



Mr. and Mrs. James Hershey, left, of Marietta, and Mr. and Mrs. James Landis of East Petersburg are among the farm families in southcentral Pennsylvania who feel threatened by nuclear

power plants. Their concern grew after the mishap at the atomic generating facility on Three Mile Island last month. With the farm couples are their respective daughters, Jessica, left, and Abigail.

## Atomic mishap turned some farmers off

By DIETER KRIEG

MARIETTA — After having sensed danger two weeks ago when a nuclear reactor about ten miles from his home went out of control, James Hershey believes "the consequences of such accidents are so dire that I don't think we can afford to live with them."

"We've never felt very good about nuclear power as an alternate source of energy. In a way I'm glad this happened because it's going to make people deal a little more realistically with the dangers of it. I don't think these things can ever be made safe enough. I think it's impossible for them to ever rule out the possibilities of an accident," Hershey explained.

Hershey and his wife, the former Nancy Frey, were most concerned about their 2-year old daughter, Jessica. She is their first child. Although they did not leave the farm and their home, they did make an effort to keep their daughter inside, the couple said. They farm a total of 400 acres, of which 140 acres are owned.

While admitting that they weren't actively opposed to nuclear energy when the Metropolitan Edison Company began generating electricity from the atomic facility a few years ago, the Hersheys now believe that it should not be the wave of the future.

"I'm not convinced that the oil situation is as serious as it's cracked up to be. But that's not to say that I don't feel strongly about our need to conserve oil. We'll have to be willing to sacrifice. Coal has its problems too, but I think it will give us a break," Hershey continued.

Although Hershey and his wife were and still are concerned about their livelihood and the future of their farm, Hershey claimed that he did not feel "that personally threatened" by the accident.

"Basically, I'm concerned about our country's view on nuclear energy. I think we need to become more aware that this is not going to be worth it. I believe many farmers have neither the education nor the background on radiation to realize the dangers," the Lancaster County

farmer continued. Both he and his wife attended college for a couple of years.

Despite the fact that a crisis situation has been averted, Hershey isn't so sure that the worst is over. "Whatever it is they're going to do to clean up, I'm not sure they're going to do it safely," he said.

The Hersheys are not alone with their concerns. Another young farm couple, James and Alta Landis of East Petersburg, are also worried. They're friends of the Hersheys and are in partnership with them in a potato business.

When a robot was brought onto the scene, Mrs. Landis said that proved to her that humans had overstepped their bounds.

They wonder now whether or not any radiation leaks might have contaminated their soil.

Across the Susquehanna River, near Goldsboro, York County, 73-year old Charles Conley is convinced that problems have increased on his farm ever since the nuclear power plant went into operation in 1974. Conley's 119 acre farm sits on a hill overlooking Three Mile Island, site of the disabled nuclear power plant. His fields come to within a mile of the facility.

There are two atomic fission units on Three Mile Island. According to Conley, the first one wasn't "so bad." When Unit 2 went into operation last Fall, however he noticed a difference. "It makes a heck of a racket," he noted. He heard the screaming blast of steam early in the morning of March 28 when the drama on Three Mile Island began. "It wasn't the first time I heard lots of noise from the plant. I heard it long before last week, and I've seen steam going up in the air too," Conley explained.

While radiation can't be detected by any of a person's senses, Conley sees an element of danger in the clouds of steam that spew out of the cooling towers of a nuclear plant. He associates those same vapors with some of the

(Turn to Page 48)

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