

# I'm Melting!



The bus pulled to a stop in front of Douglas County Community Nuclear Power Station on the eastern shore of Glen Cunningham Lake, and instantly thirty energetic eighth graders poured out and raced up to the main entrance. An avuncular looking man clad head to toe in a white radiation shield suit warmly greeted them at the door. Max McGee – or Uncle Neutron, as he liked to be called – handed each child a plutonium pop, a hard candy confection flavored with dimly glowing transuranic ores. Then he ushered them inside the power station, pulling closed behind him the door, which sealed with a hermetic hiss. Uncle Neutron liked to personally lead visiting school children on tours of his facility, and he always started with a trip into the reactor core. He waved to his wife, Alice (or Aunt Atomica), and she threw a switch that opened the massive lead-lined double doors. He chuckled at the “Gone Fission” sign tacked to the wall inside the room, no matter he’d seen it hundreds of times. “Now kids,” he said, his voice muffled by the respirator, “don’t touch the control rods, because they contain Uranium 235, which is very fragile.” But instructing an inquisitive youth *not* to do something is as good as inciting her or him to do exactly the opposite. Sure enough, the moment Uncle Neutron directed the class’ attention to the bubbling pool of liquid deuterium, little Betsy wandered over to the Magnetron Wall and pulled on one of the rods. From the control booth high above them, Aunt Atomica looked on in alarm, but by the time she got Uncle Neutron’s attention, it was too late. The poor girl shrieked as the U-235 flowed into and through her, turning her body into so much flaccid protoplasm. “Help me, help me,” she whined. “I’m *melting!*” And, just like the Wicked Witch of the West, she did!