

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# GARY KNAPP

Community Member—  
Tar Lake Superfund Site

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**Location:** Mancelona, Michigan

EPA Interviewer: Today is October 19, 2005, and we're interviewing Gary Knapp who is the Executive Director of Community Resource Development, Inc., a nonprofit organization. He's also administrator of the Mancelona, Michigan, Area Water and Sewer Authority. We're here today as part of the Superfund 25th Anniversary oral history project, and we'll be discussing Gary Knapp's involvement as a community activist and advocate in the Tar Lake Superfund site. So let's get started. Good morning.

Knapp: Good morning to you.

EPA Interviewer: I'm sure you've not always been involved in the Superfund program. Tell me what you used to do before you got involved in Superfund and how this led to your interest and involvement in the program and in environmental protection.

Knapp: From the mid 1970s—just prior to that, when I left college in Grand Rapids in 1971—I taught school down in southern Florida for a private school for children with learning disabilities. Three years later I was the principal of that and had completely—I was kind of a shooting star—I had completely absorbed and burned myself out. I decided that I wanted to dedicate the rest of my life to juvenile delinquency and prevention to keep juvenile delinquents from escalating up through the criminal justice and child welfare system. So I moved my family to northern Michigan. So I've been here ever since. Fortunately, [I] found a job with the Northwest Catholic Diocese who had a community service division and did exactly what I wanted to do. [I] started to work with young people who had gotten in trouble with the law—usually between the ages of 17 and 24 was our target population at the time. Helping them to find jobs, dealing with their substance abuse problems, education deficiencies, helping them to continue their education—whatever it took to get them out of the criminal court system and into productive lives.

So I did that from 1975 until about 1985, and in about 1980/81, I started to get involved in grant writing and was successful because there was a lot of Comprehensive Employment Training Act, CETA, money available at that time. Federal Government, as I'm sure you're aware, was putting a lot of money into CETA, and I got connected up in the early '80s—about '81—with the CETA director here in northwest lower Michigan. He was in charge of a 10-county area, and he had just begun as the administrator of CETA funds. Approached him about grants, had never written any grants before, and there was a lot of money available. But between '81 and '85 I went from direct services at a personal level to administration and had several staff people. We were working in the jails and the juvenile court, district court, probate court, and circuit court in a 10-county region.

Got involved in the legislative process, so from '83/'84 to 1989 I had a path worn from Traverse City and Lansing. Got involved in just about every legislative committee involved in criminal justice reform. Eventually we were successful and I was the principal advocate and *Superfund 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project*

author of a piece of legislation. We were the 17th state in the country to pass community corrections legislation, so our community crisis legislation, which was Public Act 511, passed in 1989. The governor at the time, Governor Blanchard— knowing that I was the principal author and advocate and I had spent a lot of time in the governor's office in the legislative halls pushing for this legislation—after he signed it, appointed me as the founding chair of the State Community Corrections Advisory Board.

We were a new department of state government, and the Advisor Board was responsible for creating a new Office of Community Corrections. We hired a new director out of North Carolina—fellow by the name of Dennis Shrontz. That legislation was the focal point of my life from 1989 until 1995. As I was chairing the board, we were also a 10-county regional model for the implementation of the act. We created a training division, and we set up state-wide training, and went into all the jails. It was a pretty intensive experience. By 1995, I had become a real lightning rod for change. There was a lot of resistance within the court system to the idea that prisons and jails and probations was fine with them. They felt that was just about all they needed. So the whole notion of alternative sentencing and community-based corrections, keeping offenders locally and supervising them safely, having to do victim restitution and community service and that sort of thing was a bit of an alien thought. There was a lot of resistance to it. So in 1995, I, by that time, had become a real lightning rod because I was not only chairing the State Community Crisis Board and responsible for a \$30 million a year budget to get this into all 83 of Michigan's counties, but I was also on the ground implementing it as a model within this 10-county region. Ultimately, the 10-county region and myself personally became a real lightning rod.

I decided in about '94/'95 that I needed to move on to something else and had decided at that point that I wanted to go off stream and start working in the school systems to keep children from ever entering the criminal justice and child welfare system in the first place, having got involved at that level of systemic change. That's what brought me to Mancelona. There was a principal of a middle school whose vision was to bring resources—health and human services and other resources—into the school to work with at-risk children. Mancelona is in Antrim County in the northwest region, if not the single biggest certainly among the largest pockets of poverty in this part of the state. A huge incidence of child abuse, neglect and sexual abuse, poverty, and every imaginable horror story associated with all that in the form of little children who walk into the school every day unprepared to learn and who had huge barriers to succeeding educationally and in life.

So it was the perfect opportunity for me to make the transition from having institutionalized community corrections to start doing primary prevention in the schools. Through community corrections we had targeted the jails as our focal point for diversion from the prison system. There was a jail in every county in the country, and I knew that that was a logical institutional base to build alternative sentencing on. Similarly, the same concept applied to schools; there's a school in every community in the country. So I thought, "God, if we can do primary prevention in the schools, we'll keep kids and family out of the child welfare and criminal justice systems." It was just a logical segue for me. And that's what brought me to Mancelona. I helped the middle school principal write a Kellogg Foundation grant—wrote in myself, or at least half of me, as a newly created position within that grant. So when I started in Mancelona, I started as a contractual employee, an administrator to administer this grant in the school system. The vision of the grant was to bring health and human services into the school, to remove barriers, and to prepare children for a positive educational experience in life, and

*Superfund 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project*

then to use the school and its resources as a foundation upon which to build community development activities. So that opens the door for how we got involved in Superfund, because that's where I was when I met Mary Tierney and Rob McLeod.

EPA Interviewer: And who are they?

Knapp: Mary Tierney was a Region 5 U.S. EPA outreach worker. I'm not sure exactly what her title was. I think she was a remedial coordinator at that the time. Rob McLeod was working for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality [MDEQ].

We had a committee as part of this Kellogg Foundation Grant, we created a governance body called Project SHARE, which stood for School and Home Alliance for Restructured Education. Under the Governance Board, we had several working and standing committees, one of which was Community and Economic Development. One of the members of that committee was the head librarian at Mancelona. One day when I was sitting in my office minding my own business, I got a call from this woman. She said, "There are two people here at the library that I think you need to come and meet."

And I said, "Gail, I'm really up to my ears in something. Can you give me a little bit more information?"

She said, "Well, I've got their business cards in front of me, and one of them, her name is Mary Tierney, and she's from Region 5 U.S. EPA, and the other is Rob McLeod, and he's with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality."

So that sounded pretty intriguing, so I said, "I'll be right there." Mary and Rob were there to drop off the—as I understand it, Congress requires that EPA and MDEQ deposit, in this case in the local library, all the information related to the Superfund process, and this case, specifically to Tar Lake. So they were there to drop off those documents. They were gonna come into town, drop off their documents, and leave. So an hour and a half into this discussion with Mary and Rob—which just opened up a whole new chapter in my life that I wasn't expecting to experience—an hour and a half later I said, "If you've got a whole row in the library, file after file after file of documentation on this Superfund site..." Now I had lived up here since 1975; I had no knowledge of the existence of Tar Lake; I had no knowledge of Superfund; I knew absolutely nothing; I was a complete blank slate. So I asked them, an hour and a half later, "If all this documentation is here—which to me suggests that all these bureaucrats and attorneys and environmentalists and researchers and scientists have all contributed to these volumes of information—if all this is available, I guess my question is, why hasn't anybody been put in to clean up the site, to solve the problem?"

And in all honesty Mary looked at me—and this was the beginnings of our—we had a great working relationship—she said, "That's a really good question." [*Laughing*] And they proceeded to tell me, both of them, how the perception at the state and federal level was that the community was apathetic about, and really, therefore, it's a squeaky wheel kind of thing. I said, "Well, what if that were to change?" Having done community organizing and activism and advocacy all my professional life up to that point, I certainly understood the concept.

And she said, “Well, that could make a difference. There’s this National Priorities List, and you’re on the list. You were put on in 1983. You’re 200-and-something out of a list of 1,000-and-something. It’s not that the resources aren’t there to do this; it’s just that however the process works, it would really be helpful if there was some activism and advocacy at the local level. It can only help; it can’t hurt.” So that was the beginnings of my involvement in Superfund. Sitting in the school, having put this Governance Board together and having this Community and Economic Development Committee and then getting this call from Gail Anderson, the librarian, and meeting Mary and Rob, it just fit. It just felt right that this would be headed to the overall...

EPA Interviewer: Were you surprised that a government official was saying we want citizen activism?

Knapp: *[Laughing]* Well, yeah. I actually was. Truly, I was a little bit surprised by that because looking backward, you’d think, well the Federal Government has a process and Superfund is born. This National Priorities List is created. You’re somewhere on that list. You’d think that when your number comes up—OK, well this is next and we go in and we clean it up and we’re gone. So I think I was a bit surprised. I don’t think I was at all prepared for how deep my involvement was going to be. *[Laughing]*

EPA Interviewer: I’m sure that’s the case. That’s often the case with folks who get involved with this program. You say you’d never seen Tar Lake. I’m sure you’ve seen it now. Kind of explain to people what this site is.

Knapp: Look at it through the lens of the history—not only of the industry that created Tar Lake, but the impact on the community—kind of looking at it through that lens, Tar Lake was created as a direct result of the production of an iron ore. From the late 1800s until 1943, Mancelona, Antrim County, northern Michigan, this site specifically grew one of the largest iron ore production facilities in the country. And as I understand it, they made some of the most superior iron that was available at the time until about the 1940s, which I assume had a direct correlation with the second World War and the ability to take otherwise inferior iron and add chemicals and one thing or another. So technology came along. But until then, the Antrim Iron Works was clearly, as I understand it, one of the best producers of iron in the country. So it fueled the industrial revolution.

Well, one of the reasons—again as I understand it, as we’ve gone back through time and history to research this—that northern Michigan and Mancelona specifically were selected for the production of this iron was because of the ready availability of hardwoods. Northern Michigan is abundant, and back then I can only imagine what it must have been like, hardwoods—maple and just huge forests of hardwoods. So one of the main reasons that this iron production facility was put where it was in Mancelona was because of the ready access to hardwoods. The other was that we were in close proximity to the Upper Peninsula and iron ore. So rails were created—a whole industry was built around the production of iron in Mancelona. During that period of time, and when all this was done, there was over a mile-long facility on what became a major U.S. highway—Highway 131—with rail running right along parallel to the highway—built, I’m sure primarily, at least secondarily, as a result of the creation of this industry. They shipped iron ore down from the UP [Michigan’s Upper Peninsula], and they went out and went further and further out as time went by into the hinterlands to bring in all this hardwood. The production facility used, at the time, some pretty innovative technology

in that they produced iron through what they called the charcoal method. They layered the iron ore on burning hardwoods through these furnaces. They put charcoal...it was just an amazing process. So they had their own saw mills, their own chemical facility, they had their own iron production facility. They literally built the town of Mancelona around the production of iron. There was literally little or nothing there when they brought this facility. Between the 1800s and 1940, a whole community was built around this iron production facility. Its school system. The company had its own housing, it had its own company store. It had its own scrip so that they paid the employees in scrip at the end of the week.

I've gone back. We've got a wonderful video that we produced with 12 high school students that we've shown at EPA Brownfields conferences—well, we showed it in Chicago a few years ago. It was just really well received. If you look at this video—and I brought a copy of it with me, we probably won't be able to see it today—but you watch the interviews. We went back and interviewed all these old timers that are now at the end of their lives who worked at the Antrim Iron Works. You listen to their stories, and one of them in particular talks about the fact that at the end of every two week pay period, the employees owed the company more than what they were paid, so it was indentured servitude. The company literally built the town around, and ran, every aspect of this entire facility.

EPA Interviewer: You read about that in school and you think it's something from decades and decades and centuries ago. You don't think of it something as recent as 50 years ago.

Knapp: Exactly. Well, and in the process, as the facility and all of the facilities kept growing and growing and growing... One of the interesting things about this—and it kind of segues back to the irony of my personal journey of having started my involvement with the Mancelona community out of the school—is that the company also imported labor from Appalachia, from Kentucky. So you look at all the problems that I'm dealing with still every day. We built a family resources center on the school campus, and these people come in every day for health and human services, and we're doing a lot of things still in the school. You look at the population of people in Mancelona and all of these issues—child abuse and child sex abuse and substance abuse and all these things—and you just get this mental insight into the origins of that community and how it's evolved and how importing that labor from Appalachia...

We talked and interviewed these old guys who talk about how it wasn't uncommon for the Antrim Iron Works employees to have a pint in their back pocket. You look at the pictures of these old timers, old pictures of them with the Antrim Iron Works in the background, and these were hardened people. They worked 12 to 14 hours a day for a meager subsistence. They lived hard, rough lives. That's the roots of this entire community and its culture.

EPA Interviewer: And I guess it's the process from that Iron Works that led to Tar Lake, which... Draw a picture of Tar Lake for the listeners. I've read about it.

Knapp: Tar Lake was, until EPA came in and cleaned it up, a 4.5 to 5.5 acre natural ground depression. It was just a natural bowl in the earth. If you could get a mental picture of a mile-long facility and the end of that mile being the actual iron production facility. Then if you can kind of get a mental picture of coming out of the end of that iron works production facility, what would end up being the retort plant. Well, the retort plant's purpose was to take all these chemicals that would naturally come off the production of iron, that otherwise would be unusable, and turn them into something usable—alcohol and... I can't remember all the

acronyms. But the bottom line was the retort complex was designed to capture and then market and sell all these chemicals that came out of the production of iron.

When all of that was done—when all the chemicals which obviously evolved over decades of technology at the time—when all of the chemicals were extracted, the iron was produced, the charcoal and everything had gone through its usable life—at the end of this facility they simply created a sluiceway. The unusable toxic brew of chemicals and wood and wood tar and everything that went into the production of iron—after it was extracted out from the retort plant—everything was just sent down this sluiceway and it was just dumped into this natural ground depression. It literally became, over decades—from the late 1800s until the 1940s, the plant was dismantled in 1943 and completely out of the community in 1945—during all that time, they literally created a lake of tar. The reason that the community called it Tar Lake and the reason that it was a lake of tar was because that's exactly what it was. If you think about a liquid, gooey, ugly, tar-like substance, that's exactly what it was.

So what happened then was, over all those years and then from the 1940s until EPA came along, that lake of tar just stood there and rain came down and sat on the top of it. Gnarly, ugly trees and vegetation all grew around it. As the old timers tell the story, at one point it caught on fire and burnt underground for years. It just became the community's legacy. It was just there. And as time went by, people just got used to the odor. It's sort of like the old frog analogy. You put a frog in cold water and slowly heat it up; it forgets that it's being boiled to death. The community just became used to it. I don't think Mary was very far off when she said that the community was apathetic. I lived there all that time—wasn't even aware of it. But the people who lived in close proximity to Tar Lake, number one most of them were employees or descendants of employees from the Iron Works. So they were used to all that odor. It was part of their life. It was how they made their living. So to have a lake of tar, to them, probably didn't seem all that unusual. It just sat there until Mary and Rob came along.

EPA Interviewer: That was in the mid '90s when they brought the information repository—the whole administrative record—to the community and met you. I understand the cleanup started happening fairly soon there after.

Knapp: Yup. We very quickly organized—in my world, it was kind of another standing committee of the Project Share Governance Board. We just created another committee that we end up calling the Brownfield Action Committee. That was at the suggestion of EPA employees. Prior to that, I can't even recall what I called it. I think we just met. We just started meeting. I just did what I do naturally—pulling in all these old timers and asking about this, Herb Moyer in particular.

Herb Moyer is an interesting little piece of this. I'll just do a little quick aside and say that Herb Moyer was one of the old timers that worked in the Antrim Iron Works forever, made this living there. He's very, very, very bright and resourceful guy. Ended up working under a contract for Viacom. Now Viacom is the PRP [Potentially Responsible Party]. So Herb would come to our meetings. Trust me, I was totally clueless. I was just—anybody that was interested in the subject at the local level and anybody that's willing to come from the state and national level—we started having regular meetings, and then we started having monthly meetings. We had just evolved with agendas. We had—none of us, certainly I had no idea what we were doing. As people like Herb Moyer would come to the table, he would say things like, "Well, I have to be careful what I say." So after awhile, I started to learn: OK, there's this

world of PRPs and this world of EPA bureaucrats and there's this process. One of the meetings that we had was an organizing meeting where I thought, "OK, we've got all these state and federal organizations. If the ultimate goal here, as I am learning, is to not only clean up this site, to remove the problem, remediate it, and then to redevelop it, then we need to start thinking down the road to the redevelopment stuff." This could be a real catalyst for community economic development, which was the committee that got me into this in the first place.

And the reason that that thought occurred to me was I thought, "OK, if this community has all of this negative history and the origin of these problems go back to the Antrim Iron Works, the cause and effect is, we've got this huge toxic waste dump. Wouldn't it make sense—if we want to get at the root of the problem, if you want to go all the way back to the beginning and then revitalize the community just like you'd eradicate cancer—well then you got to go right to the source." So the vision of that was let's use Superfund and Tar Lake as a catalyst to revitalize the whole community. Well, getting back to the point, as we went down this road I eventually thought, "Let's get all the state and federal agencies around the table with this core community group that now is starting to get organized and has a vision and purpose." So I got HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] and MSHDA [Michigan State Development Authority]....

EPA Interviewer: What is MSHDA?

Knapp: It's a form of housing. HUD, MSHDA, EPA, MDEQ, our health department—I got everybody that I could think of—my whole network of organizations at state and federal and local level. I thought, let's get one big visioning session, get everybody at the table. So we had this great session and all these great ideas came out and all this networking. And at the end of it, Stuart Hill—who was the EPA outreach worker who was at the meeting, and I think this was his second or third meeting, if I'm remembering, that he had come to Mancelona—caught me after the meeting and he said, "Who's paying you to do this work?" And I said, *[laughing]* "Paying me? Paying me? Well, there's no one paying me. I don't know how I'd even begin to..." And I said, "But I am really interested in any grants that are available, because we got to get organized by actually bringing some more additional resources to build our capacity at the local level. I'm just doing this on my spare time as this contractual school employee."

So Stuart introduced me to the Technical Assistance Grant program. Up until that, I had no knowledge that it even existed. It was through TAG that we then took all that early work and actually created what we called a Brownfield Action Team, because that's what Stuart suggested. He said, "Why don't you apply for a TAG grant to take the work that you've done—just look at it as groundwork—and formalize it and create a Brownfield Action Team." So then we did that and then we started meeting every month. That was the earliest beginning. So then we hired a technical advisor—a fellow by the name of John Diadonna who worked out of the Traverse Group, which is an environmental consulting firm down in Ann Arbor. John brought a lot of knowledge and experience and expertise that I certainly didn't have to the table, and eventually one of the things we did—I think it was in our second TAG grant—was we actually helped the county create a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. So we've slowly been building capacity and moving from informal grass roots activism advocacy to more formal, "OK, now we've got a committee, and we've got a name for it. We know who's on it; we've brought the county in and got them involved." And we just went forward from there.



EPA Interviewer: So let's go back a little bit back to the late 1990s. Tar Lake's sitting there and you're having your meetings. There was a cleanup that happened—a rather substantial cleanup that happened, right? In the late 1990s? Mary was right, if you get a little activism, you get a little response.

Knapp: That's exactly right. A major, major cleanup. As you and I talked before we turned the tape on, when you look at what's happened with Tar Lake through the lens of a rural prism, bringing—and I'm gonna say, I would guess Tom Bloom, our site coordinator from EPA could probably give us real hard number, but just talking in generalities—I'm gonna say \$14 million of EPA money later, Ralph Dollhopf came in as the removal coordinator for EPA and took 47,000 tons of tar out of that ground depression.

EPA Interviewer: What was that like? Were there just trucks waiting to have it put in?

Knapp: It was just the most amazing thing. You know the fascinating thing for me is that I was personally just swept up in all this. Of all the wonderful things that I had been able to do in my life—see legislation pass, chair the Community Corrections Board and work with 83 counties—in all the things that I was blessed with doing, I was never up close and personal to see that kind of physical, financial activity, that huge a commitment of resources.

First, the removal process ended up being about \$12 million of EPA funds. And you're right; it was just a huge... And Ralph personally and professionally—I mean I have gained so much respect for EPA and its staff, and particularly its staff on the ground, because Ralph just came in there. He set up a trailer. He set up all his communication networks. He had all these contractors. It was just an amazing thing to watch. Within two years—I think a year and a half—that entire site was excavated, all that tar removed, shipped to Illinova and Niagara Falls to be recycled into energy. So it was environmentally smart the way it was done. It was just an amazing thing to witness.

EPA Interviewer: What was the reaction of the apathetic citizens?

Knapp: I'm thinking how to characterize this—everything from benign resistance to amazement and everything in between. I had people who in my day-to-day workings in that community would come to meetings or call me on the phone or being interviewed by the local newspaper would say, "This is a total waste of... We should spend this money on..." I don't know; somebody made this just absolutely crazy comment once. "If we're gonna spend all this federal money, we should be spending it on..." I don't know what he said. It was just crazy. It made no sense. So all the way from that to people like Herb Moyer—who I mentioned earlier who was a contractual employee of the PRP—who behind the scenes was just pumping me with information. Just filling my head with all this knowledge about the history of Mancelona and the Antrim Iron Works and how important this was and how in his lifetime, his whole personal mission in life was to see this corrected and that community put back whole. So you had every possible... Everything in between. People who just thought it was stupid to be spending this money on Tar Lake. "What's the problem?" All the way to people who were swept up in it and just thought it was the most important thing that ever happened in that community. And I happen to be on the one that thinks it was the most important thing that ever happened to the community. If you go back to the whole vision—that whole analogy of going to the root of the problem—clearly this was a major contributor to the community and its

origin, but it was also a huge detractor in terms of its ability to move forward. So I think it was wonderful.

Ten million dollars was the first major budget. I think Ralph ended up spending closer to \$12 million. That was the removal phase. Then the remediation phase, which has also become a huge part of my life as it exists still to this day. There was a 5.5 mile groundwater contamination plume that originated at Tar Lake and extended 5.5 miles in a west/northwest direction with the groundwater. So we had 5.5 miles of groundwater contamination at the Tar Lake site. Tar Lake sits on the corner of U.S. 131 and Elder Road. About a quarter of a mile north on U.S. 131, which is a major thoroughfare, there's an automotive plant that's today owned by Dura. There's another groundwater contamination plume made up of trichloroethylene, TCE, that runs parallel to the Tar Lake plume for 6.5 miles, and unlike the Tar Lake plume, the TCE plume ends up... The Tar lake plume kind of dead ends at a little creek called Saloon Creek. They tested on both sides of it and there wasn't any groundwater contamination on the other side of Saloon Creek. If you and I were to drive or fly over that 5.5 mile groundwater contamination, most of what that affects is residents and just a handful of small businesses right at the Tar Lake site.

Unlike the Tar Lake plume, the TCE plume—that's a quarter a mile north—that originates at the Dura plant is significant in two respects. One, as I'm sure you're aware, trichloroethylene is a carcinogen, so its health hazards are much greater than the Tar Lake plume was. Most of the Tar Lake problem is phenols and aesthetic, not health—well, I should say—relatively minor health problems. The TCE plume is a carcinogen. And the other significant thing about the TCE plume is that unlike the Tar Lake plume, which ends at Saloon Creek and mainly affects residents, the TCE plume ends up in probably the single biggest economic development engine in Antrim County, which is the Shanty Creek, Schuss Mountain, Cedar River Resort. This is a major resort—golf courses, ski hills, million dollar properties, acres and acres and acres of literally a resort that has evolved since the 1970s. It is the biggest employer in the area. Two-thirds of the people employed from Mancelona are employed by Shanty Creek, Schuss Mountain Resort. So the TCE plume has over time eclipsed—as we've solved the Tar Lake problem—the TCE plume has actually begun more recently to eclipse the Tar Lake, but I digress.

Point being that the second phase of the Superfund process after the 47,000 tons were removed and Ralph spent \$12 million—Tom Bloom came in as the remedial site coordinator and worked hand and glove with DEQ. I've gone to a few Brownfields conferences and I hear all these horror stories about how the federal and state government don't always work well together on these sites. I don't know if it was because we always had MDEQ and EPA sitting at the same table at the local level or because they had good relationships going in or what. But the bottom line is MDEQ and EPA have worked wonderfully well together on the Tar Lake site and with respect to the TCE plume.

So the remediation phase, which was closely coordinated with EPA and MDEQ, was to address the groundwater contamination. So two significant things happened. EPA coordinated with MDEQ, and MDEQ spent its money to put in a biosparge system on the Tar Lake property in order to clean the water as it moved off the site. So they came just slightly up-gradient of the bowl that all the tar sat in. They put in a biosparge system. Obviously you've removed the source; now all you're doing is taking care of the residual. As that residual groundwater contamination moves off, it's filtered by a biosparge system. Eventually there will be nothing

*Superfund 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project*

coming off the Tar Lake site that will be going down-gradient with the groundwater stream. The estimate now is about three years and that will be done.

That's one of the things that through our TAG grant we were very successful in advocating with EPA was that their original plan, as I recall, was to put in a less significant system to remediate the plume and their original estimates were 10 to 15 years. We advocated, "No, we would like to see it cleaned up much sooner than that, because we want to get to the redevelopment phase." So the remediation phase put a biosparge system onsite at the source of the problem on the Tar Lake property.

Let me just interject here, just as a quick aside. Through this process—and I think this would be really interesting to people at the national level, because as I understand from all the EPA and MDEQ officials that I worked with over the years, I think it's a little bit unusual—my non-profit, Community Resource Development, took ownership of the 89 acres previously owned by Viacom, which is Tar Lake. Unbeknownst to any of us, well certainly unbeknownst to me, Viacom—which probably will not sound unusual at all to people who are a little bit more savvy about this stuff than I am and who have a broader national focus—Viacom's intent apparently was to mitigate their liability.

EPA Interviewer: Well, I was going to ask you a little bit about how the PRP has been involved in this. Have they done any of the cleanup or participated in any of this?

Knapp: My understanding is that Viacom put about \$1.5 million of its own money in—this was prior to any of the recent history that you and I have talked about—to investigating and researching the site. My personal belief is that their primary motivation to do that was to protect themselves from CERCLA [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act] liability. But the bottom line is when Ralph came in and when EPA started going through their entire research process to decide what their removal and remediation action plan was going to be, they used a lot of the Viacom research and data as a baseline. So in that respect, Viacom inadvertently made a contribution.

But their position, as I understand it, from day one was that this was an orphan site. They did not and do not consider themselves to be a PRP. Even though they put \$1.5 million in prior to Superfund, subsequent to that, I think if I've remembered correctly, out of the \$12 million that EPA put in—because it was an EPA lead project so it was federal money that went in—I think they recovered from Viacom in a legal agreement about \$4.5 million of that. So Viacom put a total of \$6 million—\$1.5 million of their own. They hired an environmental consultant, and they did all this research. Then after Superfund came in and after Ralph removed the tar and spent the \$10 to \$12 million, they recovered \$4.5 million. So they've always been a reluctant participant in the process, but they have put money into the site.

So as all of this was going on in Washington and Region 5... I have to say, probably somewhat naively now in hindsight, with looking at the redevelopment goal—I don't know who approached who. I don't know if I approached Viacom or Viacom approached me. They always had a seat at the Brownfield Action Team, table because they had Herb Moyer there. So they had their spot on the ground watching everything that was going on. So I don't know who approached who, but the bottom line was that at the end of the day, we took ownership of the Tar Lake property. I will say that even though I feel in hindsight that I was probably a little bit naïve in doing that, number one I think ultimately it's gonna be a good thing, even

though it may have weakened EPA's case a little bit. And I will also say that we have made every, every effort humanly possible—I know I did—to communicate to EPA and MDEQ way in advance to our ever finalizing any agreement to take ownership of this property in order to protect all the properties. I was deeply concerned about protecting EPA's ability to go after Viacom for liability. And I communicated that to Tom Bloom and Stuart. And the EPA attorneys at Region 5 I know were aware of it. There's actually a document that you can get. It's kind of a purchase agreement...

EPA Interviewer: Prospective purchaser.

Knapp: Thank you, yes. And we were trying to get a prospective purchase agreement prior to... But Viacom and their attorneys obviously had some pretty significant resources that they could apply to this. And in the end, it became a, "OK, if you don't take ownership of this within the next 45 days, the deal is off the table." Well, in that 45-day period I was on the phone almost constantly with Tom and Stuart, and they were talking to their attorneys. "Can we get a prospective purchase agreement?" In the end, while I think everybody was aware of what was happening, in hindsight we probably would have done better to say to Viacom, "No, we'll wait 'til we get that document in place." But I honestly believe to this day that the outcome would not have been terribly different. I think that Region 5 EPA considers their case against Viacom to have been a weak case all along. I think that Viacom corporate—and I know this because I've talked to their attorney on several occasions—I think they think, "OK, we've put \$4.5 million in this; we are not a PRP. If EPA wants to litigate against us, we're willing to pay the legal fees. We're not gonna put any more money into this."

EPA Interviewer: In EPA's 2006 appropriation, the one that was just passed in July and signed in August, there is an amendment to CERCLA that moves back the date for innocent purchasers. It used to be January of 2002, and they've moved it back now to an earlier date to cover some folks who are like you. And you indeed may be covered by it. The innocent purchaser rules of the law would then date back to that time, because prior to 2002 all the rules were in there about innocent purchasers. They weren't nearly as clear as the 2002 Brownfield amendments made the law.

Knapp: Well, that will be very helpful, because again the only reason that my non-profit even considered—and my board and I personally agonized over this—even considered taking ownership of this property was to bring it into public ownership in order to re-position it for redevelopment. So we felt then, and still do, that what we did made practical sense. It certainly made sense. But I've learned a lot of things that I think I would have done differently, including the prospective purchase agreement—some of these things. In hindsight now I think, boy, it doesn't feel good when you wake up the next morning thinking, "Was I just taken advantage of by a huge corporation with its unlimited legal resources? And innocently taken ownership of something that would in any way impede the Federal Government from recovery?" But again, in hindsight I honestly believe that that has not been the case.

To this day, Viacom—as I understand it—Viacom in the final analysis signed a contractual agreement with EPA that anything over \$10 million, they would be responsible for half of. So Tom Bloom and MDEQ, in fact both—MDEQ to recover its \$1.3 million for the biosparge system and Tom to recover remediation and removal dollars—are still planning to bring Viacom to the table. Quite frankly, I've been talking with both Tom Bloom and a fellow by the name of Mike Northridge in Washington about the possibility. The EPA attorney made

it very clear to me—I've met with him two or three times over all these years—very clear to me that in the event that Viacom ever would be forced or agree to a final settlement—and apparently if they've signed a contract that they're liable for anything half over \$10 million, the potential exists to recover that—that they would not put that into EPA's coffer. They would be willing to negotiate something that would benefit the community in the form of a SEPP or something like that.

EPA Interviewer: Great. Great.

Knapp: And part of the story when we get to the end of it is that—when we start talking about the groundwater contamination, when we get back on track with that and what we've done to respond to that—part of a SEPP agreement would be—and I'm working actively right now—we've gotten a couple million dollars in grant funds to create a sewer system—Mancelona has no sewer system—in order to get sewer down to Tar Lake and the county's industrial part to do redevelopment. But we're kind of getting ahead of the story.

EPA Interviewer: Let's explain to the listeners what SEPP is.

Knapp: Supplemental Environmental Project? Is that right?

EPA Interviewer: ...Project Plan.

Knapp: OK, thank you. And as I understand it, my lay interpretation is that it's a mechanism by which the PRP and EPA and Department of Justice can agree that a settlement—rather than go into EPA and stay there—could be agreed upon whereby the funds would go into a community benefit project.

EPA Interviewer: Right. Exactly. It goes into a community benefit project, and we try to put it into some kind of environmental benefit, because it's a penalty paid for an environmental insult.

Knapp: Well, we've got the project.

EPA Interviewer: Terrific.

Knapp: And I've talked to Mike Northridge and Tom Bloom, and I know that they're bound and determined to be helpful with this, but the real critical piece of that system is to get Viacom to the table.

But if I can go backwards, because I apologize, I get ahead of my own story. So we have these two major groundwater contamination plumes, one from Tar Lake and one from Dura, and the TCE plume in particular had significant health hazards and economic impact. So as the removal phase of Tar Lake was winding down and the remediation phase was ramping up, one day—it's so funny all these things happen, maybe I should spend this time at my desk—I was sitting at my desk and I got a call from a fellow by the name of Bob Wagner, who is Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. I picked up the phone and Bob said, "Are you at a point in your day where if I communicate something to you can be really focused and listen carefully?" [*Laughing*] Something like that.

And I said, “Bob, you have my full attention.”

He said, “I would like to recommend and the state would like to recommend that you create a water and sewer authority, a local water and sewer authority.”

And I said, “OK, you have my full attention and focus. Why would we do that?”

He said, “Well, we’ve got this major groundwater contamination from Tar Lake and the TCE plume, and I think can tell you unofficially that should the local units of government create a water and sewer authority that there would be grant money, and potentially significant grant money, to create a regional water system to provide potable water to all the properties affected by these two groundwater contamination plumes. So that conversation resulted in and gave birth to the Mancelona Area Water and Sewer Authority. And my non-profit—where did we go first? [First, we] had the conversation with Bob, I think if I’m remembering correctly, [then] I think MDEQ gave us a \$50,000—similar to our TAG grants—gave us this \$50,000 start-up grant that gave us the ability to do all the legal work—articles of corporation, by-laws, creation of the board. Ultimately what we did was—because the groundwater contamination problem impacted the Village of Mancelona and two townships: Mancelona Township and Custer Township. We created a water and sewer authority made up of the elected officials. The board was made up of the elected officials of all three of those. Then Kearney Township was also affected, but we had a franchise agreement with them, because they didn’t want to formally sit on the board.

The Mancelona Water and Sewer Authority has existed now for about five years. We originally got a \$50,000 grant from MDEQ to do all the legal work, create the bylaws and articles, get the board up and running, hire an engineering firm to do some of the early preliminary design work. What happened was—over the course of the last five years—was we ended up getting \$6.5 million of MDEQ funds. With that \$6.5 million, we designed and built—we’re just now on the final, final stages of closing out the \$6.5 million grant—we built a regional water system that connected a 50-year old village water system in the Village of Mancelona to a brand new privately-owned water system out in Cedar River Village—part of the Shanty Creek, Schuss Mountain Resort—with all new force main and pipe and a pressure reducing station and a whole variety of things that get off into technical things.

So we literally designed and built a regional water system that connected the Village of Mancelona, which is this pocket of poverty, to all this affluence out here in Cedar River. Now my non-profit, CRD, who created the Mancelona Water and Sewer Authority, contracts with the Mancelona Water and Sewer Authority for me as its director. We have contractual engineering firms staff that does the operations and maintenance. That system is growing exponentially. We have lots of private developers who are coming in. It’s actually already begun to serve as a catalyst for economic development. So anyway, that was the remediation phase of Superfund.

EPA Interviewer: This is the first time you’ve mentioned local officials being involved. Talk a little bit about—historically—the mid ‘90s when you got involved. Where was the local government in all of this?

Knapp: For all practical purposes it was non-existent. At a local level in the state of Michigan we have villages, townships, and counties. Through all my years of advocating for legislation in

my prior life and one thing or another, I was under the naïve misunderstanding that everything just sort of went from the state to the county level, and that's how government worked. It wasn't until I got involved in the grass, grass, grassroots of Mancelona and this pocket of poverty that I became familiar with and began to understand that villages and townships play a vital role in our governmental system. And quite frankly, if I were to tell the story of what I've learned in the last 10, 11, 12 years about villages and townships, unlike counties—well, I've got my own observations about counties—but unlike counties, they absolutely lack any capacity of resources whatsoever. They typically have no staff other than maybe a village clerk. Obviously, they are volunteer boards as counties are but without any resources whatsoever.

EPA Interviewer: Is that beginning to change now with the Water and Sewer Authority and the new high-priced housing coming in? That sort of thing?

Knapp: [*Laughing*] I'm sorry, but I have to laugh because it's changed, but it's been a kicking and dragging. I will tell you that if you look at the changes that are taking place on the ground in Mancelona and their impact on that region—the entire county—and the investment of now well over \$20 million of state and federal money into that area to create infrastructure and to remove toxic wastes and all the things that have happened, I will tell you in summary that I believe that that has been despite the village and the townships, not because of them. They have come kicking and screaming through this entire process. And I don't mean that to sound like they're bad people. It's just that the rapid change that has taken place and been foisted on those elected officials and their inability to change with it and their natural resistance to it, because they were just sitting there minding their own business. They weren't being held accountable to anything. They didn't do anything. They had a DPW [Department of Public Works] and a small police force in Mancelona, and that was their entire existence. They were just happy as clams to have to not do anything else. So they have absolutely—and again I look at it as a natural thing. People resist change to begin with, but they certainly resist change that is of that magnitude that affects their daily lives. They have been overwhelmed and highly resistant to this.

Now the one exception to this has been—their seats on because we have three elected officials from each one of the village and two townships sitting on the Water and Sewer Authority Board. Those three elected officials—and there's been a lot of turnover over the years in those positions—but those elected officials have really come light years. So I view Mancelona Water and Sewer Authority as a evolving model of sophistication and capacity that otherwise wouldn't exist if nothing happened. If Superfund never came to town, if DEQ and creation of MWSA—none of these things happen, I think the local units of government would still be stuck back where they were.

But now they have something that they can look—they can look at CRD. They can look at MWSA. They can look at what we're doing in the schools. They can look at the change that's beginning to happen, as you mentioned, as private developers and economic development begins to take shape, the business community. Everything is changing how those local units of government were. But it's changing them in a way that is not completely within their control. You have private sector... On my way here this morning I was talking to two business men. I said, "Here's the next strategy. We need to get the Downtown Development Authority and the Chamber of Commerce to agree to do x, y, and z." So it's being imposed on them, and they've been resistant to it, but those that have caught the vision

or seen the model, participated in a way that they're full participants in it and they can see the benefits of it. It is changing. The change will overwhelm the resistance, and we're at that point now.

EPA Interviewer: You mentioned that some of this started with something called a community visioning effort. I think that's perhaps an unfamiliar term to a lot of our folks who are listening to this, and yet it's something that the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative has been promoting. So if you would talk just a little bit about what happens at a community visioning and what the result is, I think it would be helpful to people to understand where the program is going with redevelopment.

Knapp: I'd be happy to. That's a great point. As I've learned Superfund—and you've got removal and remediation, and all through this you're looking down the road to redevelopment. Several years ago—and I'm gonna say I think it was in '92, right around that period of time—we realized that in order to not only redevelop Tar Lake but to use the redevelopment of Tar Lake as a community economic development catalyst to jump start the entire Mancelona area and region that we needed to get the community onboard as full participants on visions and shaping and being partners with that process. So we went through a series of town hall meetings, you could call them visioning sessions, in which our contractual consultants, Traverse Group, Gordie Frasier, the Brownfield Action Team Committee itself—which is where all these decisions were made—everyone that sat around that table. We all came together and said, “OK, let's initiate a process whereby we very intentionally have community meetings and we facilitate creating a vision for the redevelopment of Tar Lake and these contiguous properties and that being a catalyst for economic and community research of Mancelona.”

I will just say quickly, prior to that I personally had had some experience in visioning sessions—both in my prior life before I came to Mancelona and then when I came to Mancelona initially when we created that Community Economic Development Committee that I mentioned. Ball State University came in and did a community charette. Michigan State University came in and did a community economic development forum. So we had had some good experience with visioning. But this was a little bit different, because it was focused on a specific property and specific project.

So what happened was we had a series of meetings. We started with high school students and we'd already had some real positive with... Because I'd always been based out of the school and my office sits in the Resource Center which sits on the school campus, we always maintained that close connectedness with the school. A lot of my responsibilities still focus around some of those early, early days of bringing resources to the school. So we had a positive experience working with the high school students in the creation of the Tar Lake video. And we used a few of those—a couple of them had graduated, but we used that core group and then we expanded that core group—got all those students together. Then basically from that grew into involving the community.

So we had a series of visioning sessions, and in those visioning sessions we had facilitators from Gordie Frasier, the Traverse Group, myself, there were one or two others—I'm trying to remember exactly all the organizations we had at the table—and experienced people in how to structure and organize and facilitate that kind of a process, and the end result of that was that we created a redevelopment document, not a site plan, because now Tom Bloom has an organization called E2 that's actually working on taking those visioning



documents and putting them into an actual site plan. But conceptually, a visionary site plan, if you will—a redevelopment plan that captured all the information and suggestions on the redevelopment of Tar Lake.

The neat thing about involving the students was that they kept the adults honest. It was so great to have innocent... “Why don’t we have a drive-in theater? We want a skateboard park!”

So basically what we did then...and I’ve got a copy of the redevelopment plan and all the paperwork that I brought. So EPA said right from the very beginning, “OK, there are some restrictions on this property. The fenced-in area where the bowl was and that whole area where the Superfund money was spent will always be restricted in its reuse as recreational.” Tom and EPA and we had been working now for over five years to de-list the back portion—what was called the East Tailing Area, which is about 80 acres of the 89 acres that my non-profit owns. Our hope is—and in fact I just talked to Tom last week—I’m real confident we’re on track with... That will be a residential reuse because that was never contaminated in the first place. The Antrim Iron Works used it to store their hardwoods. They never had a production facility—they never contaminated that part. So the fenced-in area where the bowl is will always be restricted to recreational or light industrial reuse, unlike the other part that will be residential.

So through the visioning sessions, we basically put some baseline information out there. “OK, here’s the restrictions, but you’ve got 89 acres, and contiguous with that you’ve got 64 acres of township property. Contiguous with that as you go further east, you’ve got 40 acres that the county owns that’s been identified as industrial part. Think about that as 200 acres, and dream your dreams. This is a catalyst to change your entire community—its history, its culture, its future. Dream anything you want to dream.” And all of that went into that document. Along with that, the Traverse Group and Gordie Frasier and those organizations that were brought to the table to facilitate that also incorporated the beginnings of a site plan. There were actual identification of who the property owners are, a plot map of how the property is laid out, how it would be de-listed, etc. So what we’ve got then is a document that is the community’s vision of its preferred future.

EPA Interviewer: There’s been a lot of concern expressed by people in letting a community do this themselves. That they would just go hog wild in wanting expensive things and wanting pie in the sky ideas. Talk a little bit about what is envisioned and what’s probably going to happen to this land?

Knapp: Well, first of all let me just comment. I can certainly understand that concern. However, in my experience—and again looking at this through a rural prism—number one, if I were to give any single advice to Superfund, it would be in this area, because I think that without the community’s full participation as a stakeholder and equal partner at the table in this process, Superfund does itself a tremendous disservice. It’s ultimately the community that will be the beneficiary of this process. That having been said—I even mean up to and including, I’ve asked all along to be at the table when Viacom is brought back, to be an advocate at that table. I know that’s problematic, but I think it should be right up to that level.

Having said that, my other comment is—and on your point—is that our experience in Mancelona has been that the community is fairly well-grounded. They did not come up with

grandiose [ideas]—no one suggested that we move the General Motors plant from Detroit up to Mancelona. There was not that kind of thinking. People tend to be pretty grounded in the realities of their own existence.

And as a result, we had a list of things that the community didn't want, and we had a list of things the community did want. They didn't want a repeat of the Antrim Iron Works. They didn't want dirty, heavy industry brought in, which would be very natural and make perfect sense. And that was a shorter list of things they didn't want. They didn't want anything that was going to re-contaminate the environment. They didn't want anything that was going to negatively impact the groundwater. They wanted good quality jobs, not pie in the sky, but they didn't want somebody coming in and doing what the Antrim Iron Works did and have them work for two weeks and not be paid a living wage.

And then on the list of things they did want, they wanted things that I think, quite frankly, are very congruent with EPA's green philosophy. They wanted green space; they wanted hiking and biking trails on the whole recreation area. They wanted a park; they wanted activities for kids and families in that area—skateboard park. The kids wanted the drive-in theaters—things that you would want and expect for a community to want. On the back side they wanted things like mixed use and affordable housing. They wanted hiking and biking trails from that east tailing area back to light industry on the industrial park and the township property so that it would become a mini-model community, kind of a self-contained community. So you'd have—say on 131—you might have some commercial retail. Behind that you would have green space and recreation that would open up to the middle area, which would be low and moderate and affordable housing mixed. They'd be able to immediately access the recreation area in Tar Lake that would be an aesthetically pleasing thing looking out to the 131 corridor from those housing. Then on the other side of the housing would be hiking and biking trails to go back to these light industries that would be on the township and the industrial park property. That was their vision. And it's a vision that we're...

EPA Interviewer: And it's pretty well grounded?

Knapp: Pretty well grounded. Nothing that can't be achieved with a lot of hard work.

EPA Interviewer: Let me ask you: is there something that you would identify as the highpoint of your involvement thus far in this whole thing?

Knapp: Well, I'll tell you the first thing that comes to my mind, because that's usually what it is. I remember standing on the Tar Lake property with the Viacom consultant I mentioned earlier. His name is not coming quickly to mind but it probably will.

EPA Interviewer: Herb Moyer?

Knapp: No, remember I mentioned that Viacom's paid \$1.5 million to do their own investigation? Well, they hired an environmental consultant to do all that work.

EPA Interviewer: OK.

Knapp: I'm trying to remember his name. But he literally built a consulting firm around—his first contract was with Viacom. This guy was really interesting, brilliant guy. He and Ralph Dollhopf were almost on the same plane in terms of their intellectual capacity, and I have a tremendous respect for Ralph and got to know this guy a little less. But he and I were standing on the Tar Lake property, and he had just gotten off a plane from California. We're standing on the property, and he looked at me and he said, "I want you to understand that we are probably standing over one of the largest fresh water aquifers in the entire world." He said, "I just got off a plane from California. There are communities in California that are piping through this elaborate system, shipping water down from the mountains at absolutely outrageous costs. People spending huge amounts of money on water. And we're standing over one of the most precious resources on the planet."

And that gave birth to my vision about groundwater protection and the importance of the creation of Mancelona Water Sewer Authority not just to provide potable water, but to protect. That's how I got so passionate about the TCE plume—and we'll talk about that hopefully before we're done—about protecting groundwater. The MDEQ—let's say, just for purposes of discussion, seven or eight years later from that conversation—estimated—I created another grassroots advocacy group, not dissimilar to the BAT, to find solutions and get funds to remediate the TCE plume. I called it Acute Antrim County United Through Ecology. That group has focused solely on the TCE plume. MDEQ has currently spent \$4.5 million of its own money investigating, and they will be making recommendations on the solutions related to the TCE plume. They report to the Acute coalition quarterly their data and the results of their study, which is ongoing. About four or five months ago, seven years after my conversation with this gentleman from the organization that I can't remember—after he made the comment about we're standing over one of the largest fresh water and most precious resources on the planet—seven years later at a quarterly report at Acute, MDEQ told us that the TCE plume was affecting 10 to 20 trillion gallons of groundwater.

EPA Interviewer: Oh my.

Knapp: The Great Lakes states as I learned later...I came to Traverse City here about four years ago and our U.S. Congressman Bart Stupak—who's been a tremendous help to us along with EPA and everything that we've discussed to this point—made a speech and he said, I heard this for the first time then and I've repeated it several times since, that the Great Lakes states contain one-fifth of the entire world's supply of fresh water.

EPA Interviewer: Oh my.

Knapp: So the Great Lakes states contain one-fifth of the world's entire supply of fresh water. The next statement he made was that by the year 2017, fresh water will be the most precious commodity on the planet—and I assume that he was including oil in that equation. And that—when that gentleman and I were standing on Tar Lake, we were standing over one of the largest freshwater aquifers in the world—it stands to reason to me that this is a pretty important mission: to protect that for future generations. Just as you and I discussed earlier, if EPA's mission ultimately is to protect the planet, protecting the planet absolutely has to include protecting our most vital resource, which is our fresh water. We can't exist as a species, nor can any other on this planet, without fresh water. So in my vision of what has evolved in Mancelona has now included a much broader vision of protecting groundwater, and what a precious resource we have right here where you and I are sitting.

EPA Interviewer: Well, Superfund often is referred to—or we often discover—as the hole in the donut. You come across something that’s highly toxic, and it gets on the National Priorities List, and it’s this one little site. And then as folks come in, as you have, and they leverage funding and they get other things going, they discover that there’s a hole donut out there, like the TCE plume, that needs to be corrected. It seems like this is sort of a classic example of Superfund being the hole in the donut and the catalyst for a lot of other things to happen.

Knapp: I couldn’t agree with you more. If you think about this whole story since we began, had it not been for Mary Tierney and Rob McLeod, had it not been for the existence of Superfund, had it not been for EPA and its resources, none of this would have happened. That’s the beginning and that’s the end of the story, really.

EPA Interviewer: That’s really interesting. In all of this, you’re still very excited, and here it is seven or eight years after you started getting involved. Was there a low point? Was there a really frustrating time that you had to deal with, and how did you deal with it?

Knapp: There have been continuous frustrations. It’s almost as if they’re never not there. I mentioned the resistance and the apathy and the lack of capacity of the local elected officials, the community itself. That’s always been a frustration, and it’s almost as if all these state and federal resources and accretion of these non-profits and all these wonderful things that have happened, at some level have happened despite the community. And I want to quickly say behind that that it’s also not true in the same breath. There are significant portions of that community that have been engaged, who have been irrevocably changed for the better, and who are becoming more and more empowered to make more demands on their local units of government. I believe that this entire process—going all the way back to the beginning of Tar Lake and now using that as a catalyst—it is ultimately gonna result in a complete, irrevocable evolution of that community. I truly believe that they are at a tipping point where they won’t go backwards anymore.

But it has been an incredibly difficult and frustrating journey, because every step of the... I believe personally that the most significant element of the Superfund process is to have a local champion. Without that local champion, there are just too many opportunities for Superfund to *do* the community instead of *with* the community. And it’s the “with community” that is the most difficult and frustrating and problematic, because all that change is just a day-to-day, minute-to-minute grind. I could not even begin to tell you all the incredible things.

I will share with you, just real quickly, just give you an example. I mentioned this sewer project. We’ve managed to get from U.S. Rural Development Authority, Department of Agriculture, and the Michigan Economic Development Incorporation—for an approximately \$3 million sewer project that we have completely now removed all the residents of Mancelona and only gonna serve the businesses, which is a whole story in itself—we’ve managed to get two-thirds of the founding in the form of 100 percent grants. Despite that, we are still to this day getting huge resistance from within that community, including its elected officials.

On April 13th a year ago, I stood up in front of about 250 people in this community that I have dedicated the last 10 years of my life to—and you get some sense about the passion involved and what we’ve been able to do through collaboration, my small role as an advocate and community organizer, we’ve done some pretty remarkable things. But I stood in front of 250 people in that community and if they had a rope and tar, I would have been tar and

*Superfund 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project*

feathered and hung up by the nearest tree, because they were being asked at that point to contribute as much as \$37 dollars a month to pay for their share of the sewer costs. And they absolutely were opposed to it and saw no need for it. By that time I had written letters to the editor talking about some of the things that you and I have talked about: that sewer is an important piece of the puzzle, because it will also contribute to protecting groundwater. It provides another level of infrastructure to create jobs and economic development. None of that mattered to those 250 people, many of whom were senior citizens and on fixed incomes and lived in poverty all their life. The only thing that mattered to them was that idea in their head that they were gonna have to pay \$37 a month and that they were gonna be forced to hook up to sewer. Now these are people that you could—and I'm sorry but it's true, and I've been an advocate for people in poverty issues all my professional life—but a lot of those people were the people that would think nothing about walking into a local bar on a Friday night and paying for cigarettes and beer and drop their \$37. But you tell them that they have to do something and that there's going to be a cost associated with it.

So, point being, to get back on track with your question, there have been a lot of frustrations and challenges along the way. I think in the end it's important to have a local community champion and somebody that understands that it's through collaboration and facilitation—and that you have to have a code of ethics that go along with that. You cannot do to people. No matter how painful it is, you've got to do it with them, because in the end... Like the sewer project, it's going to go up for a referendum on February 28th. So we've got another whole... Even though all the grant money is secured, the project is ready to go, the school and the business will be the only beneficiaries, the only people that paid for it were the village residents—the voters in that community are gonna be ones that ultimately decide the fate of it. So now we're going through another whole level of educating these people. I ran into somebody yesterday in a local restaurant. He said, "I was adamantly opposed to this sewer project, and I was one of the people that came out there and tried to lynch you on April 13th." He said, "Now you've taken the residents out of it, you've got all this grant money, the business people want it." He said, "I'm for it." I thought, my god. But that's an example. It's a day-to-day, minute-to-minute... So the frustrations have always been there.

EPA Interviewer: Yeah. [*Laughing*] Boy, it sounds like big ones and always right on the cliff, right on the edge. If you could have changed one thing about Superfund in all of this, what would that have been?

Knapp: The first thing that comes to my mind is the word bureaucracy. But in all honesty, I have to be thoughtful. I'm gonna think this through out loud as I say this to you. On one hand, to be critical, I think the Superfund process is just agonizing slow and terribly burdened with bureaucracy. On the other hand, looking at it through the lens of what I just said—doing *with* instead of *to* the community—had this process moved any faster, I think opportunities would have been missed. Things would not have happened, and the thoroughness of the process would have left a lot out. So on one hand, I'm sort of critical of the bureaucracy and the slowness of the process. On the other hand, I don't think that in the end I would advocate anything radically different than what it is.

The one thing that I will say though is that—and I think this is probably unique, well I hope it's unique to Region 5 and our specific circumstances—I mentioned earlier about a potential SEPP and getting Viacom back to the table. It is our hope and dream that in the event that EPA gets Viacom back to the table, and in the event that Viacom agrees to a final

settlement—50 percent or some portion of the \$10 million—and as part of that negotiation, I'm given an opportunity or you or anybody is given the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the community that instead of that money going into Washington, that it's invested back in the community. What we need desperately is money for this sewer project. As the sewer system is currently designed, it does not extend down to Tar Lake, because we had to remove that because of all the local resistance. So we need about a half a million to \$1 million—assuming that the referendum passes—to extend that main core of the sewer system down to Tar Lake and then down the road to the industrial park. Without that, redevelopment of those properties is practically nonexistent.

Having said that, my criticism of Region 5 EPA—and it's an internal problem and Tom Bloom and I have talked about this at length. Mike Northridge and I have talked about this at length. I have not gone to our Congressman, but Tom and I have talked about strategies that whereby at some point I would. Apparently the EPA attorney assigned to Tar Lake, a fellow by the name of Terry Stanuch is bound and determined and his entire philosophic and pragmatic focus is on recovery and not redevelopment. Apparently there's a philosophic shift that is still in the transition stages within EPA and certainly EPA Region 5. So Tom and Terry Stanuch, who's the EPA attorney out of Region 5 that's working on the Tar Lake project, have apparently been in heated debates. Tom and his boss and Terry Stanuch's boss [have] apparently been in heated debate. Terry's whole philosophy and his whole focus is on recovery—up to and including, by the way, suing CRD for recovery. I have no money. [Laughing] So if EPA wants to come in here and sue my non-profit to recover, all they're going to recover is what's left of their TAG grants. So if he wants to sue CRD, OK Terry, come right on ahead. I'd be happy to give you the 20 bucks in my checking account. [Laughing] So up to...including suing CRD at the expense of not going after Viacom to seek recovery from them, and to reinvest that money in the form of a SEPP in the community. So, that is the single biggest impediment to the entire Superfund redevelopment process. I am very critical and very angry, not of EPA, not of Superfund, not of EPA Washington or EPA Region 5. I am very critical of Terry Stanuch and his obstinate and belligerent attempts to seek recovery from a little non-profit that only grew to help that community and has been a collaborative partner with EPA and MDEQ from day one, and [to] not go after Viacom for recovery to get a SEPP and put it back in that community. Those are my only observations.

EPA Interviewer: Certainly articulate. [Laughing] You've been involved in the program about eight or nine years. Would you like to talk about changes you've seen in Superfund, either for better or for worse? I think you may have just cited one that was for the better here and for the worse here.

Knapp: Well, it's probably going to be a very limited observation because, fortunately or unfortunately, almost 100 percent of my time has been spent on the ground in this little tiny rural community, and as a result you become somewhat parochial and isolated in your vision. But that having been said, the few opportunities that I have had go to Brownfields conferences—I've spoken at a couple of them, and I've always felt extremely honored. No one would be able to find Mancelona. I've just been sincerely and seriously impressed. People like Suzanne Coll and Suzanne Wells and yourself and Tom and Ralph, everybody that I've had contact with in my little world, I have nothing but good things to say about EPA and Superfund and the importance and vital role that it plays. And my observation is this. If we look at Superfund through the lens of our response to the downside of the industrial revolution in this country—'cause the upside is very clear—but the downside is this legacy  
*Superfund 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project*

of this contamination and these toxic sites and groundwater contamination, all the things that we've talked about...

...Kind of looking at Mancelona through a rural prism. If you look at that as a tipping point, as a way to compensate for the citizens of the past and to get us on the right track with protecting this planet and putting that in balance with economic development so that it's not a competitive thing; it's not an "either or" thing. It's the private sector and government working in tandem to create jobs and do community and economic development and create a better and technological future for our children and a legacy for them. It's so vital that we do that while protecting and preserving the environment. That's my observation about Superfund. And I can't think of a more important mission of the Federal Government than that. I can't. I'm very sincere about that, and I've had the opportunity to participate in a lot of other governmental initiatives and I just think it's vital.

EPA Interviewer: Well, thank you. I'm done with everything that was on my list, and I wonder if there's anything else you'd like to talk about?

Knapp: Only that in all sincerity, I want to tell you how humbled and honored I am to have been included in this process. And I sincerely hope that for all of the other 38 people and myself that something comes out of this in the way of a small message to EPA and the Federal Government on the importance of all this work.

EPA Interviewer: Well, thank you. I hope your experience is heard by a lot of people through the Web. Thanks very much.

Knapp: You're very welcome.