

1983 film **SILKWOOD**  
starring Meryl Streep,  
Cher and Kurt Russell

# IN MEMORY OF **KAREN SILKWOOD** (1946 - 1974) **NUCLEAR WHISTLEBLOWER**



The day after the 1979 court victory in Oklahoma, this sign was planted by friends and supporters next to the culvert where Karen Silkwood was killed. She was memorialized as a person "who did something we all could do, something we all should do. She chose to stand for truth instead of deception."

On Nov. 13, 1974, Karen Silkwood, a 28-year-old technician and union activist at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron plutonium plant near Crescent, Oklahoma, was killed in a car crash while on her way to meet a reporter. She was a chemical technician and labor union activist known for raising concerns about corporate practices related to health and safety of workers in a nuclear facility.

Silkwood was a victim of company harassment, like other union activists in the plant, but her problems didn't end at the factory gate.

There is evidence that Kerr-McGee, a virulently anti-union corporation with powerful political connections, kept Silkwood under surveillance, possibly with the help of police and government agents. Someone tapped her phone. Someone had, in fact, radioactively contaminated her apartment. And evidence strongly suggests her car was forced off the road on the night of Nov. 13, 1974.

Why she would be marked for murder is no mystery. Three months previously she had given the Atomic Energy Commission a detailed list of safety violations at the plutonium plant where she worked. The night of her death she was on her way to meet Steve Wodka, assistant to OCAW Legislative Director Tony Mazzocchi, and a New York Times reporter.

Silkwood was bringing with her documents that proved her allegation that quality control of fuel rods had been compromised. Her revelations might have exposed a major scandal with enormous and wide-ranging ramifications.

Exactly how she died — or who killed her — is still a mystery.



***Karen's effort and her ultimate fate is an important symbol of the collective efforts of American workers. The truth surrounding her union battle and death must be told. If we fail in this task, the labor movement struggle for a safe and healthy workplace will have been dealt a serious blow.***

- Tony Mazzocchi, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union

## **KAREN MADE A DIFFERENCE. ...SO CAN YOU.**

A supposedly "powerless," but determined woman was silenced, yet she managed to reach us. You can continue the work Karen started. There are groups in your area working on problems of pollution, worker health and safety, toxic substances, hazardous wastes, radiation, and safe energy. They can use your help.

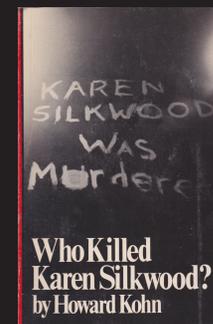
Like Karen, we must resist a system that attempts to threaten our well-being as workers and citizens, and does not protect us against dirty, dangerous and expensive energy industries conspiracies that undermine our health, safety, and environment.

Let's fight these problems - nuclear energy, radiation exposure and the entire chain of nuclear fuel production. **NO NUKES!**

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**SLOTHS AGAINST NUCLEAR STATE  
FACEBOOK.COM/SANSNUCLEAR**

**SOURCE: CHRISTIC INSTITUTE ARCHIVE, UNITED ELECTRICAL, RADIO  
AND MACHINE WORKERS OF AMERICA**



Books on the life and work of Karen Silkwood by Howard Kohn and Richard Rashke

