

**CARRIE
BAREFOOT
DICKERSON**
1917-2006



**SHE FOUGHT
THE NUCLEAR
INDUSTRY
– AND WON!**

When Carrie Dickerson learned about plans to build a nuclear power plant near her home, she asked the Atomic Energy Commission to send her information on nuclear energy. When federal Regulatory Commission officials told Dickerson that she didn't have "the time, energy or money" to stop the nuclear plant, it rallied the Goliath in her. "Oh yes, I will," she replied, "and we will win."

Carrie Barefoot was born in May 1917 near Okmulgee, attending Rocky Hill and Nuyaka Mission schools. She married Charles Dickerson in 1938 while studying home economics education and nutrition at Oklahoma State University. They settled on a farm near Claremore. In 1943, Dickerson began teaching at German-speaking Mennonite Pleasant View school near Inola. She later taught in several Rogers and Mayes County schools. In 1964, she opened Aunt Carrie's Nursing Home (later Wood Manor).

In spring 1983, with great fanfare, Public Service Company (PSO) announced plans to build a nuclear power plant named Black Fox. When Dickerson read the newspaper account "\$450M N-Plant Planned for Inola", she began researching the health and environmental risks, including damage caused by effluent from the 1940s Manhattan Project. Dickerson was outraged to discover a nuclear reactor meltdown could render an area the size of Pennsylvania uninhabitable.

She founded the political action group Citizens' Action for Safe Energy (CASE). Over the next nine years, Dickerson fought PSO in every hearing room, courtroom, and commission meeting, filing anything and everything in court to delay the project. Water, pollution, radon and radioactivity issues were all brought up in countless court proceedings. She had no idea it would take nine years and \$550,000, forcing her to sell the nursing home, cattle, and 55 acres of her farm to fight PSO. When Charles died of heart problems, she stitched quilts and raffled them off.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission planned a week of public hearings in 1976 but Dickerson flooded the proceedings with so many legal challenges that the hearings lasted eighteen months. In March 1979, a partial meltdown at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant and Soviet Union's Chernobyl Plant disaster sounded the death knell for new nuclear plants.

With construction estimates skyrocketing to \$2.4 billion, PSO asked for a rate hike in 1981. The Commission concluded that Black Fox was no longer financially viable. In February 1982, PSO cancelled Black Fox, becoming the only nuclear power plant stopped by citizens after construction began. Soon after, Dickerson began receiving funds from utility customers who had received rebate reimbursement checks from PSO.

Dickerson wrote two books including "Aunt Carrie's War Against Black Fox Nuclear Power Plant" (1995). The morning after finishing the final edit of her second book for children on the history of wind power in November 2006, she died at age 89.

Called the "Martin Luther King, Jr. of the antinuclear movement", Dickerson was a lesson in the power of one. Her actions saved rate-payers millions of dollars. "I'd rather live in poverty than under the threat of a nuclear plant. It's worth millions of dollars to go to sleep at night with peace of mind." The state of Oklahoma has no nuclear power plants, thanks to Carrie Dickerson's crusade.