



AVALON, PA

# DAN BIRON

## CONCERNS



FUMES



ODORS



SOOT



STANDARD  
OF LIVING

I've been a resident of Avalon for almost ten years now. I chose to live here because of the convenience. It's not too far away from downtown and it's accessible to all major highways. I guess the best thing I like about it is, this house and some of the other homes here are beautiful. It's just a very tranquil, low key community. Not a lot of stress, violence. A desirable place to live.

When Shenango was operating it was constant, 24/7 nightmare of toxic fumes blowing out from the manufacturing of coke. And also a fireball coming out of a smokestack at all times to burn off whatever toxins came out of that portion of the plant. There were days when you could not really or didn't want to go outside. Some days were so bad that the atmosphere was full of smoke. And many instances it smelled like diesel fuel. Other days it would smell like burned up tires. A wide range of different smells on quite a number of days of the year. I've been in construction my whole life, so a lot of the fumes I did smell, I recognized. **A lot of days your best refuge was to stay inside the house where you have air conditioning and the**

**air is filtered to accommodate your lungs so you could breathe better.**

My first indication of the problem with air pollution was when I moved here ten years ago. There was a tremendous amount of soot built up on the house from the plant's operation. Soon after, very loud rumbling noises, not during the day, but late at night or very early in the morning. Within a year, I noticed that especially during the summer months and spring, when the winds blew from the southwest, it just dumped all kinds of disgusting smelling smoke onto the northwest side of Avalon all across the boulevard here. Sometimes you couldn't see it but there was always a smell and you knew it was from the plant, not from the road, it was definitely from the plant.

**I do landscaping and so on really bad days I just wouldn't do my work. I'd go to another town or go on to another job away from the plant and wait for a day when it wasn't as bad so I could do my work here.** But that's a really terrible thing to say, to have to alter your life to get away from your work to get away from a very unhealthy condition. But that's how I would address it.

It's not just a coal soot like from many years ago that Pittsburgh acquired from the burning of furnaces. This was a very unusual element. Black soot but also an oil composition to it. The siding attracted this soot. It would embed itself in the PVC siding or wood. I would take a rag and try to wipe it off but it would just smear right into it. The only way to really get it off would be spray it with a bleach compound and wash it with a garden hose. **We're talking about something that's really a staining element, a filth element, and when you're breathing that in, you have to ask, what is that doing to your lungs?**

I found out about Shenango closing because we were actually invited to a Christmas party and our neighbor had a newspaper, on the front page an article said that Shenango would be closing down on January 14th. It felt great. When I read that in the paper, I was just elated. I thought I can't believe it. I can't believe they are finally going to shut down. I guess when you're living this close to that every day, for year after year, putting up with it, the permanent fixture of society that's a thorn in everyone's side, it's a wonderful feeling. Now that I walk outside and I can breathe the air and it's not that smell anymore, it's nice.

It's been a huge difference. People are outside more. This year I noticed, more than ever, people jogging, where nobody really ran around here last

**I'd like to see, who knows, maybe an industrial plant can come in that produces solar panels, that fabricates and makes solar panels, and sells them. That's not saying there's not toxics there either but I think that there's a lot of other corporations and industries that can come in that are environmentally friendlier, much more so than Shenango.**

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year. You'd be lucky to see a jogger on the road and then you scratched your head and said why is he running to get a work out, and breathe this? But it's been a big turnaround. I've noticed more and more people outside, especially this summer. Which is a really good thing. There's still things that smell around here like the sewer plant down by McKees Rocks, there's certain other elements and factories that probably need to be addressed. But right here, right now, right across the river, with Shenango not being there, there is a huge difference in the way this community smells. It's a much more desirable area to be in now that the plant's been shut down.

There's still a lot of air pollution around Pittsburgh though. I think there needs to be more monitoring of these plants. I was very impressed when I went to the meeting and learned there was a camera 24/7 monitoring Shenango and its operations and what time and the smoke. Everything can be detected if you probe deep enough into the sources and the times and investigate it enough you can find out what plants are doing, what they're burning, what's their chemicals, what they are doing.