

PHOTOCOPY
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CONFIDENTIAL

To Heamer

Toxic school?

Cluster of student cancer cases leaves families fearful in Elmira, N.Y.

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

ELMIRA, N.Y. — When Andy Patros was teaching his boy, Tom, to drive here on the parking lot behind Southside High School, father urged son not to put the family car into the murky pond on the other side of the school fence.

The pool of water on the old industrial site is infamously known across this town of 35,000 as "the pond that never freezes." More than a century of mighty industrial use has left the land where the school was built a known hot zone. And the pond, according to lore, must be full of nasty crud to remain ice-free year-round.

Cover story

"We used to joke about it," Andy Patros says. But nobody is laughing now.

Son Tom, 21, is one of many former or current Southside High students battling testicular cancer. Over the past three years, 13 Southside students have been diagnosed with cancer of various kinds. Since the school opened in 1979, at least 40 students have been stricken. That's out of about 4,200 students who have ever attended the school.

State health officials are analyzing the types of cancer cases to determine whether the rates are higher at Southside than in the general population. The state health department will hold a public meeting Aug. 23 to present its findings on the cancer and possible contamination of the site.

Meanwhile, some parents are wondering whether they should send their children back to classes next month or keep them home for fear the children will end up in the student support group known as the "cancer club." The club was started by Josh Palmer, a 1998 Southside graduate who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease.

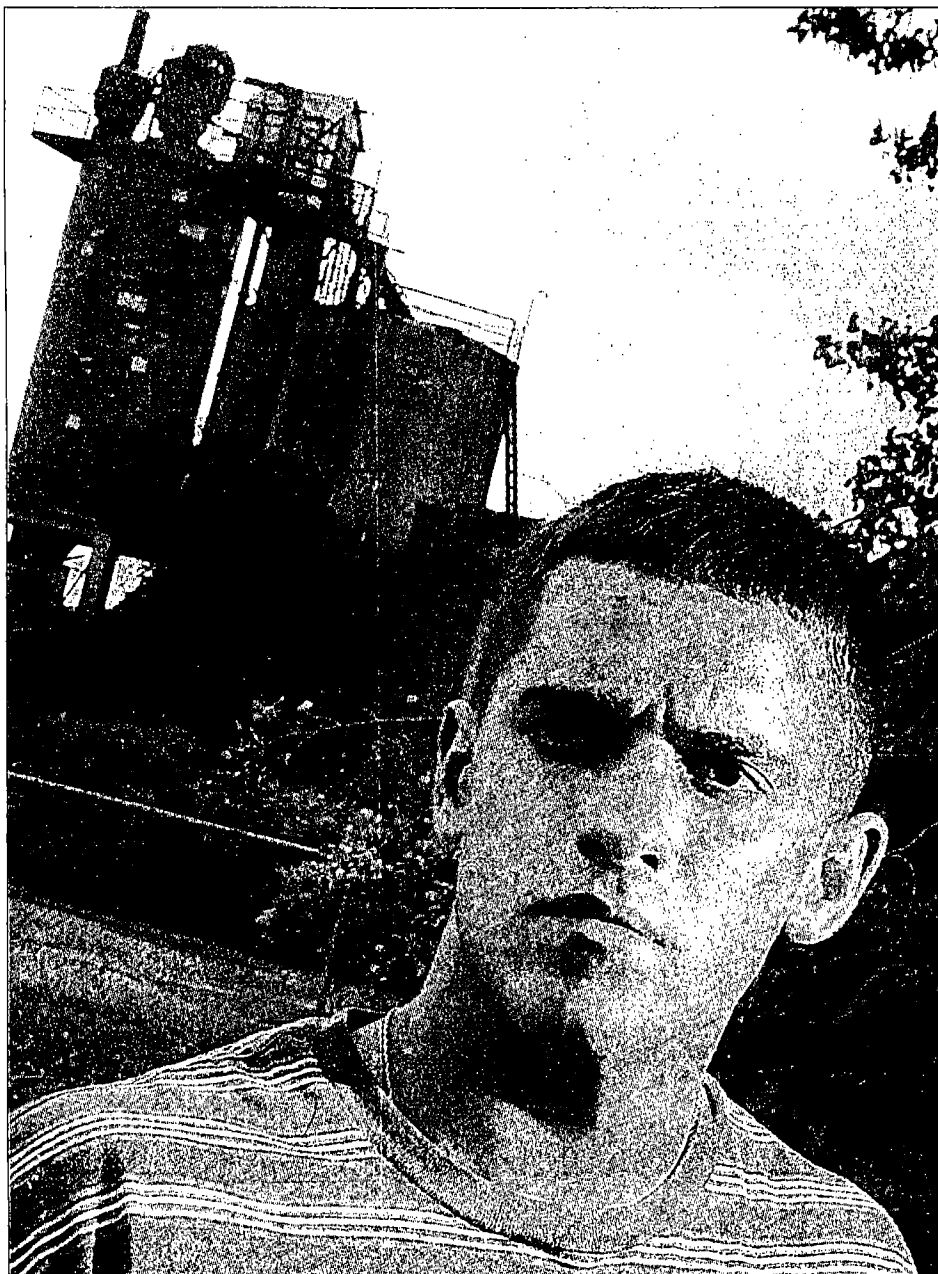
"I would never put them in danger," says Maggie Tobin, who must decide whether it is safe for 14-year-old Mara to enroll as a freshman and follow her brother's educational journey through Southside. Michael, who will be a junior, is fighting cancer. "But at this point, we don't know where the danger is."

State health officials are scrambling to determine whether the school, built atop ground polluted by a century of heavy industrial use, is to blame.

The air inside the school has been found to be safe; tests on the soil are still being analyzed. The pollution that is known to be there — petroleum underground and carcinogens outside the school fence — does not seem to be within the students' reach. And the site is not that dirty compared with countless others that have been scarred by industrial use. "It does not appear to be anything out of the ordinary," says Claire Pospisil of the state health department.

And some of the cancer sufferers don't think the school is to blame. "When you're trying to go through and prove that a school is causing it, I find that hard to believe," says Josh Palmer, now 20. "My perception is that cancer involves genetics more than anything." Both of his grandfathers and two aunts had cancer. In his case, Josh says, "there was no way of stopping it."

There are about 92,000 people living in Chemung County; more than a third of them live in Elmira. The county has had a higher overall incidence of cancer than the state for 20 years, and the number

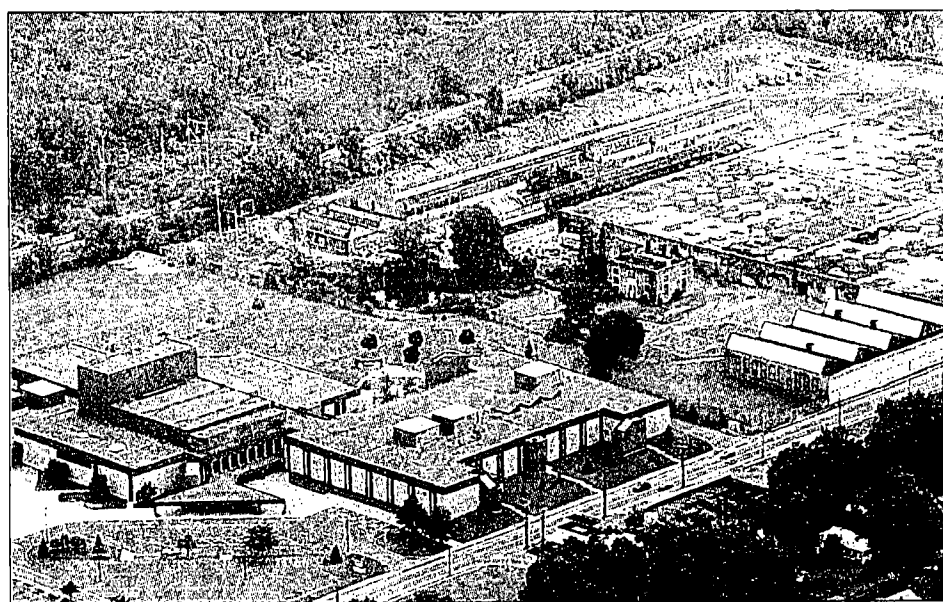


Above by Christian Abraham for USA TODAY; below by Miles Norman, Elmira Star-Gazette, for USA TODAY

Polluted ground: Josh Palmer, above, is one of 40 students stricken with cancer since Southside High School was built in Elmira, N.Y., in 1979. The 1998 graduate stands near an industrial plant that borders the school property. The school, at left below, was built on the site of a typewriter plant.



Stephanie Schrock: Died of sarcoma at age 15.



of cases continues to rise. According to the New York State Cancer Registry, the cancer rate increased about 30% from 1976 to 1994 in Chemung County. But because the population is relatively small, a slight increase in the number of cases for any reason can make a big impact on the statistics.

A higher number of cancer cases at the school could be a statistical fluke. "The problem with cancer is that it is fairly common," Pospisil says. "It's more common than people think."

But while tests so far have shown that the school

is safe — more detailed results are expected in coming weeks — the public perception is hard to change.

"It's scary," says Carol Lawson, who lives near the school and nervously will send daughter Jenna, 15, to the first day of class Sept. 6. "I would be devastated if that happened to us."

The devastation has been felt by almost everyone in this town, where everyone seems to be connected in some way to everyone else.

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

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Continued from 1D

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"It doesn't fight fair," says Michael Tobin, 16, who used to copy Stephanie's homework in school when their teacher wasn't looking. "If cancer wants to win, it will win."

Like many small towns across America, Elmira owes its economic survival through times of war, the Great Depression and town-crippling floods to its strong industrial backbone. But like those other towns, Elmira's success leaves land scarred by chemicals. The site where the town's newest high school sits has been a key part of Elmira's survival. From 1887, when steam engines were built there, un-

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til the 1970s, when typewriter maker Remington Rand left the area, the soil has soaked up everything from basic motor fuel to complex, cancer-causing chemicals.

Remington Rand has since become part of the computer company Unisys. The company says it is cooperating with state health officials to determine what needs to be done to clean up the site. "Our environmental people are working with the state and we will continue to do so," says Joe Barrett, a Unisys spokesman. "We will do whatever is required."

Environmental studies have found that the pond that never freezes has PCBs and benzopyrene, both considered probable causes of cancer. The dirt in the area contains PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), arsenic and beryllium. Groundwater has high levels of cadmium, chromium and lead.

Men who worked in the factories tell tales of dangerous chemicals spilling onto the ground by accident or design.

"It wasn't like it is today," says Paul Wood, who scavenged for precious metals as he buried waste from the Remington plant 50 years ago. "We weren't that cautious."

At a site along Seeley Creek, just south of where the school sits, Wood says he would "bury 30-gallon drums, and six weeks later we'd dig down to bury something else, and the stuff in the drums would have eaten through the heavy metal. The barrel was gone, and it was just white gunk. We knew the stuff in those barrels was dangerous."

Wood also has cancer.

"This was the bad area here where all of the hazardous stuff was used. From here all the way down to the end of the school," says Bill Fuller, standing on the school property and looking across the fence into the old Remington Rand plant where he worked.

"I can't believe anybody would build a school here."

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Nearly impossible to prove

In retrospect, some of the people who built the school agree.

"I wish I could undo it," says Paul Zaccarine, 71, the school superintendent who oversaw the school's construction in the late 1970s. Now retired and living in Illinois, he is watching in horror as student after student gets cancer.

"It's really frightening," he says. "That site was the least desirable as far as I was concerned, but because the Remington Rand people had given us the land, the board voted to go ahead and take it. We got it for a dollar or something."

He says the long-term effects of the industrial waste were never considered. So far, nobody has found any evidence that an environmental study was done before school construction began in 1977.

"We just didn't know enough about all of that to have it be a concern," Zaccarine says. "Every way we looked at it, we just felt it was an opportunity to get a brand-new school with a lot of the facilities we needed. If we had any indication that there was any contamination, we certainly would not have gone ahead with it."

Local residents understand the decision. The town was recovering from the massive flood of 1972; the chance for a new school was too good to pass up.

"There were all kinds of grant money that came into this community with that school," says Art Kieffer, Chemung County historian. "But all of the money that benefits the community doesn't count for one kid who contracts something."

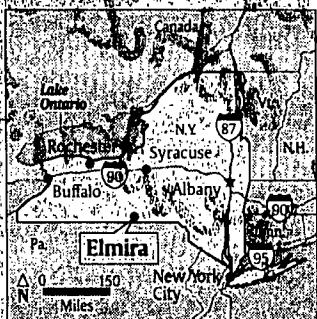
Nobody knows whether the cancer cases are connected to the school, health officials say; they may never know. It's nearly impossible to trace the cause of a cancer precisely.

Cancer cells form in the human body regularly. But most bodies attack and eliminate the unwanted cells silently and swiftly.

The reasons that some bodies become unwilling hosts to cancer are not fully understood, but the primary factors appear to be poor diet, smoking and a genetic predisposition. Toxic exposure is rarely blamed for cancer, in part because it is nearly impossible to prove beyond a scientific doubt.

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od of '72 c chemicals



USA TODAY

Even though there is a potential exposure route, we still might not be able to make the connection that somebody was exposed," says Mary Jane Peachy, regional hazardous waste remediation engineer for New York's Department of Environmental Conservation. She is investigating the Southside High School site, along with the state health department.

Some experts believe that even trying to link toxic exposure to a cluster of cancer cases is a waste of public money — money that would be better spent on education and early screening.

"You have a greater return on your investment by preventing rather than trying to find out what caused it," says Elmira's Tom Kump, the county's environmental safety chief. "We can't tell you what caused it. That's the reality."

Then he shifts gears and speaks from his second role in the controversy: president of the school board. "If I go by gut alone, the perception is we have something here," Kump says, adding that the district has a plan, if needed, to close Southside and teach all of the students in shifts at the other high school on the north side of town.

"I can understand wanting to make a decision based on emotions, but you have to look at the science."

If the school is found to be safe, Kump vows to keep investigating the area to determine whether there is a larger problem behind the rising cancer rates.

Wondering why

David Drew, who just lost his daughter, Stephanie Schrock, says the focus should be inside individual homes. He wonders whether the 1972 flood brought toxins that had been dumped around the south side out of the ground and into basements and yards.

"It could have stirred things up and maybe left things in the cellars of these homes," he says. "You go down there and you can still see the silt left from the high water levels. There could be something, but I wouldn't say it's the high school."

Like others who have been hit by cancer here, he is not looking to place blame. "Life goes on for the rest of us," Drew says. "Whether it's at the school or something in the atmosphere, I don't really know. If they'll ever find the answer."

He has his family screened regularly for cancer now.

As for students, most are ready to go back to class.

"I just don't drink the water," says Chris Lewis, 18, sitting outside the school on a summer afternoon, smoking a cigarette with his friends. "I don't travel to the back of the school (where oxygen is being pumped into wells to rid the groundwater of old petroleum), and I don't go near that pond."

"That's just spooky."

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To: Nera

Fr: Heather

4 pages follow

Re: Environmental Causes of cancer

~~Dear~~ Melanne said HRC

Wanted to do something
about the cancer cluster ~~is~~

update (reported in USA Today (8/10/00))

We talked about this briefly +

I have since talked to Deborah —
they think this is a good idea — basically
an expansion of the Adulphi event last Jan.

HARDSHIP CASES

WHITE HOUSE COMMENT LINE

VOLUNTEER NAME

Name of Caller: _____ _____	Address _____ _____ _____
Calling on behalf of whom: _____	
Home Telephone: () _____	Work Telephone: () _____

DOB: _____	SS# _____	Date of call: _____
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Nature of problem: ☐ Social Security ☐ Veterans ☐ Housing ☐ Children ☐ Prisons ☐ Immigration ☐ Medicare ☐ Medicaid ☐ Seniors ☐ Military ☐ Unemployment ☐ IRS ☐ Utilities ☐ Federal Grants ☐ Consumer Affairs ☐ Social Services	Why is this urgent? What action would the caller want?
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EXPANDING EFFORTS TO DETERMINE ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES OF CANCERS AND OTHER DISEASES

The Administration's FY 2001 budget includes a 56% increase to explore the environmental causes of disease. The initiative would provide an additional \$10 million, for a total of \$27 million, for the **Center for Disease Control's Environmental Health Lab**, to assist communities investigating unusual incidence of cancer or other diseases; identify regions of the country in which individuals are at increased risk of dangerous exposure to carcinogens and other toxic substances; ensure rapid evaluation of the impact of public health emergencies.

Proposal: 1) Expand on the Administration's proposal, providing for a significant increase in funding for CDC's Environmental Health Lab, which helps states investigate unusual incidences of cancer or other diseases; 2) provide grants to states for research into "clusters" and the impact of public health emergencies; and 3) ensure that CDC has the resources to effectively coordinate, with EPA and NIH, surveillance of clusters and research into environmental impacts on disease.

Breast Cancer
Jan 2000 - event at Adelphi -
① announcing Administration's
budget initiative - more \$
for CDC's environmental health lab
② endorsing Nita Lowey's bill - funding
to investigate the environmental
causes of breast cancer

DRAFT: WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCES MAJOR NEW INCREASE IN FUNDING TO DETERMINE ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES OF DISEASE

Funding Will Provide New Insight Into the Causes of Breast and Prostate Cancer

January 13, 2000

Today, the White House will announce that the President's FY 2001 budget will include a historic and unprecedented 56 percent increase to explore the environmental causes of disease. This investment will provide new insight into the largely unknown causes of breast and prostate cancer as well as other diseases. This initiative, which is advocated by the American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics, will provide \$27 million, \$10 million over last year's funding level, for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Environmental Health Lab to: assist communities investigating unusual incidence of cancer or other diseases; identify regions of the country in which individuals are at increased risk of dangerous exposure to carcinogens and other toxic substances; and ensure rapid evaluation of the impact of public health emergencies. Because of the startling lack of evidence pinpointing the cause of cancers and many other diseases, these environmental studies should play a major role in determining new, more effective, diagnostic tests and preventive techniques to prevent these diseases.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ARE LINKED TO INCREASED INCIDENCE OF CANCER AND OTHER DISEASES. Studies tracking patterns of cancer development and birth defects suggest the influence of environmental factors.

- **Environmental contaminants are associated with a wide range of birth defects and other diseases.** Of the 120,000 U.S. babies born each year with a birth defect, 8,000 die during their first year of life, making birth defects the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States and contributing substantially to childhood morbidity and long-term disability. Hundreds of thousands of cases of asthma and lead poisoning, in addition to a significant percentage of birth defects continue to be associated with environmental contaminants.
- **Initial scientific evidence demonstrates that increased risk of breast cancer may be associated with unknown environmental factors.** According to the American Cancer Society, one out of nine American women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, and breast cancer is now the leading cause of cancer for women between the ages of 35 and 54. Despite decades of research, over half of all breast cancer cases cannot be explained by known risk factors, such as genetic predisposition, reproductive history, and diet.
- **Initial scientific evidence demonstrates that increased risk of prostate cancer may be associated with unknown environmental factors.** Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer found in American men other than skin cancer, and disproportionately impacts African-American men. Researchers estimate that there will be about 180,000 new cases of prostate cancer in the United States this year, 36 percent of all cancer cases, and that about 37,000 men will die of this disease. However, researchers estimate that only 10 percent of prostate cancers are due to genetic predisposition.

- **Lack of research on the association between environmental exposure and breast cancer prostate cancer, and other diseases represents a lost opportunity to improve public health.** Research on the impact of environmental contaminants on individual health will promote the development of improved diagnostic techniques, prevention strategies, and treatments. If exposure to chemicals in the environment was shown to be associated with only 10 percent of breast and prostate cancer cases, and we reduced or eliminated the identified hazards were reduced and eliminated, the development of these diseases in 30,000 men and women could potentially have been prevented each year.
- **Biomonitoring provides the critical information necessary to link exposure and disease.** Biomonitoring is the measurement of toxic substances in the human body, providing information necessary to link exposure to a toxic substance and the development of diseases such as cancer and a wide range of birth defects. It identifies which groups of people are in the most danger from toxic substances, evaluates the success of preventive actions, and improves the response of public health officials to emergencies. This technique, combined with the application of new advances in determining the genetic causes of disease, will inevitably lead to striking developments in treating and preventing cancer and other diseases.

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- **Double the level of assistance provided to state and local public health officials investigating adverse health events potentially linked to environmental exposures.** This new investment will allow epidemiologists and toxicologists at the CDC's Environmental Health Lab to double the level of critical technical support services it provides to communities to investigate increased incidence of cancer or other diseases potentially linked to toxic environmental exposures, including on-site assistance with investigations and specialized laboratory services. As part of these interventions, the CDC will test the exposure of thousands of individuals in the community to toxic substances in order to determine the cause of their illness. Studies that evaluate increase risk of cancer or birth defects from exposure to potential carcinogens or toxic substances will be given funding priority. When dangerous exposures are identified, CDC will work with local public health officials to take all measures necessary to protect residents from further harm.
 - **Identify regions of the country where individuals are exposed to toxic substances that cause cancer and other diseases.** For example, although the Environmental Health Lab has conducted studies that link exposure to the pesticide dieldrin to increased risk of breast cancer and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) to increased risk non-Hodgkins lymphoma, there is currently no way to determine the national level of exposure to these dangerous substances. These new funds will allow for the routine conduct of nationwide monitoring of over 100 potentially toxic substances, including dieldrin, PCBs, and over 70 other potential carcinogens and assess exposure to these dangerous substances for women of childbearing age, children, minorities, and the elderly in order to identify exposure to toxic chemicals and

develop a blueprint for action to prevent dangerous exposures in the future.

- **Ensure rapid evaluation of the impact of public health emergencies.** New funds will ensure that the CDC's Environmental Health Lab, together with state and local public health officials, can immediately address the health repercussions of public health emergencies, such as widespread exposure to a toxic substance through a one-time event such as a chemical spill or contamination of a product through a manufacturing error. Together with epidemiologists, toxicologists, and other public health personnel, the lab will conduct a comprehensive investigation to identify all sources of contaminant and work with local officials to protect residents by swiftly acting to preventing further exposure. For example, when methyl parathion, a lethal pesticide, was illegally sprayed in thousands of homes during 1996 and 1997, the Environmental Health Lab created a new method to test for the presence of this dangerous substance and provided the laboratory support services and scientific expertise necessary to accurately prioritize medical treatment for exposed individuals and determine which homes should be evacuated.

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unclear whether Environmental Health Lab
has been funded.
w/ Chronic Environmental Disease
Prevention line at CDC - asthma,
cancer
env. health lab,
etc.
- in huge line
CDC thinks it's in there

Melany: 53894

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SB894 - Melan Nefesia

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Environmental studies have found that the "pond that never freezes" has PCBs and benzopyrene, both considered probable causes of cancer. The dirt in the area contains PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), arsenic and beryllium. Groundwater has high levels of cadmium, chromium and lead.

Men who worked in the factories tell tales of dangerous chemicals spilling onto the ground by accident or design.

"It wasn't like it is today," says Paul Wood, who scavenged for precious metals as he buried waste from the Remington plant 50 years ago. "We weren't that cautious."

At a site along Seeley Creek, just south of where the school sits, Wood says he would "bury 30-gallon drums, and six weeks later we'd dig down to bury something else, and the stuff in the drums would have eaten through the heavy metal. The barrel was gone."



Stephanie Schrock: Died of sarcoma at age 15.

Buchanan likely to be on top when smoke clears

Nomination all but sealed as Reform's split widens

By Tom Squitieri
USA TODAY

LONG BEACH, Calif. — After another raucous day on the eve of the Reform Party convention, Pat Buchanan appears to have clinched the badly divided party's presidential nomination.

Buchanan's supporters on the party's credentials committee certified 54 challenged delegates in his favor Wednesday, giving him 410 delegates pledged to his candidacy. That is more than the two-thirds needed under party rules to win the Reform nomination on the convention floor.

It also gives Buchanan enough delegates to overturn the results of the party's nationwide primary, which ended Wednesday, should he lose that vote to rival John Hagelin. Results of the vote are to be announced Friday.

Buchanan arrived here to cheering supporters Wednesday afternoon. "I think you'll see, just by yourselves, taking a look at the energy and fire and the numbers here, this nomination belongs to us," he said outside his hotel.

Buchanan left the Republican Party last fall to seek the Reform nomination. Recent polls put him in the low single digits in the presidential race.

"What we have here in Long Beach is because of what you have been doing for 10 months," Buchanan told his supporters. "We have built this party where it did not exist. We are on our way."

Buchanan still faces a deeply split party that seems unable, or unwilling, to bind its wounds as its three-day nomination convention opens today.

A faction headed by party secretary Jim Mangia and Russ Verney, an associate of party founder Ross Perot, led a walkout from the national committee Tuesday. They said they will hold their own convention today and nominate Hagelin. After that, they will ask the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to recognize their faction as the legitimate Reform Party and release to them the \$12.6 million in federal money the party is to get for the fall campaign.

"Pat Buchanan has subverted, corrupted and perverted the process," Mangia said. "Make no mistake about it, the Reform Party is united against Pat Buchanan."

Verney said his group will continue "a legal process" against Buchanan but will wait to file any court action until after the FEC decides which group is the real Reform Party.

He also said his faction will chal-



By Stephan Savola, AP

Uproar: Tony Hernandez, a Florida Reform Party official, shouts at national party Chairman Gerald Moan in a hallway Wednesday at the Long Beach, Calif., Convention Center. At right is Jim Mangia, party secretary.

lenge Buchanan's ballot status on the Reform Party line in states where the local chairman opposes the conservative commentator.

For the second day, both sides sparred and shoved, forcing security guards to intervene. Wednes-

day's fighting started after the Mangia-Verney faction tried to occupy the room where the credentials committee was meeting. Both sides spilled into the hallway and exchanged shouts of "democracy," "reform" and "traitor."

More fireworks are expected today and Friday. Members of the Mangia-Verney faction said they plan to seize the convention hall before today's proceedings begin.

Gerald Moan, the national party chairman, brushed aside the threat.

"I was the one who signed the check to rent the hall," he said. "It was Mangia and Verney who promised a bloodbath in Long Beach. We're the ones who control the party by legitimate means."

Bay Buchanan, the candidate's sister and campaign manager, said any challenges against the 410 Buchanan delegates "will be frivolous."

Buchanan has long had a majority of the delegates. But he needed help from the credentials committee to seat contested delegates elected in states where Buchanan held organizational meetings outside the state Reform Party structure because of opposition from local Reform officials.

Hagelin has about 30 delegates, committed to either him or his allies. About 500 of the possible 596 delegates are expected to attend the convention.

The two-thirds threshold is also important in any future court battles over the nomination. Both the pro-Buchanan and anti-Buchanan sides agree that two-thirds of the delegates can select a nominee from the floor.

The credentials committee meeting Wednesday was the second in a two-step process Buchanan's campaign used to try to overcome opposition to his candidacy.

On Tuesday, his supporters prevailed in the 164-member national committee, which, among other things, named Ohio Chairman Frank Reed, a Buchanan supporter, to head the credentials committee.

7/2/00

Susan Thynes
Susan Ward

Breast Cancer

2 big studies funded 5 years ^{to look at environmental effects}

① ~~the~~ LI study

first results released in Nov Fall

Dr. Mailee Gorman / they don't know findings

appears long

② NE/midatlantic BC study

report ready to go to Congress

did measurements for DDT ^{instead} of controls

had 5 ~~different~~ sites

* didn't find any correlation of DDT levels

DDT was banned ~ 1971

dead as an issue

some also looked at PCB -

nothing came out

started finding gene environment interactions

some

genes → & also don't metabolize

alcohol quickly enough; ^{heavy drinking is common}

- failure to breast feed - associated in one site

report is in clearance

E's Health office is making comments ^{want from to add con analysis}

lifestyle

choices - well-documented link b/w drinking + b.c.

3 drinks a day - double risk

stronger than most risk factors we know

- est. doesn't want to take a liquor

EMF's - data is mixed or weak

will be out of a month

one of the studies was in authorizing (can
pressure to get L.I. study out

→ if only looked at DDT - didn't look
at other chemicals
Not enough to do appropriate analysis of sample

- do more environmental determinations
may have already used up blood ^{with} studies

CDC ^{natl.} center for environmental health

'feasibility of studying 100,000 kids pre-natal
for long period (at least through teenage years)
to look at exposure to chemicals

- we can now measure exposure to chemicals →
APD, autoimmune disorders, cancers

we need to know - environmental impact on our health
Kids get sick first -
Some leukemia clusters in L.I.

needs to be an infrastructure - CDC

to be able to respond to cluster reports
w/ standardized protocols & battery of tests - ^{glc sample history}

② - Breast Cancer

up until now - been up to states - they don't have enough \$.

CDC Natl. Center for Environmental Health

top chemical co's - \$ to monitor
use superfund \$ & do ^{cluster} investigations

EPA usually not consulted in cluster investigations
* NE study said EPA, CDC & NCI had to sit together

generally - 2 parallel agencies
EPA - expert on environmental toxins

NCI didn't have enough \$ for appropriate
chemical analysis determinations

Mass. study - dry cleaning & pesticides for larvae

people will criticize NE study
- didn't look at everything

* Barbara Ballaban - NY activist

sits on Advisory Comtee for NE study

is she happy w/ the study? does she know if
it has found something?

headline in NE study will be - "it's your genes"
doesn't explain clusters

response - we need to do more - put more \$ in

epidemiological research should be at CDC
Not stingy w/ bucks

11 die when two small planes collide over N.J.

None on ground hurt by debris

By Frank Kummer
and Kathy Hennessy
Cherry Hill Courier-Post

BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP, N.J. — Eleven people were killed when two small planes collided Wednesday morning over this South Jersey community, littering the neighborhood with wreckage that set one house ablaze.

"I looked up about 200 feet in the air and saw a plane in flames," said Pat Meade, who was taking his son to the bus stop for summer school.

"It didn't make a sound. The whole thing took about five seconds," he said.

The collision happened shortly before 8 a.m. No one on the ground was injured.

However, one of the planes, a twin-engine Piper Navajo Chieftain carrying two pilots and seven passengers, plunged into the garage of a two-story home, causing a fire that forced a family to flee.

The tail section of the other plane, a twin-engine Piper Seminole carrying two people on a training flight, landed in a soybean field in the neighboring town of Florence.

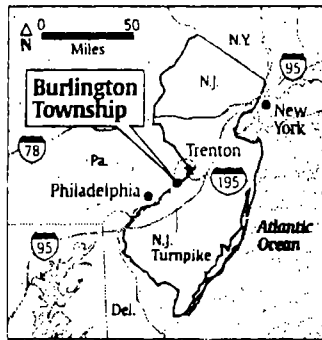
Wings, engine parts and other debris were spread over two miles in this residential neighborhood south of Trenton.

Residents reported finding body parts in their yards, and bodies still strapped in seats landed on a soccer field.

Five bodies were found in and around the fuselage of the Navajo. Another body fell through the roof of a garage.

"We heard a loud rumble that shook the house to its foundation," said Edward Trzaskawka, 32, who was getting ready for work when the plane crashed into his garage.

"As we came down the steps we



By Genevieve Lynn, USA TODAY

saw orange flames everywhere," he said.

Trzaskawka, his wife, Cathy, and their dog escaped unharmed.

Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board headed to the scene, but officials could offer no explanation for the collision.

Although the sky was cloudy at the time of the crash, visibility was about 10 miles, according to the National Weather Service.

The twin-engine Navajo was carrying civilian engineers and other employees of the Naval Air Engineering Station in Lakehurst, N.J.

The plane was a civilian aircraft under Navy contract to provide daily service from Lakehurst to Trenton and then to the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland, 60 miles southeast of Washington.

The other plane was carrying a flight instructor and his student. They had left Northeast Philadelphia Airport and were heading for South Jersey Regional Airport in Lumberton.

The instructor was identified as Craig Robinson, 28. The student, a licensed pilot who was not identified Wednesday, was trying for his commercial license.

The pilots operating the shuttle flight were identified as Daniel Groff and Joseph Mari, both employees of Patuxent Airways of California, Md.

Contributing: Wire services

Two killers, one mentally retarded, executed in Texas

Lethal injections about 1 hour apart

By Michael Graczyk
The Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — Two convicted killers, including a prisoner described by death penalty opponents as mentally retarded, were executed Wednesday in the nation's busiest death chamber.

Brian Roberson, 36, condemned for the stabbing deaths in 1986 of a couple who lived across from him in Dallas, died after receiving an injection about an hour before the second execution. Roberson, smiling from the execution chamber, lashed out at family members and police officers who testified against him at his trial. "You ain't got what you want," he said.

The second inmate, Oliver Cruz, 33, was sentenced to death for the abduction, rape and fatal stabbing of a 24-year-old woman in 1988. She had been stationed at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio.

Cruz's IQ tested as low as 63, which led death penalty opponents to argue that he should not be executed. The U.S. Supreme Court, which has allowed other mentally ill or retarded inmates to be executed, voted 6-3 Wednesday to allow the execution. The court also rejected an appeal by Roberson.

The injections were the first multiple executions in Texas since 1997. The execution dates were set

by separate local judges, so the timing is a coincidence.

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, in 18-0 votes this week, refused to recommend to Gov. George W. Bush that he halt the executions, the 27th and 28th in Texas this year. That left the Republican presidential nominee the option of granting the inmates one-time, 30-day reprieves to pursue further appeals.

Cruz and an accomplice abducted a Kelly Air Base linguist, Kelly Donovan. Cruz raped



Oliver Cruz: IQ tested as low as 63.

her and stabbed her to death. He blamed the attack on his drug use, which he said began at age 13. He said he and his accomplice, who testified against him in exchange for a 65-year prison term, had taken LSD and drank "a couple of bottles of liquor."

Cruz's attorney, Jeff Pokorak, argued that the jury was not given enough information about his client's mental impairment. An IQ under 70 is considered at least mildly retarded, but prosecutors noted that Cruz scored 83 when he entered prison in 1989.

Some of the 25 states that allow the execution of retarded killers are considering prohibiting the practice. The Texas Legislature, which rejected a bill last session that would have outlawed the execution of someone whose IQ is below 65, will revisit the issue in 2001.

In the other case, Roberson stabbed James Boots, 79, and his wife, Lillian, 75, while robbing their home. Roberson said he was "juiced up" on PCP and liquor.

and it was just white gunk. We knew the stuff in those barrels was dangerous."

Wood also has cancer.

"This was the bad area here where all of the hazardous stuff was used. From here all the way down to the end of the school," says Bill Fuller, standing on the school property and looking across the fence into the old Remington Rand plant, where he worked.

"I can't believe anybody would build a school here."

Nearly impossible to prove

In retrospect, some of the people who built the school agree.

"I wish I could undo it," says Paul Zaccarine, 71, the school superintendent who oversaw the school's construction in the late 1970s. Now retired and living in Illinois, he is watching in horror as student after student gets cancer.

"It's really frightening," he says. "That site was the least desirable as far as I was concerned, but because the Remington Rand people had given us the land, the board voted to go ahead and take it. We got it for a dollar or something."

He says the long-term effects of the industrial waste were never considered. So far, nobody has found any evidence that an environmental study was done before school construction began in 1977.

"We just didn't know enough about all of that to have it be a concern," Zaccarine says. "Every way we looked at it, we just felt it was an opportunity to get a brand-new school with a lot of the facilities we needed. If we had any indication that there was any contamination, we certainly would not have gone ahead with it."

Local residents understand the decision. The town was recovering from the massive flood of 1972; the chance for a new school was too good to pass up.

"There were all kinds of grant money that came into this community with that school," says Art Kieffer, Chemung County historian. "But all of the money that benefits the community doesn't count for one kid who contracts something."

Nobody knows whether the cancer cases are connected to the school; health officials say they may never know. It's nearly impossible to trace the cause of a cancer precisely.

Cancer cells form in the human body regularly. But most bodies attack, kill and eliminate the unwanted cells silently and swiftly.

The reasons that some bodies become unwilling hosts to cancer are not fully understood, but the primary factors appear to be poor diet, smoking and a genetic predisposition. Toxic exposure is rarely blamed for cancer, in part because it is nearly impossible to prove beyond a scientific doubt.

"Even though there is a potential exposure route, we still might not be able to make the connection that somebody was exposed," says Mary Jane Peachy, regional hazardous waste remediation engineer for New York's Department of Environmental Conservation. She is investigating the Southside High School site, along with the state health department.

Some experts believe that even trying to link toxic exposure to a cluster of cancer cases is a waste of public money — money that would be better spent on education and early screening.

"You have a greater return on your investment by preventing rather than trying to find out what caused it," says Elmira's Tom Kump, the county's environmental safety chief. "We can't tell you what caused it. That's the reality."

Then he shifts gears and speaks from his second role in the controversy: president of the school board. "If I go by gut alone, the perception is we have something here," Kump says, adding that the district has a plan, if needed, to close Southside and teach all of the students in shifts at the other high school, on the north side of town.

"I can understand wanting to make a decision based on emotions, but you have to look at the science."

If the school is found to be safe, Kump vows to keep investigating the area to determine whether there is a larger problem behind the rising cancer rates.

Wondering why

David Drew, who just lost his daughter, Stephanie Schrock, says the focus should be inside individual homes. He wonders whether the 1972 flood brought toxins that had been dumped around the south side out of the ground and into basements and yards.

"It could have stirred things up and maybe left things in the cellars of these homes," he says. "You go down there and you can still see the silt left from the high water levels. There could be something, but I wouldn't say it's the high school."

Like others who have been hit by cancer here, he is not looking to place blame. "Life goes on for the rest of us," Drew says. "Whether it's at the school or something in the atmosphere, I don't really know if they'll ever find the answer."

He has his family screened regularly for cancer now.

As for students, most are ready to go back to class.

"I just don't drink the water," says Chris Lewis, 18, sitting outside the school on a summer afternoon, smoking a cigarette with his friends. "I don't travel to the back of the school (where oxygen is being pumped into wells to rid the groundwater of old petroleum), and I don't go near that pond."

"That's just spooky."

2/2