

Don't Drink the Water...Don't Touch It

January 30, 2019

Clarifications

Before discussing the central points of this article, I wish to clarify some of my views about Donald Trump. As stated before, I believe him to be an insecure and compulsive narcissist; one who has little regard for the truth; a person I do not wish to represent my nation.

That said, I agree with his informing NATO they must begin paying their share; that many of America's trade agreements are one-sided; that our immigration practices place our nation at an eventual risk of balkanization...was well as not admitting more qualified migrants through the door. His withdrawal from climate accord treaties is misplaced. You cannot influence these events if you are not a participant.

Some of his ideas are well-founded. but they are misstated. I draw the line on some of his assertions and practices. One is America's environment, with the focus of this article on a few examples.

The Potomac River

In 1966, upon returning from a 33-month stint in the Far East, I extended my U.S. Navy commission to serve two more years in Washington, DC. I intended to pursue a career in international law. I never became a lawyer and discovered what I considered (and still consider) to be the captivating world of computer networks. I stayed with this trade until 2001. At that time, I closed-down my professional endeavors and sailed off into retirement sunset.

It was in 1966 that I went for a swim in the Potomac River. A newly acquired friend owned a sailboat and took me for a cruise from DC south toward George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. (See the red circle on the right side of Figure 1.)¹

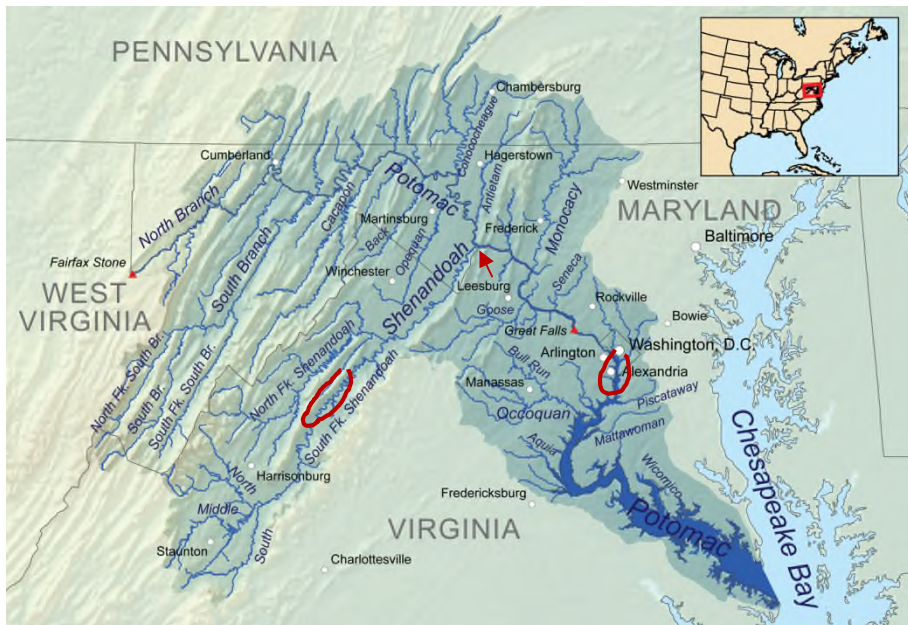


Figure 1. Water Ways.

¹ Thanks to Google for this map.

It was a hot, humid summer day. I suggested to my friend that I would like to take a swim. "Go ahead," he said, "I'll toss out a line and tow you, if you like." Without hesitation, I took-off my trousers. Using my white boxer shorts for swim trunks I plunged into this famous river, grabbed hold of the tow line, and began a never-to-be-forgotten glide down the Potomac.

What luxury! Back from the Vietnam War, I was now cruising in safe cool waters. I watched the Jefferson Memorial and shortly, the historic city of Alexandria pass before me.

Mount Vernon was over 17 miles from the Capital, so we turned around under the Wilson Bridge and headed north to my friend's boat slip. On the return sailing, I hauled myself out of the water onto the boat's deck. I glanced down at my formerly white trunks, which were now gray in color. No semblance of white could be seen on any part of the trunks.

My body resembled an ambulatory oil slick. My hair could not be combed. It had too much---for lack of a better word---goo in it. But what was the goo? Oil? Grease? Gasoline?

Who could know? My friend then casually mentioned that swimming was discouraged in this part of the river. (Friend?) I learned later that signs were posted along the river banks warning against eating any fish that were caught. I assumed the fish authorities did not think it necessary to post signs on a limit to the number of fish that could be caught in one day.

Luckily, we were not fishing. But later that night, I awoke from vomiting. I remained ill for several days. I do not know if my sickness was the result of my emersion in the Potomac. I will close-off this part of the story to tell you no amount of bleach could restore my shorts to their former white state. Later, I discovered that bleach itself contained some of the chemicals that were part of DuPont's magic elixir.

That experience disturbed me. I did not dwell on it night and day, but it was the first time I became aware of the pervasiveness of pollution that *might* exist throughout the country. I italicize *might* because my one-time encounter did not prove all of America's rivers were as contaminated as the Potomac River. Moreover, during my teens, I worked in oil fields in New Mexico. The grass and ground on these fields had been devastated with oil spills and discarded leaking crude oil tanks.

I was not looking at this aspect of America through rose-colored glasses. I went on with life, but kept my swimming to chlorinated pools and the nearby wondrous Chesapeake Bay, also shown in Figure 1.

The Shenandoah River

As a canoe enthusiast, I often paddled in the south fork of the Shenandoah River. The part I navigated is shown with the red circle to the left in Figure 1. Again, what a luxury I experienced. I could leave my apartment in Arlington, Virginia, drive about 90 minutes to a canoe rental shop located on the banks of the south fork. There, a shop bus would drive me, with the rented canoe in a trailer, several miles southwest. The shop's employees would unload the boat, place it in the water, hand me two paddles (in case I lost one), and a life jacket.

Informing me they would greet me on my arrival at their shop, they actually assisted in my stepping into the boat (a mild insult to a canoer), then shoved me off into a *down-stream current*. Down-stream. I hardly needed the paddles other than to aid in my meandering back and forth through the pristine water.

Having the Potomac River experience in mind, I asked the canoe shop personnel about the quality of the water in the river. Their response (paraphrased after all these years):

“The water here is clean enough. Up-stream it’s even cleaner. If you want [showing me a map], we can drop you off farther upstream. The water there is crystal clear. You won’t need that canteen [which I had brought along]. Up there, you can drink from the river’s waters.”

My kind of river! I asked about the water quality farther down-stream toward DC, past their shop. Their reply was something to the effect of, “You would need to keep your canteen handy, but your rental stops here. Don’t go any farther downstream. We’ll have to charge you extra to haul you back.”

My excursion could have lasted all day or a couple hours, depending on how often I stopped to explore the land around the river, as well as the fish (and turtles, my favorite reptile). After all, I was paying an hourly rental fee. My time was the canoe shop’s money.

They were correct in their opinion of the water farther upstream. Up there, as I cupped my hands into the stream and brought the liquid to my mouth, I thought of the old western song made famous by the Sons of the Pioneers. I still recall most of the lyrics and its haunting melody, which begin with:

All day I've faced the barren waste
without the taste of water, cool water.
Old Dan and I with throats burned dry
and souls that cry for water, cool, clear water.

Of course, I had not faced any barren wastes. I not did know a Dan, nor was I particularly thirsty. Nonetheless, the song came back to me as I savored this cool, clear water. It almost tasted sweet. My imagination, of course, but I still had the image of my in-taking that noxious semi-liquid from the Potomac River.

The south fork water level was lower than usual. It had been a dry summer. But with a few exceptions, the canoe floated over the river-smoothed rocks without my intervention.

I was paddling in the only boat within visible range. The south fork is a favored place for boaters and tubers. But for this day, the river and I were sole companions. The river banks showed no evidence of human occupation. While floating down the river, my paddle reposed in an idle state in the boat. So did much of my mind.

After a while of chilling-out, I noticed the scenery began to change. There were fewer trees along the river banks. Houses had sprouted up to replace plant life. So had cattle, with no fence to prevent them from using the south fork for their drinking water and a place for their urinary and excrement deposits. The animals were confined by a three-sided fence. A fourth side adjacent to the river might have done some good, but their deposits would eventually flow downhill into the river.

I counted about twenty cows confined to an acre or so of land. I was familiar enough with ranching to know that livestock needed more grazing and watering space than was available to these animals in that small amount of legroom. I paddled away wishing whoever owned those cattle had to live in that pasture.

The water no longer had the clearness it had displayed upstream. On my final few strokes to the canoe shop, I stopped malingering along the banks. I resorted to my canteen for water and paddled to get away from what can only be characterized as a pasture of cattle shit. As I paddled by this part of south fork, I thought of those poor, miserable animals, and less directly, those humans swimming downstream, unaware they were taking in polluted water.

This altered geography was not continuous during this final part of the excursion. Later, I asked the people at the canoe shop about the here-and-there topography of pollution. They replied that it depended on who owned the land next to the river. Upstream, they said the government controlled the land adjacent to the river.

Confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers



As illustrated with the red arrow in Figure 1, the Shenandoah River is a tributary that flows into the Potomac, which feeds into the Chesapeake Bay. Figure 2 shows where the two rivers join at the famous town of Harper's Ferry.

Small wonder I became ill from my Potomac River adventure. I had likely ingested goo from God only knows how many germs from the south fork and many other streams .

Figure 2. The confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers.

For many years, I continued to canoe on the south fork, but I confined my paddling upstream, again shown in the red circle toward the left and bottom of Figure 1. I still delighted, as the Sons of the Pioneers so beautifully put it, in cool, clear water. But even in those upstream waters, I stopped cupping my hands to my mouth with river water. Modern man's practices had domesticated my drinking habits. I drank water from my canteen; chemically enhanced water made safe by government agencies.

Besides, just an hour or so away from my home in Arlington, Virginia, was the Chesapeake Bay, a haven for water-loving humans. Motor boaters, sailors, fishermen, crabbers, even swimmers could enjoy their times on this huge body of water.

In case you are looking at the map in Figure 1, reading between the lines, or ahead of the lines, guess where the Potomac River's waters flow into?

Enter the EPA

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created in 1970 during the Nixon administration. One of its mandates was to clean up the so-called toxic stew, one that I experienced on the Potomac River and later on the Shenandoah River.

Nixon was a staunch conservative. In the Trumpian world of today, Nixon's EPA act would be considered conspiratorial. Yet Nixon recognized the havoc being wrought on America's ecology, and the long-term consequences of these self-imposed, self-destructive practices. He declared:

Through our years of past carelessness, we incurred a debt to nature, and now that debt is being called.²

The EPA set itself up to restore the Potomac Rivers of America; to clean up the oil-laden soils of petroleum drilling locations; to provide money for the restoration of super fund sites, and many other endeavors. If nothing else, to provide an America in which a citizen would not become ill and vomit from swimming in America's most famous river.

² Unless noted otherwise, the quotes and statistics regarding the EPA are sourced from "Redefining the EPA," *This Week*, January 18, 2019, 11.

As an update, today, the federal government declares that swimming and water skiing in the Potomac River is now safe, but recommends fishermen/women not to consume certain kinds of fish (eel, carp, and striped bass) in these rivers as they are “contaminated by chemicals like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs),” which over time can increase one’s risk of cancer.³

In 2006, I took a long walk around one of the Potomac River islands next to the mainland (East Potomac Park). Fishermen were fishing, and having good luck with Catfish and White Perch. People were swimming and water skiing.

This turnabout happened largely because of the EPA and White House support for EPA’s actions. Granted, the EPA, like any White House agency, is riddled with excessive bureaucracy and imposes substantial overhead on doing business. But they also provide valuable services.

Nonetheless, perhaps you can understand why I began this article about my swimming adventure in the Potomac River. If it were not for the EPA, America’s lands and waters would be much worse off than they are now.

For any doubters of my last statement, I ask you to visit a superfund site. Let the scene sink in for what we Americans are doing to our country, and what governmental agencies, such as the EPA are doing to make us safer.

I have visited the superfund site called the Berkeley Pit, located just outside of Butte, Montana. It is a huge hole 900 feet deep and a mile across, parts of which are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The Berkeley Pit.

The water contains so many poisonous substances that birds flying over or around it die from the concentration of lethal compositions in the surrounding air and land. Their livers and kidneys are bloated, and many have eroded esophaguses. The current custodian of the pit denies that the toxic water caused the death of the birds, instead blaming their deaths on their diet. Their diet consists of grain and green vegetation. How dangerous might this food be? Perhaps it is grown in the surrounding area and polluted as well.

The owners of the Pit declare it is safe and environmentally sound. If so, I ask the CEO of the owner of this site (Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) to take a fun swim in the pit’s water. I also ask the reader to remember the comments from the owners of this site when we examine the behavior of DuPont, the maker of Teflon. This part of the article will curl your hair...assuming it is not matted from your current swim in one of America’s rivers or lakes.

³<https://www.google.com/search?q=fishing+in+the+potomac+river+regulations&oq=fishing+in+the+poto ma&aqs=chrome.3.0j69i57j0l4.20396j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

It is accurate to claim the EPA is attempting to make us safer, but from whom? As expanded next in this article, safer from the companies to whom we have given our trust? Yes, companies who have essentially killed-off citizens for the purpose of making money and protecting their jobs and shareholders.

“The Devil We Know”

Last week, I watched a Netflix documentary titled, “The Devil We Know.” It is also available from other streaming sites as well as Amazon. As I write this paragraph, I am into my third viewing of this film. I am still in a state of near disbelief. Yet, I am accompanied by antagonism toward DuPont and other companies that embrace similar corporate practices of capitalistic depravity. DuPont’s Teflon products were created from toxic chemicals, which have been linked (for decades) to birth deformities and cancer.⁴ (DuPont has settled out-of-court with several individuals.)

I will provide a brief summary of the film, but I urge you to watch it yourself. (Additional information can be found at the website: thediavilweknow.com.)

In 1945, DuPont built a plant in Parkersburg, West Virginia, to make Teflon products. By 1948, it was producing over 900 tons of the substance in Parkersburg. It was used for many applications, including the Manhattan Project (to seal valves holding uranium hexafluoride at the uranium enrichment plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee).⁵

In 1954, a wife of a French engineer suggested her husband apply the material he had been using on fishing gear to their cooking pans. This led to the birth of non-sticking pans and the relief from the drudgery of cleaning the debris left in skillets and pots.

I speak personally about the effect Teflon had on my early life. As the younger child of six boys, I was often given the nightly task of cleaning the residue from skillets, pots, and pans that mom had created during the family’s dinner. Sometimes, these metal heavy-weights accumulated in the sink during the day to await the children’s after-supper labors. My mother was a fastidious person, but tending to six rather obstreperous boys took a lot of her time. That sink of cast iron steel, usually overflowing by the evening, was the bane of my young life.

Nonetheless, the “Happy Pan,” as it was later named by advertisers, made my life and the lives of millions of others indeed happier.

The Parkersburg Plant. During this time, the company purchased some nearby land in West Virginia from an unsuspecting farmer. The land was used for depositing what DuPont characterized as non-hazardous waste. Not too long after the plant began its operations, the farmer noticed streams of water had begun to flow from the plant through his property into adjoining tributaries, which flowed into the Ohio River. He was puzzled because there had been no rain for several days. He was also puzzled because 151 of his animals soon thereafter took sick and died. Not one or two passed away. One hundred fifty one cows and bulls died within a year of the farmer’s signing the DuPont contract.

Fish were not immune. They also succumbed to the poisonous streams.

⁴ Be aware that this section of this article accepts the veracity of this film and the accuracy of the people who were interviewed, including low-level DuPont workers. I am certain DuPont would discount my statements, but they refused to participate in the Netflix film, which would have given them an opportunity to state their side of the issue.

⁵ Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 494.

Documentation substantiates that DuPont managers characterized the farmer from whom they purchased land for waste as a “con man.” He settled in 2001 for an undisclosed sum.

Many of the DuPont low-level employees worked with the Teflon chemicals hand-to-hand. Many of their children developed cancer, levels that were well above the average number in a typical American community. Many of them were born with deformities; some with only one nostril; some with disfigured eyes.

DuPont became aware of these goings-on. The film documents the existence of internal documents from DuPont in which its scientists discuss the hazards of some of the chemicals that went into the making of Teflon.

Don’t use the Local Blood Bank. The DuPont scientists (and 3M personnel, who were partners with DuPont) attempted to find a test group whom they could be confident would have none of the Teflon chemicals in their blood. (The substance cited in studies is called C-8.) They needed to compare the DuPont employees’ blood to the blood of someone who they knew was free of C-8.

They could not find any of what they characterized as “clean blood.” They searched throughout many parts of the world. The film does not explain to what extent this search was conducted, but it does explain that a clean set of samples was found at an archival bank containing blood from Korean War soldiers, a time before Teflon had been invented.

These tests revealed there was indeed a danger, but as a senior officer explained to the depositions panel, the risk was not to the mothers of soon-to-be-born babies. As seen in Figure 4, he declared the risk was to the mother’s fetus. So, what did the company do? It sent pregnant mothers home, but kept on making hundreds of products derived from C-8: popcorn bags, Safeguard, paint products, glass lens, car lubricants, bicycle chain oil; a nearly endless list.

Consumer goods and industrial wastes, laden with C-8, all contributing to an incomprehensible morass of what seems to this writer to be a problem of such magnitude that it is insolvable, a contention addressed shortly.



What money Teflon frying pans makes (and made) for the company! Keep on cooking! Keep on baking! Those muffins will just fall out of their Teflon pans. No scraping. Little washing. A cook’s dream come true. For my youth, a dishwasher’s dream come true.

In the meantime, it became obvious, especially to the farmer who had lost his livestock and livelihood that something about Teflon was not right.

Figure 4. Don’t worry about yourselves, mommas, worry about your babies.

In the meantime, the Teflon low-level workers kept handling the substance. The film discusses one employee who says she poured Teflon overflow into the nearby streams, some leading to rivers.

From watching the film, I am convinced that many mid- to high-level managers in the company were aware of the health danger of the product. Again, I hope you watch the film to draw your own conclusions.

It is one thing to inadvertently create a harmful consumer product that is thought to be harmless to humans. The Law of Unintended Consequences touches all humans, however well-meaning we may be. But it is quite another thing to come to know the product's contents are dangerous yet continue to manufacture and sell it, and for people to continue to defend its use, because they have a financial stake in the game.

As recounted in this film, it is made even more egregious by DuPont's personnel not only covering up DuPont's sins but even creating a subsidiary company that was designed to bear the brunt of increasing awareness of these sins and impending lawsuits. Figure 5 is a screen shot of the Netflix film showing the elation of this off-shoot company, during the celebration of its creation.



Figure 5. Bring on some more cattle!

An Enemy of the People

In 1882, the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen wrote the play titled, "An Enemy of the People." Its plot centers on the town doctor discovering the town's spas, and a major source of income for the community, were contaminated with a dangerous bacteria.

The physician is castigated and threatened by most of the town's citizens for his intention to make this danger known to the public. He is branded as an enemy of the people, as they resort to violence to try to coerce him to cover-up his findings.

I encountered a similar situation in a small community where my wife, Holly, and I lived in the rural countryside of the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. We had formed an association to own our roads and our water supply. During the early 1990s, that part of the east coast suffered drought, which affected the water flow to homes located toward the bottom of the mountain on which the community was located.

Before long, our town meetings became contentious gatherings because the downhill residents began accusing those living toward the top of the mountain that they were somehow (no one could explain how) monopolizing the water supply and depriving others of the equal rights to the community water.

I recall one resident's outburst, "Take shorter showers!" He likely lived downhill.

The most disturbing aspect of this situation was a shouting attack from several residents directed toward one of the people at one of these gatherings. This resident had written a letter to the editor of *The Washington Post* about the community's water shortage. Politically speaking, perhaps this letter was not a good idea, but its contents were true.

The confrontation with the letter writer at this meeting was not a pretty scene. It reminded me of Ibsen's play. And both incidences remind me of a scene in the Netflix film.

The EPA Cover-up?

The film has a scene in which one of the local citizens in the Parkersburg area gains the attention of his cattle die-off to government authorities. He calls the EPA. The agency gives the man a reference, someone who has been tracking the events. Publicity begins to mount, eventually leading to successful lawsuits against DuPont. Later, when the identity of those who had begun to criticize DuPont, they were publically disparaged by local citizens, who stated their assertions about dead animals were incorrect and mean-spirited.

The film briefly explains that White House administrations used the revolving door policy to replace EPA officials who were at least somewhat apolitical with people sympathetic to the DuPonts of the world. Sound familiar? It is what Trump is doing to the EPA today.

I snapped some photos from the TV screen that depicted this part of the program as seen in Figure 6.

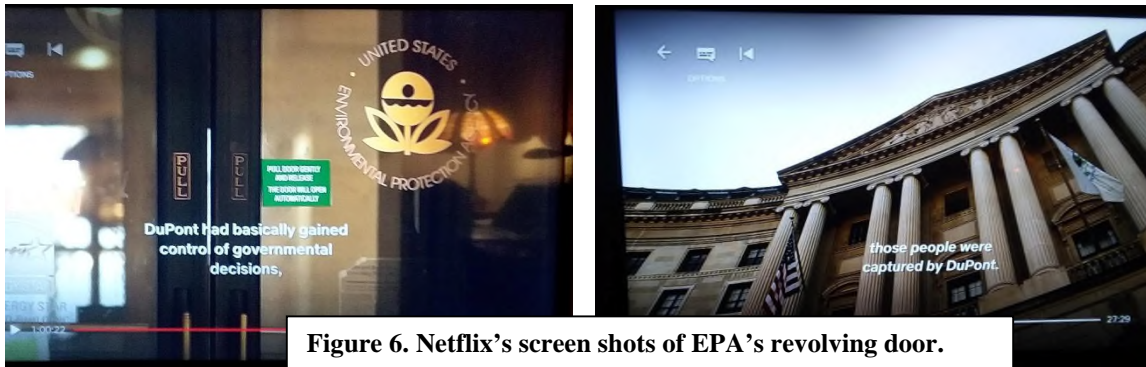


Figure 6. Netflix's screen shots of EPA's revolving door.

Perhaps the most revolting part of the film is the behavior of the high-level DuPont employees during their depositions. Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of behavior. After all, their jobs were at stake, not to mention possible time in jail, loss of reputation and wealth.

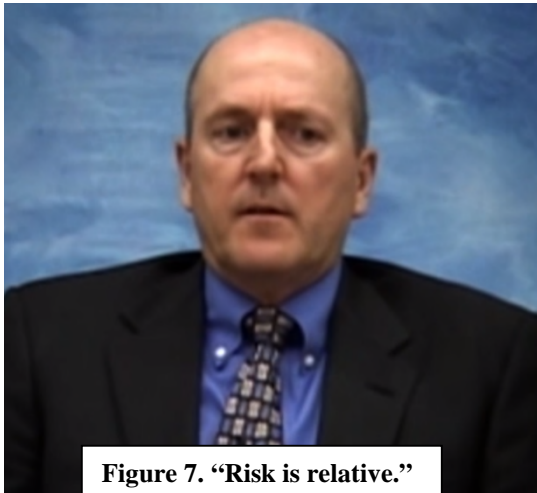


Figure 7. "Risk is relative."

With the exception of the screen and audio capture in Figure 7, I leave this part of my article for you to watch. It is too revolting for this amateur journalist to try to render. It reminds me of Ibsen's play and my experience with the water shortage in our hillside home in Virginia.

The screen shot is of a high level representative of DuPont. He is being asked who in the company makes the decision "as to whether or not there is a risk that needs to be disclosed to the community?"

His answer: "...risk is relative." I become agitated when I listened to this man's obfuscation: Evade the question as cattle die and children (not just one child) are born resembling the child shown in Figure 8. The baby is named Bucky Bailey.



Figure 8. "Risk is relative..."to whom?

What is not clearly evident from Figure 8 is that this child, whose mother immersed herself in Teflon for many years, is missing a nostril and part of his nose; part of an ear, and distorted eyelids. His right eye is lower on his face than his left eye. I might add that as you watch

the film, you will come to know that he, his future wife, and his parents are some of the principal characters in the documentary and to this writer, some of the heroes to this story.

There are other heroes to this film: Bucky's parents; several attorneys who took on the case against DuPont and 3M, and especially the self-called ignorant farmer, Wilbur Tennant, whose dead cattle he refused to ignore. Netflix pays a tribute to Mr. Tennant as seen in the screen shot in Figure 9.

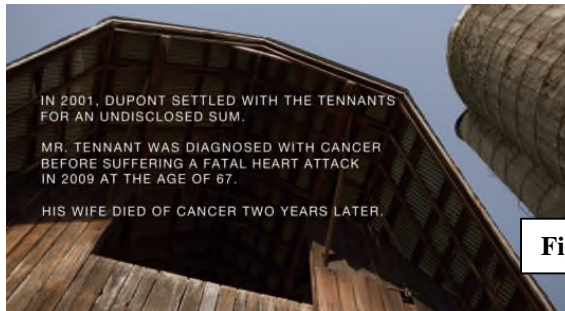


Figure 9. Tribute to Mr. Tennant.

The Butterfly Effect

A popular saying is that the fluttering of a butterfly's wings in North America will affect the waves of a hurricane in the Pacific. While fanciful, especially if the butterfly is the majestic Monarch, the idea is that all things on this earth are interconnected, that they have a systemic relationship.

I first swam in the Chesapeake Bay in 1966, the same year I swam in the Potomac River. As seen in Figure 1, many tributaries flow into this huge body of water. In turn, it flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

When I first began my modest exploration of the Bay, it was as fresh (and salty) as any body of water I had ever been in. It was also at this time that I learned the delicacies of Chesapeake Bay Crab and Flounder.

The gentle breakers on some of its shores made for lazy body surfing. The Bay somehow assimilated the saltiness of the sea with the sweet taste of a fresh water creek. It is impossible to describe, but once you've tasted this water, further explanations are unnecessary.

Because of my professional work with computer networks, I lost many opportunities to swim in the Chesapeake Bay. As often as I could, I would visit. Then one day---I recall it being toward the end of the 1990s---I read that chicken-waste runoff had created serious pollution problems in this body of water.

I read in disbelief: Fishermen were falling ill by merely touching certain types of fish. Nearby rivers that flowed into the Bay were populated with five-legged frogs.

From the DuPont plant in West Virginia toxic liquids poured forth onto the West Virginia landscape. With the aid of gravity, they made their way through the farmland. They crossed pristine pastures, ebbing downhill and finding their way into clear streams, which flowed into larger tributaries. Thus, poisoned water mingled with fresh water. The two became inseparably mixed together in the seas and oceans of planet earth. All seas. All oceans. An equal opportunity contaminator.

Netflix estimates that 99 percent of America's citizens are contaminated with Teflon-like toxic chemicals. How can one know? One body of water leads to another, and to another, and to yet another. And all Americans drink and eat from these sources. Increasingly, so do many people in the world.

Dismantling EPA: Throwing Out the Baby with the Bathwater

I wish the Netflix film had devoted more footage to the White House re-stocking the EPA with political cronies. If I have the time (and physical energy), I will attempt to pursue this subject. For now, according to *The Week* news journal (cited earlier, January 18, 2019, 11; in some instances, I quote directly from this article), the Trump administration has made the following declarations about or actual changes to the EPA:

- “During the 2016 campaign, Trump decried the EPA as a job-killing bureaucracy.”
- It hamstrung the American economy.
- He vowed to “get rid of it in most every form.”
- “Since his inauguration, Trump has stacked the EPA’s senior leadership with officials openly hostile to the agency’s original mission.
- His first EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, sued the EPA 14 times when he was Oklahoma’s attorney general.
- Thus far in Trump’s administration, the EPA has abolished 47 environmental regulations and is “in the process of rolling back 31 more, actions which a study by Harvard Law School could lead to as many as “80,000 additional deaths per decade, and cause respiratory illnesses for more than a million people.”
- “Pruitt killed a 2015 rule banning coal-fired electricity plants from dumping 1.4 billion pounds of toxic wastewater into rivers and streams, contaminating them with mercury, selenium, and arsenic.”
- “Under Trump, oil and gas companies no longer have to inform the EPA about their methane emissions

There are hundreds of others in process.

In closing this article, I offer one more example of Trump’s assaults on America’s natural resources---one in which I have posted previously on blog.UylessBlack.com.

Desecrating Your Land and Mine

In another essay, I wrote that Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke recommended to President Trump to “...vastly reduce the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, and seek congressional authorization to turn over the remaining landmarks to be co-managed with Native American Tribes.”⁶

This essay is available at blog.UylessBlack.com. Scroll down to 28. [The Environment](#) and click on [Bears Ears](#).

If enacted, this transfer would be the largest reversal of America’s practice of reserving land for the American public---a practice that began with the Antiquities Act.

This law was signed by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. It gives the President the authority to establish national monuments from existing federal lands. The idea behind the act was to protect the land because of its Native American heritage. It was also enacted to prevent damage to land that might be driven by commercial interests, such as mining, drilling, and grazing.

While in office, President Obama signed an executive order to protect the 1.35 million acres of Bears Ears.

⁶ “Interior Dept. to Trump: Downsize Utah Monument.” *USA Today*, June 12, 2017, 3A.

Trump has called Obama's action an "egregious abuse of federal power." I think President Trump is over-reacting. Granted, Obama's order added new protections on the public land in San Juan County, Utah, but he also kept intact the on-going, traditional uses for both Native Americans, as well as ranchers.

The controversy comes from those who want the land to be available for possible oil, gas, and mining operations. Trump responded also by saying "...the Bears Ears designation 'never should have happened' and that it was part of 'this massive federal land grab that's gotten worse and worse and worse.'" ⁷

Land grab? The land already belongs to Uncle Sam. There has been no eminent domain seizure of private land.

The opponents of Obama's actions want to shrink the monument and to scatter it into non-contiguous pieces, a plan that *is opposed* by the Native Americans' Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. Because of the history of various tribes being pushed off land in this part of America, they are taking a strong stand on this issue. (Google the subject of Bears Ears for a history of the area.)

President Trump's plan goes beyond Bears Ears. He has directed Mr. Zinke to review national monuments created by Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama, which includes at least 20, and maybe up to 40 monuments. Eventually, given humans' greed, the land will be turned over to commercial interests.

My preference is to leave these monuments unmarred for the use of ranchers, hikers, hunters, fishermen, and America's later generations: our children's grandchildren.

But I know this view is not in Donald Trump's vision. He is a New York City urbanite and likely has different visions of landscapes than do Western America people, likely from the view of a golf fairway.

Regardless of right or left wing predilections, we Americans should keep in mind that the mineral bounty obtained from our lands will be consumed shortly after it is extracted. What remains, and will remain for centuries, is the result of how we as a nation treat America's most valuable assets: its lands and waters. Consider the Berkeley Pit: Once we remove a mountain to claim its coal, that mountain does not grow back.

Final Thoughts

I have been around the block enough times to know that both government and private business are inherently faulty because they are run by faulty humans. Take, for example, the speeches, sermons, lectures, etc. made by members of our race.

We humans are largely focused on ascending our ladders of influence and power. Social club speeches, church sermons, and political addresses are examples. They are created to convince the audience of the worthiness of the speaker's take on life.

Yet there is much to be gained by these examples of human discourse. I shall forever be moved by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, as I will by Grant's final reflections on his life, including his disarming honesty about his failures and shortcomings.

With regard to this article: Where is the shame in your "speeches," DuPont? There is none, only proclamations of self-defense.

Using profanity, which I rarely do, I was hoping one of the high-level managers in the Netflix film would have said: "Not even our scientists knew of the hazards of C-8 when we

⁷ Francisco Kjolseth, Associated Press.

created Teflon. We did not fuck-up by bringing Teflon to the market. We fucked-up by our cover up of its dangers.”

For this citizen, DuPont’s admission would have been enough for me. But the Netflix film concludes with no such ending.

I am not surprised. That would have been asking too much of my fellow man.

At this stage of my life, my requests to other humans have become more modest, because I understand our nature of self-serving greed (with the exception of you and me, of course). As examples, is it not reasonable to require our government to prevent DuPont from inculcating toxic waters into our bodies? ...Bodies in which the Netflix film claims 99 percent of us already contain C-8? Can’t you and I take a walk in Bears Ears knowing we will be given a breathing recess from West Virginia’s mining smog?

I believe these are modest requests, and I am confident they are obtainable. But only if we can come to realize that we have a deeply serious problem on our hands: We are increasingly destroying the very earth on which we live.

The Chesapeake Bay is not the end of this flow of poison. The Bay feeds into the Atlantic Ocean, a body of water that is suffering even more damage than America’s local waters.

But being the sort of person who attempts to look at the bright side of life, I close this article with a photo of Bucky, his wife, and their child. I keep their names anonymous (other than Bucky) who is already deservedly famous. They had deep fears that their child might inherit Bucky’s C-8. But that did not happen.



Figure 10. A fitting end.

In addition to the sources I have mentioned to obtain the film, you can rent or purchase it at:

https://www.amazon.com/Devil-We-Know-Bucky-Bailey/dp/B07H7XJTX3/ref=sr_1_1_dvt_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548279001&sr=8-1&keywords=the+devil+we+know+documentary.

I thank Netflix for producing this film. I also thank the company for the snap shots I made from it.