



ROSS TOWNSHIP, PA (FORMERLY EMSWORTH, PA)

BARBARA PACE

CONCERNS



ODORS



HEALTH



STANDARD
OF LIVING

HEALTH EFFECTS



DEMENTIA



SHORTNESS OF
BREATH



EDEMA

I moved to Ross Township just recently after spending eight years in Emsworth. I originally moved to Emsworth because where I was living in the city was no longer a safe and sustainable place to live and it was what I could afford after my divorce. And I was looking for a good school because we had just gotten custody of my grandson. So I moved with my son, my grandson, and my 92 year old father to Emsworth in 2007. I didn't want to live in Bellevue because I remembered hearing about their poor air quality on the news and naive me thought that it was due to mining or that it was the only place where the air was bad.

It was a very short period after moving there that I started smelling the odor. It reminded me of when I was a kid and we would get coal delivered. That was what I was smelling. I feel really bad because I thought the smell was actually my father doing something, like starting fires. I didn't think anyone had coal furnaces anymore but I still went outside to see if any of the neighbors were burning anything.

Once I identified the odor, I read in the paper about a community meeting in Bellevue. I went and there

was a pretty good turnout. That was the first realization that what I was smelling was the Shenango Coke Works. I joined the group and got more involved. I started reading more and realizing that it wasn't just the stench. It was affecting my health and the health of my family.

When we moved my father to Emsworth he was 92 years old but he was so healthy he was going dancing two or three times a week. But he very quickly went into dementia. And yes he was an older man but we have no history of dementia in

our family. **I'm not convinced that his demise, which was a horrible death, was not a result of being exposed to that pollution at a vulnerable age.** And I am feeling the effects now too. I don't have asthma but I do feel shortness of breath when I have to climb these hills. And I actually went to the doctor's for an echocardiogram because my legs swelled. I have edema and they're not sure why.

I feel like as a human being, I have a responsibility to leave this planet better than I found it. I've spent years talking to the EPA and the Allegheny County Health Department, and all kinds of people about these issues. I've personally taken a heck of a beating from my family because they believe I am taking jobs away. I think if you have the potential to change things and maybe make it better, not only for yourself, but for the rest of the world, I don't understand not identifying with that.

I feel that for most of our elected officials the priority is bringing in the jobs no matter the cost. Their primary motivation has been bringing corporations who are dealing with the fossil fuel industry and they're not focusing on what we have already proven here in Pittsburgh that we do well, like health and education. And there is a price to be paid with that.

I believe that the Shenango Coke Plant shut down due to the efforts of several environmental groups like Clean Water Action, Group Against Smog and Pollution, Penn Future, and Allegheny County Clean Air Now. These activists realized the dirty deed that Shenango was doing, and I think it was easier for Shenango to close down than deal with the requirements that we were asking from them. But Shenango is just one plant. There are at least four other major plants that contribute to pollution around the area. Our traffic also causes a lot of pollution. There's a large number of factors concerning the pollution that we must be aware about.

On a better note, I have noticed significant changes in my health since the plant shut down. I can walk a

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mile and a half perfectly fine now. **I really believe that the decrease in pollution has improved my ability to exercise. Since I moved into assisted living, I no longer have to worry about pollution.** However, it is still in the back of my mind. Recently, I drove down 65, and I was so shocked that I could no longer smell that putrid odor that I remember so well. I used to feel so bad for the people that had to live there, but now I can take comfort knowing that they do not have to suffer anymore.

But, that does not mean that everything is solved. **To truly get what we want, we need to have good politicians who can control what businesses are coming in and out. We need to reach decision-makers at the top to fully impact the environment. It is always about the almighty dollar for these companies.** We seem to take the easy way, which ultimately causes pollution. However, that is starting to change. I think Shenango realized that fossil fuels are not the future- solar is. I hope that whatever takes over will be solar-related. Since the health department hasn't been doing its job, environmental groups need to make sure that happens.

I think that there is still a long, uphill battle to go. The environmental groups still have a lot to do. We need to make sure that this site gets cleaned up, and that a better industry takes its place.

We need an industry that is going to benefit our community instead of being more detrimental. The problems are so long-range, and it's not going to go away overnight.