

The Radioactive Boy Scout: The Frightening True Story of a Whiz Kid and His Homemade Nuclear Reactor

Ken Silverstein



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Growing up in suburban Detroit, David Hahn was fascinated by science. While he was working on his Atomic Energy badge for the Boy Scouts, David's obsessive attention turned to nuclear energy. Throwing caution to the wind, he plunged into a new project: building a model nuclear reactor in his backyard garden shed.

Posing as a physics professor, David solicited information on reactor design from the U.S. government and from industry experts. Following blueprints he found in an outdated physics textbook, David cobbled together a crude device that threw off toxic levels of radiation. His wholly unsupervised project finally sparked an environmental emergency that put his town's forty thousand suburbanites at risk. The EPA ended up burying his lab at a radioactive dumpsite in Utah. This offbeat account of ambition and, ultimately, hubris has the narrative energy of a first-rate thriller.



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