

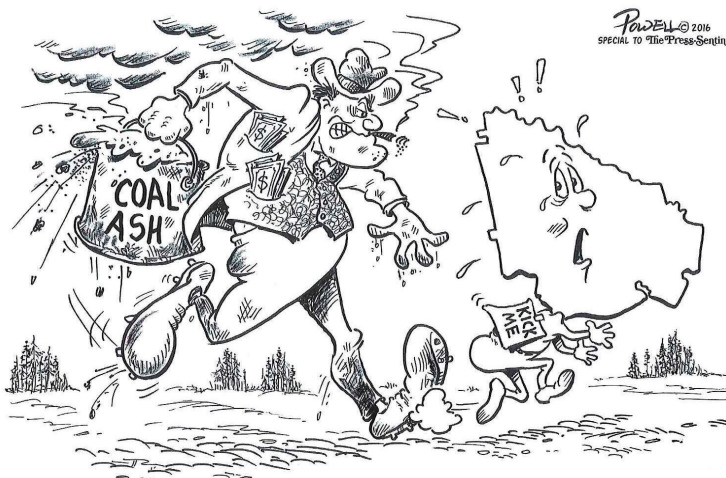
We must act now!



"Someday, son, all this will be yours."



"If it's so good, how come they have to pay people to take it?"



Your voice needs to be heard

If Republic Services, a multi-billion dollar waste-management company, gets its four-line rail-spur application approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southeast Georgia's environment will be endangered forever. Republic owns a 2,000-plus acre landfill in Wayne County. The proposed rail spur would destroy 25 acres of wetlands and open the door for up to 100 railcars of toxic coal ash per day. What happens upstream in Wayne County directly affects Georgia's Golden Isles.

Public outcry will have a critical impact on the Corps' decision. You are urged to write your objections to Republic's proposal to: **Mr. John W. Derinzy, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 100 W. Oglethorpe Ave., Savannah, GA 31401-3604** or e-mail: CESAS-RD@usace.army.mil. The deadline is April 5, 2016.

No, thanks, we don't want your toxic trash

By Dink NeSmith

If a sledgehammer had been slammed on my thumb, I couldn't have yelped any louder. And that was just thinking of the possibility that coal ash, a life-threatening pollutant, was going to be dumped into Wayne County.

No.

No.

No.

And *hell* no!

Pardon my language. But if you aren't cussin' mad about the idea of our backyard being turned into a dump so someone else can get rid of what they don't want in their backyard, *well*, what does it take to get smoke coming out of your ears?

Before you go to sleep tonight, you need to peruse an article in *Environmental Health News* by Brian Bienkowski. (<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2016/jan/coal-ash-environmental-justice-epa-civil-rights>) If you don't have Internet service, stop by *The Press-Sentinel*. We will give you a copy of the story. Here's a hint—from *Environmental Health News*—of what should give you nightmares:

"There are about 200 sites nationwide where coal ash has tainted air and water. The most recent disaster was in 2014 at Duke Energy's Dan River Steam Station in North Carolina where 39,000 tons of coal ash and 27 million gallons of wastewater gushed into the Dan River. ... Catchment areas leave those (people) nearby subject to leaks, discharges and spills."

So I ask, "Why would we want our quality of life and our natural resources put at that kind of risk?"

The company proposing to contaminate our county with this nasty stuff is Central Virginia Properties of Spartanburg, S.C. The company's application to the U.S. Corps of Engineers seeks to haul in trainloads of coal ash and pile it in an area between U.S. 301 South, Broadhurst, and U.S. 84, Screven. Let's hope our federal government is looking out for us. Let's also hope the feds will

listen: "We don't want our lives *and* our environment endangered by carpetbagger-like profiteers."

Wayne County commissioners were unaware and blindsided by this proposal, until *The Press-Sentinel* shined some light into this dark and dangerous corner. Your newspaper's roots go back to its 1865 founding. You have our promise that we will do everything we can to follow this issue and keep you informed, now and for the next 151 years. We are pleased our commissioners are rallying to see what they can learn. I hope this frightening plan gets road-blocked before it's too late.

Are you fired up yet?

If not, read John Grisham's *Gray Mountain*. It's a novel, but the facts are scary, *very* scary. The arrival of coal ash in our community brings no good news, even if it meant 500 jobs. And it won't. What they want is to dump on us and cram their pockets with cash. With potential new neighbors like that, who needs enemies?

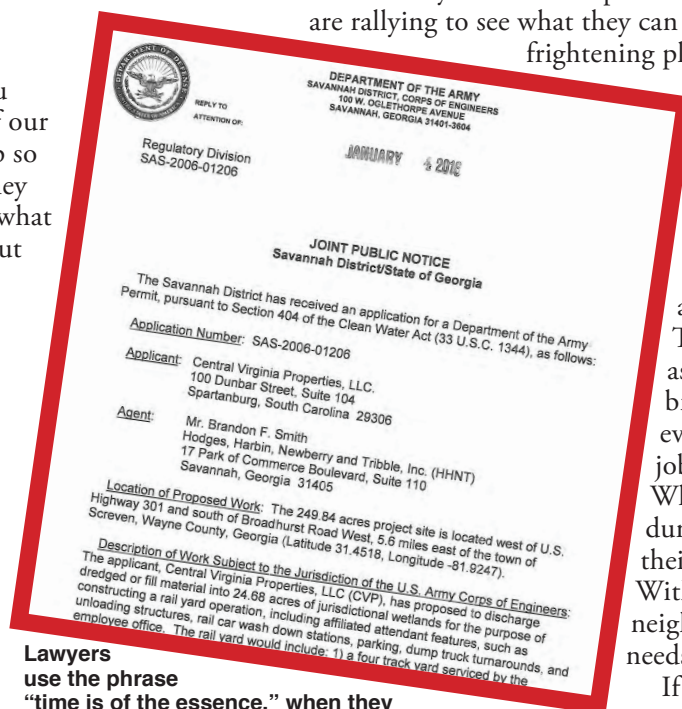
If Republic Services, operator of the Broadhurst Landfill, is behind this ploy to bring these harmful materials here, we need to know. And if that's the truth, shame on Republic. The possibility of dumping coal ash is a bait-and-switch tactic that makes no sense at all for the citizens of Wayne County.

Evangelist Billy Sunday once said, "*Very few souls are won after 20 minutes.*" I'm done preaching—for now. And I hope you, too,

are mad enough to make even a preacher want to cuss. But let's don't just fuss *and* cuss. Let's do whatever it takes to stop these unwelcomed trainloads of polluted filth.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(For more commentaries, go to www.dinknesmith.com)



Lawyers

use the phrase

"time is of the essence," when they want to hurry a process. Time is of the essence if you are interested in commenting on the proposed dumping of dangerous coal ash in Wayne County. If you'd like there to be a public hearing before Central Virginia Properties, LLC's application is acted upon by the Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, you need to write before Feb. 4:

Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, ATTN: John W. Dreinzy, 100 W. Oglethorpe Ave., Savannah, GA 31401-3604.

As reported earlier in *The Press-Sentinel*:

"All coastal projects are filed at the Brunswick Department of Natural Resources office and can be requested from Bradley Smith at Bradley.Smith@dnr.ga.gov. Any person who desires to comment, object or request a public hearing is required to do so in writing and to state the reasons or basis of objections—also within 30 days after the state's receipt of the application."

Can you smell money swirling about landfill plan?

By Dink NeSmith

If your nose is wrinkling over the landfill controversy in the south end of our county, keep sniffing. You'll smell more than the mounds of big-city garbage and coal ash that could be headed our way, trainload after trainload. What you are whiffing is the influence of money at work.

Unless the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers halts Republic Services' application to transform one of our wetlands into a massive railyard, our people and our environment are about to get railroaded into a gamble that isn't worth any amount of money.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I know. There are state and federal regulations that are designed to protect us. Up in Michigan, ask the people of Flint how much good those laws did in keeping their drinking water safe.

"But that's different," you argue.

Not really. Contaminated water is contaminated water.

The Broadhurst Environmental Landfill—operated by Republic Services—sits atop two of the best underground water sources anywhere: the Florida and Ocala aquifers. Those enormous underground streams are out of sight, but they should never be out of mind.

What's very much in sight of the landfill are the headwaters of the Penholloway Creek. That black-water stream crosses under U.S. 301 South and weaves its way through the wilderness to the Altamaha River that drains into the Atlantic Ocean. The *Titanic* was "unsinkable," but it sank. One puncture or breach in the government-approved, not-supposed-to-leak pits in Broadhurst, and neither apologies nor fines will make the contamination go away.

So how did we happen to get a private regional landfill in Wayne County? Your nose will lead you to the answer. It's the smell of money—*lots of it*—that seduced our commissioners in 1992 to strike a deal with Addington Environmental. Rather than having to hassle with our garbage, an outside waste management company got a contract to handle it for us. What

seemed to be a windfall for Wayne also opened the door for outside garbage to be dumped here—for a fee.

Have you driven past our Mount Trashmore on the Broadhurst-to-Screven road? If the Corps approves the railyard application, we could have a mountain range of trash in the piney flat woods. We will likely become the city dump for the likes of New York, Boston and Philadelphia. And that's not to speak of the trainloads of coal ash coming from such places as North Carolina that woke up and prohibited coal ash from being deposited in their open containment ponds. Georgia needs to get busy on similar legislation.

In the meantime, Republic—under the name of Central Virginia Properties, LLC—almost sneaked

past the community with its Corps of Engineers application. Instead, a pesky reporter from *The Press-Sentinel* started asking questions. Last week, Republic met—behind closed doors—with three of our commissioners, hoping to seduce them to get on board with their landfill expansion plans.

I am pleased Chairman Kevin Copeland and Vice Chairman Ralph Hickox have been vehement in their opposition. I am

anxious to see how commissioners Boot Thomas, Shag Wright and Mike Roberts stand on this. Republic figures the promise of trainloads of money into public coffers will make Wayne County accept the risks—now and forever.

Here's what I said to one commissioner: "If you and I wanted to *just* make money, and we were willing to gamble with our freedom and reputations, we could peddle pornography or traffic dope. Until we got caught, we'd be getting filthy rich. But no, thanks! I feel the same way about taking environmental risks that will affect generation after generation."

No, sir!

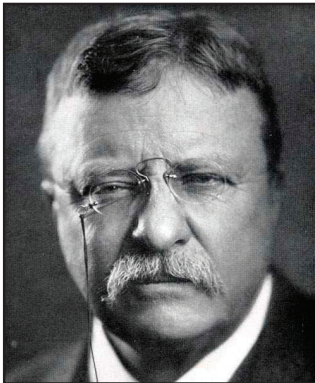
You could stack money as tall as that trash mountain at Broadhurst Environmental Landfill, and the deal would still stink. And I hope that's what your nose tells you, too.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(For more commentaries, go to www.dinknesmith.com)

"The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

Theodore Roosevelt



Will Wayne become a trash can for East Coast?

By Dink NeSmith

Back in the pre-PVC days, when plumbers toted monkey wrenches, Junior Burns took me to school. Cranking a galvanized pipe, underneath our 100-year-old house in Jesup, Junior lectured: “The first two things you learn in plumbing are that the hot water goes on the left, and the stuff flows downhill.” Junior is gone, but those rules still live.

If Republic Services gets its wish, mega tons of stuff—municipal garbage and toxic coal ash—will be flowing downhill from the East Coast into our piney woods. We already have a mountain of garbage at the private Broadhurst Environmental Landfill. If Republic’s application to destroy a wetland tract and install a massive rail spur is approved, we could have a mountain range on its 2,000-plus acres.

Let me repeat: 2,000-plus acres in leaks-like-a-sieve sandy soil, near the headwaters of the Penholloway Creek that flows into the Altamaha River that empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Republic tells us its landfill liners won’t leak. Won’t leak, ever?

In 1991 and 1992, when our commissioners were seduced by the promise of big, bonus money into the county coffers, do you think they ever imagined the possibility of a 2,000-plus-acres national landfill? The *easy thing* would be to lambast their lack of foresight. That won’t help. The unintended consequences are the same.

In 2016, the *hard thing* is what we must do if we care about our families and generations to come. We must stand our ground and resist Republic’s urge to make us the East Coast’s trash can. There’s money in garbage disposal, and there’s even more money in getting rid of coal ash. We cannot become environmental prostitutes, accepting Republic’s payments for dumping toxic trash on us. Shame on us if we sell out for any amount of money. The future of our heirs should be *priceless*.

And then there’s the railroad that stands to reap rewards for our misfortune, should the Corps of Engineers permit Republic’s rail-spur request. Jesup, originally known as Station Number 7, was labeled as a town built by trains. Wouldn’t it be a travesty if a railroad profited by making our community sick from hauling in unwanted pollution? We are proud of our rail heritage, and we need rail service. We also need the railroads to look out for our best interest, too.

There’s a long list of bothersome issues in this scheme to bring unhealthy waste into Wayne County. Near the top is how a taxpayer-funded watchdog, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), could be

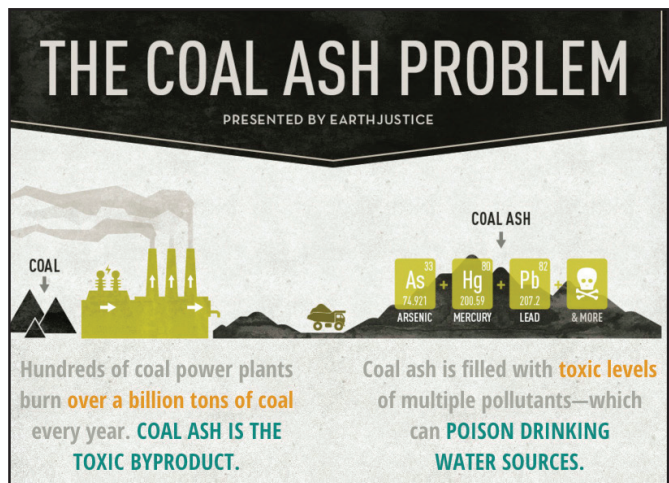
induced to reclassify coal ash as nonhazardous. Coal ash contains a string of toxic components such as mercury, arsenic and lead. Ask the poisoned people in Flint, Mich., if lead in their water is nonhazardous.

After nearly 50 years of watching laws ground into being in sausage-mill fashion, I have a hunch as to why the EPA did what they did last fall. Lobbyists for coal-ash creators, with bottomless expense accounts, got their lawyers to “help” draft more lenient rules for coal-ash disposal. Money talks in Washington and Atlanta, just as it did here in the 1990s. In the meantime, perhaps the EPA would demonstrate how safe coal ash is by sprinkling some on their breakfast cereal and stirring it into their morning coffee.

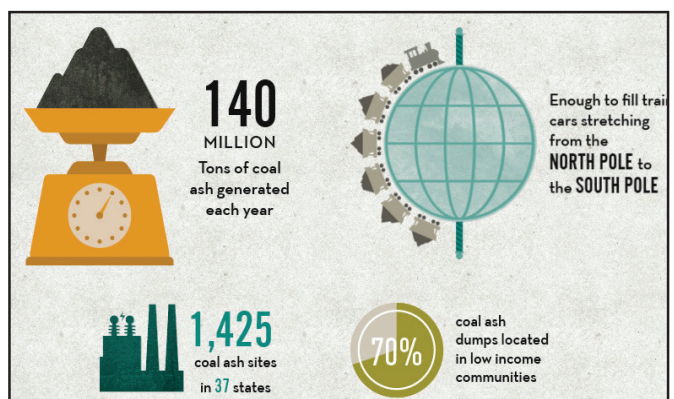
Don’t expect the EPA to do that, but you can expect Republic to find a way to spin its story of how buying 2,000-plus acres wasn’t to create an East Coast trash can in Wayne County. Heed Junior’s words, if not mine. If we don’t throw a monkey wrench into Republic’s plan, the toxic stuff will be flowing downhill by the *trainloads*.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(For more commentaries, go to www.dinknesmith.com)



Infographics by EARTHJUSTICE. Reprinted with permission. Check out its website: EarthJustice.org.



Semantics can't twist Wayne's danger of becoming a toxic-trash dump

By Dink NeSmith

Semantics. That's the weapon Republic Services is wielding in the backlash over toxic trash that has been dumped in the Broadhurst Environmental Landfill. "There has not been a spill," Republic's public-relations consultant contends. Spill or leak, dangerous stuff seeped into Wayne County's soil and put our good people and our environment at risk.

Semantics is a fancy way to spin words. Big companies and politicians are masters at semantic warfare. But here's the way I see this hair-splitting of words, as it regards to the health of our community. You can put a tutu on a pig, but you won't make it a ballerina. After all the wordplay posturing, you will still have pork chops with four hooves and a curly tail.

Many people like pork chops, bacon, sausage, barbecue, and, by all means, an Easter ham. I know of no one who would lick their lips to eat hog

meat that, in its previous life, had wallowed in beryllium, mercury, lead or arsenic-tainted mud or slurped Penholloway Creek water that was downstream of a coal-ash dump.

Wayne County, I love you. From the moment Dr. Alvin Leaphart Sr. grabbed me by my heels and spanked my bottom in 1948, I have been grateful my first breath was taken on the corner of Macon and Cherry streets in downtown Jesup. And there's nowhere in the world that I travel that I don't let people know where my roots are planted. I could live in Hong Kong, and if someone asked me where I'm from, I'd say—*proudly*—"Jesup, Ga."

I love my hometown, its people and its environment. When our business grew over multiple states, our family sat around the supper table—night after night—discussing and praying about our future. Alan, Emily and Eric were still at home, and I didn't want to miss one moment of those years. Unanimously, we voted to relo-

cate to Athens as our geographic center.

After I left Ninth Street, my parents joked, "We see more of you now than we did when you lived across the street." That was true. And 26 years later, I spend as much time as possible in Wayne County. I'd rather be with family and friends in the Altamaha River Swamp than anywhere on the globe. I can walk you to my favorite spot, overlooking an elegant cypress tree that was growing long before Christopher Columbus discovered America. And some of the cypress trees could have been here when Jesus prayed in the Garden of

Gethsemane.

No one in our family is expecting a trust fund to be left for them. However, my dream has been to leave them a slice of Wayne County's heaven, along the Altamaha, that is permanently protected through conservation easements. This way, 100 years from now, heirs can't be tempted or seduced by oil wells, strip mines or landfills.

My people, like many of yours, came from hardscrabble upbringings during the

Great Depression. My widow-farmer grandmother was as earthy *and* country as a bowl of collard greens. I adored her. And when I was about 7, we were standing at her Baker County barnyard gate. After streaming strawberry snuff over the fence, Nanny pointed to a bantam rooster defending his hens from a bigger rooster.

"That banty rooster reminds me of my daddy, your great-granddaddy," she said. "*He was little, but he was as tough as a pine knot. Nobody bullied him. If somebody tried to push him around, he'd pick up a lever (stick) and knock the hell out of 'em. Honey, don't ever let anybody push you around.*"

There's no way semantics can twist these words: Wayne County, I love you. And as long as Republic, a multibillion-dollar conglomerate, threatens to make our community a toxic-trash dump, I am going to be swinging my lever.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com



"You can put a tutu on a pig, but you won't make it a ballerina. After all the wordplay posturing, you will still have pork chops with four hooves and a curly tail."

Let's not get addicted to coal-ash money

By Dink NeSmith

Shhhhhh.

Listen. Over the whispering wind through the pines of Wayne County, I hear something. The sound is soft—this far from Arizona. But in my mind, the noise of clinking cocktail glasses is distinct. Bosses at Republic Services, the Phoenix-based national waste giant, have to be toasting themselves for being slick enough to slip into our community and snare a sweetheart deal—*almost* unnoticed.

Private landfill companies are notorious for targeting rural communities, hoping local decision-makers will accept “easy money” for dumping privileges. Waste-management companies have a history of preying on cash-starved, minority-dominant communities such as Uniontown, Ala. Unless we fight, Wayne County’s contaminated fate could be similar to Uniontown. Republic almost got away with the same tactic here.

“Almost” is a key word. Except for a handful of people, our community was *almost* blindsided by quiet maneuvers that *almost* railroaded our community and its environment into a dangerous spot, *almost* before we had a chance to react. Finger-pointing is an act of futility in this conspiracy-like predicament. Snookered or not, we must focus on stopping toxic coal-ash trains headed our way.

Now that public outcry has reached deafening decibels, the rumor mill has cranked up. Listen to what the fear-mongers are hurling at us:

- If Wayne County rejects the coal ash, Republic will take the waste and its millions down the road to Brantley County. Our environment will still be affected, but our next-door neighbor will get the money. In Chicken Little fashion, they are telling us that property taxes will rise if we don’t have Republic’s money. Wayne County lived without Republic money before. We can live without it again. *Boo*, that shouldn’t scare us.

- If the Wayne County commissioners oppose Republic’s railyard plan, the company will contend

the county breached its much-amended contract. If Republic wins that argument, Wayne County will be without a place to dump its trash or the money Republic pays the county to dump whatever it wants in the Broadhurst Environmental Landfill. *Boo*, that shouldn’t scare us.

- Some officials and lawyers are contending, “There’s nothing we can do. We’re handcuffed, and we can’t stop Republic’s rail-spur application.” *Boo*, that shouldn’t scare us. Republic has not been forthright with us, and there are legal chinks in this Goliath’s armor.

These rumor-propelled myths cause concern, but I am not intimidated. I think of a story about the late Erk Russell, legendary football coach. When the bald-headed defensive genius, architect of the Bulldogs’ Junkyard Dog swagger, moved from Athens to Statesboro, he huddled his Georgia Southern Eagles in a circle.

As the story goes, Erk piled a mound of white powder on a table in the middle. In his signature gruff voice, he said, “This, men, is cocaine. Drugs are dangerous. Stay away from drugs.” Curious, his team crowded in for a closer look. Then, Erk plopped a rattlesnake on the table.

Horried Eagles flew backwards. “That’s right, men,” he barked. “Cocaine will kill you, just like this rattlesnake. Stay away from both!”

Coal ash, like cocaine, in a little pile doesn’t look threatening. But if we allow Republic to dump mountains of it into our community—by the toxic trainloads, courtesy of CSX—coal ash will sink its poisonous fangs into our health forever.

If we don’t stand up to protect our people and our environment, Wayne County’s budget is destined to be addicted to coal-ash money. We’re in jeopardy of selling our souls—like the now tormented people of Uniontown—to an environmental devil—coal ash. Heaven help us if we don’t say, “*NO!*” But if we give up, *boo!*

Now, that *does* scare me.

dnesmith@cni newspapers.com



Except for a handful of people, our community was *almost* blindsided by quiet maneuvers that *almost* railroaded our community and its environment into a dangerous spot, *almost* before we had a chance to react.

Why should we trust Republic now?

By Dink NeSmith

When's the last time you took a roller-coaster ride?

Up, down, up, down and twist sideways.

Oops, I think I'm going to throw up.

Remember those feelings? That's how I feel right now about this threatening coal-ash dumping. Since I learned Republic Services was plotting to sneak a rail-spur application past the people of Wayne County, it's been an emotional roller-coaster ride.

I have never seen this many worry lines on my hometown faces. Even school-age children are asking how to help stop the dreaded trainloads of toxic coal ash. Folks, we have a crisis. It's time to plumb the depths of our minds, souls and resources to galvanize our resolve to stand up against Republic's poisonous scheme to pollute our future. The risk is too great for any amount of money.

Some days, I sense emotions are higher than high. Pure fear and determination underscore the battle cry. Other days, spirits plummet, just like a roller-coaster car rocketing out of the clouds and into an amusement-park canyon. If we plan to keep Republic from turning our community into an environmental prostitute, we might throw up in the tussle. But we cannot give up.

Republic chose one of its unknown entities, Central Virginia Properties LLC, to seek the Corps of Engineers permit to destroy wetlands for the sake of a mile-long rail spur. The proposed infrastructure will accommodate a 100-car train loaded with municipal garbage from the likes of New York City or—worse—100 cars brimming with toxic coal ash.

Just as vivid as the roller-coaster memories are Sunday school lessons about the importance of trust. One of my favorite illustrations is from Luke 16:10 (NIV): *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."*

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

--Luke 16:10 (NIV)

Eleven years ago, our leaders trusted Republic with its proposed amendments to the waste management agreement. The April 19, 2005, authority minutes state: "John Simmons explained that it has been ten years since the agreement between Solid Waste Authority, Republic and Wayne County Commissioners. Mr. Simmons says just some cleaning up, deleting clutter and streamlining has been done to the agreement and that basically nothing has changed."

Now, you tell me. Where's the truth in "basically nothing has changed?" We may have been snake-oil snookered in 2005, but nothing today suggests we trust Republic until—get this—2054. That's how long the new "cleaning-up" contract binds our county. "Deleting clutter," *baloney!* The "streamlining" is really "railroading," as in Republic's we-hope-you-don't-notice plan to pollute our community with as many as 100 railcars of coal ash per day.

And then there's Republic's infamous, don't-tell-anybody-but-the-EPD leakage of poisonous metals into our soil and groundwater several years ago. We still wouldn't have known about it if a reporter hadn't dug through 1,000 pages of EPD reports.

Thanks to Rep. Bill Werkheiser, a law is in the making to require public notice of future spill/leak mishaps. Next, wouldn't it be great if there could be a law to prohibit out-of-state coal ash from being dumped in Georgia?

While we were "trusting" Republic, it was adding another 2,000 acres to its landfill holdings. Add to that the scheme to build a railyard and bring coal ash from anywhere in the country. Until recently, most people in Wayne County—including our leadership—were clueless about the dangers of coal ash. Now, we know. Now, we have a chance to fight back.

Remember this old joke? "Do you know the difference between love and herpes? Herpes is forever." Republic "loves" Wayne County enough to inflict us with coal-ash herpes—*forever*.

Excuse me.

I think I am going to throw up.

Randall isn't only one who is worried

By Dink NeSmith

Randall Aspinwall and I go back to the glory days of The Pig. Randall and his parents, Sine and Vada, were on one side of the counter. I was on the other side, spinning on one of those tall, ruby-red, vinyl-topped stools, closest to the open pit. It was there my life-long love affair with hickory-smoked pork began. I've sampled barbecue across America. I always compare it to my first bite at the Aspinwalls' restaurant, a must-stop for travelers in U.S. 301's heyday.

And when my cell phone vibrates—flashing Randall's number—I'm eager to hear what my friend has to say. Somewhere in the conversation, The Pig will get a mention. Before long, we'll review what's happening on the Altamaha. Not too deep into the visit, we'll reminisce about our late football coach, Clint Madray.

Big Clint put hair on our teen age chests while teaching us the value of "having guts." We played better teams, but no one outhustled the Yellow Jackets. One of his make-a-man-out-of-you drills was Blood on the Moon. Players got into a down stance on either end of a 12-foot plank. When the whistle blew, the two charged each other. The object was to see who could push whom to the end of the board. "I don't want to see nothing but elbows and bleep-holes!" our coach would growl. And if somebody didn't show enough guts, he'd roar, "*Even a dead man has one more step!*"

Recently, Randall called. We warmed up on barbecue, football and river talk. Then, his voice shifted to a serious tone. "What about this coal ash?" he asked. I'm no scientist, but I told him what I had read and heard. "I'm having trouble sleeping, just thinking about how bad this will be for Wayne County," he said.

Just as his brothers, Al and Mike, were, Randall

is a gifted craftsman. Sine and Vada's boys grew up unafraid to get their hands dirty. Today, Randall, a Rayonier retiree, is one of the go-to men if you want a shallow well. Over the years, he's put down hundreds of the inexpensive water sources. "Not everybody can afford a \$5,000 deep well," he says. So, people opt for the economical solution—a shallow well.

Now, Randall frets about the contamination that could come from the Broadhurst Environmental Landfill. He fears the toxic heavy metals in coal ash will find a way into shallow-well water, the water thousands of Wayne Countians drink.

To understand how close to the surface the water table is, especially in areas such as Broadhurst, all you need is a piece of pipe and water gushing from a garden hose. In fewer minutes than feet to go down, you can wash down a shallow-well casing in a jiffy. I'm no Aspinwall, but even I have accomplished that in our sandy dirt. That proves whatever spills into our leaks-like-a-sieve soil won't take long to get into the shallow wells.

You can be confident, with the billions in resources available to Republic Services, the landfill owner has found a busload of paid experts to *tsk, tsk* at Randall's worries. He is not alone in his worries. If "money talks," big money *shouts!* I am suspicious about the apparent coziness of companies such as Republic with our government's environmental regulators. Here's an example. If I am wrong, how did *toxic* coal ash get downgraded to a nonhazardous material?

Like Randall, I'm having trouble sleeping these days. Coal ash is our "Blood on the Moon," 50 years later. But even when I die, I'll have *one more step* to fight for Wayne County.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(Visit dinknesmith.com for more commentaries.)

Now, Randall frets about the contamination that could come from the Broadhurst Environmental Landfill. He fears the toxic heavy metals in coal ash will find a way into shallow-well water, the water thousands of Wayne Countians drink.

Republic, show us that you really want to be a good neighbor

By Dink NeSmith

Thirty-two years ago, I was paddling a skiff through the swamp. Up front, 8-year-old Emily was swatting mosquitoes while shaking her pigtails and pink bows. “Daaaaaad,” she drawled, “*why does God make us have ticks and red bugs and these mosquitoes anyway?*” I laid the paddle across my knees and said, “That’s His reminder that we aren’t in Heaven yet.”

Today, Emily and Tom’s four boys—along with their four cousins—think the Altamaha River swamp is about as close to Heaven as you can get. They are learning to love Wayne County, just as their gray-headed grandpa does. This is a special place. And I am one, among thousands, who abhors the notion that an outsider, a conniving corporate carpetbagger, can put its greed ahead of what is safe for those of us who have loved this place for as long as we can remember.

Republic Services, the Arizona-based conglomerate, should be ashamed of the way it slick-talked its way into our corner of the world. Waste-management companies are notorious for targeting poor, rural communities. They use the seductive power of money-filled promises. And they knew how little most of us knew about the dangers of toxic waste such as coal ash. Republic figured Wayne County would bite the money bait. *Sadly*, we did.

Now, Republic is saying, “But we don’t have any contracts to haul in coal ash.” It actually wants us to believe that, like its 2005 ruse of “minor modifications to the contract.” I am surprised Republic didn’t offer to sell us some “oceanfront property in Arizona,” about which George Strait sings.

If Republic doesn’t have plans to further contaminate Wayne County, why are officials with Georgia Power, a coal-ash creator, and CSX, a coal-ash-

hauling railroad, trying to con me into believing this toxic material “isn’t as bad as some of the other things” being dumped in Broadhurst? I say: “*Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.*”

From the very beginning of this hoped-to-be-secretive scheme, Republic has been smug. It knows the way through the legal and regulatory maze, and the public be damned. You and I are that public. By now, I am not willing to trust Republic one whit. Its promises are hollow. At Wednesday night’s meeting, I hope an overflow crowd makes that clear to the company that tried to trick us—*again*—by tiptoeing its rail-spur application through the Corps of Engineers.

Wayne County’s name—its positive brand—is about to be sullied if the rail spur is allowed. Soon to follow will be trainloads of God-knows-what waste, including toxic coal ash. The consequences to our good name will be devastating, not to mention the negative impact on our property values. Imagine the difficulty we will have marketing our community to potential newcomers as an ideal, safe

Republic, if you really want to be a good neighbor as you claim, get off your poppycock-filled high horse. Show some heart.

place to live, work and play.

Republic, if you really want to be a good neighbor as you claim, get off your poppycock-filled high horse. Show some heart. Back off your rail-spur plan. Commit to keep toxic coal ash out. Re-negotiate a contract that doesn’t turn our community’s image into that of an environmental prostitute, ruining our respected name.

Before you took advantage of us, Republic, we were—despite the pesky ticks, red bugs and mosquitoes—*almost* in Heaven here in Wayne County. But if you continue with your public-be-damned plan, Republic, your sneaky reputation deserves a hellish train wreck—right in the middle of Wall Street.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(For more commentary visit www.dinknesmith.com)

Gol-ly, Andy, Republic must think this is Mayberry

By Dink NeSmith

Pedaling my red Schwinn—with its fat whitewall tires—around Jesup in the mid-1950s, I could have been in Mayberry. Now, I know there was another world outside my often I'd-rather-be-barefoot days. But much like TV's mythical Opie, my view of the world was limited by naïve, boyhood blinders. The closest I came to real-world exposure was sitting in Ralph Grantham's chair inside the rare-to-me air-conditioned comfort of Jack's Barber Shop on Cherry Street.

Waiting to hear Jack Jackson, Herbert Dent or Ralph announce “*next*,” I listened, in childlike innocence, as men of my hometown swapped news and gossip. Most of it skimmed right over my buzz-cut head, as I was itching to climb back on my bike and explore the world that I knew. But I will never forget the day Ralph swabbed hot lather on the back of my neck and stropped his straight razor. From the moment I felt the touch of that sharp steel, I imagined that I was shedding my boyhood skin on the way to becoming a man.

I cherish every one of those “Mayberry” memories that branded my profound sense of place—this place, Jesup and Wayne County. And as outsiders have tried to weaken my stance against toxic coal ash, I have not flinched, nor will I flinch. If a man cannot stand up for his family, his friends or his hometown, *well*, where can he stand?

Republic Services and all the lobbyists in America can never convince me that our already fragile environment won't be negatively impacted by the daily assault of 100 railcars of toxic waste. Last Wednesday night's county-sponsored public meeting is proof that our community overwhelmingly feels the same. The auditorium of Coastal Pines Technical College was overflowing. And while emotions radiated white-hot outrage and surely-this-can't-be-happening alarm, citizens—

young and old—used exemplary manners to ask their questions and voice their concerns.

I do not see how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can, with good conscience, give the go-ahead to Republic and its wetlands-destroying rail spur. Georgia's Environmental Protection Division should probe deeper, while the Corps should have a separate hearing. There are just *too* many misrepresentations and unanswered questions.

What Republic tried to do was quietly buy its way into Wayne County with hopes of making us a national dump of things others don't want. Sure, it offered potential millions. However, the reward

will *never* justify the risk. We don't need to be the albino lab rat to see what happens when untold millions of tons of toxic coal ash is stored—forever—in our sensitive soil that leaks, just as those landfill liners will no doubt eventually leak, too.

Wednesday night, Republic finally told Wayne County the truth: “*We let you down.*” No joke, but then came these lines. “Broadhurst Landfill is a remarkable landfill,” Russ Knocke, Republic's spokesman, who lives 2,100 miles away in Phoenix, said. “It's a breath-

takingly beautiful site.”

Mr. Knocke and others in the Arizona ivory tower must have watched too many episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*. They figured Wayne County was filled with gullible Goobers and goofball Gomers, down in our piney-woods corner of Southeast Georgia. As Republic's representatives sat stone-faced on the college's stage, you could tell the waste-management Goliath has been wrong in more ways than one.

I wouldn't take any amount of money for my boyhood memories, but our wants-to-pollute-us-more landfill operator needs to realize Wayne County *isn't* Mayberry.

Sorry, Republic.

Surprise, surprise, surprise: Gomer and Goober don't live here.

dnesmith@cninewspapers.com

(For more commentary visit www.dinknesmith.com)

We don't need to be the albino lab rat to see what happens when untold millions of tons of toxic coal ash is stored—forever—in our sensitive soil that leaks, just as those landfill liners will no doubt eventually leak, too.



"Hey, what harm could a little coal ash do?"



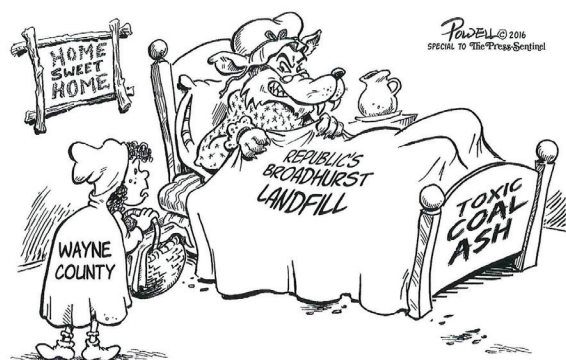
Jesup paper leads fight against coal-ash dump

When a national waste-management company, Republic Services, tried to tip toe a Corps of Engineers' rail-spur application past the citizens of Wayne County, *The Press-Sentinel* caught wind and alerted the community. Republic owns and operates the county's landfill, and the Corps application unveiled Republic's plan to begin dumping thousands of tons of coal ash each day into the landfill. Since mid-January, the twice-weekly paper has published dozens of articles, editorials, editorial cartoons, columns and letters to the editor on the subject of toxic coal ash. On March 12, the newspaper published a 20-page special report, without advertising, to inform its readers and encourage them to attend a public meeting on March 16.

In addition, *The Press-Sentinel* hired a team of environmental attorneys to help thwart the unwelcomed contamination. More than 500 citizens attended the March 16 meeting to question the Corps, Georgia's EPD and Republic, as well as to express outrage over the coal-ash dumping plan. Twice, the Corps has extended the public comment period. "This is the role of a newspaper—to inform and fight for its community," said Eric Denty, publisher of *The Press-Sentinel*.



"So, where do you want it dumped?"



"Grandmother, what big teeth you have!"

Comments to Wayne County public meeting

Thank you, everyone, for being here tonight. Your presence—all 500-plus—is a testimony to how much you care for Wayne County and how concerned you are about its future. Years ago, I heard a preacher say, "The 5 Bs of a good sermon are: *Be brief, brother, be brief.*" I'll be brief and get right to the point.

Wednesday is prayer-meeting night, and I know hundreds of others are in church right now or they, too, would be here. And in those services, I hope they are turning to 1 Samuel 17:32 and reading the story of David *and* Goliath. My friends, we are up against a multibillion-dollar bully—a Goliath in the waste management business. But we, just like David, cannot be intimidated. We must stand our ground.

Yesterday, I found this quotation by Horace Mann: "*Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.*" If I am breathing, I am with you—fighting for the health and well-being of our community. In the battle against this bully—Republic—I can find no peace of mind. And here's why. Despite Republic's legal and regulatory advantages, the whole issue boils down to one word: T-R-U-S-T.

Since Republic's representative snookered our leadership in 2005, this Goliath has demonstrated we cannot and should not trust it. The record will show that Republic has done everything it can to keep its actions out of public view. Oh, yes, it has put on a recent dog-and-pony show. But Republic is still laughing behind our backs. *Really*, can we afford to trust Republic?

Republic says it has no contracts to haul in toxic coal ash. Why then is Republic gobbling up our pine woods and ready to spend millions to

build a massive rail spur? Why is coal ash mentioned repeatedly in its application? Why is an official with CSX railroad, the company that will profit from hauling toxic coal ash to Broadhurst, contacting me in hopes I will silence my uproar? And why has a vice president of Georgia Power, the state's biggest producer of coal ash, repeatedly e-mailed me to talk about how my coal-ash fears are unnecessary? He wants to bring his spin doctors to educate me on the safety of coal ash. He accused me of using fear to sell our newspapers. That's garbage, just like what you'll find in Republic's Mount Trashmore. Why should we TRUST them, either?

Wayne County might need revenue, but we cannot afford to become an environmental prostitute for Republic's few pieces of silver. Well, actually, it's a lot more silver than Judas got. But that should only make us shout louder: "*We cannot be bought!*"

It is yet to be determined if Republic is following the letter of the law, but it is clear Republic has no regard for the spirit of the law, which is to protect the people. If this rail spur is allowed, a floodgate of horror will open. We will be contaminated forever by toxic coal ash.

Republic, if you really want to be the good neighbor that you say you do, meet us at the table to renegotiate an agreement that ensures Wayne County a healthier future. If you refuse, you can TRUST us. We will find the right stone to bring down Goliath, perhaps where it will hurt the most—on Wall Street. That's not a threat. If I am breathing, that's a *promise*!

Dink NeSmith, chairman, The Press-Sentinel
March 16, 2016