

Everyone's Backyard

CITIZEN'S CLEARINGHOUSE FOR HAZARDOUS WASTES, INC.

Vol. I No. 1—Fall 1982

WELCOME

Welcome to the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes.

As a community leader who fought a toxic waste problem at Love Canal, I know how difficult and frustrating it is to understand, document, and finally resolve a local problem—how hard it is to find the best scientist to evaluate a health and environmental problem or to find an attorney who will help you with your legal rights. After fighting the Hooker Chemical Corporation, I know how hard it is to get an industry to take responsibility for the hazards it creates.

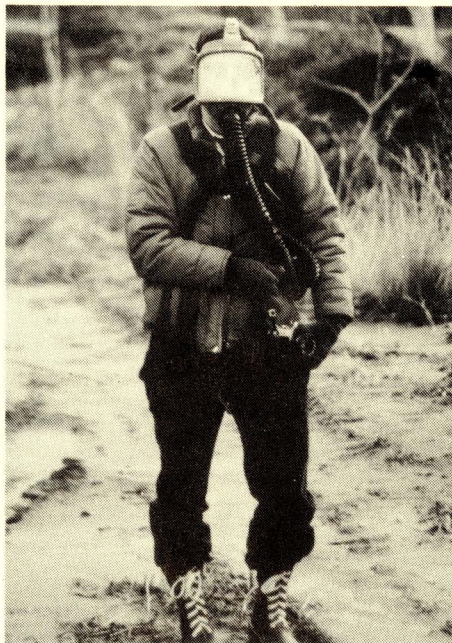
And we all know how hard it is to get government to respond, especially now. How can citizens depend on government when, for example, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency's Hazardous Waste and Superfund Programs, Rita Lavelle, is the former public relations director for a company that operates one of the 40 most hazardous chemical waste dump sites in the nation? Our government's commitment to the toxic waste problem is more limited than ever.

The Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW) will assist citizens in overcoming these difficulties. We will provide you with scientific and legal information written in common terms to help you understand the significance of analytical and technical reports. We can also help organize and motivate your community and define workable strategies to win your goals.

The CCHW can also help in other ways. We can visit your community to hold workshops or conferences, meet with your group's leaders, and participate in public education meetings you set up for your neighbors. We can also put your organization in touch with others in your state or county who are working on similar issues so that we can all share information, experiences, and strategies.

Over 2,000 citizens across the country have contacted me or the Clearinghouse to ask for help. We have used their questions to develop our programs and services. We established the CCHW to help you—this is *your* organization. Please let us know if you have a problem and tell us what the CCHW can do to help your community. Together we will clean up our environment!

LOIS



Courtesy Environmental Defense Fund

About Our Title

We put a good deal of thought into finding a title for our newsletter. We were looking for a name that would suggest the grassroots nature of the Citizens Clearinghouse while announcing our concern with hazardous wastes. One contender was "Waste Watchers," but someone then expounded on the well-rounded waist of one of our editors, and that was the end of that. We easily reached a consensus, however, with "Everyone's Backyard," which suggests the many facets of the hazardous waste problem.

Hazardous wastes have been buried for decades at thousands of sites around the United States. Hundreds of these are still in operation. Many, like Love Canal, have been forgotten for years, and now lie in wait ready to release their poisons upon the unsuspecting. The problem belongs to all of us, for truly, the problem threatens everyone's backyard. And the answer? The most important one is local action by citizens in every community. Helping with

See **TITLE** continued on page 3

"Why Should I Listen to Lois Gibbs?"

In the spring of 1978 Lois Gibbs discovered that the school her son Michael attended was built over a dump that contained over 20,000 tons of toxic chemicals—buried there by the Hooker Chemical Corporation.

The Love Canal chemical dump was three blocks from her home. Since moving to the neighborhood, Michael had developed asthma, epilepsy, blood disorders, and urinary tract problems that required two operations.

Lois believed that her son's health problems were directly related to his exposure to the Love Canal dump. She went to the Board of Education for help. She wanted them to transfer Michael from the school and to evaluate the whole area for possible contamination. But the Board refused to transfer him—if they moved her son because the school was dangerous, they would have to transfer all of the other children, too.

Lois then approached other local, state, and federal officials, but they also made excuses, saying that they were "investigating the situ-

ation." They told her to go home, stop worrying, and accept the fact that Michael was a sickly child.

Instead Lois began organizing and educating her community. She saw that only a united community group could fight the authorities and force them to address the needs and concerns of the residents. In August, 1978, the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA) was born.

The LCHA quickly set goals, developed strategies, and began to question the government investigating teams. They discovered that if they asked the scientists simple, common sense questions rather than trying to use their technical language, and if they demanded answers in plain English, the community could finally understand what was happening to them.

For example, when the authorities announced that they were going to evacuate only pregnant women and children under two from the contaminated area, the residents asked,

See **LOIS** continued on page 3

OUCH: A Pain in the Dump in Pennsylvania

By Bill Sproat

One day in July of 1980, Tracy Marsh, a substitute school teacher in York County, Pennsylvania, received a frantic phone call from one of her neighbors. "Have you seen today's paper yet?" she screamed. "They're going to put a hazardous waste dump in our backyard!" What Tracy read in the local newspaper made her absolutely furious. Stabatrol, a New York-based company that treats and disposes of hazardous wastes, had announced that they were going to dispose of treated chemical wastes in a former sanitary landfill in nearby North Codorus township. Furthermore, Tracy discovered as she read the article, they had been granted a permit to do so eight months earlier by the state of Pennsylvania—without any notice of public comment or hearings. In addition, the landfill that they proposed to fill with chemical wastes covered an area of 530 acres, making it over 100 times larger than Love Canal. Recalling that day in 1980, Tracy Marsh said, "I got absolutely incensed. I was appalled that something like this could happen here. I said to my husband Steve, 'What are we going to do?'"

What Steve and Tracy Marsh did was to start calling all of their neighbors and friends to talk about the dump and see if there was a way to stop it. When they talked to their local representatives, Steve and Tracy were told that if their friends would form an organization, they would have a greater chance of being heard. It was out of this need to organize as a group against the dump that Steve and Tracy formed OUCH (Opposing Unnecessary Chemical Hazards).

OUCH's initial goal was to inform the public about this dump site and the circumstances that led to its development. This would not be the case for long.

The landfill site had passed through several hands before Stabatrol bought it. As events began to unfold, the Marsh's and their neighbors discovered that more than public information was needed. The only way to fight the dump was through well-organized public action.

In August 1980, Stabatrol bought construction equipment to the site and, in violation of the local municipal planning code, began grading operations. OUCH petitioned the North Codorus township to intervene. In response to this public pressure, the township obtained an injunction barring Stabatrol from further construction on the site.

In September, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER) held a public hearing in York County concerning the Stabatrol operation. Over 3,000 area residents came to that hearing, and OUCH presented the DER a petition with more than 40,000 signatures of citizens that were opposed to the dump. DER refused to answer any questions put to them from the floor, preferring instead to respond in writing to selected questions. This written response was not made public until December.

On November 10th, however, DER met with Waste Management Incorporated (WMI), a large



Courtesy Marilyn Shapiro

hazardous waste treatment company that was interested in purchasing Stabatrol. In answer to their questions, DER told them that Stabatrol's York county site and operation was perfectly acceptable in Pennsylvania. As a result, WMI bought out Stabatrol, on November 14th and consolidated their entire Pennsylvania operation under the name of Stabatrol.

Three days later Stabatrol/WMI returned to the landfill site with construction equipment, again illegally, and now in violation of the injunction. For three days, it graded and excavated the site. This action established their landfill as being in "continuous construction" prior to November 19, 1980. Under Federal law, landfills and dumps in operation or in continuous construction prior to this date do not have to comply with the new hazardous waste regulations. Instead, they could be given "interim status" and operate under older, less stringent standards for up to ten years. By blatantly flaunting the law and starting token construction before that date, Stabatrol could qualify for interim status.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency granted this status in April 1981. OUCH challenged the decision in federal court, but the suit is still pending.

In March 1981, OUCH petitioned the DER to revoke Stabatrol's operating permit. In response to this petition and to pressure from other citizens groups throughout the state, DER

investigated an active Stabatrol facility, the Lyncott Corporation in Susquehanna County. Because of numerous operating and design violations at Lyncott, DER suspended all Stabatrol landfill operations in the state. There was strong evidence of ground and surface water pollution at the Lyncott site. The city of Binghamton, New York, only ten miles away, was concerned that their drinking water supply was threatened.

In the summer of 1981, DER ordered Stabatrol to clean up their Lyncott facility and remove all of the wastes that had been dumped there. In addition, they denied Stabatrol a transportation permit to haul hazardous wastes anywhere in the state until this was accomplished. Because WMI's entire Pennsylvania operation was under the Stabatrol name, this order effectively put them out of business in Pennsylvania.

OUCH, started by Steve and Tracy Marsh initially to increase public awareness about a particular problem, became the major driving force in the effort to stop this chemical dump site from operating. Through time, effort, persistence, and organization, OUCH succeeded. In addition, OUCH organized a statewide coalition of 17 grassroots activist groups, composed of concerned citizens like themselves, to fight against other sites in Pennsylvania. As Tracy Marsh says, "You need people working together as an organized force . . . the more we band together, the better it is for all of us."

LEGAL CORNER

By Lewis M. Milford and Ronald Simon

One of the more frustrating problems for someone new to hazardous waste issues is learning the ins and outs of our legal system and regulatory agencies. Like scientists and engineers, lawyers and bureaucrats speak a language all their own. For the novice, this language and the concepts it explains can sometimes be as intimidating as the polluter being fought. But used properly, it is a powerful ally.

To deal with this problem and to take some of the mystery out of "legalese," Everyone's Backyard will run "Legal Corner" from time to time in order to explain in simple terms common legal problems which crop up in hazardous waste lawsuits, or in government enforcement of hazardous waste laws and regulations. The Legal Corner belongs to you. Please write and let us know what your questions and concerns are.

I recently moved into a town house and soon read that I'm nearly on top of a site where toxic chemicals were dumped. I'm really worried but I don't know where to begin. Somebody told me that I don't have any legal recourse because of something called the statute of limitations. What does that mean? R.B., Pennsylvania

Statutes of limitations are laws that prevent a person from suing someone else for something that happened in the distant past. The purpose of these laws is to insure that disputes are settled within a certain fixed period of time after the cause for the complaint.

Statutes of limitation vary from state to state depending on the type of event that caused an injury. For instance, in some states, an action based on the sale of a car (a contract) can be brought for four years after the sale. But in the same states, a lawsuit may be filed only for two years after someone is injured in a car accident (a tort).

In terms of your situation, the important question is *when* the time limit begins to be counted. The time period for a car accident usually begins to run from the accident itself.

In other situations, such as when a doctor leaves a pair of scissors inside you during an operation, it is not clear when the statute of limitations begins to run. Toxic dumps pose similar legal problems since the dumping of the chemicals, exposure to the chemicals by the residents, and injuries from the chemicals occur at different times. Because of these problems, there are a number of different times when a statute of limitations may begin to run: when a person is first injured; when a person is last injured; when a person is aware of the injury or when a person is aware that another person caused the injury. This means that you will have a certain time from one of these dates to file a lawsuit; if a lawsuit is filed too late, it may be dismissed and you may lose the right to go to court. Court decisions vary from state to state about the proper time periods for persons exposed to hazardous chemicals. Finally, some legal actions such as actions to clean up toxic wastes are based on legal theories or statutes in which the statute of limitations does not come into play.

In terms of where to begin, we have three pieces of advice:

- 1) Find out what is known about the dump site. Start by talking to your neighbors and contact government agencies, especially the state department of health and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. (We'll tell you how to do this in future columns).

- 2) Work with your neighbors. Toxic dump problems are community problems and working as a group is the key to success.

- 3) Get a lawyer who can answer your questions. Lawyers have their own language and may act as if they expect you to understand their jargon. Make sure you get answers to questions that you understand.

We plan to write about other legal issues in future columns. We invite your questions about legal issues that concern you.

Lewis Milford and Ronald Simon are lawyers on the faculty of the American University Law School in Washington, D.C.



LOIS *continued from page 1*

"Why?" The scientists explained that children's bodies are fully developed by the time they're two. After that they can filter out toxic chemicals. "What if a child develops slowly?" the LCHA asked. "Why cut off the age limit at two if all children may not develop at the same rate and some may not be able to filter out the poisons?" The citizens learned the power of asking "Why," "Why not," and "What if."

The residents also found other scientific ways to justify their needs and concerns. The authorities had put the burden on the community to prove their health damage. The residents needed scientists and researchers to evaluate the Love Canal situation, but the government refused to pay for them. Meanwhile the health authorities conducted inadequate studies. In response, the LCHA and a team of volunteer researchers did their own health survey and collected their own scientific evidence.

The residents also learned which laws applied to the hazardous wastes at Love Canal. The legal and scientific evidence that they collected gave them the tools they needed to pressure elected officials and to justify taking action to help the community. Because the citizens made Love Canal a political issue, Governor Hugh Carey, who was running for re-election in New York that November, agreed to evacuate all of the Love Canal families who lived in the first two rows of homes surrounding the dump. Later, as a result of citizen pressure during the Presidential election, Jimmy Carter ordered the evacuation of the remaining families.

Lois Gibbs and the Love Canal Homeowners Association eventually won their fight—the state of New York evacuated all of the families who wanted to leave the area and purchased their homes at fair market value. When they started, the residents were scared, confused, and frustrated. But by using a whole arsenal of strategies, they succeeded. They held rallies. They picketed. They demonstrated. They learned about and used the scientific and legal tools available to them.

Lois went on to form the Citizens Clearinghouse Hazardous Wastes to assist people with using all of these strategies in their communities when they are confronted with hazardous waste problems. Through her experience, she is helping communities to fight their own "Love Canals"—to protect their environment and the health of their citizens and children.

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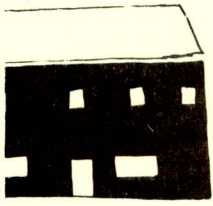
this fight is what the Citizens Clearinghouse and this newsletter are all about.

But there is another side to the problem. Like it or not, America depends on its chemicals. Many we can do without, but so many of the products and goods vital to our quality of life produce harmful wastes as by-products. While there are irresponsible industries that hold public safety in contempt, we cannot place the blame for the chemical waste problem solely on the shoulders of outlaw companies. The consumers who use these products must also accept responsibility for managing hazardous wastes. This obligation means taking part in public decisions on cleaning up waste sites and handling wastes as they are produced. The question all citizens must answer is, "If we as a society continue to produce hazardous wastes,

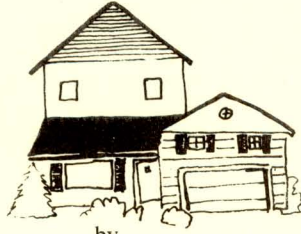
then what can be done to dispose of them responsibly?" Accordingly, if we choose to use landfills, then where are we willing to put them? If we choose to ban landfills, then what alternatives will we accept? Recycling? Incineration? Redesigned industrial processes? Other technologies? And are we, along with industries and stockholders, willing to foot the bill in lower profits and higher consumer costs? These are not easy questions. They will require good answers if we are to solve the waste problem.

Our environment is indeed everyone's backyard, industry's, government's, and private citizen's. We all depend on it for recreation, for our livelihoods, and for our survival. It is up to all of us to protect it. It's just like voting; if you don't participate, you usually get the government you deserve. Let's make the environment we deserve one we can live with.

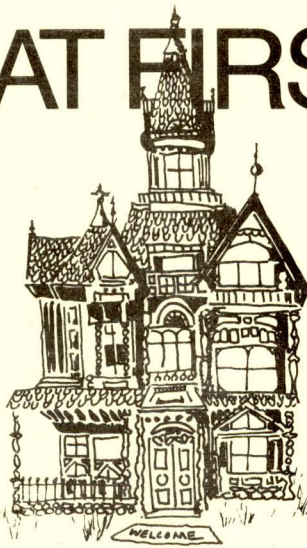
MAKING THAT FIRST CONTACT



Organizing Toolbox
First in a Series



by
Will Collette



Three young organizers made the long drive through rural California to meet famed farm-worker organizer Cesar Chavez. After their hard dusty journey, they sat with him and asked, "Cesar, how do you organize?" Cesar replied, "Well, first you talk to one person, then you talk to another person, then you talk to another person. . . . 'But, HOW DO YOU ORGANIZE!?!' they insisted. Cesar repeated, "First you talk to one person, then you talk to another. . . ."

To build an organization, there's no substitute for face-to-face contact. You can call people on the phone, send flyers in the mail, distribute leaflets, but to build the relationships that will hold an organization together you must meet and talk with people, one by one.

So first, you have to go and knock on someone's door. When you knock on a new person's door, there's that awkward first few seconds when she's deciding whether or not to slam the door and go on with the business of life. Your opening has to be clear, open and appealing. She's wondering, Who are you? Where are you from? What do you want? And what's it going to cost me? Think about your own experiences with strangers coming to your door. What makes you decide to talk to them? What makes you decide to close your door?

Who sent you? With whom are you connected that I know? These are credibility questions a good organizer will work out in advance. If you can say, "I was just talking to your neighbor, Mrs. Jones, and she said you'd be a good person to talk to," or "Reverend Smith is working with us—he's letting us use the church basement for our meeting next week," you have "borrowed credibility" and have a few more seconds to get in the door.

The person you're talking to knows that you haven't decided to knock on the door for a lark. You want SOMETHING, so what is it? Are you passing around a petition? Petitions are an excellent door opener. Many organizations use petitions for just this reason—to have a conversation-opener with new contacts. Carrying around a petition is better than walking around with your group's flyer. People know it generally doesn't cost them anything to sign a petition; they'll be more at their ease if you open with "I'd like to talk to you about our organization."

Once you are inside the door, your job is less to talk and more to get the other person talking. Listen to her story, her reaction to your group's issue, how she ties that in to her own past experiences and future aspirations. You are also taking the measure of her leadership possibilities. The more people talk to you and the more they perceive you as LISTENING, the stronger will be the bond between you.

Whether you are selling brushes, vacuum cleaners, or toxic waste cleanup, the time comes when you have to close in for the sale. In organizing, the sale is the commitment to DO SOMETHING. To make the sale, you will have to show how it is in the person's interests to get involved in your organization. People act out of self-interest. You want them to see how their needs and desires fit in with what you are doing. Usually, there is direct self-interest—the organization is working on an issue that directly affects them. Sometimes, self-interest is less direct: If I work with this organization, I can count on them for help when I need it. Or self-interest could be the desire to help, to do the right thing, to socialize, to be connected to something exciting. The strength of such commitments will vary: a strong moral or religious commitment often outweighs the need to socialize (though not always!)

Use your judgment to gauge what the person

can "afford." Everyone can do something. Commitment should be expressed as action. "I believe" should flow directly into "I will do." Signing the petition is the easy way out. So is making a half-hearted promise to maybe come to the meeting. Explore ways that the person can become actively involved. Ask for other contacts. Ask her to come door-knocking with you, or to make two to five contacts herself—make sure that she knows you'll be back in touch to see how things went. Close out the meeting by being sure you and the new person have a clear and concrete understanding about the deal: how many people she'll contact, how many she'll commit to getting to the meeting, etc.

Now you're up off the couch and heading for the door. You've had a good meeting with a brand-new person who looks like a real good prospect. Before you leave, that person deserves to know how happy you are with this meeting and, more important, how essential she is to building this organization. Remember how you felt the first time someone asked you to get involved.

Then you're out the door, armed with more insight into the community, new names, more issues, and, hopefully, feeling stronger. Now you've talked to one person and it's time to talk to another



A New VOICE in Ohio

Citizens in Ohio are mad as hell about hazardous wastes. They are tired of being dumped on. They are sick of being exposed to who-knows-what chemical wastes. They are fed up with the denial of their right to know. And they're not taking it any more.

People from across Ohio are forming VOICE, a statewide coalition to fight hazardous waste dumping. Through a united front, they will find out what's buried in their backyards, force the cleanup of existing problem sites, and put a stop to any further destruction of their environment and their children's environment.

Some of the areas (but certainly not all) where the coalition is taking action are:

Wilmington, Ohio. Citizens living near a CECOS disposal site in Wilmington believe they have been exposed to chemical wastes from the site. They have reported a number of suspicious health problems in their community. Cecos, of course, denies that their wastes have moved out into the community. Even more, the company has filed a suit against the residents for slander and libel. Residents look at the suit as a transparent attempt to shut them up. Not to be denied, the residents filed a coun-

tersuit against CECOS. They refuse to shut up until CECOS cleans up.

Norton, Ohio. In Norton, citizens are fighting the burial of toxic wastes in abandoned mines underneath their city. Pittsburgh Plate Glass (PPG) intends to use the mines for just this reason. They could hold nearly 30 million barrels of toxic wastes.

The Norton residents are worried about the health and safety of families living above the mines, near truck routes, and near the above-ground storage area, where the wastes will await placement in the mines. The residents are also concerned that their property will lose value while PPG makes its profits with unsafe waste disposal. CODE, the Norton citizen organization, is making a strong stand against the disposal site. As its members say, "We will defeat this proposal."

Blanchester, Ohio. Blanchester is a beautiful farming town where a new landfill has been proposed. Area farmers are worried that the landfill will damage their farms, which have been passed down from generation to generation. They are afraid that the wastes will leak out into their soil and water. Contamination

could threaten their crops, their livelihoods, and possibly the health of their families. Their newly-formed citizens group has vowed that the landfill will not be sited in their community. They are ready to fight it all the way.

At the state level, VOICE is working on legislation to give communities control over local chemical dumping decisions. Right now, a five-member committee in Columbus, the state capital, makes these decisions for the whole state. The new legislation would give communities the power to protect their health and environment and to safeguard their future from hazardous wastes. VOICE is working on a "right-to-know" legislation to help Ohio citizens find out which wastes their families are being exposed to. It is promoting a ban on toxic waste landfills which would force industries to seek alternative measures for managing their wastes. VOICE is also seeking legislation to set up a state fund to clean up sites already contaminated with chemical wastes.

Go get 'em, Ohio citizens! For more information, contact VOICE, David Craig, P.O. Box 56, Blanchester, OH 45107. (Phone: 513/783-2471).

Courtesy Monument Improvement Association



consultant or a helpful university to take samples and test for chemical contamination. You may have to do some work yourself—like surveying your neighbors to see if they have the same problems as you. “But what is the first step?” you ask yourself. “What do I do now?”

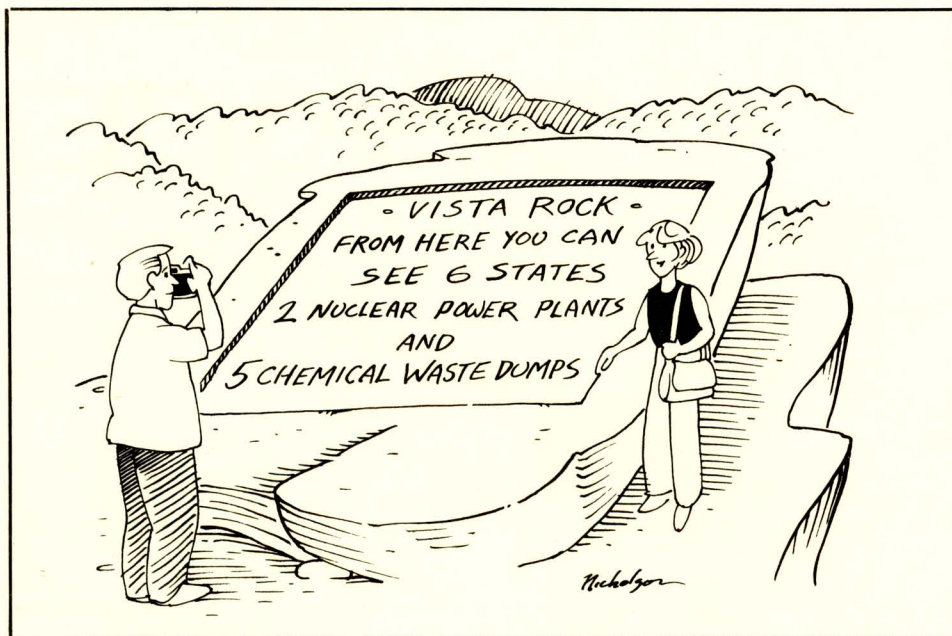
If you suspect toxic wastes in your neighborhood, call your local and state elected officials first thing. These include your city or county council, the mayor or county executive, and your state senator and representative. These people are all in the phone book, listed under either City Government, County Government, State Government, or the name of the jurisdiction (for example, “Kent County,” “City of Wilmington,” or “Newark, City of.”) If you need more help, call your local Board of Elections for names and numbers. Some representatives have more information than others, so contact them all.

When you reach these officials, explain your concerns. Ask for information about the location and contents of dump sites in your area. Don’t expect them to have this information at their fingertips; they have to do research themselves. If they cannot give you direct information, ask for the names and numbers of state and local agency managers who can help. These folks generally work for health, environmental, public works, planning, or natural resources departments. Also ask your representatives if they have received similar complaints from other area residents. You may be able to join forces with others doing the same research.

Tell your representatives that you will investigate the situation, and ask them to do the same. Send each a follow-up letter, and have them send you one within two weeks. This is very important. Putting things in writing makes the request more official and serves as a reminder that you mean business. Receiving a return letter will indicate how responsive the representative is and will start the problem-solving process. Remember, not all representatives are created equal. Some are terrific; some mean well but are ineffective; some are only fit for tar and feather. It’s up to you to find out which is which.

No matter how good you may think your representatives, don’t depend on them alone. If you reach your elected officials on Monday, start with the state and local agencies on Tuesday. When you contact them, say that Senator X or Representative Y referred you. This gives you more credibility. Ask for information about dump sites in your area and request follow-up letters. Make sure to send copies of any correspondence with an agency to your representatives and note it in the bottom left-hand corner of the last page. A simple “cc: Senator X” can inject motivation into the sleepest of public servants.

Make appointments to visit the agencies you contact, since you will probably receive more information in person. Look for land use plans, drainage maps, water quality plans, well contamination data (State health departments often have this), disposal permits, complaint files, and all available data on dumps, landfills, and their contents. Don’t forget to check back sev-



eral decades since many sites have been abandoned for years. Land use and water quality plans can be especially important. They may indicate the types of industries in the area and their locations.

Don’t stop your search here, however. The local library often has these plans and reports. Also check with local universities, possibly the political science, public policy, law, biology, geology, geography, chemistry, or engineering departments. Universities can be an invaluable source, particularly if they have done consulting work for the state or local governments.

Also touch base with all the state and local public interest groups that are active in environmental protection and public health issues. Groups that immediately come to mind are your neighborhood homeowners association, county and state civic groups, the League of Women Voters, and state and local environmental or conservation groups such as the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, or the Izaak Walton League. Most areas have local environmental groups which, while not as well-known as the large national organizations, may be dealing with your specific problem (see Bill Sprout’s story on OUCH). To find these groups, start with one you know (like the League of Women

Voters) and ask for leads to others. Also check the Yellow Pages under “Associations,” “Civic Organizations,” “Environmental Organizations,” and “Pollution Control.” Your elected officials and the library should also give you leads.

Finally, call or write the Citizens Clearinghouse. We can advise you on how to get started on your research, we can tell you the type of information to look for and the people to see, and when you start collecting data, we can provide information about the toxicity of the chemicals you identify and the severity of your problem. The Clearinghouse can also lend a supportive ear, no small offer after you’ve dealt with a seemingly endless army of deaf politicians and bureaucrats.

The key point, however, is to give your state and local governments a chance. They deserve at least one. After that it may be time to call in private consultants, your U.S. Senators and Representatives, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the press. We will talk about this in future issues of *Everyone’s Backyard*. But start at the state and local level. If the information you need already exists and you can find a supportive official, you may save yourself time, aggravation, and money.

LOVE CANAL
MY STORY
 Lois Marie Gibbs
 as told to Murray Levine

Love Canal
 Ask Those Who Really Know!

Ask the victims of Love Canal why they need immediate permanent relocation, and why some will refuse to leave their motels/rooms/condos are cutoff.
 Ask the innocent victims of corporate profits.

The reasons are simple. We cannot live a normal life, we cannot do our jobs because of contamination, we cannot do our children's school in the area—there have been closed due to Love Canal contamination.
 We cannot allow our children to play in the park because of contamination.
 Love Canal contamination.
 We cannot live in the area because of contamination, we cannot do our jobs because of contamination, we cannot do our children's school in the area—there have been closed due to Love Canal contamination.
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“A story that needs to be told if we are to comprehend the true human significance of environmental pollution.”

—Murray Levine

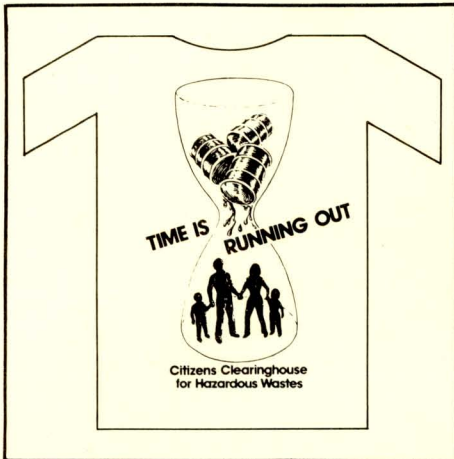
This book is available for \$12.95 plus \$1.00 postage from CCHW, P.O. Box 7097, Arlington, VA 22207. Make checks payable to CCHW.

BAFFLED by the TERMS

by Julie Jacobson



TERM: A Habitable Area; A place where homes are safe for citizens but investigators need space suits before entering.



Everyones Backyard is a publication of the Citizens Clearinghouse For Hazardous Wastes, Inc. CCHW is a nonprofit tax exempt public interest organization which primarily focuses its work on grassroots environmental organizations across the nation.

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To understand hazardous waste, you must know its jargon. People toss lots of terms about when they talk about waste management. Toxics. Solid waste. Groundwater. Landfills. Dumps. And many more. Most of these terms have precise meanings in either a legal or scientific sense, meanings which provide a starting point for dealing with public officials, technical "experts," and lawyers. Several important terms are defined here; more will follow in future issues of *Everyone's Backyard*.

Hazardous waste is any waste or combination of wastes that threaten human health or living organisms. As used today, the term typically refers to chemical and biological wastes produced by industries, power plants, mining operations, the military, and institutions such as hospitals and research laboratories. The federal government has four tests to identify a hazardous waste. If a substance is flammable, corrosive, explosive, or toxic, then it's hazardous. Nothing is ever kept this simple in Washington, however. Because of strong lobbying efforts, Congress exempted several sources of these wastes from federal hazardous waste legislation, including oil well brines, sludge from smokestack scrubbers, wastewater from municipal sewage treatment plants, and ash by-products from boiler operations. Some hazardous wastes such as radioactive materials, old explosives, and pesticides are regulated by separate legislation. Note that some substances which can threaten human health may not be considered hazardous by the government.

Toxic waste* is one kind of hazardous waste. Toxic substances, called toxicants, are any substances which cause harm or sickness when people are exposed to them, eat, drink, or breathe them, spill them on their skin, or otherwise take them into the body. Toxicants cause death, disease, cancer, birth defects, genetic damage, bodily malfunctions (including impotence, sterility, and miscarriages), or physical deformities.

Solid waste* is any garbage, refuse, sludge, or other discarded material (including liquids) resulting from industrial, commercial, mining, agricultural, and community activities. Anything which can be placed in a land disposal site is a solid waste. For its purposes, the federal government does not include solid and dissolved materials in sewage and irrigation waters in its definition of solid wastes. It also excludes certain radioactive materials and industrial wastewater discharges covered by federal permits.

Dumps* are just what the name implies, any uncovered land disposal site where solid wastes are dumped with little or no regard for pollution control, ugliness, or the smell. Dumps can catch on fire and are exposed to the elements, disease-carrying organisms, and scavengers. Federal law prohibits dumps.

Landfills* are land disposal sites where wastes are covered daily or occasionally with soil. While problems from scavengers, disease-carrying organisms, and air pollution may be reduced, water resources can still be affected.

Sanitary landfills* are land disposal sites where engineering methods are used to minimize environmental hazards by spreading solid wastes in thin layers, compacting the solid wastes to the smallest practical volume, and applying and compacting cover material at the end of each working day.

"Secured" landfills are land disposal sites that are supposed to allow no wastes or leachates to come into contact with natural waters. These sites have restricted access and are continually monitored. Wastes are separated by type. There are very few, if any, "secure" landfills in existence. Most have liners which, at best, are expected to last 50 years. In fact, recent research on four state-of-the-art, "secure" landfills in New Jersey found that all of them leaked within the first year of operation. We should probably stop thinking of any landfills as "secure."

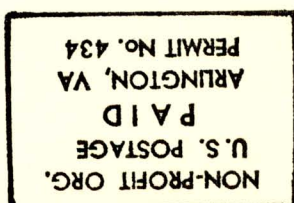
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I THINK THERE'S A DUMP IN MY BACKYARD — *What do I do Next?*

by Janis Bernstein

The primary goal of the Citizens Clearinghouse is to help people who have hazardous waste problems in their communities. We can arm you with information, suggest sources for more, and aim you in the right direction as you deal with public officials. In this and future issues of Everyone's Backyard, we will point out steps you can take when you suspect a problem.

So you think you've got a problem. Your child is sick again, the dog's hair is falling out, your mate hasn't been interested in sex for five months, and you're not feeling so hot yourself. You've heard vague reports in the newspapers about waste sites, but until now you never paid much attention. And as you look out over the bare backyard that hasn't grown even weeds for two years, you wonder if you might not have cause for alarm.

The answer at this point is a definite maybe. To be sure, you need two more things: research and documentation. The key word is "you." You have to check available information. You have to call your councilperson or your state senator or your U.S. senator or whomever it takes to get an answer. And if the information isn't there, you may have to find a private

See DUMP continued on page 6



Courtesy Meg Switzgale