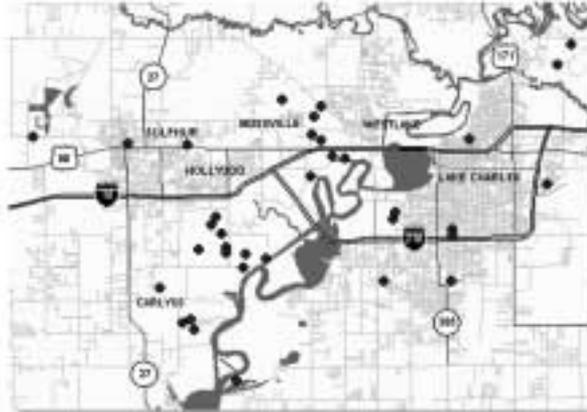


# BIRDS OF PREY

Conoco, Condea Vista, and PPG

Feeding off of Mossville and Calcasieu Parish

The dots represent facilities in the area that release toxic chemicals.



Calcesieu Parish is located in Southwest Louisiana, near the Texas border. These maps include close ups of the parish. Note that Mossville is across the lake from Lake Charles.

Wednesday, April 4, 2001, 1:10 PM

## Industrial accident in Mossville, Louisiana

Conoco spills over one and a half tons of sulfur dioxide into the air.

Conoco call to neighboring plants: *Workers should Shelter in Place. In case of a chemical accident, people should go inside, close all doors and windows, turn off the air conditioner, and turn on the TV and radio to await further instructions.*

Conoco call to neighboring residents: None. Conoco never calls.

Diane Prince, resident of Mossville:

*"Then about 1:30, I was talking to my niece down the road, I guess about a mile away. She said, 'What are you doing here, you should be in your house [because of the accident].' I proceeded to come back home. I was so angry because I had an odor in my house. So I called Conoco, and there was a gentleman that came here. He proceeded to tell me, 'Mrs. Prince, why . . . I am going to tell you Mrs. Prince [why we didn't call and warn the community]. . . . The reason why we didn't is because the wind was not moving in your direction.' I proceeded to ask, then, how could he tell me this when my house was full of the fumes that they had released? I said, 'Who are you to say the wind was not moving in my direction. Are you God?'"*

Mrs. Prince was not the only one ignored.

*" . . . There is a school right up the road from my house . . . those little kids . . . the mothers were so concerned and were so angry they ran over there and picked their kids up and went back home. [They were] very, very upset because there was no Shelter in Place and he said, 'We did call Shelter in Place for Georgia Gulf and Condea Vista people.' So I told him, 'Oh, I see . . . I said it is okay to call Shelter in Place for Georgia Gulf, which is directly across the street from my house, but it's not okay to call Shelter in Place for us . . . for the people.' So I am very upset because this is not the first time [that Conoco has failed to warn us]."*

Fifty years ago, in the early stages of the chemical revolution, Diane Prince was just a little girl. One of 16 children, she grew up on a farm where she and her brothers and sisters helped their parents work the land.

Today, Mrs. Prince still lives in a rural setting, though it is blighted by the chemical plant across the street from her home. The plant produces a substance called vinyl chloride monomer (VCM), a chemical known to be a possible human carcinogen. Mrs. Prince and her husband David have raised their four children in the African American town of Mossville.

Emancipated slaves founded Mossville after the Civil War, and the town was proudly born from African Americans' first step toward equality. The presence of so many petrochemical facilities in Mossville today is another symbol of African American history, albeit a sad one. When the petrochemical industry first moved in, the African American population did not have the political power to prevent industrial juggernauts from gobbling up their land. The families of Mossville are paying a heavy price for that legacy to this day.

Imagine that it is the 1950's and that you want to build a chemical plant in Louisiana. The Jim Crow laws of the segregated south are going strong, and African Americans do not have equal rights and certainly no political power. Would you choose to locate your plant in an area populated by influential white citizens where construction and operations would be subject to scrutiny, legal processes and oversight? Perhaps you would have to pay to relocate some of the families who live nearby to move them away from a future industrial neighbor.

The cheaper and more efficient option would be to put your plant in the area where the black people live, where people who demand scrutiny lack the power to make it happen. Many residents of Mossville believe that industry stands strong today because it profited from the repressive laws and social dictums of the segregated south.

It seems apparent that people throughout Calcasieu Parish, the county in which Mossville is located, are ill in unusually high numbers. Many residents believe that the concentration of petrochemical plants—approximately 40 in a ten-mile radius—is the cause of the widespread illness. Conoco, Condea Vista, and PPG are three of the facilities that have long garnered complaints from local citizens. Though much of the parish population suffers the effects of industrial pollution, the African American citizens of Mossville bear a disproportionate share of the burden.

The homes of Mossville residents stand directly adjacent to industry that has sprawled, in some cases, only feet away from their front doors. But industry representatives, like the spokesperson from Conoco, have always assured residents that there is no reason to be concerned. No reason to be concerned when the plants first moved in. No reason to be concerned today.

It is no surprise that many of the people of Mossville are sick. Mrs. Prince has ovarian cancer. Her daughter has endometriosis, which affects a woman's ability to have children. Mrs. Prince elaborates:

" Never, never did I once think that I would get cancer. . . I have no family members that have cancer. My Mom and Dad died from a stroke and heart problems and my uncles and aunts died from strokes or heart attacks . . .so this is our family trait, not cancer.

I had four children. Never had a problem with carrying my babies or delivery. My mother had 16. My grandmother had 12 children. My dad's mom had nine children. So I had to say that my cancer and my daughter's illness came from this plant. I truly believe that."

# Birds of a Feather

Conoco, Condea Vista, and PPG are three of the companies that citizens of Mossville and Calcasieu Parish believe to be significant polluters of the area. Each company employs a public or community relations officer who scours the parish with a friendly face, stating earnestly to schoolchildren and to civic groups that their operations are improving all the time. Unfortunately, the facts do not support this claim.

According to the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory, Conoco, Condea Vista and PPG are among those industries that lead the parish in releases of toxic chemicals (1997, 1998, 1999 TRI data). Contrary to the public relations spin, their toxic releases are increasing at alarming rates, as seen in the increased quantities released from 1997 to 1999.

These three companies rely on each other for the production of their products. The relationship is like this:

Conoco refines oil. Products from that process are sold to Condea Vista.



Condea Vista uses the Conoco products as feedstock in production of polyvinyl chloride (PVC). The PVC is shipped off to companies to make plastic consumer and commercial products.



PPG produces chemicals like chlorine and vinyl chloride monomer that assist in the production of PVC. They produce PVC with these products and also sell these chemicals to Condea Vista for their PVC production.

The production process and thus the economic health of these three facilities are entwined, and they take joint action to assure that success. These three companies are members of groups with innocuous sounding names like the Vinyl Institute and the Lake Area Industry Alliance. Many residents liken these groups to gangs formed by industry. Residents believe the design of these gangs is to defend their turf at all costs and to combine their power, thwarting meaningful change in the local community.

| Facility     | 1997 Toxic Releases to Air | 1998 Toxic Releases to Air | 1999 Toxic Releases to Air | % increase |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| PPG          | 434,733 pounds             | 496,630 pounds             | 491,640 pounds             | 13%        |
| Condea Vista | 448,976 pounds             | 516,671 pounds             | 532,782 pounds             | 19%        |
| Conoco       | 167,521 pounds             | 208,858 pounds             | 693,839 pounds             | 314%       |



# The PR Machine

In response to criticism from the public, the companies increase their spending on public relations in what appears to be an attempt to smile and spend their way out of trouble. Harris and DeVille, a public relations firm, is one company often hired by petrochemical companies to concoct studies to show that all is well in the community. The money spent by Conoco, Condea Vista, and PPG on consultants and public relations adds up to a considerable sum. Why not stop the cosmetic changes and use that money toward improved technology and safety mechanisms at the plants?

PPG, Condea Vista, and Conoco are not generally forthcoming about their public relations expenses. The following figures are clear examples of pollution control equipment, such as leakless valves, that these companies could buy with money that is allocated to PR. Most pollution comes from leaks in equipment at the plants. A leakless valve costs about \$2,500 and eliminates the problem

| Public Relations Spending | Estimated Amount Spent in a Year | Number of Leakless Valves Money could Buy* |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Community newsletters     | \$30,000                         | 12   |
| Community events          | \$25,000                         | 10   |
| Salaries and consultants  | \$200,000                        | 80   |
| Total                     | \$255,000                        | 102  |

\* Leakless valves are just that—valves that have a good seal and prevent chemical leaks. These valves could protect the health and safety of so many, yet are not uniformly used throughout the facilities.

## Eating Crow—Myths of PR

**PR Myth One:** Don't worry about the production process; these plastic products are useful

**Fact:** No plastic product is more valuable than a person's health

A never-ending part of the spin by the big three is repetition of how their chemicals are found in many useful products. They haul these products into schools and smile at the schoolchildren as they repeat this concept. Their argument seems to say that any end is justified since their products are helpful to some. Where are the ethics of this position? It is not acceptable, for any reason, to dump toxic emissions on the residents of Mossville and put people's health at risk. Mrs. Prince's life is worth more than a new plastic cup.

This argument by industry follows the national trend; people sacrificed to industry are typically minority populations. In this case, it is the African American people of Mossville who are the first of the lambs to the slaughter.

**PR Myth Two:** You can trust the safety information provided by the companies.

**Fact:** Recent events, including the Bill Moyers' program Trade Secrets, have exposed the petrochemical industry's bad habit of keeping the full story from citizens.

On March 26th, 2001, Bill Moyers' investigative report on PBS revealed how the chemical industry trade group, the Chemical Manufacturers Association—now called the American Chemistry Council—has willfully withheld information about the danger of its products from the American public ([www.chemicalindustryarchives.org](http://www.chemicalindustryarchives.org)). Condea Vista and PPG are members of this trade group.

There are many examples of Conoco, Condea Vista, and PPG engaging in efforts that appear to mislead Mossville neighbors and the general public in the parish. What follows are a few samples of that practice.



# Rotten Eggs

## Conoco

*"This is not the first time this has happened," said Diane Prince about Conoco's failure to warn the community about its accident on April 4, 2001. That day she called the company, prompted by odors in her home, to find out if anything had happened. "...I proceeded to call Conoco, and the man that answered the phone told me that they did not release anything at all. I asked him twice and he told me no there was no release."*

Conoco finally told Mrs. Prince the truth after it was too late for her to take safety precautions. One evening news station reported that local residents were warned of the accident. In truth, Conoco left the residents of Mossville uninformed and unprotected. They did not tell Mossville the full story and did not correct the incorrect account of events that appeared on the evening news.

## Condea Vista

Nancy Tower, Community Services Administrator, is the face out in front for Condea Vista, reassuring the public that the company's products are safe. She frequently goes into schools to spread this

point of view. One prop that she uses is a small piece of plastic pipe. She informs the schoolchildren that Vista products like the pipe are the reason that clean drinking water is brought to their homes. She does not inform them about Vista's ethylene dichloride (EDC) spill that contaminated area water, nor does she inform the children of her role in withholding information about that spill.

What Mrs. Tower routinely fails to tell the schoolchildren and the public is that, in a memo dated May 12, 1994, she participated in what appears to have been the willful cover up of an accident involving Vista. Earlier that year, on March 31st, the accident spilled over a million pounds of EDC, a known carcinogen, into the water. Conoco and Condea Vista were working together when the spill occurred.

Mrs. Tower's participation in the cover up is chilling. On the May 12th memo, the handwritten initials "N.T." are near a note scrawled in her handwriting that says the following:

*"Conoco's sticking to this number [1602 pounds] officially. Unofficially Tom Holti says over 1 mill. lbs."*



In a deposition on July 31, 1996, attorney Billy Baggett asked PPG's Dan McGinn about the mailing list for The Source. Mr. McGinn said that he wanted particular people on the mailing list. "I would like to have educators, doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, bankers. That's what I asked for." (p.13)

Mr. Baggett continues to question him.

"Was there a particular criteria that you were using in deciding what sort of mailing list to assemble?"

Mr. McGinn: "Just general framework in my own mind of I would like to talk to educated people who can form, you know, the general leadership of Lake Charles, that kind of thing." (p. 13)

Many of the residents of Mossville did not receive the newsletter, despite the fact that they are among PPG's closest neighbors. Mr. Baggett, who lives about nine miles away from PPG, did receive the newsletter. He is an attorney, the sort of person considered by PPG to be influential and worthy of informing PPG should inform all of its neighbors of relevant news, regardless of their occupation, education, or level of influence.

This cover up has been public information for years, and yet Mrs. Tower shamelessly continues to go before the public, offering reassurances about Vista as a good neighbor. No doubt her position at Condea Vista pays well, but can remuneration soothe the conscience behind the initials? The Mossville community and the public at large can have little faith in any reassuring words from Mrs. Tower and the Vista PR machine.

## PPG

In August of 1995, PPG and Condea Vista published a newsletter called The Source to announce the formation of a jointly owned company that would produce vinyl chloride monomer (VCM). The newsletter was written by Dan McGinn, PPG's Manager of Communications and Media Relations. A July 1996 deposition of Mr. McGinn by attorney Billy Baggett of Baggett McCall & Burgess exposed that Mr. McGinn's newsletter misled its readers about the safety of the products coming from the facility.

At issue is Mr. McGinn's use of the word "vinyl" in The Source. The newsletter communicated in several ways that vinyl is safe, yet, as Mr. McGinn admitted in the deposition, vinyl is not what the plant was producing. It was, in fact, producing VCM, a chemical known to be a possible carcinogen.

Some of the statements from the newsletter:

*"The vinyl industry has more than a 50-year documented record of safe performance and has one of the most closely regulated production processes in existence."*

*"Study after study has confirmed there is no evidence that vinyl affects human health—not for workers in the industry, not for people living near vinyl-related manufacturing facilities..."*

Unfortunately, this information discussed does not pertain to anything produced by the plant. Excerpts from the deposition illustrate this fact.

*"Mr. Baggett: The statement that ... 'the vinyl industry has more than a 50-year documented record of safe performance' is misleading. It would make a person think that PPG and Vista are a member of an industry that has more than a 50-year documented record of safe performance, wouldn't it?"*

*"Mr. McGinn: In the context of when I put that together I was referring to end-use vinyl." (p. 77)*

End use vinyl is not produced by his facility. Mr. McGinn acknowledges that his newsletter is talking about wholly different product and not about his facility's product, VCM.

Throughout the deposition Mr. McGinn states that it was late at night when he wrote *The Source* and that much of its content was copied directly from the Vinyl Institute's information. No excuse can compensate for misleading the residents of Calcasieu Parish.

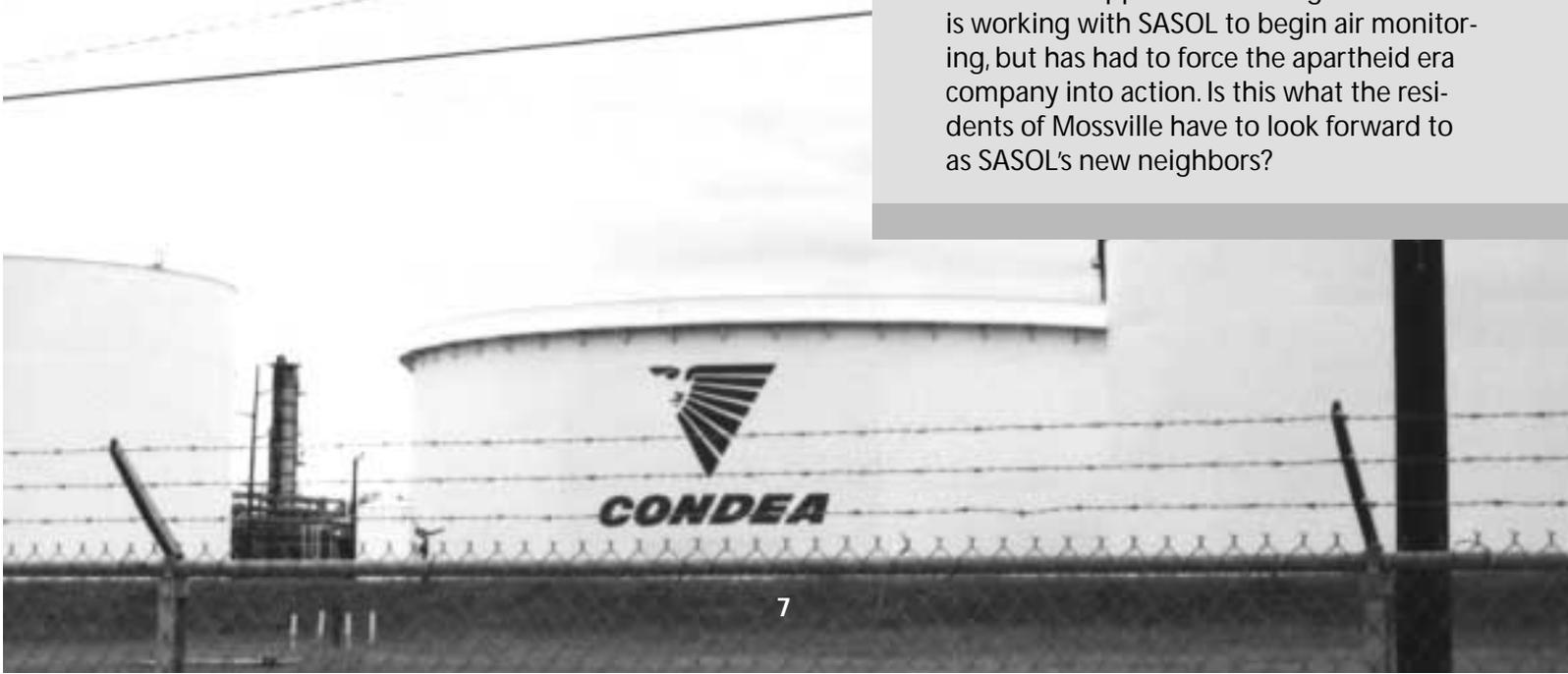
Residents of the parish will be comforted to learn of one additional statement from Mr. McGinn's deposition:

*"I have not put out another edition of *The Source* since then..."*

On March 1, 2001, the South African company SASOL officially took over Condea Vista. SASOL was a significant source of revenue for South Africa's apartheid regime. According to the South African environmental group groundWork, the company profited from apartheid laws that prohibited the release of information to the public regarding emissions (groundWork, March 2001, Press release and background documents). This opportunism is eerily reminiscent of industry's first foray into Mossville in the repressive atmosphere of the 1950's.

In May of 2000, the people of Sasolburg, where the company is located, took their first air samples as part of the bucket brigade. The results found disturbingly high amounts of benzene and vinyl chloride. According to Bobby Peek, director of groundWork, "Several of the identified pollutants are either known as or are probable carcinogens." (groundWork, *ibid.*) Mvuse Maguma, a school teacher who was born and raised in the area, said that "Most people in the community are having similar health problems, including bronchitis, tuberculosis, eye irritations, and asthma." (groundWork, *ibid.*)

SASOL's response to the charges was to state that groundWork is exaggerating the threat of pollution, although they supplied no data to support this claim. groundWork is working with SASOL to begin air monitoring, but has had to force the apartheid era company into action. Is this what the residents of Mossville have to look forward to as SASOL's new neighbors?



As the history of Mossville shows, race is a factor of industry issues in Calcasieu Parish. **Ray Reynolds** is a former worker and union leader at Condea Vista. Like most of the workers, he is white.

At the viewing of Trade Secrets, the Bill Moyers documentary, Mr. Reynolds gave the audience an insider view of the plant. His experience reinforced what seems apparent: despite the fact that many African Americans live near industry, African Americans, for the most part, are not given the best jobs in the facility. Ray noted that during his time at Condea Vista, many African Americans worked as janitors, but few were the well-paid operators and management.

As it happens, the black community may have been lucky to be overlooked. Ray Reynolds is now terminally ill due to toxic exposure. In the midst of his battle with his disease he is loving and generous, welcoming people into his home to tell about his family and his illness. He is spending his last days fighting for the workers and the industrial neighbors.

"... What I have is called toxic neuropathy. The toxins are going through the nerve cells, through the central nervous system and now they are into my brain and they are trying to slow it down.

I probably would have turned the machines off by now if I didn't have a thirteen-year old daughter. I still debate every night in my mind whether to shut the machines off or not. I wouldn't wish this on anyone. It's horrible. It's horrible. You wake up in the middle of the night and your shirt is just filled with blood and then your kids have to see that."



#### **Ray tells of what he believes made him sick.**

"I began [working at Condea Vista] in 1982, September 21st. That was my daughter's one-year birthday. That's how I remember the day. I stayed working there until July 22nd 1998.

Well, this is something again that hardly no one knows about, but in downtown Westlake there is a toxic waste dump and it is shielded by the trees so you can't see it. [Conoco] would go in the middle of the night and they would just dump truckloads, dozen of truckloads of toxic chemicals onto the dirt.

... [I was] sometimes less than thirty or forty feet away and then after three or four days they would till it up with a tractor and they would start all over again. It was just separated from my unit by a chain link fence. No doubt, that's when all my problems started are when they opened up that toxic waste farm. They call it a land farm. That's what it's called.

I had an EPA guy tell me he went through there last year and you still had to cover your face. It stinks so bad when you go through there. ... So how many countless people in Westlake are sick and they don't know why? They just think, 'Well, I got it hereditary or genetically.'"

#### **Ray was chairman of his union. He looked after the families of his deceased co-workers.**

"The worst experience I had as chairman of the union is when someone would die. I would bring the widow of the family a Bible and a check for \$3,000 ... To sit there with the widows and the orphans and hug them while they cried is an experi-

ence no one should have to ever, ever encounter. That was a horrible experience to watch a five year old girl—I've got goose bumps—crying over the loss of her father and there is nothing you can do that can make that child feel better.

We kept ordering more Bibles and I kept delivering more checks and every time it was as difficult as the first. I thought maybe that it would get easier as each time went on, but it never does.

There have been at least four or five widows that have called me in the past few months, and they are upset because the cause of death on the death certificates are reading either pneumonia or heart failure. . . . Really the primary cause of death was cancer so what happens, when they go to bring the body from the house to the hospital, their company doctors are waiting and they make sure that the secondary cause of death [is] placed on the death certificate."

**Ray continues to find joy in many things—in his family and in the beautiful day lilies that he has planted throughout his yard.**

"Yes, I like cross-pollinating hybrid day lilies. It is so fascinating because every time you cross-pollinate

one, every seed that you get is a different plant, it's the original plant—there is nothing like it elsewhere on the face of the earth.

When I got too sick to move the new day lily bed in, [my 16-year-old son Jack] did it for me. He went out and dug it...it's quite a bit of work actually. You've got to dig two or three feet down and bring in fresh dirt and fertilizer . . .

[The colors of the lilies are] everything between white to purple to green. Some have lacy edges. Some of them have bubble blooms. They are unbelievable, unbelievable."

**Despite his illness, there is no bitterness apparent in Ray or in his children and wife.**

Well, they already wrecked my life physically, and if I live in bitterness and anger then they wreck my life totally. So instead of trying to be bitter and anger, I try to love the victims and love the people that are being poisoned everyday and that way they haven't totally ruined my life. . . . they can't take my pride, they can't take my dignity, they can't take my serenity, they can't do that, I won't let them. They would love it if they could. That's not going to happen today.



# Daddy Death

Daddy worked for thirty years  
making his death.  
While the fog bathed on the roof,  
he put on his hard hat,  
took the green lunch box, and the car keys  
and rode off to his funeral.

At the tomb he picked up a heavy drill.  
They lowered him and several other daddies  
into a cylindrical grave.  
All day they scraped red mud  
and poison from their sarcophagus;  
so that America could produce  
raw material to murder itself with.

A slow death that he passed on to us  
in his cigarettes, his cough and his genes,  
coated with the poison of his daily bread.

Along the Mississippi  
men & women are caged in boxes,  
selling their life to produce  
chemicals that sanitize the world.

by  
**Malaika  
Favorite**

When I write with my new pen  
I think, piece of this is daddy,  
his sweat flowing out on my page.  
Elmer's Glue and zinc oxide  
wears his shoes.

Every day men and women car pool  
to their small injection of cancer.  
When the boxes sneeze, one of us  
on the outside catches a cold,  
or die of hiccups in the heart.

All along the river, sealed in mud,  
drowned in the water,  
bathing in the fog;  
the death that kills daddies  
floats out to us, as little rubber ducks.

# Catch the Worm

In 1998, the citizens of Mossville, through their group Mossville Environmental Action Now (MEAN), collaborated with Dr. Marvin Legator, a toxicologist at the University of Texas in Galveston. Dr. Legator, famed for his work with the residents of Love Canal, works with citizens to conduct symptom surveys. With the help of Diane Prince and Lake Charles residents Laura Cox and Beth Zilbert, a door to door health symptom survey of 99 Mossville residents was taken.

Dr. Legator's analysis of the results proved alarming. He concluded that "This community is one of the most heavily impacted communities I have ever studied. This community is very sick." (Breathing Poison, Beth Zilbert, 2000) Breathing Poison illustrated many of the details of the survey results, noting that "Mossville residents suffered from illnesses related to chemical exposure 2 - 3 times higher than that of a control group."

Members of local environmental groups began taking their own air samples with Oakland, Ca. based Communities for a Better Environment and the Bucket Brigade. The known effects of the chemicals found in their air samples matched the health symptoms that Mossville residents suffer.

Following is a chart regarding the frequency of symptoms and the chemicals detected by the bucket, chemicals that might be expected to cause the symptoms. Note that cancer is not an aspect of the survey, yet many of the chemicals detected in the air samples are known or suspected carcinogens. Many of the residents of Mossville, like Mrs. Prince, suffer from cancer, in addition to the symptoms detailed below.

The plant managers of PPG and Condea Vista do not live next door to their facilities and do not feel the health effects that the people of Mossville do. They live near the golf course of a country club and are less likely to watch their children suffer the severe symptoms of chemical exposure.

| Symptom   | % of people who experienced the symptom | Chemical detected in the air by the Bucket Brigade | Known health effects of the chemical  |
|---|---|--|---|
| Burning eyes, nasal soreness, nose bleeds, sinus and ear infections   | 91%                                     | Benzene  | Suspected respiratory toxicant, recognized carcinogen, recognized reproductive and developmental toxicant                         |
| Symptoms of central nervous system illnesses, such as headaches, dizziness, tremors and seizures.                 | 84%                                     | Carbon Disulfide                                   | Suspected neurotoxicant, recognized developmental and reproductive toxicant.  |
| Symptoms of cardiovascular illness, such as irregular heart beat, stroke, heart disease, and chest pain.          | 71%                                     | Methyl Ethyl Ketone                                | Suspected cardiovascular toxicant, suspected blood, liver, reproductive, and respiratory toxicant                                 |
| Symptoms related to digestive system illnesses such as frequent vomiting, ulcers, frequent diarrhea, and jaundice | 57%                                     | Xylene   | Suspected Gastro-intestinal or liver toxicant, suspected cardiovascular or blood toxicant, suspected skin or sense organ toxicant |



*"People have been fighting for this for a very long time. [Government agencies] are now being embarrassed because community members have done the work for them. We did a health study. Concerned citizens did blood tests. The fact that we did our own air sampling gave us leverage with the governmental agencies. Now they cannot send us away any more, they cannot ignore the problems the industry is causing. They have to pay attention because the proof is in the pudding."*

Laura Cox, Calcasieu Parish environmental activist and mother of two

April 5, 2001

The last several years have seen hard fought victories for the citizens of Mossville and the parish. There have been individuals and groups that have committed endless time and resources to the effort. The Mossville citizens, through MEAN, have lobbied successfully for government action on the problems caused by industry in their community. A host of other organizations, particularly Communities for a Better Environment, Greenpeace, Earthjustice and the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, have added technical resources, global reach, and power to MEAN's punch.



In 1998 the Baggett McCall & Burgess law firm in Lake Charles paid for dioxin analyses of Mossville residents' blood. The analyses revealed that residents had high levels of the chemical in their blood. Many had levels seen only on the scale of exposures to industrial accidents (Times Picayune, March 29, 2001, p. A - 1).

The citizens of Mossville have complained about their health for years. In March of 2001, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released the results of blood tests taken from 28 Mossville residents. The following

"Because of my children and the other children that live here, I participate in changing the system. We are leaving this legacy of pollution behind. It's not fair NOT to take a stand for the future of the next generation." Laura Cox

The active citizenry has produced real results in two areas.

## Health

Dioxin is best known as the most toxic component of the U.S. military's deadly Agent Orange. This chemical has been found in the blood of Mossville residents. Dioxin is formed when chlorine-containing chemicals, like plastic or industrial waste, are burned. The chemical becomes airborne, settling on plants that are eaten by animals. When the people of Mossville eat the chickens that they raise or eat food produced near industry, they are also consuming dioxin. People retain dioxins through meat and dairy consumption.

information is taken from the conclusion of the Exposure Investigation Report.

"Exposure Investigation (EI) Report: Blood dioxin levels were elevated in residents of Mossville who participated in the EI. The median and mean concentrations of dioxin TEQ's in the EI participants were greater than the 95th percentile concentration of a comparison population."

Diane Prince comments on the investigation. "They tested 28 of us and I was one of those and I tested high so I know that my cancer came from that and it is very frightening."

Based on those results, the ATSDR has decided to study the blood of people throughout the parish. The federal government's actions come years after the fact. It is only after the law firm's blood analysis, the symptom survey by the citizens and Dr. Legator, and constant pressure from MEAN, Greenpeace and Earthjustice Legal

Defense Fund that the federal government has finally taken action.

The citizens of Mossville are concerned for everyone in the parish, yet they know that they are under the greatest threat as the direct neighbors of industry. They do not want their health issues clouded by the larger survey. Dagmar Darjean, a Mossville resident: "I think industry is afraid if [health studies] really focus on Mossville and bring out all the dirt, the community would sue industry. So they are focusing on everything else - which is important also. But we want the focus to stay on Mossville." (Times Picayune, March 29, 2001, p. A 8)

The state of Louisiana refused to act on the issue of dioxin. "These [dioxin] tests were shared with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, which refused to investigate the dioxin results." (Breathing Poison) Though state health officials are now involved in the parish, the degree to which they and the federal government had to be, in Laura Cox's words, "dragged kicking and screaming," is alarming.

To this day, industry representatives, including Conoco, PPG, and Condea Vista, refuse to meet with health officials and Mossville residents. (Times Picayune, March 29, 2001, p. A 8)

## Fines for Industry, Reduced Accidents

In September of 1998, the citizens of Mossville began to monitor their air quality with the bucket brigade, sponsored by Communities for a Better Environment and a grant from Cox, Cox, and Filo. Tired of DEQ and EPA ignoring their problems, and wary of the false assurances by industry, Mossville residents took matters into their own hands and began to sample their air. The bucket results have revealed that Calcasieu Parish residents are exposed to a variety of chemicals—a toxic soup—on any given day. These chemicals have real effects of people's health.

In July of 1999, Diane Prince received a letter from the DEQ informing her that Condea Vista was fined based on the results of one of Mrs. Prince's community monitoring activities including photographs,

telephone complaints and bucket samples.

Another plant, Westlake Petrochemical, was fined more than \$300,000 for a series of serious violations following an inspection triggered by a community complaint and bucket sample showing a violation of the state's health based benzene standard. The sample showed levels 231 times greater than the state standard. The enforcement actions occurred because of community monitoring plus data from the bucket samples. The information indicated to EPA enforcement officials that there were serious problems and probable violations. Once again, citizen action preceded the government and forced action.

According to Breathing Poison, the Bucket Brigade also resulted in a lower number of accidents. During the year 1999, the average number of accidents per day dropped from 1.5 to .67. Even this number is too high, indicating that an accident takes place nearly every day. Nonetheless, the citizen action is creating pressure and exposing hazards, resulting in improved safety at the plants.

"I live across the lake from the chemical plants, but the wind blows my way, it changes directions on a regular basis. It's not predictably going to blow into one particular community. I can sometimes smell the chemicals in my community where I live. My children are being exposed just like everyone else's children.

Pollution does not know about race or gender, we are all feeling the effects. But if you live close to the polluters, your exposures are going to be much higher." Laura Cox

The worst case scenarios of the facilities' accidents continue to be a source of concern. These scenarios show that no one is safe from the threat of the petrochemical industry. The accident of a worst case scenario would affect people living within a 25-mile radius and would certainly endanger the lives of those who live in Lake Charles. The plant managers have a responsibility to the people of Mossville, Lake Charles and throughout the parish to assure the safety of their operations.



**Mrs. Prince** has ovarian cancer, but the cancer is in remission and she is feeling better these days. She is exuberant, full of life, but angry about the time and the quality of life she has already lost.

"My name is Diane Marie Prince. I live in Mossville. I am 55 years old. I have four beautiful children. I am a mother and a wife and I love being a mother and a wife. [My husband David and I] have been married 33 years.

I live across the street from Georgia Gulf now but it was Condea Vista. They are still flaring and so they are flaring maybe once a month or so...

I have cancer. I have had cancer for three years now. I have had two rounds of chemo, six months each of a very, very strong chemo. I have been in remission now for three months. Thank God again. I think I may beat it this time...

I feel like that they cut my life so short. There are so many things now that I want to do that I cannot do. Like now, I want to go back to work. I love nursing. I was a nurse's aide for 31 years and I did it with so much love. I really took care of the people that I took care of and I want to go back so bad, but ...I can't stand for a long period of time...the chemo has done a lot to my feet. So I

am angry about that. That is part of my life that was taken away from me."

The feeling in the Prince household is one of a closely knit, loving family. But Mrs. Prince's illness has taken its toll.

...Now my daughters sometimes they, like this year, they were talking about us taking a trip, you know,



and I don't know if I am going to do that because I don't feel good all the time... I got to wait. I can't project things. I can't decide I am going to do something in a couple of months anymore. I can't do that.

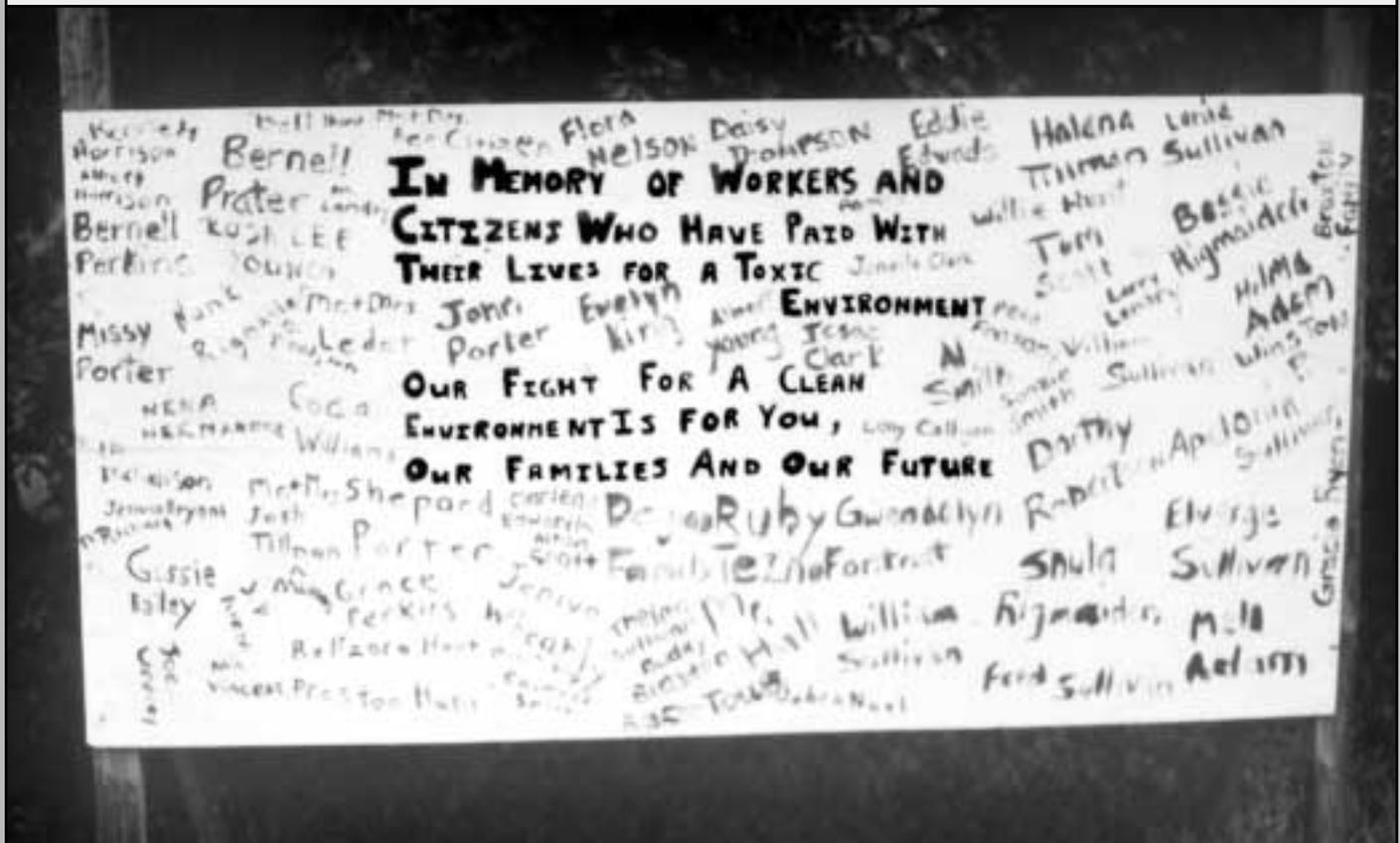
My children have suffered so much with me through this because they hate to see their Mom suffer.

My baby daughter came back from [college] one day, the first time when I had my chemo... I had [always had] thick hair and my hair was dark brown and I always had it short but full. I would go fix my hair every week 'cause I love to keep my hair nice and so she came back. It was Easter time and she came for Easter break and I did not tell her that I had lost my hair, you know, I didn't want to tell her on the phone... When [she] and her sister came up to the door and I walked and unlocked the screen door and she saw me [with no hair], she passed out. It really just...it just

shocked her and I'll never do that again. I'll tell them, you know, prepare them. She felt the end for me. When she saw the bald head, she saw the end."

Mrs. Prince's dimple stands out when she talks about her husband. She smiles when his name comes up, even after three decades of marriage.

"I met David in November. I married him the following September. I [first] spoke [on the phone] to him... and he sounded so intelligent. It was enlightening to speak to him. [When he first came over to my house, my Mother said] 'He is so nice, Diane. He is so very nice.' I said 'Yes mother.' ... I kept talking to him and the more he talked, you know, the better looking he got and to me he was the most handsome guy in the world. [Months later] he came back ... and that's all he talked about is marriage, marriage, marriage, marriage. So, I married David on September 2. It's been 33 years."



**The residents** of Mossville and Calcasieu Parish stand in solidarity with communities throughout the world that have been decimated by industrial pollution. It is only by standing together that the wrongs perpetrated by the petrochemical industry can be righted. The residents of Mossville stand in union with the community of Sasolburg, South Africa, the people who breathe the benzene emitted by SASOL / Condea Vista. These communities will work together to make sure that the air in Mossville and in South Africa is free from this chemical giant's emissions.



## Community Demands

The ATSDR must comply with the demands of MEAN and make health care readily available and affordable to the Mossville community.

There must be a toxicologist for Lake Charles area residents.

In Italy, plant managers have been tried for manslaughter for toxic chemical exposure to humans. This same strategy should be considered in Calcasieu.

The parish council and / or chemical industry should enact a residency requirement for plant managers. The manager and her / his family should be obligated to live adjacent to the plants they operate.

DEQ must recognize the chemical burden already borne by Mossville residents and the citizens of Calcasieu Parish and enact a moratorium on new permits in the parish.

## What you can do

Get involved with the local campaign! If you are interested in being involved with MEAN, please call (337) 625-8414. If you would like to be involved with the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, please call (504) 914-3164 or write [anne@labucketbrigade.org](mailto:anne@labucketbrigade.org).

Call Conoco, Condea Vista and PPG and voice your concerns about their operations.

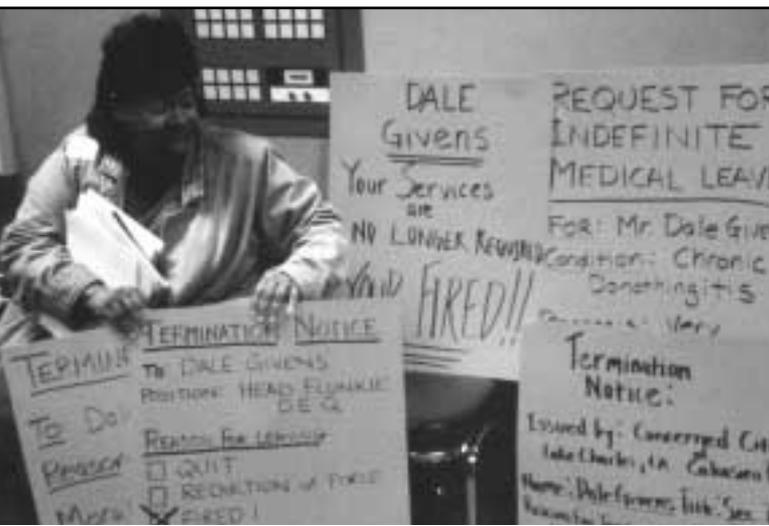
Conoco: (337) 491-5211, Condea Vista: (337) 494-5140, PPG: (337) 708-4500

## Resources

For more information on the situation in Mossville and Calcasieu Parish, please access the following web sites:

[www.focusonmossville.com](http://www.focusonmossville.com)  
[www.labucketbrigade.org](http://www.labucketbrigade.org)  
[www.cbecal.org](http://www.cbecal.org)  
[www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)  
[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) (for information about the Bill Moyers program)  
[www.chemicalindustryarchives.org](http://www.chemicalindustryarchives.org)  
[www.scorecard.com](http://www.scorecard.com)  
[www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov).

The ATSDR and EPA have pages on their web sites specific to Calcasieu Parish:  
[www.atsdr.gov](http://www.atsdr.gov) and [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)



Paid for by the Coming Clean Campaign and the Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Written by the Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Photos: Laura Cox, Transcription of interviews: Angela Matte and Tim Running.

Edited by: Christine Cox, Denny Larson, Diane Prince, Katherine Wilson

A thousand thanks to the Calcasieu Major Donor Fund, Beldon Fund, the Jennifer Altman Fund, and Communities for a Better Environment

Printing and design by Inkworks Press. Union Labor.



Bird lovers may note that vultures are not birds of prey. However, some people believe that excessive pollution in Calcasieu Parish has caused genetic mutation of the vultures there. Also, no offense to vultures is intended by the comparison to Conoco, PPG, and Condea Vista.



The general manager of Conoco lives ten miles away from his refinery, much farther than the residents of Mossville who live just down the road. He lives across the lake near a golf course, better protected from Conoco's accidents and chemical releases. If the refinery is as safe as Conoco's public relations claim it is, why doesn't the manager live nearby?