

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

HELEN DUTEAU

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION AND ACTION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH
IN AMBLER (REACH Ambler)

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Lee Sullivan Berry

at

EPA Office
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

on

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(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

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Principal Investigator: (name, address, phone and email) Frances K. Barg, PhD, Anatomy Chemistry 141-2, 215-746-1830, fran.barg@uphs.upenn.edu

Co-investigator: (name, address, phone and email): Jody Roberts, PhD, Chemical Heritage Foundation—315 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA, 215-873-8281, jroberts@chemheritage.org

Emergency Contact: (name, address, phone and email): Frances K. Barg, PhD, Anatomy Chemistry 141-2, 215-746-1830, fran.barg@uphs.upenn.edu

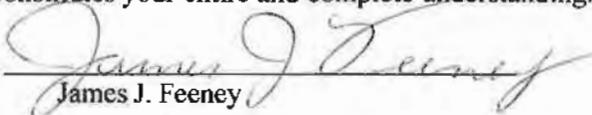
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ABSTRACT

Helen DuTeau has been working with Superfund community involvement programs in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for more than twenty years. She explains the law itself and its revision (Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA)) that included community involvement as an important factor in educating and engaging communities throughout the cleanup process. She describes the process of designing a community involvement plan and the points at which the community is encouraged to comment on the EPA's work. DuTeau has to balance communities' interests with the requirements of the law, and she often has to balance competing and sometimes hard-fought opinions within a community. She emphasizes that flexibility is the key to a successful remediation, one attuned to the wishes of the people who must live with and use the site.

Most often a community forms a community advisory group, or CAG, which formally elects leaders and structures its own meetings; in these meetings citizens voice their concerns about safety, their preferred method of remediation, and their hopes for the purpose of the site after remediation is complete. The meetings are open to the public, and an EPA representative—usually the Remedial Project Manager and Community Involvement Coordinator for the site—attend each meeting. Communication between EPA and CAG is crucial, especially in the early stages, though the internet has greatly simplified and expanded communication during later stages.

DuTeau oversees community involvement activities for Superfund in region three; one of these sites is BoRit in Ambler, Pennsylvania, where asbestos-containing waste materials were accumulated. She says BoRit has an active and knowledgeable CAG. BoRit also covers several municipal jurisdictions whose interests are not always aligned; West Ambler, the community nearest and most directly affected, has two representatives in the CAG. Although the remedial investigation and feasibility study are not yet complete, the EPA has done extensive removal work at the site and residents are looking forward to a restoration of Whitpain Park.

INTERVIEWER

Lee Sullivan Berry earned a master's degree in medieval studies from the University of Notre Dame, and a bachelor of arts degree in religious studies from the University of Pennsylvania. As a staff member in the Center for Oral History, Berry conducts background research and oral-history interviews, edits transcripts of completed interviews, and coordinates with interviewers and interviewees to finalize transcripts. She was the lead interviewer for the REACH Ambler project and has presented her work at meetings of the American Society for Environmental History and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

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