

O'Bryan still pleading his innocence to media

United Press International
HUNTSVILLE — "Candyman" killer Ronald Clark O'Bryan, nearing execution Thursday for poisoning his son with Halloween candy, came to face Wednesday with the father of one of his intended victims and pleaded his innocence.
 "I've stated from the beginning that I had absolutely nothing at all to do with this, and I maintain that now," O'Bryan said.
 Defense lawyer Will Gray late Wednesday filed in Houston federal court a writ of habeas corpus and a request for a stay of pending execution. Gray noted that several jurors had been improperly disqualified from O'Bryan's trial in 1974.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in Austin Wednesday denied without explanation O'Bryan's request for a stay, removing one more hurdle between the 39-year-old former optician and death by lethal injection.
 An attorney for the Houston chapter of the American Civil Liberties also filed suit Wednesday in federal court asking for a preliminary injunction because he said the method of execution was "cruel and unusual punishment."
 Attorney Stefan Presser noted in his suit that the Food and Drug Administration is required by Congress to test all drugs to make sure they are safe

and produce their intended use. He said the testing had not been done. He claimed the method of execution was cruel because it took death row inmate James Autry 15 minutes to die after the injection was administered to him earlier this month.
 A jury convicted O'Bryan of feeding his 8-year-old son Timothy a cyanide-laced Giant Pixy Stix on a stormy Halloween night in 1974 to collect \$31,000 insurance money. Prosecutors said O'Bryan gave Timothy Kool-aid to wash down the poison.
 O'Bryan's daughter, Elizabeth, who was six then, and three neighbor children — including Whitney Parker — also received the candy. Only Timothy ate it.

The Parker boy's stepfather, Charles Hudgins, publisher of a weekly community newspaper, was one of two dozen reporters who spoke with O'Bryan in an interview area off death row.
 Hudgins had a private five-minute conversation with O'Bryan and afterward said he pressed the inmate for a final explanation.
 "I asked him why he has not cried out loudly about authorities not catching the right person — if he is not that person," Hudgins said. "The only thing he said is that he's written letters."
 It was the first meeting between the former neighbors since Timothy's funeral two days before O'Bryan was charged in his son's death.

"I also asked him if he thinks he is innocent, why has he not corresponded with us and the Bates family, and tried to convince us of this," Hudgins said. "Again, the only thing I got from him was that he didn't know what to say to us."
 Mark and Kim Bates, children of another former O'Bryan neighbor, Jimmy Bates, also received poisoned candy. Bates, who trick or treated with O'Bryan and the kids, has told United Press International he has no doubt about O'Bryan's guilt.
 Hudgins traveled 100 miles from Pasadena, where he publishes the weekly Free News Enterprise, to speak to O'Bryan for "various" reasons. He declined to characterize the meeting due

to his position as a working journalist.
 Prior to the private meeting, O'Bryan took questions from reporters including a television crew from the Phil Donahue Show.
 When asked if he was fearful of dying by an overdose of drugs, he said, "No. I've always associated fear with guilt, and guilt with fear. Because I have no guilt and because I know I didn't do it, and the people close to me know I could not have done it, and because the Lord knows I didn't do it, I've got nothing to be scared about."
 O'Bryan claims the evidence which convicted him "had no basis in fact." He said it was "100 percent circumstantial" and that he was a scapegoat for a panic-

stricken neighborhood.
 O'Bryan said he does not know who the killer might be and that he is tortured by the thought of so many people hating him. Fellow death row inmates call him "Candyman."
 "When I die," O'Bryan said, "I know where I'm going. They can lock up my body but not my mind or my spirit."
 He said that in the last week he has filled out paper work necessary for the execution and that officials have reviewed the procedure with him.
 If executed, O'Bryan will be the third Texas inmate to be put to death since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the Texas death penalty in the early 1970s.

Solemn march marks 10th anniversary of TMI

United Press International
MIDDLETOWN, Pa. — Large cooling towers looming over them, about 150 people marched solemnly Wednesday at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant and cheered Jesse Jackson's call for a permanent closure of the facility.
 "It is time to close this plant forever," the Democratic presidential candidate told marchers at the fifth anniversary of the worst accident in U.S. commercial nuclear power history. There must be a better way, he said, to oppose the restart of Unit 1.
 Jackson is the only Democratic presidential hopeful to come

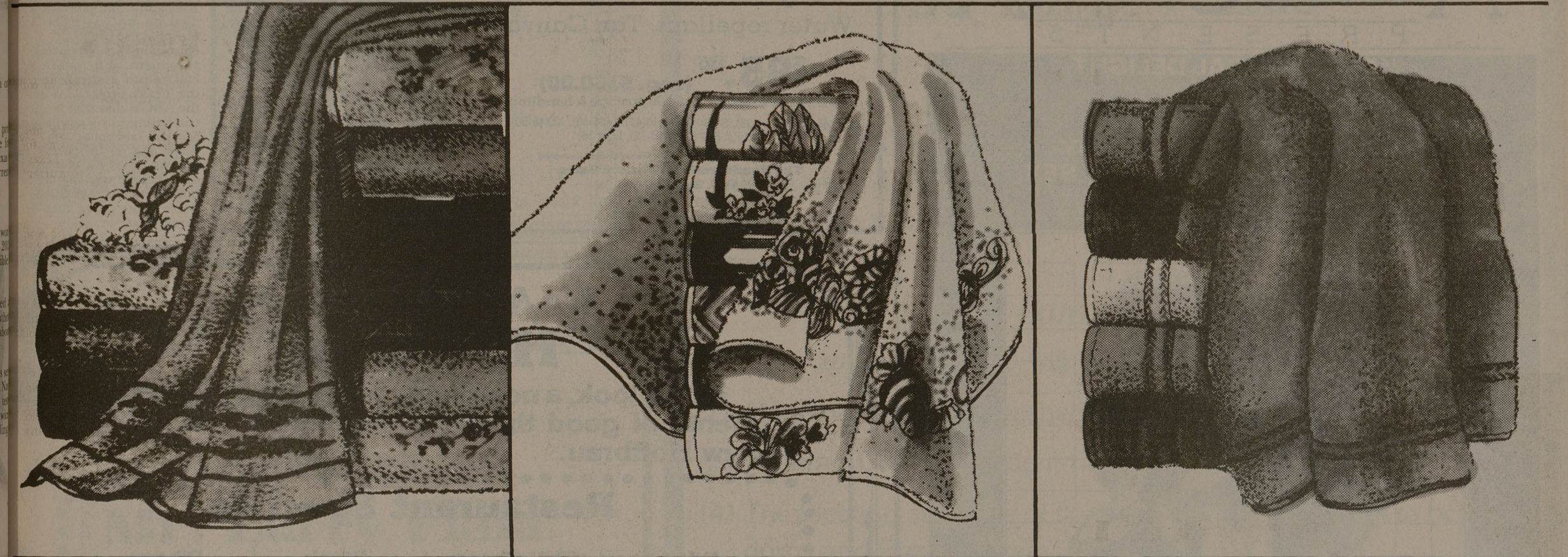
out against the plant reopening and nuclear power. March organizers said 1984 is a crucial year in their fight to get TMI's damaged Unit 2 cleaned up and to keep the undamaged Unit 1 from being restarted.
 The candlelight vigil began at 3:30 a.m. EST with a half-mile procession in a steady rain to the gates of the southcentral Pennsylvania plant, followed by five minutes of silence at 4 a.m.
 The plant began to lose cooling water and its Unit 2 reactor overheated at 4 a.m. on March 28, 1979.
 Colorado Sen. Gary Hart, another Democratic presiden-

tial hopeful, got a mixed reaction in nearby Harrisburg last week when he said the undamaged unit should not be restarted until it is proven safe and area residents' opinions have been heard.
 The marchers carried blue and orange globed candles and displayed signs reading, "The Public Will Shut TMI," and "Keep TMI Shut." They sang traditional protest and folk songs before ending the observance.
 The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled a June vote on whether to allow the undamaged reactor back into service. Unit 1 was shut down for refueling at the time of the accident.

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