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## Statement of George Farrell *Town of Ulster, July 27, 2007*



*Environmental cleanup workers outside Sojourner Truth Library in January 1992. Photo: Eric Francis for Student Leader News Service*

MY NAME is George Farrell, and I have been a Town of Ulster resident for 38 years. I have a biology degree from Marist College and I have taught in New York State for 37 years in the fields of biology, chemistry, Earth science and general science. I have also received five National Science Grants for Environmental Studies. At the time of the explosions, I had two daughters at SUNY New Paltz.

It was a cold, calm day when the explosions occurred. I drove down to the explosion site at SUNY New Paltz with my wife. We could see a smoke cloud covering the south side of the campus. Smoke was crawling up the side of Bliss Hall. The smoke cloud seemed to linger, it hardly moved at all.

A week or so later, we visited college vice president Kenneth Burda's office on order to view the wipe tests. It was very evident that the bathrooms, janitor's cleaning closets and lounges were coming in with the highest hits. It then came to my mind that these areas all had vents. Burda informed us that the vents were all off for the holidays. I tried to explain to him that the vents act in the reverse when they are off, much like a chimney, especially on cold days. He did not seem to be able to comprehend this concept.

I proceeded to call Dean N. Palen, who was at the time in charge of the Ulster County Health Department. One of his secretaries, I do not recall her name, informed me the situation was very serious. She even went as far as saying, "I would not send my son or daughter to that campus."

Dean told me he hoped the cinderblock walls of the dorms were not used as vents. "Some of the dorms were old enough to use that method of venting," he stated. I never did receive an answer as to the possible cinderblock venting. He also told me that it would take months to rip out that block. He understood that if the blocks were contaminated, they would have to be cleaned. At a later time, I learned that they were cleaned, but that they were cleaned with Tide and only cleaned as far as an arm could reach.

I honestly believe that since the people that were in charge at the time of the incident did not have a science background, they were not able to handle the situation properly. It seemed that their only goal was to open the campus as soon as possible. I even recall seeing students entering several dormitories, while workers around and inside the dormitories were in protective clothing.

San Francisco