FAMILY AND FRIENDS BURY PETER STARCOVICH, ONE OF THE FIRST TO DIE IN SMOG, WHILE THE MILLS OF DONORA, PA. SEND UP SMOKE IN THE BACKGROUND
October 1949-1951
- Asphalt Paving.
- Street Lights.
- Water service.
- Rostraver Township Fire Department.
YOU ARE ENTERING NOWHERE PENNA.
IN LOVING MEMORY
OF THE
1948 SMOG DISASTER VICTIMS

Ivan Ceh            Marcel Kraska
Barbara Chinchar    Andrew Odelga
Taylor Circle       Ida Orr
John Cunningham     Steve Faulchak
Clifford DeVore     John Poklemba
Bernardo Disanzi    Mary Pozik
Mike Dorincz        Thomas Short
Susan Gnora          Peter Stancovich
William Gardner     Perry Stevens
Milton E. Hall      Sawka Trubolis
Emma Hobbs          Alice Ward
Ignace Hollowiti    George Weisdock
Ruth Jones           John West
Jeannie Kirkwood

AND THE MANY OTHER LIVES THAT WERE AFFECTED BY
THIS DEVASTATING INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION WHICH BECAME
A TURNING POINT IN NATIONAL HISTORY VIA “CLEAN AIR”

PRESENTED BY THE SMOG COMMITTEE
10-26-2008
Thomas and Mary Short. Wedding Day 1915
The 1948 Donora Smog

Major federal clean air laws became a legacy of this environmental disaster that focused national attention on air pollution. In late October of 1948, a heavy fog blanketed this valley, and as the days passed, the fog became a thick, acrid smog that left about 20 people dead and thousands ill. Not until October 31 did the Donora Zinc Works shut down its furnaces—just hours before rain finally dispersed the smog.
Myths Of The Smog

THE LEGEND OF STANLEY SAWA’S FATHER

THE FOOTBALL GAME & PARADE

THE LONE FIREMAN

COFFINS ON ROUTE 837

CLOSING THE ZINC WORKS (Imperial Smelting Corporation)

“BLACK CLOUD OF DEATH”
The Donora smog took a toll of 19 lives
Imperial Smelting Process

1950

Imperial Smelting Co.
Avenmouth, England
“Blake Harper, City Surgeon”

#1

Gold Key Comics, 1952

TRUE MEDICAL CASES

DONORA’S DEADLY FOG

WHERE THE CITY OF DONORA RISES ABOVE THE MONONGAHELA RIVER IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, STACKS FROM STEEL AND ZINC-AND-SULPHURIC ACID PLANTS POURED SMOKE INTO THE ROLLING FOG IN LATE OCTOBER, 1948...
The local doctors were used to fog, but that night it seemed thicker than usual. To one doctor, on the way to his office, answering an emergency call...

The doctor wasn't surprised to find who the patient was! He was an asthmatic and fog regularly affected him. But this time his wheezing seemed more labored...

Quickly, the doctor prepared a shot of aminophyllin, an antispasmodic, which by opening the bronchia, let the gasping man breathe more easily...

Hardly had the first patient left, when the door opened and a second gasping man stumbled in...
As the doctor examined the fallen man, learning of his symptoms of nausea, vomiting and choking, the phone began ringing...

Each call was the same! More people were gasping for breath, as the thick, inky, deadly fog spilled across Donora's streets, even filtering through closed windows...

Soon, all of Donora's doctors were out on emergency call! And in each case, it was a wheezing, blue-faced, choking victim of the fog...

Again and again, the hypodermic needles jabbed into the suffocating victims' arms, as the harassed doctors raced from patient to patient...
The next day, the fog didn't postpone the annual Halloween parade! But even the reviewers were masked, desperately trying to block out the stifling fog...

And some costumes seemed grim prophecies of things to come...
That evening, the fire department received several calls for emergency oxygen.

Although, the fire chief knew every road in Donora. The fog was so thick and deceptive that he had to lead his car on foot.

Swiftly, the calls for the undertaker mounted... three... eight... twelve...

The community center was set up as an emergency aid station! Patients were brought in... but one was already dead...
When the fog finally lifted, twenty had died! As the mourners stood at the cemetery, one burning question was in all their minds—what made this fog a killer?

The United States Public Health Service conducted a detailed scientific investigation. Its conclusion—no single substance was the killer! The fog, fumes, soot and fly ash had all combined in a freakish lethal mixture that would have claimed more victims, but for Donora's dedicated doctors!
DEMOLISHING THE ZINC WORKS
1958-59
Except for a few passersby, McKean Ave., this town's main street, appears virtually deserted in mid-morning. U.S. Steel Corp., the community's biggest employer, announced last week it will close operations here. Some believe Donora will wither; others feel it will survive and even grow.
DONORA, Pa., April 13--It fouled death--Mayor Albert Belsandro of Donora, Pa., stands in front of the now closed zinc and steel mill that helped polluted the air in 1948 when twenty persons died, 5,910 were sickened, including 1,440 who were severely ill. (AI HERSHBERGER) 1970
Other Smog Disasters

1930: Meuse Valley, Belgium. 60 Deaths

Nov. 28 - Dec. 1, 1939: St. Louis, Mo. “Black Tuesday” No Reported Deaths


“Black Tuesday”
St. Louis, Mo.
Nov. 28 - Dec. 1, 1939
Results of the Smog Disaster

Government Oversight Agencies:

- Department of Environmental Protection
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Clean Air and Water Acts
- Emergency Management Services
- Federal Emergency Management Administration
1936: The Webster Society for Better Living. “Fresh Air and Green Grass”

Recognition of the dangers of unchecked industrial pollution.

Earth Day, Greenpeace, WWF, NRDC, WNO, IPCC

Renewable Energy, Alternative Energy

Recycle, Conservation, Sustainability.
Challenges for Clean Air and Water

- Anti-Intellectual/Science Movement.
- Forgetting the lessons of history.
- Attaching a political and economic bias to clean air and water.
- Attempts to discredit environmental research and turn-back legislation.
- Marcellus Shale. Hydro-fracturing.
“SMOG” RESOURCES

donorahistoricalsociety.org

donorahistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Donora Digital Collection and Veterans Oral History Project at California University of Pennsylvania

Visit us at the “Smog Museum” 595 McKean Ave. Donora, Pa.