

ANGELO TARANTO

CONCERNS



HEALTH



QUALITY
OF LIFE



ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE

HEALTH EFFECTS



ASTHMA



EMPHYSEMA



IRRITATED
THROAT



CONGESTION

I currently live in an apartment complex in Ross Township. It has a suburban feel but you can walk out the drive and get onto sidewalks and into the West View neighborhoods. I moved here from Emsworth after my wife passed away three years ago. I wanted to downsize so I sold my house. I considered moving to Bellevue because of my ties to the North Boroughs community, but I decided it probably wasn't wise to live so close to the air pollution from Shenango.

My wife, Georgette, and I lived in areas close to Shenango for 20 years. We moved a couple of times but always lived within a mile and a half of the plant. After living in the area and learning a little about the Shenango Coke Works, I began having more concerns. Georgette was a lifelong asthma sufferer and had a number of other respiratory conditions. **Before we moved to Emsworth, I tried to talk her out of moving there, but in Georgette's mind we shouldn't have to be concerned about where we moved because the air quality should be good everywhere.** She didn't want to have some concern prevent her from moving where she wanted. She had spent all her life except a couple of years in

Allegheny County close to steel plants and had a lot of health issues because of the poor air.

After Georgette passed away, I really wanted to get involved in advocacy for air quality. Partly in her memory, partly because I felt this was a huge injustice. People like Georgette and everyone else shouldn't be forced to breathe poor air when the air could be better. So I joined the group that was called the Neville Island Good Neighbor Committee, which later changed their name to Allegheny County Clean Air Now. I became a certified smoke reader, I started taking the minutes of the meetings, and I've spoken at County Council Meetings and at Health Department meetings.

I even purchased a share in DTE Energy stock so that I could go to their annual shareholders meeting and speak.

I had always been so protective of Georgette and I wrongly assumed that my health wasn't being impacted. However, when I would go down to smoke read and monitor the plant, if the wind was blowing at us I would leave there with a very irritated mouth and throat. And on days of really bad pollution that irritation and congestion would last a week or longer.

It's very obvious there are emissions from Shenango. You can see them. When you are living with air pollution you are constantly living in fear of what implications there are for you and your family. The very things that promote health, like exercise, are increasing your risk. You can't take anything for granted and it turns your life upside down. Life without air pollution would free up a lot of that anxiety that we live with.

When I started this project, my main motivation was telling my wife's story. I believe that Georgette passed away prematurely due to health problems that were largely caused by air pollution. But not only do I have a deep concern for my family, but also for the whole community that has to suffer with the consequences of pollution.

What many people don't realize is that we all have skin in the game. Whether our health is affected now, whether we live close to one of the plants or not, this is an issue that concerns all of us. I see this as affecting generations to come. I have two grandkids at Pitt now and I'm a little concerned they might, after graduating, decide to stay in the Pittsburgh area. And while on the one hand I would love that, on the other I'm thinking maybe it would be better for them if they chose to live in a place that had better air quality.

Ever since Shenango closed, I no longer have to worry as much about what might be in the air. When I'm in the North Boroughs, I can no longer smell the odor from Shenango. Everyone involved

It is also necessary for ACCAN's perspective of the story to be told through "before and after" accounts so that no one ten years from now can say that Shenango didn't really have a big effect on the community.

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with the closure, including fellow Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN) members, have noticed a significant difference since the plant has closed. It will be especially noticeable when the weather gets warmer and people begin to spend more time outside. I know that more people will notice the differences then.

My determination to work for the right to better air quality motivated me to be an active member of ACCAN. I believe that this group, along with other environmental organizations, have been the driving force in closing the Shenango Coke Plant. They have been so diligent these past few years about getting the health department to respond to regulation requirements. I believe their activism put enough pressure on the company that they had no other choice but to close. Shenango claimed that the market for coke decreased, however, I think that it was mostly these environmental groups that shut the plant down. I have been so impressed with the dedication of the people in our group. Even after the closure, people still attend our monthly meeting. I think that says a lot.

If you asked me before the plant shut down what ACCAN would have to do after closure, I'd probably tell you that our goal would have been met. However, now I realize there are several important steps to take in order for the site to remain pollution free. We need to make sure that Shenango cleans the site up, and we need to see a clean reuse.