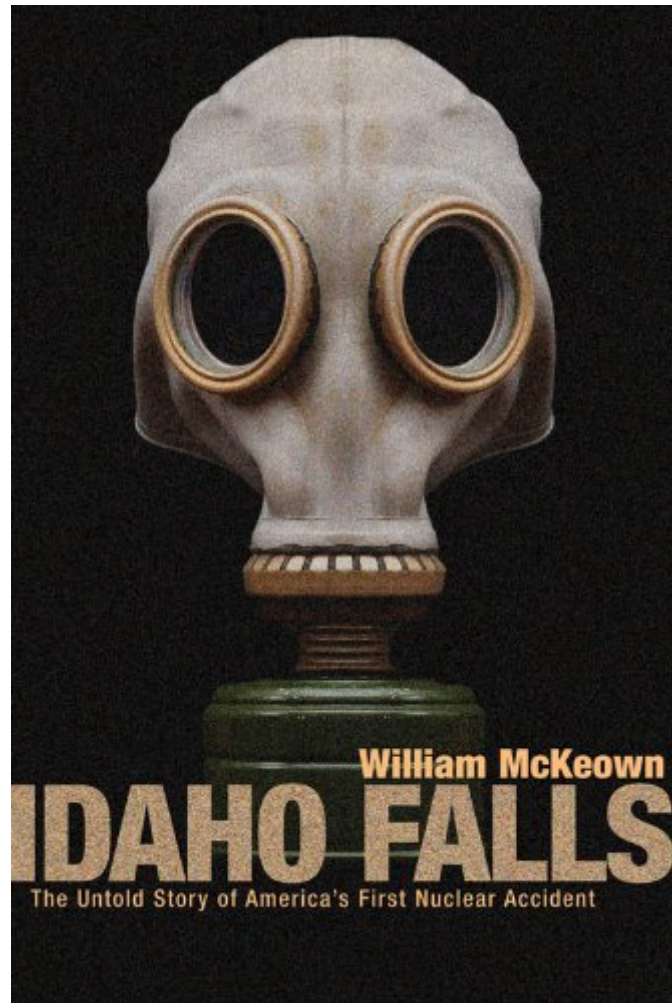


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Idaho Falls: The Untold Story Of America's First Nuclear Accident



Synopsis

When asked to name the world's first major nuclear accident, most people cite the Three Mile Island incident or the Chernobyl disaster. Revealed in this book is one of American history's best-kept secrets: the world's first nuclear reactor accident to claim fatalities happened on United States soil. Chronicled here for the first time is the strange tale of SL-1, a military test reactor located in Idaho's Lost River Desert that exploded on the night of January 3, 1961, killing the three-man maintenance crew on duty. Through details uncovered in official documents, firsthand accounts from rescue workers and nuclear industry insiders, and exclusive interviews with the victims' families and friends, this book probes intriguing questions about the devastating blast that have remained unanswered for more than 40 years. From reports of a faulty reactor design and mismanagement of the reactor's facilities to rumors of incompetent personnel and a failed love affair that prompted deliberate sabotage of the plant, these plausible explanations for the explosion raise questions about whether the truth was deliberately suppressed to protect the nuclear energy industry.

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Customer Reviews

The author does a good job with the Accident victims autobiographies, psychology, injuries, and burial preparations. However his account of the Accident victim's rescue is insulting of the Rescue Team and inaccurate. The insults include "nerdy engineers"(p.99), "bourbon and water downing bosses"(p.95) and individuals who were "forced to conduct a rescue operation even though they were unprepared"(p.95). In fact they were some of the most courageous, intelligent, experienced, innovative and caring individuals I have ever known. The 4-man rescue team was composed of the following individuals: Paul Duckworth, the SL-1 Operations Supervisor, who may have been a WWII South-Pacific Campaign ship commander at age 19 and owned the powerful Model 88 Oldsmobile used to race the Rescue Team to the Accident site. Sidney Cohen, the SL-1 Test supervisor, a WWII, 2nd-wave Normandy Invasion infantryman at age 17 and a "Life Master" bridge player. William Rausch, the 28-year old SL-1 Assistant Operations Supervisor who had been a Merchant Marine ship engineer with experience in recovery of a fatal shipboard boiler room explosion. Ed Vallario, the 33-year old SL-1 Health Physicist who was the first team member to be notified of the post-Accident lethal radioactive conditions and missing operators because he was the designated technical contact for concerns of the SL-1 plant operators and NRTS security and firemen that evening. William Gammill, the 32-year old, on-duty, AEC Site Survey Chief and a certified Health Physicist who volunteered to assist the rescue team. In 1962 all five men received medals and national recognition for "heroism in saving human life" from the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission.

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