Personal Past, Amelia Nicolas HIST 1493

NO NUKES Antinuclear Movement

Primary Source: Summarized Interview- Kelly Hodge



KELLY'S DAUGHTER WITH HER DAD- "NO NUKES" SEWN ACROSS HER BUTT

"I just really felt like I was doing something important, [it was] so close to where we lived, like I was really doing something important for our country and people in general"[1]

[1] Kelly Hodge, interview by Amelia Nicolas, Dec 6, 2025

My Nana, Kelly Hodge, was an American teenager during the Vietnam War. During this time, before his Watergate days, President Nixon campaigned to use nuclear warfare in the ongoing Vietnam War. Kelly was a young adult when government energy operations began putting nuclear plants in the United States to provide 'unlimited energy'. In some extreme cases, landowners would be contacted and paid by the Government to put a nuclear silo 'in their backyard'. Nuclear power plants would provide unlimited energy preventing potential power outages at the cost of the environment, while the public feared a catastrophic nuclear plant meltdown.

In 1979, my Kelly was 19 years old with a newborn baby. As a young woman and mother she decided to join the antinuclear movement. She went to Tulsa and joined the Sunbelt Alliance. At this time, Kelly was living in Catoosa, just a few minutes drive from Inola where the Public Service Company of Oklahoma was building a large nuclear power plant: Black Fox. As a member of the sunbelt alliance, Kelly would participate in fundraising and public awareness events. Her small group was called the Solar Bears. (She laughed when she told me that). She recalls sewing a quilt with the group that read: NO MORE NUKES. The Sunbelt Alliance hosted a concert, featuring Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt- a smaller scale of Bruce Springsteen's NO NUKES concert at Madison Square Garden.

On the other side of the country, Three Mile Island was a nuclear power plant in Middletown, Pennsylvania. In June of 1979, electrical malfunctions at Three Mile Island caused the system to overheat and release increased amounts of radiation. People in the area reported sickness and deformation appearing in both humans and wildlife.

This event meant that tension was high for the Sunbelt Alliance. So, The Sunbelt Alliance organized a peaceful protest event: they would occupy the land where the Black Fox plant was being built. They didn't want to have any harm or destruction, so nonviolent training was required to attend.

On June 2nd, 1979 in Inola Oklahoma, 352 sunbelt alliance members including many news reporters, cameramen and actor Wes Studi hiked to Black Fox power plant chanting things like, "NO MORE NUKES!" and "2468 WE DON'T WANT TO RADIATE!" They walked a few miles to the Nuclear Power Plant before being met with a barbed wire fence. Kelly talked to a Tulsa News Reporter (later she

saw herself on TV). Everyone climbed over a ‘tee-pee shaped’ ladder to get over the barbed wire fence into the plant construction site. Nana says she brought food, water and a tent- they planned to sleep overnight. As everyone was climbing over the fence, the Rodger’s County Sheriff’s Department came in and arrested everyone for “trespassing and treason”. The protesters stood trial and received a split jury: A mistrial. No one was convicted.

Though cut short, the Black Fox protest raised public awareness and was seen as a success for the Sunbelt Alliance. The Public Service Company eventually ran out of money for the Black Fox nuclear power plant and in 2017 built a much safer paper plant instead.[2]

[2] Kelly Hodge, interview by Amelia Nicolas, Dec 6, 2025



KELLY HODGE AND JEFF BRUER IN THE 70S

Secondary Source: *3 Mile Island*, Walker

Description of Key word:

The antinuclear movement became popular in the 70s in religious groups and environmentalist groups. People supporting the antinuclear movement aimed to raise public awareness. In 1979, the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Middletown, Pennsylvania malfunctioned, further intensifying the antinuclear movement.[3]

[3] Samuel J Walker, 3 Mile Island: a Nuclear Crisis in Historical Perspective (The University of California Press Berkeley 2004), 20-22.

Significance and Personal Connection:

Inspired by the 3 mile island meltdown, activists from Tulsa, Oklahoma protested construction of the Black Fox Power Plant in Inola. The antinuclear movement influenced public opinion on nuclear technology in America and in Oklahoma it stopped the construction of the Black Fox nuclear power plant.[4]

J. Samuel Walker Background:

J. Samuel Walker has written multiple books on atomic/nuclear energy and warfare. He is a published historian with a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland. He has also held government roles and Nuclear Regulation roles.

Copy of pages referenced:

[4] Town of Inola, "Protests of Black Fox," *Inola Oklahoma*

arithmetic with wishful thinking." Although Bethe and other nuclear proponents favored the development of solar, wind, and geothermal energy, they denied that those alternatives to nuclear power could satisfy either the short-term or long-term energy requirements of the United States. Advocates contended that nuclear power was reasonably reliable and predicted that it would improve with more operating experience. They presented data showing that the industry-wide capacity factor for nuclear units was comparable to that of large coal facilities, and that for some nuclear plants it was better.[32]

THE NUCLEAR POWER CONTROVERSY

The issues surrounding the safety, necessity, and reliability of nuclear power had erupted into a full-fledged national controversy by the mid-1970s. The debate was intense, dogmatic, and highly polarized; representatives of both sides described it as a "religious war." With the fervor of holy warriors, partisans used emotional appeals to win public support. "The result has been a flood of advertising and pamphlets," observed the reporter Joanne Omang in the *Washington Post*, "either scaring us about the horrors of [a] nuclear holocaust or scaring us about the horrors of inadequate electricity." Howard K. Smith, a commentator for the *ABC Evening News*, repeated a favorite theme of nuclear proponents when he told viewers in 1975 that, without an expansion of nuclear power, "the day will come, probably in the early 1980s, when the home will grow cold, auto traffic [will turn] to a trickle, and industries [will] go on two days a week, with lots of unemployment, for lack of fuel." Although supporters of the technology seldom drew the issue in terms as stark and alarming as Smith's commentary, they insisted that nuclear power development was necessary to avoid a serious energy shortage.

While nuclear advocates used emotional appeals in advancing their arguments, critics were even more inclined to make their case by evoking strong sentiments. Perhaps the most arresting example was a poster that antinuclear protesters often carried at rallies. It asked the question "What Do You Do in Case of a Nuclear Accident?" and provided a hauntingly apocalyptic answer: "Kiss Your Children Goodbye." Students from Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington, D.C., made a similar argument in a letter to President Jimmy Carter. "People often say, 'I don't want my kids to sit around in the cold twenty years from now,'" they wrote. "But the proliferation of nuclear power raises the more important question of whether there will be anyone alive twenty years from

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now." Hans Bethe complained that trying to explain the advantages of nuclear power to opponents was like "carving a cubic foot out of a lake." He related an incident that occurred when he spoke to a largely antinuclear audience at a meeting in Berkeley, California. After he had presented his position on the need for nuclear power, a woman in the audience stood up, turned her back on him, and shouted, "Save the Earth!" The crowd reacted, he said, with "thunderous applause."[33]

In keeping with its heavy emotional content, the contest over nuclear power featured a strong element of gamesmanship. This was evident in competing petitions that each side publicized to show authoritative scientific support for its position. In January 1975, a group of thirty-four eminent American scientists, including eleven Nobel laureates, released a statement on energy policy that had been drafted primarily by Bethe and Lapp. Contending that the energy crisis confronted the United States with "the most serious situation since World War II," it maintained that there was "no reasonable alternative to an increased use of nuclear power to satisfy our energy needs." The petition faulted nuclear critics for a lack of "perspective as to the feasibility of non-nuclear power sources and the gravity of the fuel crisis." When Bethe and Lapp issued the statement at a press conference attended by about a hundred reporters, Ralph Nader countered by attending the event and handing out an appeal of his own. It was a letter to President Ford signed by eight prominent scientists, including five Nobel laureates, that opposed a "massive speedup of nuclear power plant construction." *Science* magazine scored this exchange as "Nuclear Advocates 34, Opponents 8."

A short time later, the Union of Concerned Scientists circulated yet another petition that urged a "drastic reduction" in new construction of reactors. Of the approximately sixteen thousand people who received the statement from the UCS, about twenty-three hundred signed. The UCS then delivered the petition to the White House and Congress on August 6, 1975, the thirtieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This initiative, in turn, prompted the American Nuclear Society, an organization of nuclear professionals in industry, government, and academic institutions, to launch its own drive. Eventually it secured more than thirty-two thousand signatures on a statement that underlined the need for both coal and nuclear power and asserted that there were "no technical problems incapable of being solved" in the use of either technology.[34]

As the adversaries in the nuclear debate attempted to win public favor by citing the numbers and professional qualifications of their supporters,

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each also acclaimed defectors from the competing side. Nuclear proponents pointed to the views expressed by Ian A. Forbes, a former member of the UCS who had coauthored a stinging reproach of the AEC's treatment of the emergency core cooling question in 1971. By 1974, he had concluded that the issue had been satisfactorily resolved, and he became a vocal backer of nuclear power. He rebuked Nader and the UCS for polarizing discussion in a way that "made reasoned debate almost impossible." The effect of Forbes's changeover from a critic to a defender of nuclear power was modest, however, compared to the highly publicized resignation of three midlevel engineers from their positions with General Electric's nuclear power division in 1976. The three men, Gregory C. Minor, Richard B. Hubbard, and Dale C. Bridenbaugh, had a total of fifty-four years' experience with General Electric, families to support, and no immediate job prospects. They resigned with a flourish by announcing that "nuclear power is a technological monster that threatens all future generations." General Electric sought to deflate the effect of their action by pointing out that they were a small portion of the hundreds of nuclear engineers that it employed. Nevertheless, as *Time* reported, the "trio's defection seemed like a major victory for the antinuke forces in the great nuclear debate."[35]

Although the battle over nuclear power was usually fought in press conferences, hearings, meetings, petitions, articles, and television appearances, it occasionally was joined in more direct confrontations. In May 1977, a demonstration against two proposed nuclear plants in Seabrook, New Hampshire, attracted about two thousand poster-carrying, slogan-chanting, nonviolent protesters. "We feel Seabrook in particular and nuclear power in general are life and death issues," explained one of their leaders. After the demonstrators occupied the construction site, police arrested more than fourteen hundred of them for trespassing. The conflict over Seabrook commanded a great deal of attention and suggested that citizen protests against nuclear plants would grow. Nader predicted that direct action "will spread all over the country as needed . . . if there is no more formal way to protest." Opponents of nuclear plants in Indiana, Oklahoma, Missouri, Alabama, California, and elsewhere adopted similar nonviolent tactics in efforts to halt or slow construction, promote their views, and win sympathy for their cause. The result was to amplify the emotional and uncompromising quality of the nuclear power debate. "Increasingly, the debate is constituted less of reason and logic and more of emotion," lamented Jon Payne, editor of *Nuclear News*, the monthly publication of the American Nuclear Society. "And its out-

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Figure 1. Demonstrator at an antinuclear rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1979 (National Archives 220-TMI-DE9040041-5).

come is based less on the accuracy of the arguments than on the number of voices behind them."[36]

The influence of the nuclear controversy on public attitudes toward the technology was difficult to assess. Public opinion surveys showed strong support for nuclear power. A poll conducted by Louis Harris and Associates in August 1975 indicated that 63 percent of the public favored the expansion of nuclear power in the United States, while 19 percent opposed and 18 percent were not sure. Later polls yielded similar results. Nevertheless, the polls were not unequivocally favorable to nuclear power. The 1975 Harris survey, for example, found that support for con-

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