themselves the Apollo Area Economic Development Council. A dynamic fellow named Bill Kerr was its leader. Bill's determination to meet the challenge was something special. I asked if I could help and off I went.

I wrote to the reporter involved and politely asked for a meeting. I heard nothing. Two weeks later I called the reporter's producer. She never returned my calls. I waited another week and wrote to the General Manager of KDKA-TV. I still didn't hear anything.

I knew Westinghouse which owned KDKA made nuclear fuel rods in Cheswick at one time employing much the same processes as the plant in Apollo. While reviewing documents from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on Cheswick, I accidentally stumbled into something peculiar. Westinghouse had a nuclear core disruption in the early 60's at a place called Waltz Mill which was located near Irwin. The irony was that the NRC report questioned the willingness of Westinghouse to clean up its site for a significantly more dangerous problem than Apollo ever had. Meanwhile Westinghouse through KDKA was blasting B&W. Think CBS will carry that one on 60 Minutes?

I wrote to the President of Westinghouse and sent a copy of that NRC report. Perhaps it was coincidence but I suddenly received a call from KDKA saying that they would love to meet with us.

The meeting went well. We hit them with the facts. When we told them that no off-site radiation existed above allowable levels, the two producers shot back "that's not true." Remarkably, the reporter paused and said, "yes that is true." Back on their heels, KDKA refused to give us documentation for any of the people that they maintained were dying of radiation causes here. Furthermore, KDKA would not reveal where they obtained any information. Maybe they were terrified to reveal what little they had after learning that more background radiation was emanating from One Gateway Center (home of the big K) than any building in Apollo.

Today, a high-powered attorney from Pittsburgh is the next opportunist hoping to cash in on the conjectural plight of Apollo. He has solicited most property owners in Apollo asking them to join in a lawsuit for a perceived decline in property values due to perceived radioactive contamination. He is so concerned with our welfare that he wants to help us out of our misery by making easy money. He won't take any cash unless we win. What a humanitarian. His action does more to harm the property values in Apollo than any perceived radiation. But so what. He doesn't have to live or work here. I wonder how he would like it if people from Apollo strategically solicited his posh neighborhood for their economic enrichment.

The Apollo area is an easy target. It has a small population. However it is also an area that is moving forward toward a promising future as evidenced by the success of the Apollo Area Economic Development Council, the Roaring Run Watershed Association and the Internet project. Consider the good that would follow if outsiders used their creative talents exploring opportunity here instead of exporting sensationalism and greed?

None of us want to ignore the truth about our past. But the real truth is that Apollo has much to offer. The collective human spirit in Apollo is an excellent illustration. Maybe it is no fluke that in Greek mythology Apollo was the god who best embodied the Greek spirit.



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