

The Woman Who Knew Too Much

**THE WOMAN WHO
KNEW TOO MUCH
ALICE STEWART
AND THE SECRETS
OF RADIATION**

Gayle Greene

Foreword by Helen Caldicott

Ann Arbor

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

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Published in the United States of America by
The University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
Ⓢ Printed on acid-free paper

2002 2001 2000 1999 4 3 2 1

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*A CIP catalog record for this book is available
from the British Library.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for
ISBN 0-472-11107-8

In Memory

Agnes Elinor Paterson Greene

(May 22, 1907–May 20, 1997)

Lydia Paterson Greenspoon

(October 10, 1908–March 28, 1997)

*My mother and my aunt,
who did not see the end of this project,
but were its sine qua non*

My Father, Jack Greenberg

*(January 10, 1907–October 6, 1993),
a good doctor,
whose stories I never collected*

Foreword

Helen Caldicott

This is a fascinating account of the life of an Englishwoman, born into a medical family almost 100 years ago, whose discoveries have brought her into conflict with the powerful nuclear industry and the international regulatory bodies that set radiation safety guidelines. Alice Stewart is a pioneer worthy of a Nobel Prize. Her work has been largely unrecognized by the scientific mainstream because it challenges received wisdom that radiation in small doses poses no threat.

In the 1940s, Dr. Alice Stewart had a brilliant career in clinical medicine. She won honors and accolades few women have received, having been elected Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (the ninth woman fellow ever and the first under forty to attain this distinction) and the first woman to be elected to the Association of Physicians. But World War II and a serendipitous turn took her to the new area of Social Medicine and an appointment at Oxford, where her work helped carve out the new field of epidemiology before it was even called epidemiology. While at Oxford, she initiated a survey on the etiology of childhood leukemia which led to the startling revelation that just one prenatal x-ray doubled a child's risk of developing the disease. This discovery won her few friends in the British medical establishment.

Twenty years later, she again lit a fire in the scientific world with the discovery that the nuclear industry is twenty times more dangerous than safety standards admit. Her work with Dr. George Kneale and Thomas Mancuso on the Hanford nuclear workers directly contradicted the Hiroshima data on which international radiation standards are based.

This book provides the most lucid account that I have ever read of the control and cover-up by the U.S. military of the data relating to the injuries and diseases induced by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It gives a compelling account of the personal story as well—of the scientist who carries on without funding or support; of the mother, wife, then divorced single mother, lover of Sir William Empson, and responsible and caring grandmother.

Alice Stewart at the age of 92 still dazzles an audience with her originality and penetrating clarity. Like other scientists whose discoveries were not fully appreciated in their time—Galileo, Pasteur, Semmelweis—her work may receive the recognition and thanks of the future. “Truth is the daughter of time,” as she’s fond of saying, and her theories are even now finding validation as the health effects of radiation come to be better understood. That day when the value of her work is acknowledged will mark the beginning of the end of the nuclear age.

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