

Hunsberger, Brent. "It Wasn't a Healthy Place to Work." *Portland Oregonian*, 19 December, 2000. (Reviewed by Tracy Maloney)

This newspaper article focuses on two Northwest Portland chemical plants that dumped waste products and dangerous chemicals into the Willamette River decades ago. The article quotes a former employee, James Forney, who worked as a truck driver at one of the plants. In his interview, Forney mentions what his job entailed, which included dumping barrels of chemicals into Doane Lake, which separated the plant from the river. The contents of the barrels were (now banned) pesticides, herbicides, and the ingredients to make Agent Orange. In the following years, the lake was filled and the waters dumped into the nearby Willamette.

James Forney stated within the article that chemicals burned one's skin upon exposure and that "the odors were intense...my skin smelled like burnt insulation even after showering." The article then mentions the human health risks posed by these chemicals that have been slowly seeping in the water. Scientists have linked the defoliant in Agent Orange to Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft-tissue sarcoma, and cancer. The remainder of the article discusses the legal ramifications of the companies that took over the plants, and the consequences of dumping the chemicals.

Critique

This newspaper article, found in a series done by the *Oregonian* on the risk of the Willamette River, is helpful in establishing a historical aspect of its pollution. The writing presents a cause and effect situation; it describes in good detail the processes of chemical pumping that occurred decades ago, and also describes the current situation and consequence of the pollutants. There is little scientific language present, making it an easy to follow article for a general audience.

One down side to the article is the overall flow of the writing. Smooth transitions between topics are scarce, and the author tends to jump from one subject to another. It remains, however, a valuable source for assessing the potential risks to human health as a result of the chemicals. The article states at one point that the substances found within the river, as a result of the dumping of Doane Lake, take a minimum of 15 years to lose half their potency. This remark alone serves as a warning to the public to use caution, and most of all, that the need to restore the Willamette back to full health is crucial.

[return to info sources page](#)

[return to home page](#)