

# LOSS OF INNOCENCE

by

Dawn Kowalski  
Marie Mason  
Holly Huff  
Barbara Johnson

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## LOSS OF INNOCENCE

It was 1989 mid May when the news broke that a study performed at the Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL), operated in the Simi Hills for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) by the Rocketdyne Corporation, had found significant radioactive and toxic contamination. It was 1989 mid May when our lifestyles changed irrevocably, and our innocence was lost.

The four of us -- Holly Huff, Barbara Johnson, Dawn Kowalski and Marie Mason--- all lived in the foothills, a quiet rural canyon community less than a mile from (and resting just below) the facility. Instead of the serenity of our daily lives we were thrown into the turmoil of uncertainty and fear. We needed answers and didn't know where to turn. To what had we subjected our families?

Our friendships had been forged by our community concerns. We all sat on the Susana Knolls Homeowners Association's board (SKHA), a group formed to protect us from growing city influences and to preserve our rural integrity. Now we had a new direction --- to protect us from Rocketdyne (then a division of Rockwell International), our neighbor who had secretly polluted its site with life-threatening radioactive and chemical contamination for 40 years. If its land was so polluted, what had happened to our land, to our lives, to our health? With our friendship and our commitment to our community it was a natural progression that we would group together to brainstorm. The first week the headlines read like a horror story.

## ROCKWELL SITE CONTAMINATED (5/19/89)<sup>1</sup>

In this article James Werner, then a U.S. DOE contractor who had conducted the study, spoke of a disposal pit near the western fringe of the SSFL: "When I was there, there were dead rats floating belly up and bloated little snakes swimming in it. It was the nastiest thing. You could see the sheen from chemicals and stuff." Hank Yacoub, engineer in charge of the investigation for the Regional Water Quality Control Board, said, "We have been kept in the dark all along and I don't know what to say," Jim Marxon, the state Superfund spokesman, also stated, "Our site mitigation folk were not aware of the radioactive material." These comments on the contamination at the site painted a bleak and terrifying picture.

The fact that the state agencies we thought were there to protect us knew nothing about the radioactive work at the site was also a rude awakening. How could a facility operate with materials of such great potential for harm, in an area surrounded by hundreds of thousands of residents, become so contaminated, with essentially no effective oversight, without the agencies looking out for the people and the environment? We found no knight riding to our rescue -- no one apparently knew, and no one seemed to care. Within days of the news, calls started coming from Knolls residents who were shocked and fearful. One such call came from a young mother of two. Her concern was that the water she was using to mix the formula for her babies' bottles came from the well in her backyard directly below the SSFL. Dawn received the call and searched for answers. It was no easy task as she was passed like a hot potato from one agency to another from Los Angeles to Sacramento, over 20 agencies; and no one took responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles Daily News

The sick started calling, young and old, with cancers that perplexed them and they asked if Rocketdyne was the cause. Young families who recently moved to the neighborhood asked if they should move? People buying into the neighborhood wanted to know if it was safe? We regrettably could only answer that we didn't know. By the second week, the monitoring wells at SSFL had become a big issue. Tests of 16 wells and springs within a one-mile radius of the facility had revealed some radiation levels slightly higher than State standards, but the Company officials said the radiation was naturally occurring. The Department of Energy(DOE) report said that the more than 100 ground monitoring wells on the property were poorly placed for determining whether contamination was spreading from the nuclear research area and that new wells should be dug to make sure contaminants are not migrating to irrigation and drinking water wells outside plant boundaries.

May 31,1989 was a turning point. Our homeowners group was contacted by a group in the San Fernando Valley who were having a meeting of homeowner groups and activists that evening. Barbara and Dawn attended the meeting that was held at Estelle and Mark Lit's home in Northridge. More that 30 representatives of homeowner and environmental groups attended the meeting. It was empowering for us to realize that the army of allies was growing. We were now not alone but flanked by seasoned activists who could assist us on our mission. The groundwork was now in place. The press reported the meeting with the headline ACTIVIST GROUPS DEMANDING MORE ROCKWELL DISCLOSURES (6/1/89)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Daily News

### ROCKWELL SEEKING NUCLEAR CONTRACTS (6/5/89)<sup>3</sup>

Rockwell was now seeking new government contracts to process radioactive fuel elements at SSFL. Officials of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) said that Rockwell was seeking renewal of its license to possess up to 11 pounds of enriched uranium and 4.4 pounds of plutonium at the SSFL. Their current license for the building where irradiated fuel elements are processed, called the Hot Cell Laboratory, expired June 30, 1989. (Although most of Rocketdyne's nuclear activity was performed at the DOE facility on the property, which is unlicensed and self-regulating, the Hot Cell required a NRC license.) Though we were unaware at the time, this was to be our first goal and victory as we, along with others, stepped in and prevented the Company from obtaining a renewal of its nuclear license.

Things were moving fast. The SKHA had requested that Rocketdyne meet with the homeowners. The meeting was held on June 6th in the Quonset Hut in the Knolls, where about 100 residents packed the building, Scared and angry, our lives thrown into turmoil, we wanted answers and accountability. Rocketdyne came in force, ready to soothe us. Steve Lafflam, environmental manager at the site, told us "Rocketdyne is very committed to cleaning up problems caused by Rocketdyne. We'll guarantee nothing is moving of site." Speaking of the sodium burn pit, Hank Wiezeneck, a vice president told us, "If you planted cabbage on that area we cleaned up and ate the cabbages for a year, you'd only have three extra hours of exposure to radioactivity than you'd normally have in a year."<sup>4</sup> Lafflam also told us that sitting in the sodium burn pit for a day would be the equivalent of spending the day in Denver. We were also assured that we should glean confidence from the fact that it was the same management at SSFL

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<sup>3</sup> Daily News

<sup>4</sup> "Rockwell Meets With Residents Over Pollution" Los Angeles Times 6/7/89

as at Rocky Flats. Maybe some were soothed by the meeting, but all of our neighbors with whom we came into contact felt bewildered and frustrated, and were left with more unanswered questions. Our fears mushroomed the following day when we read that the FBI had raided Rocky Flats.

All of a sudden our lives, once tailored to the lives of our families and personal endeavors, became overwhelmed with learning what different acronyms stood for and strange new technical terms. Chemical compounds that had no reason to enter our lives before were now taking center stage. We were being forced into an unwanted education in order to deal with the difficult journey ahead.

#### EPA CRITICIZED FOR NUCLEAR LAB CLEANUP ROLE (6/9/89)<sup>5</sup>

Congressman Elton Gallegly criticized the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as insensitive to “the human needs of our communities” after agency officials refused to join efforts to clean up contamination at the SSFL. It was the first time that we saw that our public agencies need to be prodded by a lawmaker to do their job. The following day the headlines read: EPA REVERSES POSITION, ENTERS ROCKWELL CONTAMINATION PROBE (6/10/89)<sup>6</sup> Who is this organization that claims by its very name to protect the environment? At least they were now accepting their role of looking into the contamination, since they hadn’t done anything to prevent it. Meetings by now were consuming our lives. We were meeting with the activist groups from the San Fernando Valley, with the SKHA, and attending any public meetings addressing the issues at SSFL in order to educate and fight to regain our life. The press was eager to find every angle to the story and was diligent in their availability.

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<sup>5</sup> Daily News

<sup>6</sup> Daily News

On June 16, the Los Angeles Democratic Party leadership passed a resolution sponsored by Estelle Lit calling for a moratorium on nuclear work at Rockwell's SSFL and a public hearing on contamination at the site. Lit was one of the more seasoned members of our group that was meeting at the home of Dr. Sol and Jeanne Londe in the San Fernando Valley. Independently, through our different organizations, and collectively, we were prioritizing our goals. It was obvious that resisting the re-licensing of the Facility would be a good first attack. To prevent the re-licensing would prevent further radioactive contamination.

By the end of June, the Rocketdyne Cleanup Coalition (RCC) was formed and actively working to prevent the re-licensing. The four of us were core members of this Coalition, which was further comprised of local activists, such as Sylvia Fliss, Jerry and Bunny Raskin, George and Eleanor Rembaum, Sheldon Plotkin, Richard Saxon, Don Wallace, the Lits, Jon and Lorraine Scott, and the Londes. Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) led by Dr. Richard Saxon, a board member, said they would help contest Rockwell's bid to renew its nuclear license. Saxon said "The potential risk of an accident at the lab outweighs all other considerations." Other PSR's concerns were the risk of conducting nuclear activities near populated areas and Rockwell's record at Rocky Flats.

July erupted with all the agencies suddenly showing interest in the contamination. The EPA agreed to conduct a contamination study, and they were also looking into whether the site should be designated a Super Fund site. State, local and federal health and environmental officials reversed their policy and pledged to end self-regulation at the site. After reading that there were radioactive "hot spots" up to 200 times above background levels found in soil near a septic system leach field, the SKHA voted to join

a coalition of 30 groups in the SFV calling for the NRC to deny the pending renewal of Rocketdyne's nuclear permit. Backed by the RCC, we started piecing together newspaper articles that spelled out the reasons for our concerns about such a company being reissued a license to handle nuclear products.

August cleared the way for the Committee to Bridge the Gap (CBG), a public interest group of nuclear experts led by the brilliant Dan Hirsch to enter our lives. It was Hirsch who turned out to be our knight, a highly intelligent man who has devoted his life to ridding the planet of contamination. He had just given up his position as Director of the Stevenson Program on Nuclear Policy at the University of California, Santa Cruz, to return full-time to public interest work with CBG in Los Angeles. It was his allegiance with old friends who were already part of RCC that brought Hirsch to join us. But Rocketdyne ran deep in Hirsch's veins as it was CBG which had, in 1979, discovered and publicly revealed the partial nuclear meltdown that had occurred at SSFL in 1959 and been kept a secret until that time. Hirsch and CBG had monitored the Rocketdyne facility ever since, identifying other reactor accidents and nuclear spills, and were well aware of the problems that we were only beginning to realize.

In 1959, there was a serious meltdown of an uncontained sodium-cooled nuclear reactor at the site. Thirteen fuel rods deteriorated, spewing radioactive contaminants into the atmosphere. Little did those of us who lived near the site know that there had been a meltdown, or know of the other accidents that occurred over the years at other reactors on the site. Holly who had moved into the area the year of the meltdown was traumatized, to now know what she might have been exposed to during those years.



## 2 GROUPS ACT TO BLOCK RENEWAL OF ROCKWELL'S NUCLEAR LICENSE

(8/8/89)<sup>7</sup>

PSR and CBG announced that they had petitioned the NRC to reject Rockwell's bid to renew its operating license at the SSFL. Stating that Rockwell is unfit to handle radioactive materials, the groups had asked the NRC to hold public hearings before ruling on the license renewal. Such hearings are discretionary under NRC regulations. The firm's license, which expired June 30, had been extended indefinitely while the NRC assessed the environmental impact of the Hot Lab. One of our big concerns was the population now living around the SSFL, maybe not a problem in the 40's when the site started operating but in 1988 almost half a million people lived within a 10 mile radius of the facility. People moving into the area were unaware of the potential health hazards.

## EPA DOUBTS ROCKWELL DATA, CALLS SSFL MONITORING INADEQUATE TO ASSURE SAFETY (8/31/89)<sup>8</sup>

"Certain problems exist within this laboratory that make me question the validity of some if not all of their environmental data," EPA radiation specialist Gregg Dempsey said. "If the environmental program stays uncorrected SSFL cannot guarantee that unforeseen or undetected problems on site will not impact the offsite environment in the future." He noted for example, that Rocketdyne was washing vegetation samples and then heating them to high temperatures before monitoring them, thus washing and driving off most radioactivity that might have been on or in them, a grossly unacceptable procedure for radiation monitoring. Dempsey also said it was clear that Rocketdyne does not know where radiation had been inadvertently or intentionally

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<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles Times

<sup>8</sup> Daily News

dumped on site. The politicians reacted immediately: both Assemblyman Katz and Representative Anthony Beilenson called for testing and information.

Time goes by slowly when you're waiting for answers. It was strange meeting people in such a combative arena. Rockwell employees at all levels, claimed a pristine perfect environment, and we saw growing evidence to the contrary. We, as a group, holding steadfast were becoming an obvious irritant. It would be untrue to say that we didn't have a certain fear associated with lashing out against a giant, such as Rocketdyne, this was becoming a David-and -Goliath situation. We gleaned our strength from the RCC members who had been down this road many times. There were nights when all of us would check our brakes as we drove the canyon roads home after meetings, images of Silkwood in our minds.

Administrative Law Judge Bloch of the NRC, who was presiding over the re-licensing of the facility, held informal hearings at the end of September to determine if he would allow local residents to intervene. The hearings were in a Van Nuys courtroom and we were all there. The following day Bloch announced that Lit, Raskin and Scott had raised sufficient concerns to contest the re-licensing.

#### ASSEMBLYMAN CALLS FOR STATE TO STEP IN ON ROCKETDYNE CLEANUP (10/16/89)<sup>9</sup>

Calling for aggressive state involvement in the cleanup of SSFL, Assembly member Terry Friedman said "It's such a conflict of interest: we can't trust the DOE to do the job. I hear that Rocketdyne may be one of the worst waste sites in the state of California." Assemblyman Richard Katz and Assemblywoman Cathie Wright also voiced their concerns. Katz called upon state officials to oppose Rockwell's re-licensing.

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<sup>9</sup> The Simi Valley Enterprise

It always seemed that when the bad news about Rocketdyne hit the press it seemed to keep coming one story after another.

## TRUCK CARRYING RADIOACTIVE ROCKWELL GEAR HITS UNDERPASS

(10/25/89)<sup>10</sup>

So this truck ran into problems. What happens to all the trucks carrying radioactive material that leave the facility, and drive down the steep windy canyon roads past our homes: what perils lie in wait for us?

We first met Hirsch when he was asked by our spokesman Don Wallace to join us and Tom Petty, our celebrity activist, in front of the facility to protest and demand that nuclear work at the site cease. Thirty five members of the RCC were on the hill that day. It soon became apparent that Hirsch, with his expertise, brilliant mind and integrity would become our driving force. Hirsch, though needed our human aspect, as much as we needed him. The press needed the face of the distraught mother as much as that of the savvy environmentalist. It was a mutually beneficial relationship. We married together in our fight, both totally dependent on each other. Steered by Hirsch the coalition formed its goals: the first, to block the re-licensing of the facility; second, to have an epidemiological study done on the workers at the site and if problems were found with the workers, to then study the community; thirdly, to ensure the total cleanup of the facility. Even in November of '89, Rocketdyne was still pursuing the TRUMP-S nuclear project, designed to find easier ways to extract plutonium. Fueled by the ever-increasing negative news, our coalition hosted a meeting at the Simi Library. About 100 people attended, including Katz's and Wright's representatives. Our first

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<sup>10</sup> Los Angeles Times

victory came before the year was out. SKHA, CBG and Southern California Federation of Scientists were admitted as interveners in Rocketdyne's license renewal.

By Christmas we were reading reports that radioactive contaminants had been found in ground water monitoring wells at the site. Jim Ross, senior engineer for the California Regional Water Quality Control Board said, "The potential to flow off site is greater than we thought."<sup>11</sup> Despite the assurances we had been given by Rocketdyne, this increased our fears, but strengthened our resolve to get accurate, unbiased information. We were also making headway in our second goal. The state health officials were starting to buckle under pressure from lawmakers and RCC. They were promising to look into whether a major health study of worker and neighbors of the SSFL was justified. Wright was a strong supporter and, at the beginning of the year it was reported that she had introduced legislation to fund the health study. With legislative pressure it was less than a week before a representative from the Department of Health Services (DHS) was in Simi to assess whether a full -scale epidemiological study of workers and nearby residents should be pursued. Hoping to loosen the cloak of secrecy and distrust shrouding them Rockwell decided to open its facility to the public. We all signed up to go and were picked up by a bus that kept us contained for the tour: no wandering around with cameras. The day was foggy so the beauty of the site was blurred, but what struck us was the vastness and magnificence of the site. The rocket test stands stood silent surrounded by blackened rock formations. (In addition to testing reactors for the DOE, Rocketdyne uses the site to test rockets for the Air Force, Navy and NASA.) The buildings stood guarding their nasty secrets. One thing we all noticed were the signs cautioning that tap water was not to be drunk. We, as a group, had, with Hirsch's expertise, zeroed in on the radioactive contamination, but testing of

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<sup>11</sup> "ROCKWELL CONTAMINATION SPREADING TOWARD SIMI" Daily News 12/15/89

the new wells was showing high levels of trichloroethylene (TCE). One well sampled contained 1200 parts per billion of TCE the recommended state level for drinking water is 5 parts per billion.

This became a new area of concern. If TCE was found at such high levels in the wells, where was it going?

Victory came in a surprising way in April when Rocketdyne abandoned its re-licensing bid and instead moved its TRUMP-S project to the University of Missouri. All nuclear activity at the site except cleanup would cease. This is apparently the first time a citizens' group had succeeded in shutting down an unsafe DOE nuclear facility, anywhere in the country. The pressure had been on them, and we all gained confidence knowing that our persistence was cracking Rockwell's veneer.

The RCC got together on a frequent basis. We met before every public meeting to decide on our direction. It was at these meetings that we realized our total naiveté. Hirsch it appeared was jaded in his distrust of virtually all agency representatives. Unfortunately it soon became apparent that Hirsch was right, we were the ones living in denial. Hirsch's predictions of agency officials behaving in a less than candid fashion seemed over and over again to be the reality. It seemed that no one was for the people, but they would bend over backwards for the Company. The press and lawmakers often became our powerful allies. The stories kept unfolding.

In May, Congressman Gallegly wrote to the RCC, informing us that officials were looking to form a Cleanup Oversight Panel. Given the history, we knew it would be a huge uphill battle to get any of the RCC members appointed.

#### 4 ROCKWELL CRITICS TO ADVISE FIRM (9/28/90)<sup>12</sup>

Surprisingly we had won this battle when Hirsch, Plotkin, Raskin and Barbara were appointed by the EPA as panel members to oversee the cleanup of the SSFL. The group, which is supposed to include all relevant health and environmental agencies, was to meet quarterly for updates on testing and cleanup at the site. Rockwell and DOE officials were displeased with the EPA's choice of the four community representatives, it was reported. We now had our foot in the door. We were in a position to officially be heard, and supposedly to make a difference. With four panel members and other RCC members in the audience, ready with key questions, we packed a powerful punch at the meeting.

DHS had been dragging its heels regarding the feasibility of an epidemiological study when the following headline appeared.

#### BLADDER CANCER RATE FOUND HIGHER NEAR ROCKET TEST SITE(2/5/91)<sup>13</sup>

This was a sobering headline. A DHS report dated October 1990 found that bladder cancer rates were about 50% higher in three census tracts in Canoga Park and Chatsworth, close to the facility, than for Los Angeles County as a whole. Katz was furious that the findings had not been made public sooner. "By keeping this critical report's findings from the people directly impacted by the results, the DHS has in effect been holding the public hostage," he said. It was stories such as the bladder cancer and a later story questioning whether there had been a cluster of birth defects close to the lab that pointed the finger at DHS. The birth defects was looked into after parishioners at a church in Simi were noticing an alarming amount of miscarriages and many babies in one area were born with kidney problems.

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<sup>12</sup> Los Angeles Times

<sup>13</sup> Los Angeles Times

The local legislators held a hearing, raking DHS over the coals over its foot-dragging, and directed them to aggressively push for a study on the workers. Dr. Robert Harrison of DHS said a preliminary review showed that Rocketdyne has paid worker-compensation settlements to six employees who contracted cancers. Harrison said a detailed health study should be conducted to determine whether any health problems were caused by exposure to radiation, but that obtaining records needed for a health study was to pose an ongoing problem. Rocketdyne resisted providing the records. Rocketdyne said chemical exposure records had been destroyed, but that the destruction had not been company policy but rather the act of a “deranged employee” The Company was doing everything possible to prevent or hinder a health study. Katz, Friedman and Wright pushed for the records to be released.

It was at the hearings at the LA Times building that the legislators pushed for these records. It was at this meeting that Barbara had the courage to tell of her year-long battle with breast cancer. “I have lived in the shadow of Rocketdyne for 20 years and have spent this last year going through treatment for breast cancer. The cancer support group I attend in Simi Valley has expressed great alarm with the prevalence of breast cancer in our area,” she said. It is always the personal stories that touch a nerve. It is hard to be a statistic when you are telling your personal story. The visual of the child running burning with napalm in Vietnam is forever etched in our memories. So, too, are the personal accounts from these 17 years .

The workers, family members, community members that shared their personal journeys, give us the impetus to keep striving for the justice we all deserve. After a DOE Tiger Team went on site to review health, environmental, and safety issues and cited 155 problem areas, we felt even more justified.

It was the DOE who put up the next roadblock, stating that they would not pay for a health study of the workers. "I have asked for money to look at the workers, and they've told me no,"<sup>14</sup>Lynn Goldman, then senior epidemiologist for the DHS said. Pressure finally buckled the DOE. They reversed their position and allocated \$340,000 for the study. The meeting was held in Katz' office, and Robert Goldsmith, senior epidemiologist of DOE, attended. Goldsmith held the purse strings tightly, which caused emotions to run high. Marie had an emotional outburst, resulting from the frustrations of dealing with such serious environmental issues. We feel this outpouring of honest feeling did a lot to make an impact on the legislators in recognizing the urgent need for the health study. We noticed that at times of conflict the rational, human element so many times cut through the intellectual barriers. It was a grounding influence.

#### U.S. TO FUND HEALTH STUDY OF ROCKETDYNE EMPLOYEES (6/20/91)

A DOE spokesman, Larry Hart, said "It was a question of doing what the community wanted; it will be a study of mortality among SSFL workers. There will be an agreement with the state to eventually study the community if possible." Yes, we finally did get a commitment from the agencies to fund a study. An Advisory Panel was set up with renown scientists from across the country, plus one representative each from DHS, and DOE ( who could not vote on the choice of the contractor), a representative from NIOSH and from labor and four community representatives--- Hirsch, Johnson, Plotkin and Raskin. Additionally a fifth public member was appointed. Assemblywoman Wright appointed Dr. Cesar Julian a Simi Valley physician.

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<sup>14</sup> "HEALTH STUDY AT ROCKWELL PUT ON HOLD" Daily News (5/14/91)



Barbara was unaware at the time of the huge obligation this post required. Countless hours would be spent reading documents and participating in endless conference calls. The health study was unique in that it allowed the Advisory Panel to send out requests for proposals to independent bodies. In other words, the study was to be performed independently of the agencies and the company involved, which substantially increased public confidence, given the past history of other DOE studies.

In August, Lafflam's guarantees that nothing had left the site were history. Radioactive contamination had been detected in the ground water outside the SSFL boundaries. Tritium was found in the wells on the Brandeis-Bardin Institute, a camp next to and directly below the facility. Brandeis officials said that cesium 137 had also been found in the soil by their private consultants. In March 93, tests found elevated levels of tritium, strontium 90, cesium 137 and plutonium 238 on the Brandeis property. The institute sued Rockwell for an undisclosed amount and won. Rockwell then bought the contaminated portion of Brandeis, so that they could continue to claim that nothing had gotten "off site" -for now it was onsite. For two years we had been asking for community testing. At last, in the wake of the Brandeis contamination, Rockwell hired a contractor to test Brandeis and the Sage Ranch ( a public park abutting the site).

The Health study was also in jeopardy at this time. The \$340,000 slated for the study was only going to cover the overhead associated with the study. The lawmakers came to bat again and the RCC spent much time with Katz and Friedman's representatives, who were very diligent in getting answers for us. By the beginning of '92 an additional \$500,000 had been authorized for the health study.

A new problem was surfacing at the site. Mixed radioactive and chemical wastes were found in the soil in the sodium burn pit. The federal law prohibited the storing of such

waste, and there were no facilities that accepted mixed waste at the time. Questions about how chemical and radioactive contamination wound up in an open pit were asked.

“What’s needed more than anything is the truth so that people in the neighboring communities either know that there was an exposure or there wasn’t,”<sup>15</sup> said Friedman. “I believe that the answers are available and that the agencies simply aren’t pushing for them.” Hirsch said. “I think a renewed effort must be made to force Rockwell to ‘fess up’ to what they did in the past.”

The Health Study faltered many times. All along the road, egos, especially male egos, played an enormous role. Goldsmith threatened to block the Health Study if he wasn’t allowed a vote on the panel overseeing the study. What we insisted on throughout the cleanup study and Health Study was independent testing and no influence from the DOE or Rocketdyne. We did not want the fox guarding the chicken house. We wanted studies, testing, and cleanup that we could trust. In February ‘93, a team from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) was chosen to conduct the mortality study of the Rockwell workers after the Panel had evaluated several proposals. The biggest concern with UCLA was that the team had no prior experience in radiation epidemiology. In order for the study to fully quell the fears of the community, a solution was found. The panel would include world-renowned radiation epidemiologist Dr. Alice Stewart from England. She could provide additional oversight and advise the UCLA team comprised of Drs. Hal Morgenstern, John Froines and Beate Ritz. Dr Stewart was able to contribute so much as she had been involved in studies of nuclear effects for many years and at many different facilities around the world. We felt

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<sup>15</sup> “ANSWERS SOUGHT IN ROCKWELL PIT” Daily News (7/20/92)

so fortunate that this 90 year old woman, who came all the way from England to share her vast knowledge, was now a part of the panel. There were some obstacles: however, as she was challenging to some of the other scientists who appeared threatened by some of her controversial findings.

The study team was also strengthened by the addition of Dr. Gregg Wilkinson, who had performed key radiation epidemiological studies in the past, including one of Rockwell's Rocky Flats Facility, and whose addition to the team greatly increased community confidence.

Early in the study it became evident that Rockwell would help as little as they could in providing necessary dose and worker files. Their arrogance and unhelpful attitude fueled many heated discussions. The resistance by Rockwell made conduct of the study considerably more difficult than was necessary.

#### TWO KILLED IN ROCKETDYNE BLAST(7/27/94)<sup>16</sup>

Sad headlines. Rocketdyne's safety violations at last caught up with them instantaneously when two scientists were killed and one seriously hurt while mixing highly volatile rocket fuel. Things went horribly wrong when these two senior scientists, one of whom had told friends he was unhappy about the upcoming operation, were blown to pieces. The actions on the hill were now taking a criminal turn. The company initially claimed the scientists were performing legitimate experiments at the time of the accident. Subsequently it was learned that the company had, in fact, been illegally burning hazardous wastes in the open air rather than properly disposing of them, and this time the mixture exploded, killing the two employees.

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<sup>16</sup> Simi Valley Enterprise

In August Dawn learned that, she too, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Six years ago we were all cancer free and now two of the four of us are fighting breast cancer.

FEDERAL AGENTS LOOK INTO FATAL BLAST. (7/14/95)<sup>17</sup>

Rocketdyne is fined \$250,000 for serious safety violations over the blast. The regulators alluded the company broke state rules on worker safety by the following:

- \*Failing to provide barriers to prevent materials from detonating each other.

- \*Failing to maintain sufficient worker-safety programs.

- \*Conducting the tests in 17 percent humidity when 20 percent humidity was required.

- \* Running the tests near a site where material had been burning without waiting 48 hours.

Shades of Rocky Flats, the FBI conducted a raid on the Rockwell facility, seizing cartloads of documents about the deaths and illegal disposal of hazardous materials, resulting eventually in felony charges against the company. Fueled by these events and further angered by Rockwell's blatant disrespect in allowing toxins to be released into the atmosphere, our battle now had new meaning, as it became a race to preserve life. Not only were we concerned, but also in January '96, shareholders of Rockwell International Corporation sued the company, alleging gross mismanagement by recklessly disregarding environmental laws. We had been previously dismissed as hysterical housewives, but with these latest allegations, we felt vindicated in our pursuit of the truth.

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<sup>17</sup> Simi Valley Star (formerly Simi Valley Enterprise)

## FIRM AGREES TO RECORD FINE IN FATAL BLAST (4/9/96)<sup>18</sup>

Rockwell pled guilty to felony environmental crimes in connection with the illegal disposal of hazardous materials that had resulted in the deaths of its employees. This showed that Rocketdyne, itself, finally had to admit to wrongdoing. The deal called for Rocketdyne to pay a record \$6.5 million. The fine is described as only a “slap on the wrist”, for a company earning billions a year in defense contracts. Dan Hirsch, of CBG was quoted as saying, “It looks like, once again, the government has caved when it comes to enforcing the laws where big corporations are involved.” Prosecutors agreed not to charge the firm for any other crimes committed before the agreement was ratified in court that would involve illegal disposal, illegal handling, workplace safety or contract fraud related to hazardous waste. Rockwell was also working closely with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to avoid any debarment or limitations on its lucrative federal aerospace and electronics contracts with the government. Why, we all ask, is Rocketdyne, an admitted felon, being given such latitude? Is money more important than human life? The federal government obviously didn’t feel the same way and, during this time, awarded Rocketdyne new contracts, including more than a hundred million dollars of taxpayer money to clean up the mess that Rocketdyne itself was responsible for creating. Likewise, Boeing didn’t seem to care, in that it decided not only to buy Rocketdyne, but also to assume all the liabilities associated with this contaminated site. With this acquisition, Goliath grew.

During this time, the Worker Health Study was proceeding and a rough draft of the findings was completed. However, much to our dismay, and over the strident objections of the Advisory Panel, Harrison, of the DHS, gave the confidential draft to

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<sup>18</sup> Los Angeles Times

Rocketdyne. Rocketdyne had to sign a confidentiality statement, as did all panel members, but Rocketdyne then freely distributed copies to their hired consultants. Rocketdyne then proceeded, through direct meetings and other communications with the UCLA team, to try to press for changes in the scientific study. The Draft rightfully should have been confined to those members of the independent Oversight Panel for review; most of whom were outraged that a company with a financial interest in the outcome of the study was permitted to receive advance drafts and lobby for changes. Panel member, Sheldon Plotkin, echoing the concerns of all Panel and RCC members states, "The message is loud and clear that DHS seems primarily interested in the well being of Rockwell"<sup>19</sup>

#### RESIDENTS WIN BOUT WITH EPA OVER LAB (9/26/96)<sup>20</sup>

Finally, responding to RCC pressure, the EPA agrees to allow Gregg Dempsey to be assigned to the cleanup project. Due to Dempsey's candidness regarding the pollution at the site, we felt some measure of confidence that Dempsey would be forthright with us. DOE had insisted that no characterization study would be performed until after cleanup was over, which seemed quite backwards - one should find out where the contamination is first, to know what needs to be cleaned up. We pressed and pressed for an independent site characterization survey and DOE eventually agreed - and then gave the contract to Rocketdyne. CBG and EPA's Dempsey both reviewed the Rocketdyne work and found it completely unreliable. DOE was eventually forced to throw it out. Part of the new plan was that Dempsey's staff would perform a detailed, independent site characterization, looking for contamination throughout the property. This was refreshing as in each previous Cleanup Oversight meeting we were told about the process of decommission and decontamination, but were never given the facts. We

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<sup>19</sup> ROCKETDYNE GETS HEALTH STUDY BEFORE PANELISTS (8/3/96) Daily News

<sup>20</sup> Simi Valley Star

would have to rely on the newspapers to find out which buildings had been declared 'clean'.

#### STATE DELAYS RELEASE OF ROCKETDYNE REPORT (11/14/96)<sup>21</sup>

There were many reasons given for this delay, but RCC suspects that Rocketdyne's hired consultants needed more time to prepare their attack on the study. So, we were forced to wait another four months, our lives, as usual, were in limbo. The RCC panel Members were privy to the findings, but, unlike Rocketdyne, we respected the Confidentiality Agreement. this was a wrenching time as RCC members, not on the Panel, were forced to conjectures.

In an ongoing protest of EPA's abuse of never providing documents on time the RCC members staged a walkout at the public meeting. Despite ground rules that panel members were to receive documents intended for discussion at the quarterly interagency Work Group meetings two weeks in advance of the meetings, so that serious review could be conducted, virtually all of the agencies consistently violated the requirement, choosing instead to try to sandbag the community representatives by providing the documents only minutes before they were to be discussed at the community meetings. Even so, our representatives on the panel were able repeatedly to find the embarrassing data in the documents that the agencies were trying to hide, like new findings of contamination and relaxed cleanup standards. Referring to the EPA, Dan Hirsch states, "They refuse to show documents about the cleanup to the oversight panel looking after that work. They just don't want an independent review of what is going on up there."<sup>22</sup> We hoped that the walkout would wake up the EPA to be more professional in dealing with this highly-controversial matter.

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<sup>21</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>22</sup> FIELD LAB WATCHDOGS WALK OUT ON EPA 11/15/96

The New Year brought new fears. We had for years requested that we be permitted onto the site to keep an eye on the cleanup. Rocketdyne had long resisted, asking at one meeting, 'Don't you trust us? What do you think we'd do hire a crooked contractor to do the cleanup?' Eventually the company agreed to let us observe, but only if we first were "trained" in safety. We dutifully attended Rocketdyne's safety classes in order to observe cleanup in progress. On our first day of observing the cleanup, we discovered that Rocketdyne had hired a firm called Transglobal Environmental Geochemistry (TEG). This independent contractor, selected by Rocketdyne, was hired to perform soil vapor tests. The Press shortly thereafter revealed records from a state agency barring the Company from further work because it had determined the Company had fabricated calibration records in the past. In the face of disclosure, Rocketdyne had to fire the contractor. Again, our confidence was shattered. Could we now not rely on "independent" contractors? Even though Rocketdyne suspended testing, we felt vindicated in our fears. Joe Lyou, then Executive Director of CBG, who had been working closely with us, lending his brilliant scientific mind to our emotional misgivings about the Company, is quoted as saying, "It'll be interesting to see what they do," as he recalls that the Company had accused the RCC of overreacting. "They accused us of being 'Chicken Little', and now we've found that the sky really was falling."<sup>23</sup> We continue to emphasize that the Company who was responsible for the contamination should not be trusted with the cleanup.

RADIATION REPORT RELEASE DELAYED (7/28/97)<sup>24</sup>

Intended for December, promised in April, delayed once again in July, the date now is set for September 7th. We wait. The news broke early. CANCER LINKED TO

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<sup>23</sup> "COMPANY SUSPENDS TESTING OF SOILS (2/20/97) Simi Valley Star

<sup>24</sup> Simi Valley Star



ROCKETDYNE (9/11/97)<sup>25</sup> "The Daily News" is the only newspaper reporting this "leaked" story. Although the reporter for "The Los Angeles Times" had the information, his story was killed at the last minute by senior management. Subsequent press reports indicate Rocketdyne had pressured the "Times" to kill the story, a breach worsened by the fact that the President of Rockwell served on the Board of Directors of the Times Mirror Corporation, owners of the LA Times. How dare such a premier newspaper deny its loyal subscribers such vital information?

It was chilling to awake to this devastating cancer headline prior to attending the official press release of the findings of the UCLA team. The report showed that workers exposed to external radiation had higher-than-expected death rates from leukemia, lymphoma, and lung cancer than workers with lower exposures. Increased doses of internal radiation raised the death rates for a number of cancers, including the mouth, esophagus, and the stomach. Death rates for all cancers increased as external radiation doses increased. Rocketdyne, who received the Draft Report, had plenty of time to assemble their "independent" consultants, to put together a graphic rebuttal, and to man their defenses against such a strong outcome. Rocketdyne's cost for this failed effort at rebuttal was significant. Wouldn't this money have been better spent looking into the health of the community? Dr. David Michaels, a co-chair of the Advisory Panel, echoed the beliefs of all Panel Members when he said, "The results stand, and they're very strong." Another Advisory Panel member, Dr. Jack Geiger reminded the audience that the tobacco industry long denied its product caused cancer and would frequently hire "independent" consultants to attack scientific studies that concluded otherwise.

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<sup>25</sup> Daily News

In the wake of the UCLA study finding that Rocketdyne's activities had significantly increased the cancer death rate among exposed workers, many people in the community now started questioning the cause of their cancers and whether there was a link to the site. When the news about contamination at the site first broke in 1989, the four of us were cancer free. By now, however, two of us were breast cancer survivors. We knew this wasn't scientific, but we could only see that this was a 50% rate, as compared to the national rate of one in seven. Was this pure chance, or could this in any way be connected with Rocketdyne? With what had we been contaminated? Without a community study, how were we to know? In our efforts to help stimulate response for a community study, we got our County Supervisor, Judy Mikels, to help host a meeting of all the involved legislators. All seemed to show an interest, but no one has yet picked up the ball. Another glimmer of hope came when the Response Team for the Chemically Injured held a meeting in the same month of October 1997. Although in both these meetings, there were testimonies of spreading cancer cases, there was no promise of a follow up.

By the end of 1997, more lawsuits had been filed. This should have further alerted our agencies to the fact that many people in the surrounding communities were fearful and ready for action. The New year brought new contamination when ammonium perchlorate was found un the Field Lab's wells. This aroused more questions of what might have seeped into our neighborhood. In June, we met Michael Collins, an independent investigative research journalist, who wrote a candid expose of the history of what went on up at the site. He quotes former workers, activists, and some contract employees. One of these was Jim Garner, a former employee, who now has cancer and tells of working in a pit without any protection and then seeing Rocketdyne people around him with full protective gear and Geiger counters. It was obvious to Mr. Garner that he was in a "hot" area, but he had never been informed of the conditions. We

heard many such stories from former workers, who also had cancers. There was a man in his twenties, who had an inoperable brain tumor, questioning whether his work on the rocket stands had caused his illness. Many of these sick and dying people told of sloppy monitoring, lack of protection, and un-enforced safety practices. Where is Rocketdyne's conscience?

#### LAWMAKERS SLAM STATE HEALTH AGENCY (6/27/98)<sup>26</sup>

We were outraged when DHS gave Rocketdyne advanced copies of the Draft Epidemiological Report, but were justified when Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl D-Encino and State Senator Wright claimed the Department's action jeopardized public trust in efforts to determine health problems at the nuclear testing facility. Public trust is further eroded when officials say money is running out before the community around Santa Susana Field Lab can be tested for possible chemical exposure. Funds for the independent Advisory Panel are also not forthcoming. This proved to be an ongoing seesaw of events. Why, we ask, do we study the dead and ignore the living?

It was fireworks day, July 4th, 1998, when Rocketdyne announces that it plans to detonate old shells found at its field lab. What on earth was live ordinance doing up there, and how could Rocketdyne have lost such explosives and only now stumbled upon them? Dangerous practices conducted at the Field Lab continued to be unearthed. Another explosive situation was the growing lawsuit that we felt compelled to join for fear of losing our property values and missing out on the health monitoring that was being offered for our families and ourselves. We also felt that this was a way to combat the Giant. This, however, proved to be a double-edged sword, for our lawyers advised

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<sup>26</sup> Daily News

us not to talk to the media, voice our opinions, nor to be photographed. We found this impossible to adhere to, for our silence was a victory for Rocketdyne. With the talk of disbanding the Oversight Panel, we feared that we might be silenced forever. EPA, the agency that was meant to protect us, was the agency that next tried to silence us. Canceling the public meetings, then scheduling a closed-door meeting, while allowing Rocketdyne, who was not on the Panel, to attend, EPA, we feel, was laying the groundwork to disband the public panel. The RCC refused to allow the threatened closed-door session. We orchestrated our attack by carrying picket signs, such as “Stop Rocket Dying.” and forced our way into what, by all rights, should have been a public meeting. Although the Panel unanimously voted to continue the meeting with the “protesters/public” present, Vicky Semones of Cal EPA overrode this decision and canceled the meeting. We feel that this whole fiasco was precipitated from the previous meeting when a former Rocketdyne worker recited a litany of accidents and radioactive releases at the Santa Susana facility, and EPA and Rocketdyne representatives had tried to stop his disclosures.

Many people, including legislators, began speaking out about the health risks and the need to get factual information to the public. Jonathan Parfrey, Director of PSR, said, “What’s getting lost in the mix here is that if Rocketdyne isn’t forced to clean up its act, untold generations of Angelenos may suffer from this toxic legacy. But under California Governor Wilson, it appears the regulatory agencies charged with protecting the people have been more concerned about the Company’s well-being.”<sup>27</sup> U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein added her voice to the chorus of lawmakers urging a cancer risk study in the neighborhoods surrounding Rocketdyne’s Santa Susana Field

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<sup>27</sup> “Rocketdyne’s Red Glare” (12/10/98) L.A. Weekly

Laboratory. She penned letters to the heads of two federal regulatory agencies. Her letters echoed the concerns of lawmakers Wright and Kuehl.

Boeing received an early Christmas present when they were awarded a \$148.5 million contract from the DOE to clean up the nuclear waste site, which it had been responsible for contaminating. Joe Lyou was quoted as saying, "This is a blatant conflict of interest on the part of Rocketdyne and DOE. You can't trust the polluter to tell you that their site is clean."<sup>28</sup>

Our Christmas present was that the Court endorsed the class-action lawsuit one day before Christmas. Also, the Panel received the long-awaited Chemical portion of the Worker Health Study. The onion in UCLA's stocking, however, was that of the \$1.5 million allocated for the health study, they only received \$700,000. Michael Collins wrote, "Imagine giving someone millions of dollars for doing a bad job. That's what Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson did on December 15th when he awarded aerospace giant Boeing \$148.5 million to complete cleanup efforts at its Rocketdyne Santa Susana Field Laboratory by 2006."<sup>29</sup> Why is there money to help Boeing clean up the facility, but not a penny to test our neighborhoods or to fund a health study of the community?

Through a Public Records Act request, we find in the DHS files a study of the offsite population showing elevated lung cancer rates in the census tracts in Ventura County closest to the site. DHS had kept this study secret, repeating the fiasco with bladder cancer study nearly a decade ago. Critics are angry that the State knew the results two years ago but did not disclose--prompting charges of a cover-up from local lawmakers, environmentalists and the community pressing for cleanup of the troubled facility.

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<sup>28</sup> "Boeing to Clean up Lab Site" (12/16/98) Daily News

<sup>29</sup> "meltdown Money - Offbeat" (12/25/98) L.A. Weekly

## STUDY LINKS LUNG CANCER DEATHS TO ROCKET ASSEMBLY JOBS (4/17/99)<sup>30</sup>

The long-awaited second portion of the UCLA study was released, which was the part dealing with cancer and chemical exposures. As was found in the radiation part of the UCLA Epidemiology Study, the chemical portion also linked higher mortality rates to working at the facility. John Froines, one of the UCLA researchers, said, "What you are seeing is the history of the cold war and attention paid to production instead of health and safety." Researchers found a link between the heightened rate of lung cancer and chemicals used at the rocket test stands. Bladder, kidney, and blood and lymphatic system cancers also were elevated among the workers with the greatest exposure to the rocket chemicals. During the period studied, about two million pounds of hydrazine, for example, were used at the lab. From the beginning we were told that the Workers Study would be the canary, and if the canary died, the community would be studied. The canary died. Will the community study die too?

## IN WHOSE POCKET? ROCKETDYNE, STATE TRIED TO DISSOLVE OVERSIGHT PANEL (4/26/99)<sup>31</sup>

Memos and e-mails including the lung cancer survey, were recently unearthed from the Health Department's files by CBG. The evidence contained in these files has led legislators and others to charge that state health officials and Rocketdyne plotted to overthrow the Oversight Panel and hand pick a group of replacements that might help bring the ten-year investigation to a close. "I was shocked but not surprised at the blatancy of it. I don't think we've even plumbed to the depth of the collusion between

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<sup>30</sup> Los Angeles Times

<sup>31</sup> Daily News

Rocketdyne and DHS,” said Kuehl. This showed that we were justified, not paranoid, in suspecting that we were to be silenced, and the Panel replaced. California Governor Davis responds to these allegations by pulling funds from the Health Department and charging Cal EPA with the responsibility to run the Lab investigations.

It was now five years ago that the two scientists were killed in the explosion at Rocketdyne. Only now was the grand jury charging individual employees (as opposed to the charges against the company to which it pled guilty) with violating federal environmental laws at the site. If found guilty of the charges of disposing hazardous gun propellants, or aerospace fuels without permits they could each serve 15 years and pay fines up to \$750,000. United States Attorney Alejandro Mayorkas said “The environmental laws are designed to protect our natural resources and to protect our safety, and to protect the world for future generations. Individuals who violate those laws threaten our world in the most fundamental way. Those individuals will be prosecuted with all our might.”<sup>32</sup>

Oh how we wished that this were true. Not that these three men, per se, were to be punished , but that those who violated our world, our environment would be punished. But that never seems to be the case.

At this time it appeared that DOE was refusing to comply with the EPA stringent cleanup standards. Worried by this fact, the RCC alerted the offices of Senators Feinstein and Boxer, who immediately called for the Clinton administration to impose the strictest EPA standards, demanding that the site be cleaned up to these standards. They cited the close proximity to residential neighborhoods as the need to take extra

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<sup>32</sup> FATAL ROCKETDYNE BLAST LEADS TO INDICTMENT OF THREE MEN (4/29/99) Simi Valley Star

caution to make sure the site is cleaned up adequately. Philip Rutherford, manager of radiation safety for Rocketdyne, said most of the radioactive cleanup work at the lab is already accomplished. He said attaining the EPA limits would be “Practically impossible and not cost-effective. You’re not buying anymore health protection.”<sup>33</sup> Recalling Mayorkas’ words, shouldn’t the violators who pollute and leave the world scarred, be “prosecuted with all our might”?

June heralded the first meeting of the Cleanup Panel in a year, after its controversial cancellation by EPA. The levels of standard of cleanup were fiercely voiced. The DOE was concerned about the costs of cleaning up the facility to EPA’s stricter standards. They wanted the standard set for each soil-bound isotope as high as an estimated one-in-a-hundred lifetime risk of giving someone cancer, rather than the set national standard for each isotope at a one-in-a -million lifetime risk. It was horrific to hear a price tag put on the lives and futures of our families in such a calculated way. We also heard of the plans to build homes on the site. Houses would have four foot thick foundations, they would stipulate that no one would sleep on the ground floor and that the gardens would not be used for growing vegetables. This was a very different scenario from our homeowner’s meeting where we were told of cabbage patches that could be grown on the sodium burn pit and eaten without a care. As Hirsch said the night of the meeting “The reality is a lot of people are going to eventually live on that hill - and a number of people already live below it, a number of people are going to get hurt.” It was imperative to us that the cleanup be to the highest standards as our longtime homes were in the possible path of pollution.

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<sup>33</sup> SENATOR URGES TOUGHER CLEANUP STANDARDS AT ROCKETDYNE LAB (5/8/99) Los Angeles Times



It was July again and, as if by design, the headlines brought news of 24 more live shells found and an emergency request to detonate them at the site. Since last summer, 56 unexploded shells estimated at 30-40 years old had been destroyed on site.

In her third letter since December, Feinstein urged U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to appropriate money to study whether a community health investigation is scientifically feasible. "It is critical that this community be assured they and their children can safely drink the water, breathe the air and spend time in their back yards,"<sup>34</sup> she said. This is something that we never questioned before May 1989. We trusted that we lived in a world where we could drink the water, breathe the air and spend time in our yards.

#### FEDS TO WEIGH ROCKETDYNE HEALTH STUDY (8/28/99)<sup>35</sup>

Senator Feinstein and Congressman Gallegly had repeatedly requested that the federal government provide funds to the independent Oversight Panel to permit it to perform a feasibility study of ways of assessing potential impacts on the offsite community. The federal agencies refused, instead "treating" the legislators' request as a petition that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) come in and do such an assessment itself. This was the last thing the community wanted, as there was little confidence in the agencies, and a good deal of confidence in the independent panel. A nine-member team from ATSDR arrived, visited the site for a day, then held a public meeting where people could relate their health concerns to the staff. ATSDR staff had maps displayed on tables and were plotting where people known to have cancer lived in the community. The radiation specialist assured us that we would be exposed to more radiation eating a banana than living below the facility - this within a day of

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<sup>34</sup> FEINSTEIN KEEPS PUSHING STUDY OF ROCKETDYNE (7/16/99) Simi Valley Star

<sup>35</sup> Daily News

arriving in the area and months before completing his “review” . It sounded so simplified and so reminiscent of the cabbage and Denver stories. Again we were being placated by people who had fewer facts than we had. We were weary warriors and could no longer be fooled: however, the data kept astounding us.

At the October '99 cleanup meeting NASA's project manager told us that 500,000 gallons of TCE had leached into the ground water during the rocket testing. This was more than Rocketdyne had ever admitted to in the past. An estimated 21,500 rocket engine tests were performed during '54-'83 and 1.2 million gallons of TCE was used to clean the engines.

Rocketdyne was jubilant when the ATSDR's preliminary report was made public a month later. ATSDR had asked Rocketdyne if it released any significant emissions of chemicals or radioactivity into the community: Rocketdyne said no: ATSDR therefore concluded that the community was safe. ATSDR had relied exclusively on Rocketdyne's own documents, and had performed no independent analysis. It was a whitewash, but what we had unfortunately come to expect. It took the UCLA team years to complete its study on the workers and it took a single day visit to the site and a few weeks of reading Rocketdyne's reports back in Atlanta, with no testing of the community with complete reliance on Rocketdyne's material, to claim that we were safe. We wonder who was sleeping sounder after hearing ATSDR's results? Despite the conclusions of the teams study, Burt Cooper, an ATSDR investigator said it is necessary to do an in-depth study to placate the concerned community. The study was estimated to cost up to \$500,000 but ATSDR refused to allocate the funds to the independent panel to conduct the study.

We had been invited to attend meetings at the Department of Toxic Substance

control (DTSC) to actively engage in the ongoing cleanup at the site. The meetings were held every three months at the DTSC office in Glendale. Several DTSC officials flew in from other parts of the State. The Sodium burn pit was one of the concerns. It had been years since Jim Ross From the Regional Quality Water Control Board had challenged Hirsch to take samples at the burn pit deemed by officials to be clean and ready for release. Rising to the challenge Hirsch, critical of the sample locations selected by Ross, chose two areas where he thought contaminants may still remain. (It was Ross who had previously appeared in a promotional video by Rocketdyne touting the safety of the site, a very inappropriate act for an independent regulator to engage in.) To the embarrassment of Ross and other officials , the two samples taken by Hirsch marked, DH1 and DH2, came back with levels of contamination significantly above the action levels set. It was now feared that the pit would be a possible source for contaminants to be carried off site by rainwater leaching into the ground water and that it needed to be covered. DTSC's technical staff had recommended requiring a synthetic cap be placed over the contaminated pit. However later pressured by Rocketdyne at higher levels in the agency, DTSC reversed course and decided to permit filling the pit with soils with a high clay content found on the site, and then to plant it. The rationale being that when it rains the plants will soak up the water and the clay soil will prevent it from leaching into the ground water. None of us are happy with this proposal (e.g. clay cracks providing pathways for migration) as we feel that this measure will not prevent further pollution of the groundwater. It appears that once again political pressure from this powerful corporation has caused regulators to cave and worry more about meeting the needs of the company than about protecting the health of the public.

The New Millennium rolled in with still fewer answers. EPA announced that it would be conducting spot checks on buildings that had been cleaned up to federal standards to verify the site is free of radiation. The tests were open to residents if they wished to

attend. Up we all went to the dog and pony show. Lo and Behold, it turned out that several of the buildings due to be surveyed had already been dismantled and shipped to local landfills, leaving EPA looking pretty foolish. This outraged us. How could Rocketdyne send the debris off before the buildings were checked. Why send it to the local municipal dump instead of to a licensed nuclear waste facility? The metal in the buildings was sent to a recycler to be reused in every kind of consumer product- belt buckles, zippers, frying pans, etc. We also learned that trailers that had never been tested had been sold to a local animal way station and to a school district for use as classrooms. This was unconscionable that innocent people, especially school children, could be subjected to life- threatening contamination. The EPA without any of the facts took a cavalier attitude and did nothing. Again we wondered who are the EPA protecting? With intervention by Senator Boxer, DOE agreed to retrieve the trailers , which turned out to have asbestos, lead and mercury in them, and dispose of the hazardous portions in a toxic waste facility.

#### BOEING SAYS POISON OAK IS WORKERS' BIGGEST PROBLEM (3/31/00)<sup>36</sup>

What a headline. After two studies found significantly increased cancer death rates for the workers exposed to radiation and chemicals, and with all the revelations of contamination, we are still treated like children by being told that the greatest risk at the site is from poison oak. No independent review of the cleanup or the contamination has yet occurred. However, in May, DOE said it would finally conduct an environmental assessment (a far less thorough review than a traditional Environmental Impact Statement) of the remaining cleanup project at the site, two-thirds of the way into the project that has cost well in excess of \$100 million. Hirsch's response was that the DOE should have conducted a full Environmental Impact Statement from the beginning.

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<sup>36</sup> Simi Valley Star

“They have flouted the law for a decade. Rather than comply, they are doing a quick and dirty environmental assessment instead.”

To date , according to a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, the SSFL will never be sufficiently cleaned up to permit unrestricted use; access controls, deed restrictions and long-term stewardship will be required in perpetuity. The report was prepared by the National Research Council, an arm of the NAS, that examined the government’s plans for the site. The study was based on DOE’s own reports. The report states that any future use of the site will need to be “industrial use under surveillance and monitoring and deed restrictions.”<sup>37</sup>

Donna Sutherland, ETEC site manager, says that DOE intends to release the facility for unrestricted, residential use, with no access controls or deed restrictions. She states that ETEC will be returned to Boeing in 2006, which will be free to do anything it wishes with the land, including selling it for residential development. On the one hand the NAS, based on DOE’s own documents, says the site is too contaminated and will never be sufficiently cleaned up to permit unrestricted use; on the other hand, DOE says that is precisely what it plans to do.

#### RADIOACTIVE SOIL STILL AT PLANT (9/10/00)<sup>38</sup>

Now we learn that the dirt excavated from the sodium burn pit sits in 660 storage containers waiting while the debate rages as to where the soil should be disposed. The soil contains traces of radioactive material in addition to dangerous dioxins, PCBs and mercury. The Company wants to dispose of the soil at a facility that accepts hazardous

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<sup>37</sup> 90-ACRE SITE EAST OF SIMI DEEMED UNRECLAIMABLE (8/19/00) Simi Valley Star

<sup>38</sup> Daily News

chemicals, but we are pressing for the soil to be taken to a facility that handles nuclear waste.

Ed Bailey, DHS's radiologic health chief, stated that the soil "could have stayed onsite for the standpoint of radioactive material. They could have moved a farmer in there and he could have grown his crop." That statement was eerily reminiscent of the cabbage story of our early days, but this time it was a health official. Finances again take center stage; the cost of renting 660 storage bins at the rate of \$220,000 a month and the additional cost of disposing of the contaminated soil at a nuclear waste dump played an integral part.

#### LATEST ROCKETDYNE STUDY PLAN LEAVES NEIGHBORS ANGRY (10/13/00)<sup>39</sup>

After 11 years, the ATSDR announced that UCLA will research whether an increase in lung and bladder cancers in the surrounding area detected in earlier studies, is still present. We were told that ATSDR will have no say in the study. Dr. Beate Ritz, who will conduct part of the study, acknowledges that there will be limitations, noting that cancer registry data only goes back to 1988 and that "there is no funding to collect any other data."

None of us left the meeting that night with confidence that the final goal set by the RCC, to study the health affects from the facility on the surrounding residents, would be obtained by this study.

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<sup>39</sup> Simi Valley Star

#### REALTORS WARN OF ROCKETDYNE PROBLEMS (10/14/2000)<sup>40</sup>

It is always unsettling to read articles confirming that your environment is being targeted negatively. This article states that for about three years contracts for properties bounded by Highways 23,118 and 101 and Sepulveda Blvd in the San Fernando Valley have contained a clause warning buyers of possible groundwater contamination from the Rocketdyne site east of Simi Valley.

#### GROUP SAYS PROPOSED STATE RULES LAX ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE CLEANUP (10/17/2000)<sup>41</sup>

October also brought the news that State health officials were considering adopting federal standards set by the NCR for the radiological cleanup of sites. This would lower the standards of cleanup at the site and increase the risk of cancer from one in a million to one in 286. Under the proposed standards sites could be cleared for unrestricted use with levels of radioactive contamination as high as 100 millirems per year, equivalent to 10 x-rays a year. Both Senator Boxer and Assemblywoman Kuehl spoke out strongly calling for more stringent cleanup levels.

#### TOXIC SOIL WILL BE TRUCKED (1/20/2001)<sup>42</sup>

Much to our dismay we watched as the trucks left the site and wound their way down Woolsey canyon on their way to Buttonwillow Hazardous Waste Disposal Facility west

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<sup>40</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>41</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>42</sup> Daily News

of Bakersfield. Against our wills 14,000 tons of soil contaminated with radioactive and chemical waste had started to be shipped to the hazardous waste facility, a facility that is not permitted to take waste containing radioactive contamination.

In April funds were cut for the DOE portion of the cleanup and in May the EPA announced that they would reduce their oversight of the cleanup due to budget cuts. Lawmakers jumped in, both lobbying for funds and attacking the EPA's decision. By June, with a lot of political pressure, much of it coming from Rep Elton Gallegly, the EPA decided to continue leading the survey of the site.

#### BOEING LAB GETS TOXICS CITATIONS - LAB CITED ON 38 ISSUES (8/16/2001)<sup>43</sup>

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board issued the notices of violations June 27 after samples taken between January 2000 and March of this year were provided by the company, including one mercury reading 191 times what the permit allows, according to agency documents. "It is shocking that there could be so many violations by Rocketdyne and that the contamination apparently has been there since the 70's," said Dan Hirsch. "This incident reinforces a long history of the public not being able to have confidence in Rocketdyne's environmental controls."

#### RESIDENTS LIVID OVER ROCKETDYNE CLEANUP PLAN (10/27/2001)<sup>44</sup>

The message Federal officials gave during a heated public meeting was the following "Cleanup of the Rocketdyne SSFL will be delayed yet a few more years and the level of cleanup will be reduced." Dan Hirsch, speaking for the community said to EPA

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<sup>43</sup> Daily News

<sup>44</sup> Simi Valley Star



officials on the Panel, "You have again broken your promise. We are a decade into cleanup of an extraordinarily contaminated site and the EIR has not begun." Again the veiled assurances of "no health risk to the general public" given by the officials was met with distrust by the audience.

#### RESIDENTS DECRY RADIATION - PLAN LEAVES RISK, RESIDENTS FEAR

(1/25/2002)<sup>45</sup>

Residents accused the U.S. Department of Energy of promoting a less-than-thorough cleanup of low-level radioactive waste at SSFL and said they feared that their health could be imperiled. Their concerns stemmed from the DOE's proposal to leave 98% (or 30,000 truckloads) of contaminated soil at the site. This would raise the estimated cancer-risk rates 300 times that which the community had sought. Absurdly, DOE counters that the lower standard would protect human health and the environment while sparing neighborhoods the traffic of 27 truckloads per day for eight years under the tougher cleanup plan. Along with this lesser standard, DOE and Boeing plan to release the site for unrestricted use. "They broke a decade of solemn promises to save money," Hirsch accused the DOE. Many urged the DOE to restrict the land use to open space. "To restrict the land use forever would be safer," said Bonnie Klea, a former Rocketdyne employee and bladder cancer survivor.

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<sup>45</sup> Daily News

#### HAZARDOUS CHEMICAL DETECTED IN SIMI WELLS (2/23/2002)<sup>46</sup>

Perchlorate, a hazardous byproduct of Rocket fuel, has been detected by DTSC in four underground wells at Erringer Road and Royal Avenue in Simi Valley. The chemical is linked to thyroid dysfunction, a condition that appears to be prevalent in the area. Those of us active in the oversight have had many calls from residents and former residents concerned about members of their families with thyroid problems. Officials from DTSC said the finding is just another piece in the investigation and they could not say whether the contamination came from the Rocketdyne site. Even though perchlorate is commonly associated with solid rocket propellant, and Rocketdyne tested rockets, no official would admit that this pollution could possibly have come from the site. Yet we feel that proximity and geography make the likelihood of perchlorate originating at the site a most plausible one.

#### FIELD LAB NEIGHBORS MIGHT BE STUDIED (3/12/2002)<sup>47</sup>

After the disappointment of DOE's broken promises to conduct a community health study, in the wake of the elevated health risk of the previous worker study, the community is finally given some hope that there will be a follow-through to study the residents of the area. Epidemiologist Stephen Wing, an epidemiologist associate with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has also been involved in health studies at other nuclear sites, and assured the community that the newly-formed Advisory

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<sup>46</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>47</sup> Simi Valley Star

Panel will look into the feasibility of a community study. The Rocketdyne Cleanup Coalition now believes that their final goal might indeed be met.

Throughout the years on several occasions, various members of the Rocketdyne Cleanup Coalition, at their own expense, flew to Sacramento to lobby for our legislatures on bills concerning Rocketdyne, such as those drafted by Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl aimed at protecting human life. Her Bills included mandating cleanup, release, and radioactive disposal to stringent standards. The days at the Capitol were spent lobbying many of the legislators who would be voting on the Bill.

While doing this, we had to contend with the lobbying powers of Rocketdyne, which too often thwarted our sincere efforts. Even Mayor Bill Davis of Simi Valley opposed Kuehl's Bill 1444, which would have placed restrictions on properties subject to radioactive contamination and prohibit local government from making land use decisions for that property.

In April 2002 we found that Rocketdyne had been dumping radioactive material at a local landfill for decades. This is just another example of the irresponsible management at Rocketdyne that has health implications for not only the surrounding community, but has far-reaching effects. Even Mayor Hahn of Los Angeles was appalled and called for an investigation. DHS approved the dumping of the low-level radioactive waste into Bradley Landfill in Sun Valley without informing other authorities or even the landfill operator. Incidents such as this show that Rocketdyne has no regard for human safety. As community members, we feel that we must always be vigilant as we are not only fighting to safeguard our health, but that of future generations.

Sadly, on June 23, 2002, we lost a champion in the fight for protecting the world against radiation contamination. Alice Stewart was 95 when she died, and up to that time she

was actively contributing her scientific knowledge to help guide the panel overseeing Rocketdyne's radiation problem. She was an icon, discovering that low-level radiation doses were far more dangerous than had ever been suspected.

In August 2002, we met with Senator Barbara Boxer, who listened to our pleas and vowed to continue to urge Boeing and Federal agencies to adopt stricter standards at SSFL. We felt empowered that we were being listened to by those who can effect change. Despite some of the best efforts by concerned legislators in DC, we still met defeat on a State level when, only two weeks after Boxer's visit, Kuehl's Bill for stricter cleanup standards was defeated in Sacramento.

#### RANCH EIR SHOWS TOXIN (10/30/2002)<sup>48</sup>

The contaminant perchlorate was found in a well that Ahmanson Ranch plans to use for irrigation. The ranch abuts Rocketdyne on the northwest side, yet Rocketdyne officials contest that the contamination could not have come from their site. Now, however, wells on both the north- and southwest sides have shown contamination. Even a rocket scientist is unable to make this simple connection!

#### TOXIC CHEMICALS FOUND IN 18 NEW SIMI VALLEY WELLS (12/04/2002)<sup>49</sup>

Now, only two months later, perchlorate is identified as new wells are drilled. State investigators could not determine the chemical source, although they noted that Rocketdyne is the nearest known location with perchlorate contamination. Countering this, Dan Hirsch states, "This suggests that there is a very large potential problem with

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<sup>48</sup> Daily News

<sup>49</sup> Daily News

leaking contaminants from Rocketdyne headed offsite in all directions.” Residents continue to be alarmed, wondering what other contaminants might be discovered in the community.

#### ROCKETDYNE SAYS IT DIDN'T FOUL WELLS (12/13/2002)<sup>50</sup>

Much to the chagrin of the community, Rocketdyne continues to deny any responsibility for the perchlorate contamination. Even our State agency, DTSC, soft-pedals the source of the known contamination. Gerard Abrams of DTSC states, “We weren’t able to find any connection to the activities at Rocketdyne.” However, Ali Tabidian, a professor of hydrology at Cal State Northridge, who has studied the area for more than a decade, theorizes that the substance was carried down the mountain from Rocketdyne by water trickling through natural drainage systems.

“Based on the data, there is no reason to believe the source is anywhere by the SSFL.” Our frustrations were echoed by Stanford Lovett, who suffers from Graves disease, which attacks the thyroid gland, when he said he is fed up with the theories of dueling scientists and bickering government agencies and wants some answers.

Frustrations continue and in the Fall of 2003, Rocketdyne again gets a break when the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board introduced a plan that would drop trichloroethylene off the list of contaminants tested in storm water leaving the facility. “Seems to me that you are going backwards,” said Hirsch. “There are many gallons of TCE and it is the largest contaminant of groundwater at the site.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Los Angeles Times

<sup>51</sup> NEW PLAN FOR LAB PERMIT REVIEWED (10/9/03) Simi Valley Star

## FIELD LAB CLEANUP CRITICIZED (12/10/2003) <sup>52</sup>

Ongoing cleanup operations at SSFL are inconsistent with Federal environmental regulations and leave too much radioactivity behind to allow future development at this site for even unrestricted recreational uses, according to EPA officials. DOE officials counterclaim that the site would pose no significant threat to human health or the environment once the multimillion dollar cleanup is completed in 2007.

Congressman Elton Gallegly, in a letter to EPA, said, "I am amazed, as are my constituents, that two Federal agencies have failed to agree on the best course of action and that commitments repeatedly made over the years are being abandoned."

After reading the above headlines in the morning, we found out that night at a Workgroup meeting that the EPA was abandoning the community. "Our job has been to come in and make sure the DOE is cleaning up the site adequately," said Arlene Kabei, Associate Director of the EPA's Waste Management Division, "We've tried to compel change. It's time people look to responsible parties who have the authority and hold them accountable." <sup>53</sup> Congressman Gallegly wrote in a letter to EPA administrator Mike Leavitt that the current plans to clean up the site would leave the former nuclear test site unsafe for even casual picnicking. Senators Feinstein and Boxer also weighed in, saying they would urge the DOE to follow EPA's recommendation. The controversy surrounds the DOE's plan to remove just 2% of the soil on the contaminated site, which would lead to an additional 1-in-3333 cancer as opposed to EPA's acceptable risk range of 1-in a million to 1-in-10000.

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<sup>52</sup> Los Angeles Times

<sup>53</sup> EPA GIVES UP KEY ROLE IN CLEANUP OF FIELD LAB (12/11/03) Daily News

EPA TO KEEP MONITORING CLEANUP (12/12/2003)<sup>54</sup> DOE MULLS QUITTING  
COMMUNITY COMMITTEE (12/13/2003)<sup>55</sup>

What a difference a day makes! On December 12, 2003, EPA announced that they would continue their involvement in monitoring the cleanup. But on December 13th, DOE counters that move by announcing that they would leave the established Work Group and hold their own meetings. Referring to the DOE, Dan Hirsch said, "They're running like a scared child. They want to be able to get their meetings out without being contradicted from the EPA or people like myself." For DOE and Rocketdyne to walk away showed not only a lack of respect, but a lack of responsibility to the community. Although we in the community have attended meetings for 15 years in the hope of effecting positive change, we are dealt a terrible blow by the lack of cooperation by the two groups who caused the pollution. The splintering of the groups adds the burden of attending two quarterly meetings and not having questions answered in a timely manner. For any meaningful communication, it is essential that both sides of a controversy be present so that the audience can make educated assessments.

NEW PERCHLORATE DISCOVERY REPORTED (12/18/2003)<sup>56</sup>

High levels of perchlorate have been discovered in silt and groundwater at Runkle Ranch, a proposed development that lies directly beneath the site. As always, Boeing officials have consistently denied that contamination from their SSFL site has migrated

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<sup>54</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>55</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>56</sup> Simi Valley Star

into surrounding communities. We all fervently wish that the contamination would stay on site, but our fears grow as contamination is continually detected in various locations offsite. We now question whether the high levels of thyroid problems reported by local doctors could be related to perchlorate contamination which is known to cause problems with the thyroid. In fact, Dan Hirsch was quoted, "It would appear that there are now more dots connecting the contamination at Rocketdyne and the perchlorate found in Simi." In February 2004, experts hired by plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Rocketdyne claim that dozens of residents across the San Fernando and Simi Valleys developed cancer and other conditions from toxins released at the site. Experts found links to lung, brain, kidney, and bladder cancers, as well as Hodgkins, and non-Hodgkins disease. The plaintiffs team of eight hired experts said releases from the field lab, as well as from Rocketdyne's other two facilities in the West San Fernando Valley likely caused the cancers and the injuries among those residents studied. But, as usual, Rocketdyne continues to deny responsibility.

#### LATEST TOXIN TEST PLAN CONTESTED (03/06/2004)<sup>57</sup>

Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board proposes lifting limits and reducing testing from quarterly to annually for some 25 contaminants in creeks and storm water coming off the site. Fortunately, for us, the Los Angeles City Attorney and other officials showed good sense in seeing the critical need for more stringent testing, rather than relaxing the criteria. TCE is one of the contaminants proposed to be removed from testing, even though it is found at 2000 times the limit in groundwater at the site. "Because these pollutants have been detected at the lab, it is possible that they could enter surface water runoff," wrote Shahram Kharaghani, head of the City's Watershed

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<sup>57</sup> Daily News



Protection Division, to the City Attorney. He further added that Water regulators should err on the side of caution. This echoes what the community has been saying for years. Much of the runoff from the field lab flows into Dayton Canyon Creek and Bell Creek, before flowing into the Los Angeles River. The additional water runs into the Arroyo Simi and Calleguas Creek. How absurd that those in charge would even think of relaxing the rules!

On March 20, 2004, we learned that more perchlorate had been found in the groundwater nearby the SSFL. Rocketdyne claims the chemical isn't leaving their property because it is soaked up and trapped in the porous bedrock beneath the surface, but regulators say the Company has yet to prove that theory. DTSC questions how much is being held up in the rock and how much is getting through. If Rocketdyne's theory is legitimate, then why are they preparing to clean up soil from Happy Valley north of the community of Bell Canyon where perchlorate levels have reached 3,400 ppb, well above the public health goal for water of 6 ppb? The company plans to use bacteria to consume the perchlorate in 20,000 cubic yards of soil. The concern is that bio-remediation might not work on soil piles as large as the one at SSFL. In late April we lost Professor Jerry Raskin, an original member of the Rocketdyne Clean-up Coalition and a member of the Advisory and Work group panels. Jerry was a steadfast member to the end, a brilliant, witty, astute man who helped guide us all. Jerry will be missed. Marie agreed to take, the now vacant seat, on both of the Panels.

KUEHL REINTRODUCES BILL SETTING CLEANUP STANDARDS FOR FIELD LAB  
(05/04/2004)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Simi Valley Star

Again, members of the Rocketdyne Cleanup Coalition took their time and money to travel to Sacramento and lobby in support of this important Bill. Senator Sheila Kuehl's Bill, SB1456, is seeking to assure that the site will either be cleaned to standards that satisfy the EPA or become permanently off-limits to housing. Unfortunately, it is indeed an uphill struggle for those of us lobbying for stricter standards as corporations, such as Boeing, have such tremendous lobbying power by their contributions to political campaigns.

Two days later, Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks calls for an extra check by builders for sites around the SSFL. Under the proposal, developers would be required to test soil and water for the contaminants perchlorate and TCE before they could build. We applaud Linda Parks for her concern for the community, but we are troubled by comments by Supervisor Judy Mikels (whose district includes Rocketdyne), when she states that approving the new guidelines would be tantamount to declaring that testing at the SSFL has polluted offsite lands. This is hard for us to understand, when history of the site proves that contamination has indeed gotten offsite, such as dioxins and tritium found on the Brandeis property?

TRITIUM FOUND IN WELLS NEAR ROCKETDYNE LAB (5/21/04)<sup>59</sup>

Controversy continues to surround the Lab after high-levels of tritium were discovered in groundwater from a trio of new wells. "This is a really big deal," said Dan Hirsch, "if after 12 years they have just now found this, what else haven't they found? How much hotter is it elsewhere?"

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<sup>59</sup> Simi Valley Star

By the end of June, we learned that Sheila Kuehl's Bill went down to defeat, our lobbying being of no avail. With proposed standards being relaxed and continued new findings of contaminants, it is frightening to think that this site might one day be inhabited by families. We question why Boeing would defeat a Bill that would make them a good neighbor, and instead opt to leave a dirty environment that could affect not only the health of the present generation, but that of future generations.

#### GROUPS PLAN TO SUE AGENCY ON LAB CLEANUP (07/20/2004)<sup>60</sup>

Two Environmental groups, frustrated at the attitude of DOE regarding the alleged violation of Federal Law in its nonchalant cleanup of the site, intend to file lawsuits. The Natural Resources Defense Council and Committee to Bridge the Gap claim that the DOE would leave dangerous levels of radioactive material and other toxic materials in the soil at the Field Lab. The outcome of the lawsuit could have implications far beyond the 2800 acre hilltop lab because the DOE operates many other contaminated nuclear and chemical sites round the country. Dan Hirsch, President of Committee to Bridge the Gap, states, "I think (DOE officials) are sacrificing public health for cost savings. The Bush Administration has a tremendous hostility to living up to its environmental responsibilities. So it's partially to save money and partially an antipathy to environmental protection." The Community was encouraged by this news and hope that a lawsuit will force the DOE to do the right thing and clean up to the highest standards. The legal hotbed brews as the Ventura County Supervisors voted 3 to 2 in August to approve a measure that would require developers to test for toxic contamination before building within a two-mile radius of SSFL. Again,

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<sup>60</sup> Los Angeles Times

Judy Mikels, the Supervisor representing the site, voted against this measure and sided with the Company.

In October, concerned that one day homes may be built on the site, Los Angeles City Attorney joined the two groups in support of the lawsuit against the DOE to force a stricter cleanup. "The site is not very far from Los Angeles City boundaries and contamination knows no borders. We are joining this lawsuit because the DOE has failed in its duty to protect the public,"<sup>61</sup> said Assistant City Attorney Cecilia Estolano.

Again, the Company changes hands when in February 2005 Boeing sells Rocketdyne to United Technologies Pratt and Whitney Space Propulsion, a rocket engine builder out of Hartford, Connecticut. The sale did not include the SSFL site. "I think it tells you that United Technologies viewed the Field Lab as a toxic liability that they didn't want to get anywhere near touching it,"<sup>62</sup> Dan Hirsch opined about the sale.

#### BOEING IS CITED AFTER CONTAMINATION FOUND (03/18/2005)<sup>63</sup>

Now here we are 16 years later and new contamination is still being discovered. This time dioxin and mercury contamination was found in storm water leaving the SSFL. Rocketdyne officials contend that the contaminants are the result of ash blown onto the site during brush fires in 2003 and 2004, and not from dioxin-tainted soil found at the Lab. However, we skeptics question that the ash could be the source of the contamination, and feel that it is more strongly related to the burning of old fuel and

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<sup>61</sup> L.A., 2 GROUPS TO FILE SUIT OVER CLEANUP OF ROCKETDYNE LAND (10/21/04) Los Angeles Times

<sup>62</sup> FIELD LAB IS NOT IN ROCKETDYNE SALE (2/24/05) Simi Valley Star

<sup>63</sup> Daily News

debris by lab workers, which left high concentrations of highly-toxic chemicals at the site.

Following this, in May 2005, concern is raised over the proposed development of 147 homes on Dayton Canyon property, 1.3 miles east of the facility. Alarming, this property was never tested, because consultants based their assessment on a visual survey. It is insane that this development has passed an Environmental Impact Report in Los Angeles without even one test. Councilman Dennis Zine said he has serious concerns about the lack of tests conducted during the environmental review process. He vowed to enlist the City Attorney's office, if necessary, to insure that the soil and water on the site are analyzed. "I'm not going to let him (Centex Homes) proceed when there's still a question mark when it comes to safety"<sup>64</sup>, said Zine whose district abuts the site. The Los Angeles Regional Water Control Board, several years ago, found perchlorate, a chemical that can cause thyroid problems, leaking into Dayton Canyon Creek from a former rocket fuel storage area at the Field Lab. However, Boeing officials have said they believe the contamination remains encapsulated on top of the hill with tainted groundwater trapped in rock that acts like a sponge. For sixteen years we have heard these absurd claims and give no credibility to anything they say at this point.

#### HIGHER TRITIUM LEVELS FOUND IN WATER AT FIELD LAB (06/21/05)<sup>65</sup>

Radioactive contamination has again been detected at higher levels than last year in ground water at SSFL, DOE officials said Monday. In the latest round of testing at the site, officials found tritium ranging from 12000 to 117000 pico curies per liter, the peak

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<sup>64</sup> PLANS FOR HOUSES NEAR LAB A CONCERN (5/23/05) Daily News

<sup>65</sup> Daily News

being nearly six times the EPA standard for drinking water. Last year tritium tested four times the standard.

Tritium is a radioactive form of hydrogen that is produced as a byproduct in nuclear reactors.

Drinking tritiated water increases the risk of cancer. Given the new test results, it is possible the tritium in the Lab's groundwater was 50 times the EPA drinking water limit in the 1960's when DOE officials suspect the contamination occurred.

#### TOXINS FOUND 1-1/2 MILES FROM SANTA SUSANA FIELD LAB (07/12/05)<sup>66</sup>

Two months after Councilman Zine called for new testing of the Dayton Canyon development, the findings come back with perchlorate detected at levels as high as 62000 parts per million in the sediment along Dayton Canyon Creek. This level is 850 times more potent than samples taken at the SSFL where rocket fuel was spilled onto the soil, and it is nearly 8000 times the level allowed for residential neighborhoods.

Consultants hired by Centex were unsure whether the chemical was from the SSFL or was placed on the property only recently and perhaps intentionally. However, Ali Tabidian, as geological sciences professor at CSUN, said it is possible that perchlorate, which is water soluble, flowed down the steep canyon in water that pooled in the flatlands, so that it was left in high concentrations when the water evaporated. Despite this scientific evidence, Centex vows to continue with the project in disregard to suspected health impacts.

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<sup>66</sup> Daily News

That devil perchlorate shows up again, but this time in two drinking water wells in Simi Valley. "This shows that perchlorate contamination is well spread throughout the Simi Valley aquifer," Dan Hirsch said, "We knew the monitoring wells, a few yards away from the supply wells, were contaminated."<sup>67</sup>

PERCHLORATE VANDALISM? (07/31/05)<sup>68</sup>

The battle rages on when officials from DTSC concur with the absurd contention that perchlorate was intentionally dumped on the site. This is eerily reminiscent of past claims by our protective agencies that contamination could not come from SSFL, like Ahmanson Ranch, Runkle Canyon, the groundwater in Simi, and now, Dayton Canyon.

In late September 2005, one of the worst fires of the season burned 2000 of the 2800 acres of the SSFL site. While fighting the fire in our own backyards, we gave little thought to the contamination being released into the surrounding neighborhoods from the SSFL. Our concerns grew when we read EXPOSURE FROM FIRE SPURS CALL FOR TESTS (1/8/06)<sup>69</sup> We then read that a representative of the Firefighters Association showed concern that firefighters may face unusual health risks due to exposure to chemicals used at the site and released by the fire. Not only was our landscape scarred by the fire, but our psyches were also scarred by uncertainty. Again, Rocketdyne silently invades our lives.

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<sup>67</sup> Simi Valley Star

<sup>68</sup> Daily News

<sup>69</sup> Simi Valley Star

CANCER IN OUR BACKYARD (2/3/06)<sup>70</sup>

WHAT NOW? LIFE IN TOXIC 'HOT SPOT' (2/4/06)<sup>71</sup>

These headlines were generated by studies and presentations conducted by Dr. Hal Morgenstern, and Dr. Yoram Cohen. The study by Morgenstern analyzed cancer incidences in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties from 1988 through 2003 .

Morgenstern's study found slightly higher rates of all cancers linked to radiation and chemical exposure. The study led by Cohen looked at how contamination at the SSFL moved off into the surrounding neighborhoods. "It is clear to us that there has been a migration of contaminants from the facility by surface water, air dispersion, and ground water," Cohen states.

These studies reinforce the fact that our original goal of a community epidemiological study, is still needed.

GROUPS SUE OVER POLLUTION AT FIELD LAB (2/22/06)<sup>72</sup>

Frustrated by Boeing's 48 blatant violations of its pollution discharge limits, the organizations - Committee to Bridge the Gap, the Los Angeles Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Southern California Federation of Scientists - filed a lawsuit and asked a judge to impose monetary penalties on Boeing for violating those limits, which are set in permits issued by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. This action stemmed from a January meeting in which Boeing asked for

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<sup>70</sup> Daily News

<sup>71</sup> Daily News

<sup>72</sup> Simi Valley Star



their standards to be relaxed. It is absurd to us that legal action must be taken to force government agencies to enforce their own rules.

#### INQUIRY SET ON FIELD-LAB REVELATIONS (8/30/06)<sup>73</sup>

#### Supervisors Order Probe into Open-Pit Burning of Napalm, Dioxin

It was the Los Angeles County Supervisors who ordered an independent investigation into the new revelations that Rocketdyne detonated and destroyed hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic liquids and gases at the Area 1 burn pit. It was this inflammatory headline that led to a frenzied public meeting on August 31, 2006. The meeting was initially called to discuss the closure of Burn Pit 1. DTSC was initially moving ahead with the closure. However, new information was unearthed that showed that some of the materials destroyed, in the burn pit, came from other Rocketdyne facilities, namely, the Canoga Park Lab and another lab on site where radioactive work was conducted. Officials from DTSC admitted they made mistakes while planning to clean a toxics-infested burn pit, but pointed fingers at the site's owner, Boeing Company, who they said stonewalled them.

Boeing retaliated by stating that DTSC had long ago been given the necessary information, but DTSC countered that it was lost in countless papers.

What else is lost, we wonder, and what else will surface?

Over the last 17 years we have had many victories. The people we have worked with within the RCC have been wonderful, talented, diligent individuals. We prevented the

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<sup>73</sup> Daily News

nuclear re-licensing of the facility, forcing the end of all nuclear work at the site except cleanup.

We got oversight panels consisting of community members established for both the cleanup and the Health Study. We forced the DOE into funding the epidemiological study with DOE having no vote or say in its conduct. We requested and received three document repositories in the surrounding communities. With Committee to Bridge the Gap as our ally, we have effectively battled Rockwell on many key issues. Although the epidemiological panel started with many different viewpoints, by the end they were cohesive in our defense. We still wait and plan for the following: a comprehensive community health study, and an independent, effective cleanup adhering to the strictest standards.

It has been a seventeen-year ongoing lesson in frustration at how agencies and government interact with big business. It has been a chess game of strategic moves, played out in a forum that was surreal to us. It has been a time of fear, uncertainty and change.

We lost our innocence.