If I told you I have a pet hippopotamus, would you believe me? If you knocked on my door, and I did not answer, would you think no one was home? In the first statement, I would be telling a lie. What I did not do was deceive you. I would be hard-pressed to find someone who actually believed that I have a pet hippopotamus.

Lying is saying an untrue statement. Deceiving is getting someone to believe an untrue statement, but it can be done without words or even with the truth. In the second statement, I may have gotten you to believe I was not home. Even though I did not lie, my silence might have made you conclude that no one was home. This is exactly what Rocky Flats did; they would opt to remain silent on many pressing issues. The public would then make up their own conclusions. By not correcting any misconceptions, Rocky Flats was able to deceive. They chose not to speak out.

To begin with, Rocky Flats, and those associated with the plant, flat-out ignored issues. Multiple times, public or private investigators would recommend or request an issue to be resolved. Rocky Flats would either refuse to respond or just ignore them.

In response to the 1957 fire, a spokesman “declined to describe exactly what had happened. There was no mention of the destroyed filters and sensors or the deadly plume of smoke” (30). This way, Rocky Flats could not be accused of lying because no one actually said that any of these were not destroyed. The public was deceived because they were not concerned about any consequences following the fire. Ed Martell, suspicious of off-site contamination, asked the Dow Chemical Company for more information, and “[t]he response is swift: Dow denies the request” (60).
Ed Martell eventually gets some information, but not all. He was not able to prove anything with inadequate information; therefore the truth could not be known. Throughout the book I saw Rocky Flats’ refusals to respond repeatedly. As a result, the public was led to believe untruths.

Another way Rocky Flats was able to hide the truth was through its workers. They used both deceptive thinking and silence to hide the truth. To them, a “bomb was called nothing more serious than a ‘device’ or ‘trigger,’” and “[a] nuclear bomb explosion is called an ‘excursion’” (20, 127). As if calling a bomb something else would make it no longer a bomb — something they could call harmless. When given a chance to speak out following the FBI raid, the workers stayed silent, having “observed a code of silence for years” (220).

As to why the workers chose not to speak out, it is hard to say. It may have been through force, since one manager told workers that “whistle-blowers ... will be dealt with severely and completely” (226). Whatever the reason, the workers chose to not speak out.

A third way in which Rocky Flats hid the truth is through physical means. Inspector Joseph Krupar, noticing many problems occurring with the pondcrete, warned Dominic Sanchini, a manager for Rockwell.

In response to this, Sanchini “surround[ed] the blocks with a barbed-wire fence and a sign that read UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL KEEP OUT” (230). Krupar was just doing his job, but Rocky Flats restricted his access to keep its problems hidden from unwanted eyes. They were operating under the belief that if you cannot see the problem, it does not exist. Rocky Flats even went so far as to literally blind investigators from the truth by getting “managers to blindfold EPA investigators before taking them through the plant” (179).

This kept Rocky Flats from having to explain any inconsistencies that an investigator might have noticed, and problems could remain a secret.

All in all, the way the government dealt with Rocky Flats makes me lose faith in our system. I am angered and appalled by the carelessness toward public health. It is not only concern for strangers on the other side of the country either; it is concern for those I love as well.

A few times in the book, the Fernald nuclear plant in Ohio is mentioned. I live about three hours away, and I have been in the area multiple times for soccer tournaments. I was definitely stirring up the ground and inhaling a lot of air.
My parents and sister were there with me. How much contamination is there from the Fernald plant? Should I be concerned? Since Rocky Flats and the government have remained silent, the truth may be lost forever.

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