

VIEWPOINT Of Maggie Trudeau and nuclear radiation

By Gerry Landsborough
Herald columnist

Nuclear disaster and Margaret Trudeau appear to be getting most of the headlines this past week. Let's look first at the nuclear disaster.

Experts have been arguing pro and con over the risk factors of nuclear power plants since the after effects of Hiroshima.

Experts predicted what occurred at the Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania could never happen. So much for the experts. The main danger from a malfunction of a nuclear reactor is the exposure to radiation. Even a small amount of radioactive material can cause cancer.

SAFE LEVEL.
Dr. Karl Z. Morgan of the Georgia Institute of Technology said "There is an overwhelming amount of data showing there is no safe level of exposure - there is no dose of radiation so low that the risk of malignancy is zero".

A statement such as that is weighed against the needs of an energy hungry world. It's like arguing against the motor car over the horse and buggy - nuclear power will win.

Already more than 12 per cent of all electric power in the United States is produced in nuclear power plants.

Whenever you have anything that is man made you run the risk of malfunction. The "human factor" is where the real danger lies.

Experts are already blaming the accident in Pennsylvania on fatigued employees. The human factor.

If anything it will caution us against treating nuclear power without the proper respect.

Dr. Ted Taylor a nuclear physicist and former bomb designer warns against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

With so many reactors appearing around the world (220 now licensed with 320 additional reactors on order or under construction) there is a high risk of mis-use. All nuclear reactors produce plutonium. Plutonium that has been separated and purified in a reprocessing plant can be used for weapons and fuel.

WILD STALLION
Harnessing nuclear power is like harnessing a wild stallion, you may break him or he may break you - it's all in the handling. Can it happen again?

Dr. Arthur Porter of the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning says "The more reactors you build the greater the chance of a deadly accident". A built in risk factor, but we must remember that we live in a world of risks. Risks are a price we pay for technology and I believe that the benefits of our modern society outweigh the risks. After all, who can turn the wheel of progress in reverse - with all the motor car accidents who would want to go back to the horse and buggy? Our hunger for energy is growing steadily and that need will be answered by nuclear power though the risk is great it is the price we pay for the benefits we reap.

"Beyond Reason" is the title of Margaret Trudeau's new book. Having read several excerpts so far I can honestly say that we are getting a remarkable between-the-lines portrait of Margaret and Pierre Trudeau. Rather than hurt Pierre Trudeau I believe Margaret's book will do just the opposite.

There is much to be said for a man who can keep public composure in the face of such difficulties. Margaret paints herself to be very immature and very vulnerable to life around her. Her words, even taking into account a possible dressing up of the facts for the benefit of the reading public, shows her to have been a very lost sort of individual for many years.

TAKE SIDES
People tend to take sides and expect certain behaviour from the rich and famous - they forget that people in the public eye are "people" and some just can't make it.

No one has paid as great a price for the financial rewards "Beyond Reason" will bring as Margaret Trudeau.

History has never been given such an intimate look into the lives of a Prime Minister and his wife and family.

Margaret Trudeau is giving us a close look at the after-life of a flower child and I doubt that other flower children have conducted their lives with very much difference.

The life of public figures is a very lonely one. Betty Ford recently announced her addiction to alcohol. Margaret is announcing in "Beyond Reason" emotional weakness and drug abuse. She shows herself as a lost child - a woman who has never grown up and though we can get very angry with a child we usually forgive them because they are just children.

I hope the Canadian public will do the same with Margaret Trudeau - she deserves sympathy nothing more, nothing less.

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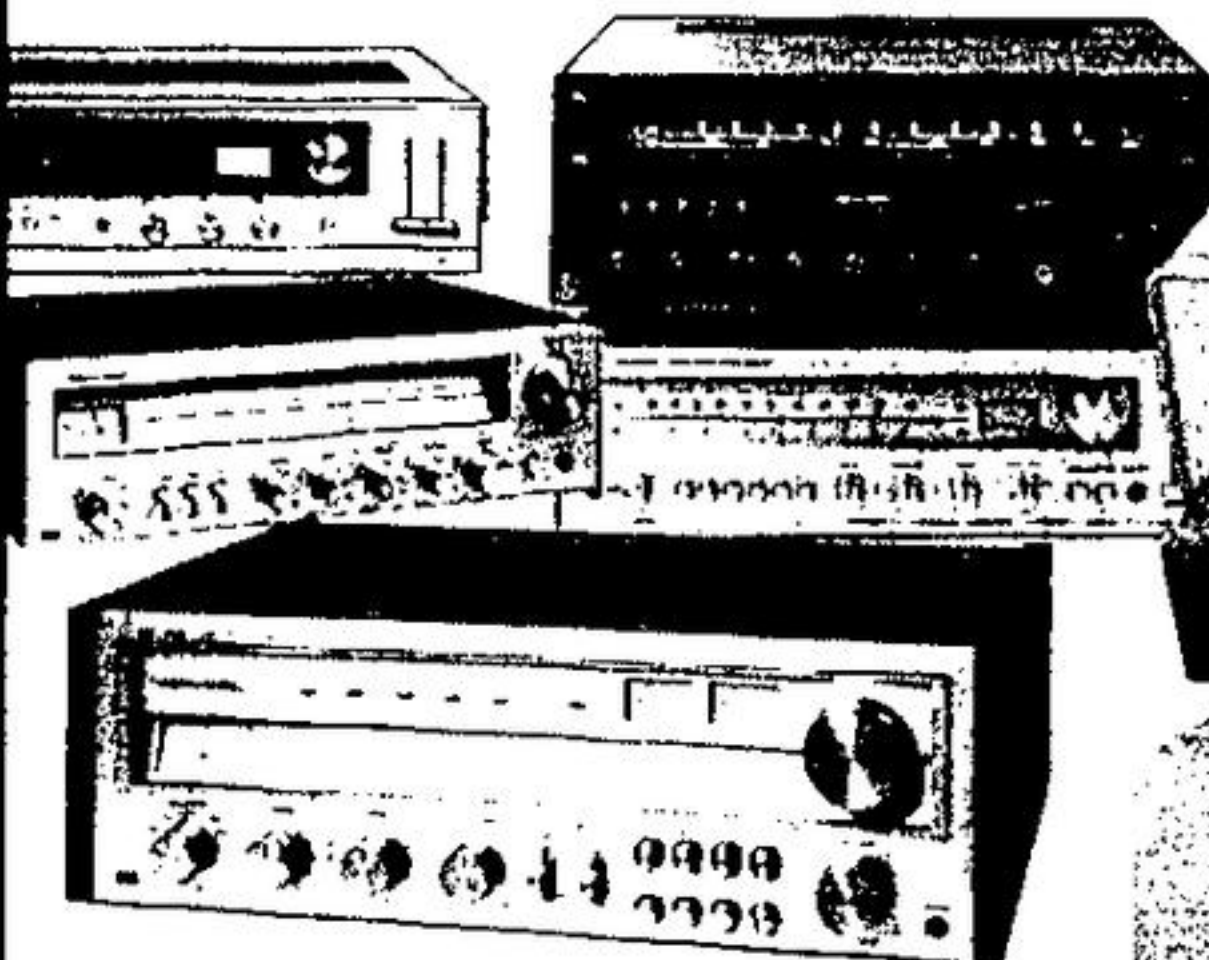
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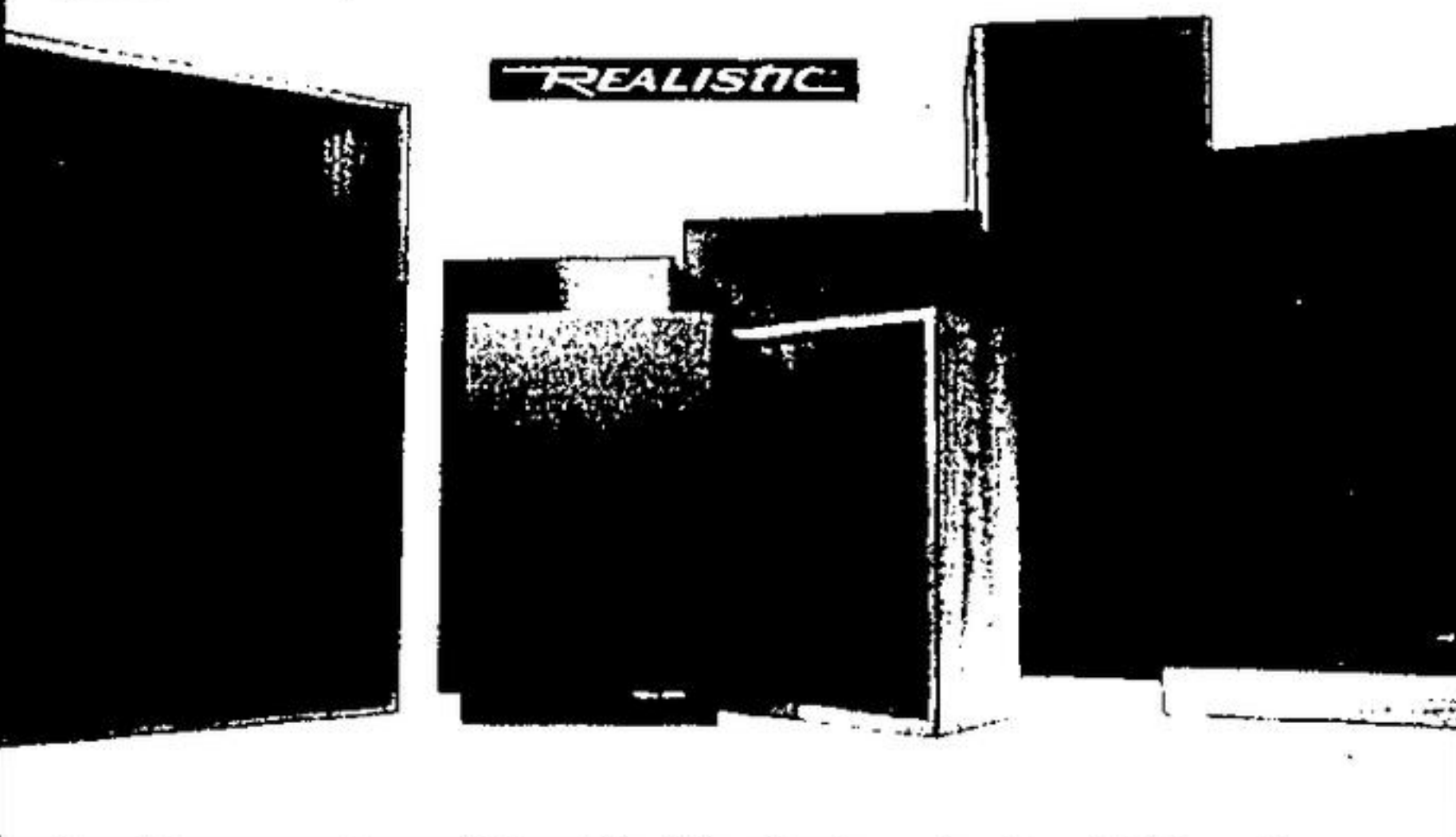
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