

TESTIMONY OF

ANNE HILLIS AND JIM CLARK

THE JOINT SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLLUTION AND HAZARDEOUS WASTE

MARCH 28 AND 29, 1979

CO-CHAIRER BY

SENATOR EDMUND MUSKIE AND SENATOR CULVER

The day we testified was the same day the  
3-Mile Island Nuclear accident occurred.

My name is Anne Hillis. I am a Wife, a Mother, I live in Niagara Falls, New York. I also live close to a "Dump". A dump called Love Canal. I don't want to live there anymore. I hate Love Canal, I hate my life at Love Canal. It's a strange life that I lead now, it is filled with disruptions, frustrations, sleepless nights and a grip of fear that only those in similar situations can understand.

My family and I live on a historically wet area, east of Love Canal.

From State, air testing my home, like most homes, shows chemical contamination.

Homes along the Canal edge are empty - a green fence surrounds them now. The fence is far too late, because the contaminated water has been running in our homes (cellars) and yards for years.

We've lived in the home for 13½ years. We lost a child there. My 10 year old son went to 99th Street school, as did other children in the neighborhood, some of those children are gone now after the August, 1978 emergency was declared by Dr. Whalen (New York State Health Commissioner at that time) and President Carter.

But the remaining children are still in the same houses, the same bad air, and the same horrible environment.

Despair, hopelessness, we ask - What are we doing to our children and to our own bodies, staying? The stress alone is enough to break anyone.

I think many of us are at this point. Our homes are valueless, we can't sell, who would buy a home like this?

Some have thoughts of trying to rent, but how can we rent a contaminated house. A house we ourselves fear to live in -- no I cannot.

I want to tell you about my son. As I said before, he's 10, he's a bright boy, he has a 91 average in school, as a baby he never required much sleep, he was put on a sedative at about age 7 months to about 18 months, he developed rashes, frequent bouts of diarrhea and respiratory problems -- always respiratory problems.

His first year at 99th Street school, Kindergarten, he was admitted to the hospital - very ill. The diagnosis - acute gastroenterites - cause unknown.

After that - more respiratory infections - tonsillitis. At age 6 the tonsils and adenoids were removed, but the respiratory infections did not improve - he developed asthma.

In 1977 we were told to consult an allergist, he was tested, and found to have many allergies. He has been on a desensitizing program now for a year and a half - with no improvement.

He started school last September 7 miles across town, as "his" school was closed due to chemicals - chemicals in the air, and on the playground where he and all the children played.

He started the school year off with an abscess in his nose - he was on antibiotics - he had repeated respiratory infections, attacks of asthma.

By this time we the people were well aware of Love Canal, as was our children, my son, went into a depression, withdrawing, from the school, and his Mother and Father, he begged to leave.

I promised, we would leave soon!

One night last winter I got up to go to the bathroom - I looked in on him, his bed was empty. I looked all over, it was 2:00 a.m. I heard a cry from under the couch, my son was under there with his knees drawn up to his chin, crying. I asked him to come out, and what was wrong. His reply, "I want to die, I don't want to live here anymore - I know you will be sick again and I'll be sick again"

My husband and my son and I cried together that night.

We went to a Councillor with Family and Children Services. The Councillor arranged for a change of school, for he was refusing to go to school, he would stay in bed night and day.

We did all we knew to reassure him, we changed the school, he had been out about 8 weeks. We did get him back in school and he was doing fine, then two weeks ago another bronchial infection - more antibiotics and medications.

The 22nd of March, back to the Doctor. The antibiotics didn't work. It was changed to another - we went to the hospital, more blood work, chest X-rays. The Doctor knows my son is sick, but they don't know how to help him. I do -- get him out! Him, and all the sick people out -- out of the contaminated Hell we live in.

December 8, 1938 was my birth date. December 8, 1978 I celebrated my 40th year by getting up at 5:00 a.m., going out in zero weather to walk a picket, the air we breathed was so cold and heavy with chemical stink, that we could taste it.

We neighbors, out of desperation, walked together, to halt the movements of trucks from the Canal site into our neighborhood - for now - we knew of over 200 chemicals brewing beneath our soil, and Dioxin - Dioxin one of the most deadly poisons known to mankind. We also knew Radiation was at the Love Canal.

We publicly protested these crimes. We had been made to feel that we were the criminals! We are not - we are the victims!

**SO WE PROTESTED!**

I was arrested, as 15 others were, for being victimized by Occidental Petroleum Corporation (Hooker Chemical's Parent Company), the U.S. Army, the State of New York, the City of Niagara Falls, and the School Board for knowing from day ONE.

Knowing the chemicals were there -Hooker knew- Why did they not stress this to the School Board?

They are a big Company, they produce their chemicals - surely they had some idea of what the chemicals could do.

The people of Love Canal know now what they have done - they have produced children with extra fingers, extra toes, double rows of teeth, cleft palate, enlarged hearts, vision and hearing impairment and retardation.

State officials announced on February 8, 1979 that all children under 2 and pregnant women should be moved out of the area. If it's not safe for them, what about my child - he's not 2 years old, but he was 2 once, he was born here and he's sick, he was when he was 2, now he's 10 and he's still sick.

And what about pregnancies?

Many women cannot get pregnant because they've had hysterectomies due to excessive bleeding, tumors and cancer at young ages - ages 20 to 30.

I, myself, am in this group.

Dr. Beverly Paigen, a cancer researcher at Buffalo's Roswell Park Memorial Institute, who has worked with the Love Canal Homeowner's Association for months, says analysis of health data collected by the Association shows incidents of attempted suicides, nervous breakdowns, hyperactive children, epilepsy, asthma and urinary tract problems occurring 3 to 4 times higher among residents living in the wet areas compared to dry areas. Dr. Paigen said the data indicated 24 of the 120 children born to women living in the wet areas had birth defects. In the 5 years from 1974 through 1978, 9 of the 16 children born to women in the wet areas had birth defects - a rate of 56%.

Dr. Paigen says 39 of 155 pregnancies in this area end in miscarriages a rate far above the national average.

The wet areas She refers to are swale or old stream beds that are suspected of carrying the toxic chemicals from the former Hooker Chemicals land fill, or Love Canal.

I am a sick woman, nursing a sick child. My thoughts are - will he live to have children, if so, will they be sick or deformed?

Man made chemicals are not to be lived with 24 hours a day, for years.

We are not guinea pigs.

We are humans. Humans with human needs! We want hope, for our children, we want simple things like a spring garden, even this has been denied us since the State has said the vegetables may not be safe for human consumption.

But for years, my family has eaten vegetables grown in our yard. Also vegetables grown at the Canal edge, for a friend lived on 99th Street and grew them. Her Husband died 5 years ago from cancer, her son 6 months later from cancer. The State moved her out of her home, a home she had lived in over 20 years.

The State's air test showed chemicals in her home, but there are readings outside of the 99th Street area, higher than her's were.

One such home is up the street from my home, a 9 year old child asked State Officials, at a public meeting, Will I grow up to be a normal Man?

The State had told his parents not to let him sleep in his bedroom for chemicals are there. The boy has asthma, his Father has asthma, his Mother and little Brother have epilepsy.

They remain in that home, for they do not have the financial means to get out, like everyone else.

I believe most Americans assume that the Government would be there when they need help, but the people of the Love Canal area are now very disillusioned. Is this belief wrong? For the people of the Love Canal feel a hopelessness. Are we not Americans?

Our City, our State has done nothing to help the people in the areas outside of 99th and 97th streets, if our Federal Government does not help us, we are all doomed at Love Canal.

May God help us and our Country, for we need help, desperately.

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March 28, 1979

An:jcn

QUESTIONS WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ANSWERED:

1. Why is Niagara Falls, New York as a scenic wonder, allowing SCA, Hooker, and Newco to turn it into a chemical dump?
2. Why was the engineering study turned over to a Hooker Associate who is doing the remedial work for Hooker at Bloody Run?
3. Why was Newco, a Hooker associate, given remedial construction of Love Canal with no bids asked for?
4. Why did Donald O'Hara leave the City of Niagara Falls to work for Newco in Florida.?
5. Why can't we get straight answers from New York State Health Department?
6. Why, if this was declared an Emergency Disaster area can't we get help from the Federal Government?
7. Why, when we can bring home 900 dead bodies from Guyana, can't we get the Government to help in Love Canal?
8. Why, if we can send billions of dollars to Egypt and Iran can't we help in Love Canal.
9. Why did Hooker receive three million dollar grant for a building downtown.
10. Why did our Mayor, with the taxpayers money, build Hooker a parking ramp for their new building, which by the way was built not for them but for Carborundum. Hooker is now planning to build their own and the City is also agreeing to put up another parking ramp.
11. Why was our Mayor so intent on reviewing the television documentary which brings to light all the truth in regard to the anguish and suffering of the people of the Love Canal and the like canals in our country?
12. Why did Hooker receive a ten million dollar grant for municipal garbage incinerator?
13. Why did Hooker turn this property over to the Board of Education for the sum of \$1.00?
14. Why did the Board of Education sell this property to contractors for the

- construction of homes when they knew there were reservations in their deed.
15. Why must we ~~live~~ here while blame is affixed. Their chemicals came in my yard, I did not go in their yard and mess with their chemicals.
  16. Why did Dr. David Axelrod refuse to testify before the subcommittee?
  17. Why is the New York State Health Department do diligently trying to disprove that Love Canal caused health problems?
  18. Bruce Davis, Head of Hooker, says that Dioxin in those minute levels will not harm you. Dr. Axelrod, New York State Health Commissioner; says it will kill you. Why are we still here?
  19. Why are our children still attending 93rd Street School where they have proven that radiation levels are higher than the maximum permissible dose level (yearly) than a worker around a nuclear reactor?
  20. How can a fence stop leaching?
  21. Why does the City of Niagara Falls have Hooker do their water tests for our drinking water?
  22. Why, if Dr. David Axelrod is ~~so~~ concerned about kidnapping wasn't an arrest made?
  23. Why are they pumping leachate from Storm to Sanitary Sewers during high rains?
  24. Why was all the workers with rashes sent to Roswell for first aid?
  25. Why is the sewage treatment plant unable to filter all the known chemicals out of our effluent. This treatment plant has not worked since March 1978.
  26. Why have soil samples of yards not been taken?
  27. Why did our Governor say he was definitely not going to buy anymore homes which is reality ~~is~~ tantamount to a death sentence.
  29. Why, if this is a demonstration project, are we not demonstrating to the world that we can clean up and not cover up and protect our citizens?