

*Will it hurt farmland?*

# York County farmers fight chemical dump

BY JOYCE BUPP

Staff Correspondent

SEVEN VALLEYS —

Traveling over hilly Panther Road on his way from one farm to another early this Spring, Nelson Brenneman, Spring Grove R1 dairy and crops farmer, spied a well-drilling rig in a field just off the dirt roadway.

"It was set-up on another neighbor's property. That neighbor was alerted, and they were asked to get off," recalled Brenneman. The drilling rig disappeared.

Then some weeks later, while hauling manure from the family's 50-head milking herd, Brenneman spotted a stranger checking wells on adjacent property. Questioning eventually led to the revelation that a permit to dump industrial

wastes nearby had been issued by the state's Department of Environmental Resources to Stabatrol, Inc., of Norristown, on December 17, 1979.

The dump site is part of more than 500 acres owned by the York County Industrial Development Authority and leased to Sunny Farms, Ltd. Sunny Farms is a subsidiary of Stabatrol, and formerly operated a solid waste landfill and has been grain farming the tillable land on the property. At one time, a cattle feedlot was also in operation near the ridge of the hillside farmland.

But the land that immediately bounds the Brenneman dairy farm, and where the drilling rig was

actually supposed to be when Brenneman first spotted it, is a plot of over 80 acres earmarked for disposal use by Liqwacon, Inc.

Liqwacon, officials later found, had applied for an industrial waste site permit in May, but licensing has not yet been granted. Additionally, Allied Chemical has plans to use a portion of the site for burial of their industrial chemical wastes.

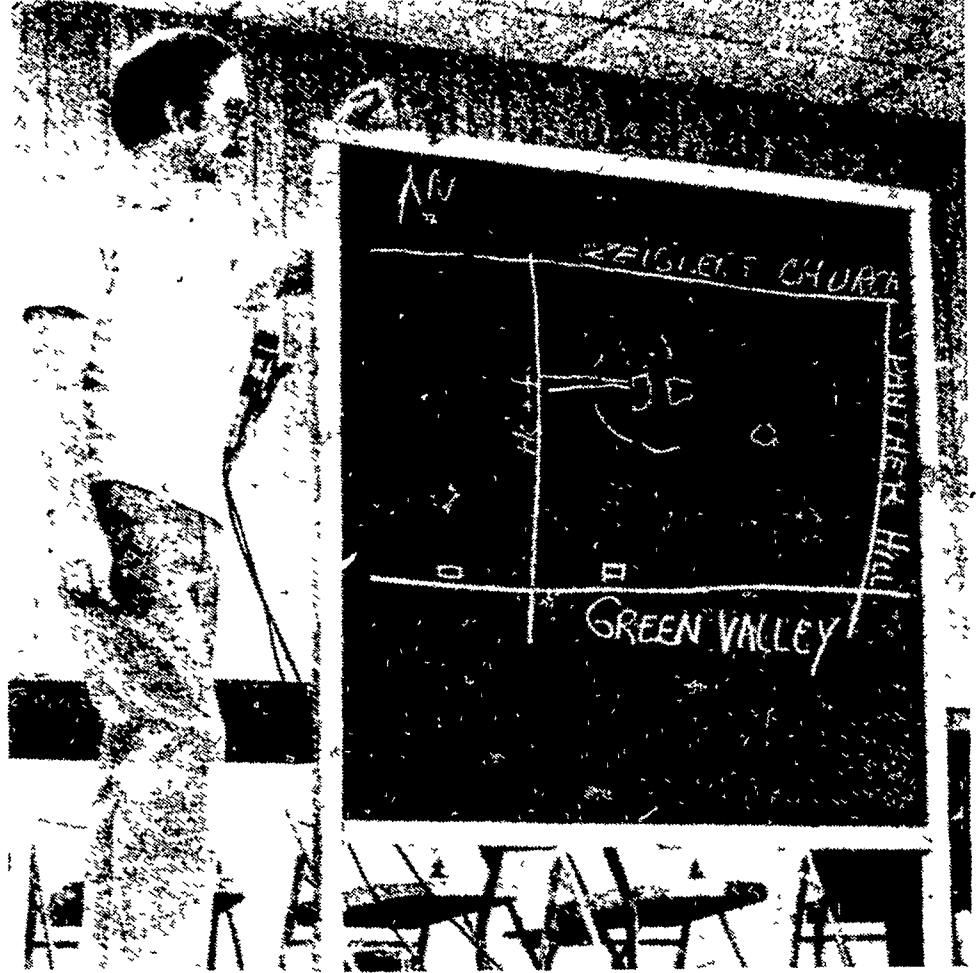
It was near the end of July when farmers, residents, North Codorus township officials, and legislators finally dug up enough details to begin piecing together the bits of the plan. Announcement of the permit had been made, DER and company officials said, in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, a state-issued publication of state government activities.

A letter of notification was also to have been sent to township officials, but allegedly went to a supervisor out of office for the past two years. That letter has not yet been found.

Because a subdivision plan of the property had never been submitted for township approval, the municipality sought and won an injunction on August 21 from York County Courts to halt further dumping planning. At that court hearing, Stabatrol allegedly agreed to submit subdivision plans. Contrary to a report last week in Lancaster Farming, the township still has not yet received that property division plan.

After that plan is received, the township has ninety days to take action, and dumping could begin immediately after approval. In order to stop construction of roadways onto the property from the township's Hoff Road, which bisects the dumping sites, the dirt road had been temporarily closed by the North Codorus officials.

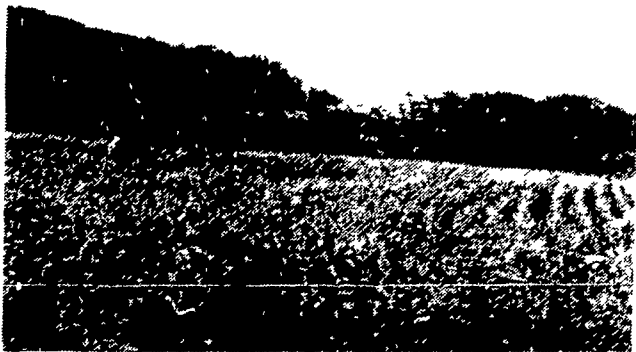
Farm owners have teamed with their non-farm neighbors into a group they've labeled OUCH, an acronym for Opposing Unnecessary Chemical Hazards. A fund for legal defense has been set up at the Jefferson branch of



Farm owner Stephen Marsh is president of OUCH, Inc., the citizens' group opposing the granting of permits for burial toxic chemical wastes.



Stabatrol has begun working on roads to haul trucks loaded with barrels of toxic wastes into the treatment and above-ground storage site.



Corn waves over a former solid waste landfill site operated in the mid-70's by Sunny Farms. Just beyond the field, at the site of the old cattle feedlot sheds, farmers say the barrels of toxic chemicals will be stored on skids above ground. When sufficient quantities are gathered, and the soil conditions are correct for burial, the neutralized wastes will be deposited in underground vaults.



Hoff Road, which runs through the Stabatrol dumpsite, had been temporarily closed by supervisors. Farmers in the area point to the dirt throughway's foot-deep gullies as one example of the washout and runoff that comes down from the hillside farmland.

Peoples' Bank of Glen Rock, and a public information and petition-signing campaign against the waste site is underway.

The York County Farmers Association has been called into the fray and, in Brenneman's words, is "deeply involved."

Irate farm families are especially questioning the methods of "neutralization and encapsulation" disposals that are planning for the waste burial. Stabatrol has patented a method of "vaulting", which the July-August issue of Next magazine labeled a "poisonous cement sandwich."

First, a site must be found where the soil is compatible for mixing with Portland Cement. In excavated pits, the cement would be mixed with soil to form "soil cement," preferably two layers, each six inches thick. That soil cement layer is then covered with a waterproof sheet of a polyethylene type material.

Treated, neutralized waste is dumped into the prepared vault and covered over with another piece of plastic sheeting, and then sealed at

the edges. Another layer of the cement mix goes on top, covered over with layers of earth, about three feet deep.

Eventually, the land is to be restored to its present use: growing corn and other farm crops.

Allied Chemical's plans center on neutralizing the wastes, mixing with dirt and cement, and then burying blocks of the hardened sludge. Liqwacon, whose land drains toward Nelson Brenneman's 1165 home-farm acres in cattle feed crops, would store neutralized wastes in a one-eighth to one-fourth thick PVC liner in sand-lined holes.

The companies involved generate heavy metal wastes like lead, chromium mercury, cadmium, copper hydroxides, and possibly such toxic materials as cyanide and arsenic.

Although the systems are to be "fail-safe" against leakage, Stephen Marsh, Seven Valleys R1, sees it differently. Marsh is the president of OUCH, Inc., and describes himself as a part-time farmer.

"Three Mile Island taught me what fail-safe means,"

he grimly noted while heading up a citizen's meeting of some 300 disgruntled residents in the Seven Valleys Fire Hall last week. "The long range knowledge on this problem is nonexistent."

One aggravated citizen at that meeting suggested that the area's groundhogs wouldn't be deterred by the shallow soil covering required over the buried wastes. An even greater worry is that the area has experienced two minor earthquakes in recent years, although neither was strong enough to have registered on the Richter scale.

Farmers are angry that DER says the site is not chiefly farmland when it's been exclusively used for crop production for the past several years, and the land surrounding it is considered prime farmland.

Marsh, who's spent most of his spare hours for the last month doing leg work on the dump problem, lives across Green Valley just down the hill from the Stabatrol planned waste burial site. He farms 35 acres in corn and

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Nelson Brenneman points out to his wife, Judy, left, and daughter, Esther, the gap in the woods where the proposed dump site of Liqwacon, Inc., would bound their dairying operation property.