



ROSS TOWNSHIP, PA

ALAN HOROWITZ

CONCERNS



ODORS



HEALTH



QUALITY
OF LIFE

HEALTH EFFECTS



CANCER

I have lived in Ross Township for 16 years. My house is three miles as the crow flies from where the Shenango coke plant used to operate. It's in a middle class, suburban neighborhood of small houses with one-car garages. My house has a nice green area around it; I like to live amidst nature.

I used to live in Friendship, downwind from the LTV coke plant, and often complained to the Health Department about those fumes right up until the plant closed in 1998. Shortly thereafter, as luck would have it, I ended up downwind from Shenango subject to the same awful, easily recognizable stench. I continued calling the Health Department to complain to pretty much no avail. To me, the air in Pittsburgh is pretty bad, though better than many people who grew up here were used to. I grew up near New York City and have since lived in eight other cities and never experienced bad smelling air around my residence until I moved to Pittsburgh in 1992.

Being three miles away from Shenango, the odors were frequent. It would smell sometimes, several times a week especially powerful at night when

there was an inversion. And then when the plant was having trouble you would smell it often, almost every day. It was an intense, complex stench, probably dominated by sulfur. I know there are hundreds of chemicals in there, such as toluene and benzene but I can't testify that I could single those out.

My wife and daughter were quite disturbed by it, as were friends in other areas. One was a woman in Bellevue. Almost every time I went to her apartment I smelled it. The daughter of a friend of mine living in Ben Avon had asthma. She was not exposed to cigarette smoke. **Three of the five women I know within 3 miles of Shenango had cancer, including my wife who had breast cancer.** Two friends who lived in Squirrel Hill within 2 miles of the LTV coke plant both died of lymphoma in their

forties while the plant was still operating. I've always suspected the plant as the cause.

It was dangerous to sleep with the windows open at night because you didn't want to be awoken by the stench. I would have to go to a room with no open window. I always hated breathing that stuff. The injustice of it made me angry. I jog and when I smelled the coke pollution, I would have to stop. You don't want nasty particulates deep in your lungs.

I never dealt with the company, but I felt the Health Department was not very receptive to our complaints. My impression was that they felt it was an odor, but not a health problem. That seemed incredible given the well-known links between volatile organic compounds (VOCs), hazardous air pollutants (HAPs), nitrogen oxides, particulates, and the many other dangerous compounds in coke oven emissions, to respiratory and heart diseases and to cancer. The exposure of the local communities to frequent high concentrations of these compounds from an old coke plant situated in a river valley was certainly a health issue. The health department did take some action but to me, and many others affected, they never went far enough. For example, they could have threatened to not renew the plant's operating permit unless extensive investments were made in pollution controls. Instead they levied small fines and issued consent decrees, which did some good but not nearly enough.

I started attending meetings with the community group when they were called the Neville Island Good Neighbor Committee. I attended them sporadically starting maybe ten years ago. They morphed into ACCAN, as far as I know the history, because the "good" had to be removed. Shenango wasn't a good neighbor.

When I had heard that Shenango was closed, it was great news. **I had been considering moving. I'm sorry about the workers, but tens of thousands of people should not have to breath stinky, dangerous air, for the employment of 160 people,**

I hope Pittsburgh keeps progressing towards the great city it is becoming. Cleaner air and water is a big part of that.

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and for the profits of a company in Michigan.

The air is noticeably cleaner now. It's a joy to smell nature again without those nasty interruptions. My nose doesn't run as much, I can go jogging without fear. I can leave my windows open at night. When I drive on 279 I can see the Ohio River valley is now free of haze. The quality of life is much better.

But now that Shenango is closed the problems aren't solved. Not in Allegheny County, not in my neighborhood. As we know, Allegheny County is still near the top of the worst air list. We have ozone problems, too much diesel exhaust and other large industrial sources of toxic particulates. Childhood asthma rates in Allegheny County are around 50% higher than the national average. The county is in the top 2% for cancer risk from air pollution. The risk is double that of surrounding counties. In the worst areas of the county the risk is estimated to be 20 times higher. Air pollution kills. And now we have the threat of the Shell ethane cracker, which will be a giant step backwards for ozone in our region, which already teeters on non-compliance with Federal standards.

Obviously we don't want the Shenango site to become another source of pollution. I know that ACCAN is trying to press the company to install a solar array there. That would be good for Pittsburgh and probably good for DTE. I will take anything other than a polluting industry. A beautiful park would be ideal. Pittsburgh has shown that you can have a thriving economy without having to sacrifice the quality of your air and water in exchange for jobs.