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## Rising Above Hazard

JUN 4 2010 RACHAEL GLEASON 102 COMMENTS

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The accidental poisoning of Michigan dairy cattle in the 1970s sparked the largest chemical contamination in United States history.

Nine million residents consumed contaminated meat and milk for a year after a Michigan chemical plant mistakenly added PBB (polybrominated biphenyl) — a toxic fire retardant — to dairy cattle feed, and distributed it to farms throughout the state.

In the *Poisoning of Michigan* — published 30 years ago — investigative reporter and author Joyce Egginton sheds light on the PBB disaster and how federal and state authorities failed to respond.

PBBs were banned in 2003, but equally toxic substitutes are still commonly used. The Michigan State University Press reprinted Egginton's book last August to draw attention to the subject once again.

In a phone interview from her home in New York, Egginton discusses the impact of the book 30 years later and how the risk of chemical contamination is a long-lasting concern.

### Q: What sparked the story?

A: "One day I picked up the *New York Times* and there was, way tucked on an inside page, a very insignificant-looking story placed down the bottom of the page. It talked about the fact that there had been a contamination in Michigan and that it was estimated that everybody in the state had, by this time, drunk contaminated milk and eaten contaminated meat. And I thought, immediately, why isn't anybody taking more notice of it? So I proposed that I should go out there and write it, and I did."

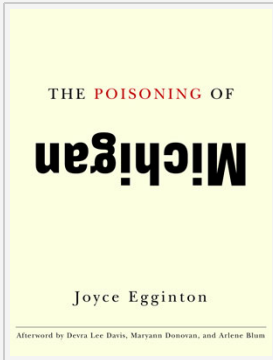
### Q: What was the immediate impact of the PBB contamination?

A: "What had happened is that the whole quantity of PBB had gotten mixed in cattle feed. It was the biggest cattle feed plant in the state of Michigan and farmers from all over the state ordered their feed from there. With any sort of poison that people are slowing taking, the symptoms started appearing gradually.

"At first, it didn't seem too bad. Then, after a few weeks or months, farmers were saying their cows were aborting and cattle were dying. Cows began looking deformed: their coats were mangy and their hoofs would overgrow. The farmers did the obvious thing of going to the Department of Agriculture and saying, 'I've got a problem here. Can you help me?'"

"The general view presented to them by the Department of Agriculture at that time was well, 'You must be doing something wrong.' Because in the early days, the symptoms that the cattle showed could have been put down to bad husbandry or poor feeding methods. Farmers weren't talking to each other about their troubles.

"It was over a year before the state acknowledged that the problem existed. And even then, it didn't know how to handle it. I'm not saying that in any way blaming the state of Michigan, but simply, this was something so widely outside their experience that there was no way they could know what to do. It's like a bunch of doctors faced with a brand new disease. They started looking at the diseases they knew rather than looking for something they didn't know."



Joyce Egginton's 1980 book, republished by Michigan State University Press last year, is available in paperback for \$19.95 at <http://msupress.msu.edu>.



Joyce Egginton was a foreign correspondent for a British newspaper when she first wrote about the PBB crisis. Photo: Michigan State University Press

### Q: Why was the PBB crisis underreported when it happened? Do you think it's been covered fairly since then?

A: "Even at that time, although it was this little downpage story in the *New York Times*, there was nothing in any of the Detroit papers. *The Grand Rapids Press* started covering it very early, and did a good job. A monthly magazine called the *Michigan Farmer* did, but nobody else that I could see. At the beginning, it was thought to be the complaints of farmers that couldn't be substantiated.

"It was an enormous story and no one was interested. I'm still, all these years later, amazed that that story has not been more widely told. Here is the biggest recorded contamination alone in this country — one that affected

nine million people — and where have you read much about it?

"Not long after it happened, there was a story of contamination in a place up in New York state called Love Canal. It was a modern housing estate that had been built on top of an old toxic dump. Everybody had been told the dump was sealed and safe, and it wasn't. After some years, the toxins from the dump started permeating into people's homes and there was a high degree of illness, particularly among children.

"Now that got a lot of attention — a huge amount of attention. I reported on Love Canal. It was all contained in one place. It was easy to find people to interview because were all living in adjoining streets. They were all activists in the fight against the whole contamination issue.

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"When you had come to report the Michigan story, what have you got? You got a farmer here, another farmer 50 miles away, another farmer a long drive across the countryside. I drove hundreds of thousands of miles crisscrossing Michigan, interviewing farmers. Newspapers don't give that much time to a story. It took an awful lot of time. It wasn't easy. Is that why it didn't get better reported? I often wonder how many stories are easier to report get reported much better because of that."

**Q: What were the hurdles to gathering and presenting the material?**

A: "I really had to learn how to report differently from the way I had been taught. This is true of any environmental reporting. As a journalist, I had been trained that once you get a story, always check it out with the authorities. Here you get a story that you go to the authorities — the Department of Agriculture and Farm Bureau — and they're telling you, 'Oh, look, he's making a lot of fuss, we know about him. His farming methods aren't that great.'

"That was a huge obstacle. It was an obstacle for me because I didn't know about dairy farming. I studied it as hard as I could, and as quickly as I could, but I think it was an obstacle that daunted a great many journalists in the state. I always remember that the head of the Department of Public Health in Michigan saying later, several years later, this was something beyond their comprehension.

"He used the phrase: 'We were mired in a swamp of ignorance.'"

**Q: Why reissue the book 30 years later?**

A: "This event in Michigan did cause PBB to be outlawed. It's never been made since. And so there is a general reaction, 'Well, Thank God.' It's caused this trouble — it's no longer a menace.

"Now, one discovers, that what replaced PBB is a great variety of similar chemicals that are used as fire retardants without real testing on the market. They're not tested on people and many of them aren't even tested on animals. And they're terribly widely used.

"This country has the highest incidents of these kinds of chemicals being found in people's bodies. They're used as fire retardants in practically every home. For example, it's in the kind of foam rubber that is used in mattresses and armchairs. It's used in carpets and drapes.

"Doing the job it's said to do is a huge amount of overkill. OK, it's a fire retardant but it's poisoning people the whole time. It's a good example of trying to come up with a preventive before you really find out what dangers the preventive can pose. I thought it's about time to draw some more attention to that."

**Q: How would you have approached this book in 2010?**

A: "In some ways, it would be easier to cover because there's more knowledge in place. When they tried to settle this one by a lawsuit on behalf of the farmers there was no such thing as environmental law. Now, there's more protection for the public. But the more protection is coming at the same time as the more exposure. The one is never catching up with the other.



**SPECIAL FEATURE:**

After the statewide PBB contamination, the chemical plant at fault, owned by a company now called Velsicol Chemical Corp., became a federal Superfund site due to contamination of a nearby river. See what an [environmental policy expert](#) has to say about its cleanup.

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**102 Comments »**



**Rosemary** said:

I was working in a dairy lab on msu campus during this era, and were part of a study to determine the effectiveness of various treatments in decontaminating the exposed cows. Naturally, I handled many samples of contaminated meat. A few years later, when we started our family, I had my breast milk analyzed by the health department, per recommendation, and found it tainted with pbb. But because there was no knowledge of what levels would be considered harmful, I was advised to breastfeed my children because the benefits would outweigh any possible (unknown) detriment. So I did. Two of my five children have thyroid disease ( never a problem on either side of the family before) and a third has elevated liver enzymes and multiple digestive troubles, cause unknown. These problems were not diagnosed until their late teen years. A few years ago A coworker at the time turned out to be one of the children of a dairy farmer whose herd had been contaminated; as such she is part of a study of lingering health effects. Through contact info from her I tried to retrieve the data on my own breast milk analysis but was told by the state health department all those records were long gone. Meanwhile, my younger coworker's child has been diagnosed with severe and rare autoimmune troubles. I have trouble believing this is coincidental but it appears no one is actively studying the truly longterm effects of that pbb trouble so many years ago...

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: [94](#) [0](#)

# 4 June 2010 at 6:46 am





**Cynthia** said:

There must have been some degree of media coverage because I lived in New York/New Jersey at the time and I heard about it. I may have been more attentive when I heard about a Michigan and environmental story than others might have been (I attended high school and college in W Michigan), but someone was definitely doing that reporting — it seems to me the NY Times was on it.

I also remember that there was TV coverage of the Dupont and Hooker Chemical contamination in Whitehall-Montague area on New York City channels. That was a bit later, as I recall.

Anyway, this story was a good journalistic effort about a GREAT journalistic effort. I

intend to buy the book. Thanks.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  23  1

# 4 June 2010 at 8:39 am



**jim** said:

There is a huge hole in this story – the omission of the role that the Michigan Farm Bureau played from the very start.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  50  2

# 4 June 2010 at 10:31 am





**Chris** said:

I am a bit disappointed by the tone of this article. Saying the state of Michigan was unprepared and responded slowly to this incident is like saying the Holocaust was a misunderstanding. I lived in Big Rapids during those years and worked for a doctor whose patients were largely farm families, many of whom dealt with PBB contamination on their farms. We watched our patients deal with pain, anger, frustration and fear. They were lied to, bullied, threatened...and so were we because we had the medical records and did the testing to support their claims. It was a frightening and temble period in Michigan history as, initially, they tried to cover it up. The doctor I worked for had two german shepard dogs and lived in the country. The dogs went missing and he received a 3am call on his private line telling him his children would be next if he testified in Washington, DC. (he sent his children to live with relatives out west for the summer) The office was ransacked in the middle of the night, not for drugs but for patient files (he kept them in a secret place). Blood tests for PBB levels came back negative from Michigan labs, until they were informed we took two samples and sent the other one to California and received positive results from them. (After that the samples matched)The local police would escort him where ever he went until after the hearings in DC.

After all these years, reading this article, bringing it all back, I still cry. I won't even go into the illnesses we saw in our patients. Farm animals were not the only ones who aborted, and died very young, and wasted away from liver failure. These people ate the meat they raised and drank the milk from their cows. They were primary recipients of the contamination.

I remember one woman who raised chickens. Their feathers were falling out, they could not stand on their own legs, and she was selling them to a large company for human consumption. She cried as she told me she knew the chickens were bad, even though they passed inspection and every government agency told her there was nothing wrong with them, but she had to sell them because the bills were piling up, they were out of money and would loose their business and home if she didn't. Another man, suddenly incapacitated by arthritic symptoms and liver damage, was told that if he signed a form promising to never sue Farm Bureau for his illnesses, they would send him to another doctor who would guaranty him disability payments for life.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  90  0



# 4 June 2010 at 11:03 am



**David Poulson** said:

This is an interview with the author of a book about an immensely complicated environmental story. It is not an article detailing that story. Indeed, that would take a book, and many have been written about this issue – including the one written by Egginton.

Those who want the full story – including the role of Farm Bureau – may want to check it out.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  28  2

# 4 June 2010 at 12:29 pm



**Laurel** said:

I think that stories like these are so important considering the current state of our food system. Documentaries like Food Inc. and stories like these are hopefully going to get more people to ask questions about the source of they food that they consume. Keep up the good work.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  34  0

# 4 June 2010 at 1:50 pm



**me** said:

Has anyone even STARTED to think about the fact that most landfills are designed to last about 30 years? And that these landfills were mostly placed in sandy areas - where migration is more likely?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  16  3



# 7 June 2010 at 1:16 pm



**Bob** said:

I began working for the Michigan Department of Public Health in 1980's, only a few years after the "PBB Disaster". I was hired to investigate the health effects of PBB on state residents. I talked to many farmers who told me stories about their sick and dying livestock and how Farm Bureau and the Department of Agriculture did nothing more than blame them for mismanagement or not knowing how to take care of their own livestock. These were not new farmers, but farmers who came from farm families who spent generations raising dairy cattle and other livestock. I believe the reason Farm Bureau and the Department of Agriculture told the farmers they were lousey

farmers was because of the potential litigation they (FB & MDA) were faced with by the farmers and many thousands of citizens who were poisoned by PBB. They were covering their own butts. We did studies on farmers as well as citizens who had nothing to do with farming operations. The citizens were part of a control group. Guess what? Literally everyone who lived in Michigan during those years in the 1970's whose blood we tested had some level of PBB in their blood and bodies. PBB will not easily leave ones body either because it mixes with and is stored in fat cells. Bottom line is this: when it comes to disasters like this, the powers that be, unfortunately, are more worried about their legal responsibilities than human life. Sorry but that is the sad truth. Oh yeah, I bought Joyce Egginton's book "The Poisoning of Michigan" many years ago. My hat is off to her for her enormous efforts in getting the information she needed to put this book together.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  71  0

# 8 June 2010 at 6:50 am



**Jane** said:

I've read the book, and it is excellent. Do you know it took only about 3,000 pounds of PBB to contaminate the human and animal population of Michigan? And do you know that the manufacturer of PBB, Velsicol Chemical Corp., illegally buried over 269,000 pounds of PBB in the local landfill? That landfill, located in Gratiot County, Michigan, has been a Superfund Site since 1982. The landfill has leaked repeatedly. It has no liner, even though a 1976 law required landfills to be lined. It is a second PBB disaster waiting to happen.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  58  2

# 8 June 2010 at 8:12 am





**Chris** said:

My uncle raised beef cattle near Midland during this period and fed his stock the PBB tainted feed. When he discovered his cattle were contaminated, he excavated a trench, ran the entire herd into it and shot them all rather than put them into the food chain. The event haunted him for the rest of his life. Shortly after, he tore down his silos and quit the business that he and my grandfather had operated as the Michigan Beef Company for decades.

There is ample evidence that chronic low dose exposure to brominated and chlorinated compounds will elicit a variety of adverse health effects in both human and non human populations. These adverse impacts occur at the genetic level and go far beyond the simple transient effects industry would have us believe.

Toxaphene and DDT, both widely used and banned chlorinated pesticide found leaching into the Pine River from the Velsicol site, are known endocrine disrupters. In Florida at Lake Apopka where toxaphene and DDT are also present, the legislature elected to remain inactive until it was discovered that the pesticides were causing a mutation in the male alligators that decreased the size of their penis. A sudden concern by the largely male legislators that this effect could be species non-specific caused a flurry of legislation to address the problem.

Cancer, liver damage and other disease couldn't convince them to move but mention a shrinking weenie and all the stops get pulled out. Go figure....



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  61  0

# 19 June 2010 at 6:25 am



**kim** said:

I lived in Michigan during the 70's. I ingested a lot of dairy products during two pregnancies. A lot of the PBB left my body through breast milk but then was in my boys. My mother, children, husband, and myself have had many large cysts removed that were filled with PBB. Future medical implications worry me. Why are those responsible not brought to justice?



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  49  0

# 7 July 2010 at 1:27 pm



**kim** said:

One son (and myself) also have an autoimmune disease and elevated liver enzymes. My other son (and myself) have multiple digestive problems without being able to find a diagnosis.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  26  0

# 7 July 2010 at 1:41 pm



**Paul** said:

We, in this country are at the mercy of the business/industrial complex, especially in areas that require stringent regulation by government. In those areas of the economy the corporations do their utmost to subvert any gov't oversight. It happens in the food industry and, of course, the latest and greatest example of subversion of gov't regulation, BIG OIL and the economic, health and environmental catastrophe in the Gulf Of Mexico. There, a whole way of life and economic dependence has been destroyed, not to forget the destruction of an entire marine, estuarian, and terrestrial ecosystem. All because politicians and bureaucrats of a particular persuasion gave carte blanche to an industry that owned them, and succeeding politicians cared not to investigate authenticated complaints. Our democracy has been sacrificed on the altar of personal, corporate and political greed, and we have only ourselves to blame.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  33  0

# 8 July 2010 at 10:10 am



**Jennifer** said:



I also lived in Michigan throughout this time and had two children. I breastfed both of my children. My son and daughter have had digestive problems since birth and now my daughter is having issues with a possible auto-immune disease. I would love to talk to Kim and see if we have any similarities, and could possibly brainstorm.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  19  0

# 22 July 2010 at 7:40 pm

**Shelley** said:



I attended GVSU, Allendale in 1972-1973, eating in the college cafeteria and drinking lots of milk. Does anyone know exactly when this all started? I am an 8 year breast cancer survivor. My gene tests came back negative. I remember hearing of it at the time and always wondered about future health issues for all Michigan residents.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  18  0

# 25 July 2010 at 8:38 pm

**Judy** said:



I lived in michigan in the 1970's and have been sick every since then and doctors cant seem to find out why? so they tell me its in my head but i dont see how bleeding from every where is in my head and balance problems and not wanting to eat with stomach pains for many many years it started in 1973 and now is better but still not right i dont see how this is in my head can anyone tell me how to see if this is from bpp?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  18  0

# 29 July 2010 at 4:40 pm

**Natalie** said:



I was born in Mid-Michigan in 1966, and lived there until 1986. Just a few months ago, I watched "Bitter Harvest" on Hulu. It grabbed my attention so I Googled some info... I was horrified to find out this was based on contamination in Michigan! I am concerned about my health and my children's health. Can anyone give me specifics on which tests to request via my doctor, any specialists I should see, etc.? I am sure this situation never crossed my radar... I wonder now whether my parents just kept my siblings and me sheltered from it. Scary stuff.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  18  0

# 23 August 2010 at 10:28 pm

**Annie** said:



As I recall, the state of Michigan tried to hide the origin of the contamination. When a Canadian T.V. station came here and exposed all the things that were being covered up. People that were trying to get answers (farmers, doctors,) were threatened and told to keep quiet. Has anyone done any health follow ups?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  16  0

# 2 September 2010 at 5:33 pm

**Lori a morris** said:



i lived in kalkaska michigan in the 70's. since i have lost my thyroid at 18 yrs of age. 2 hip replacements. and now cancer in my neck. this contamination needs to be recongized. there are many sick people. my sister has also problems and has lost her esophagas' my brother has serious stomach problems.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  20  0

# 8 September 2010 at 1:17 pm

**lori morris** said:

adding to my response my mother tried to do something in the 70's when all 3 children became very ill. they did nothing to support her issue. there is no one in my family with thyroid problems. my sister has a very rare throat disorder and since has had her esaphagus removed. all problems started when we were 18 yrs old. i have tried to do research over the years to no avail. i believe it was all caused by the contamination of pbb. i would love to do something about this cover up and politics of this state. it was turned on the farmers and said they were the ones at fault. lrt mr tell u if i had known or could have helped my parents move forward i would have. this has ruined my life and my familys also.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  14  0

# 10 September 2010 at 10:48 pm

**Freda** said:

When I was about 8-9 yrs old I lived in the neighborhood of Delray, in Southwest Detroit right behind Fleetwood Fisherbody Cadillac plant and remember going to Great Scott in precinct 13 and there was no milk products on any shelf wondering mom went to other stores and there wasn't any to be found. I remember watching on TV about them herding the cows in a huge hole and killing all the cows it was on a local chanel we did get Canadian channels. In 81 mom moved out of state but since she died from cancer of the broncial tubes in 86. I have had Thyroid problems and was on medication for many years every now and then my gland on the lft side of my neck swells and tends to be short tempered when this happens. .Then the Dr found from a blood test that I have P.A.D. with a lot of mri's and some dye they found I have 100% blocked artery that feeds my left arm I suffer with this everyday and also have Rey Naulds Disease which can be very painful when my fingertips go white feels like frostbite and are gonna blow off. I use to hear that the poisoning was from cropdusting that was done in the 60's-70's. I'm only 45 but feel 70. When i was a toddler mom said

when I ate it went right thru me and said I'd scream bloody murder she took me to a faith healer in Macon Ga and said the healer said there was a young child in the audience with kidney/bowel trouble mom didn't take me up cause she and the Dr.s didn't know what it was (this may sound strange to some but here is what she told me)when they went to get in the car she heard a voice tell her raw cows milk so she went to a farm(were in Georgia now)and got the milk blanched it and said I was constipated for the first time in my life this was in 66-67.I read an article a yr or so ago and I have many of the symptoms.in 2000 I became sick again with diareaha and have fought it for over 10 yrs makes me wonder how bad I have it and how long.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  11  0

# 21 October 2010 at 6:22 pm



**Freda** said:

adding to my comment I also have a lot of joint pain.Still have stomach problems intestinal troubles.It is a shame they let this go on and remember a lot of deformities in children from those days.Like to know more about this .The disc are gone in my neck and back and I have alot of problems sleeping at night from the pain.yes i got to read that book.I believe there are a lot of LIES and COVERUPS on this.My oldest daughter has alot of these symptoms also, she just turned 30.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  11  0

# 21 October 2010 at 6:40 pm



**CHERYL** said:

I am the mother of a female child born in 1974 in Battle Creek, MI. I was told by a teacher when she entered school with learning disabilities that a large percentage of the children born then were having problems. We made it thourgh school with lots of turtoring. Now my daughter is having serious mental health issues. I am wondering is anyone else?



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  12  0

# 31 January 2011 at 2:28 am



**Harold** said:

I remember that the state buried many of the contaminated cows—I think on state land in northern Michigan. Does anyone recall the exact location? Have any studies been done to determine the amount of PBB which leached into the soil and groundwater?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  13  0



# 31 January 2011 at 11:31 am



**Klay** said:

Kalkaska Landfill info can be had here.....

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1637458/pdf/envhper00480-0034.pdf>



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  7  0

# 20 February 2011 at 9:36 pm



**skulladay** said:

dude that sucks a cemical that stays in ur body n causes helth problems n u wont know that thats the cause + with no way 2 get rid of it that really sucks.



Hot debate. What do you think?  5  6

# 28 February 2011 at 3:11 pm



**Anonymous** said:

Watched the movie again, Bitter Harvest. All about this PPB, in the movie, with Ron Howard, you couldnt tell where it was. I had to search the net to figure it out. I wonder how far the meat and milk went outside of MI too?



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  12  0

# 2 March 2011 at 10:28 pm



**anne** said:

Lived most of my life in lower michigan area, farm country. Remember hearing about the contamination when I was a teenager but not much. Began having terrible bowel problems in 1972. Told it was all in my head. Years later was diagnosed with colitis, bleeding from bowels. Have had years of mental problems depression, anxiety. Wonder now if all related to contamination? How do we get Erin Brocovich on this case? Sure do wish somebody would do something. Now am worried about my children, which I also breastfed and my Grandchildren.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  16  0

# 22 March 2011 at 10:46 am



**Fay** said:

I lived in Michigan with my husband and 3 young children from 1972 to 1982. My husband had kidney cancer two years ago and my 21 year old granddaughter had cancer surgery a month ago on the same kidney. The surgeon said she was the youngest patient he had ever had for that and was suspicious. My daughters and myself have had numerous problems including thyroid, joint pain, and other problems. The cancer in such a young woman concerns me. We didn't know there was a problem until all milk and meat were taken off the shelves.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  14  0



# 30 March 2011 at 3:45 pm

**Rhea Anne Gibson** said:

I was conceived in 1973, born in 1974 in the state of Michigan. I have suffered my entire life from ear, nose and throat problems, esophagus, digestion and bowel problems. I also have auto-immune disorder. I have been on pain medication since I was pre-teen due to chronic pain in my neck, back and knees. I have spinabifida and osgood slaughters disease. I suffer from inflammation in all my joints including ganglion cysts. I was never able to participate in sports or keep a job due to my lack of an immune system. If I get an illness it keeps me down for months and usually ends up turning into pneumonia. In April of 2010 I found out I have a moderate-size tumor on my pituitary gland in the brain. The quality of my life is in question all the time. NOTE: My mother has talked about the PBB for many years and insist that it is the reason for my conditions. I am the only one of all my siblings with these health issues. How do I find out if my life has been affected by my PBB? Is there testing out there for this highly toxic chemical and how do I find out diagnosis and treatment. Please help. Thank You for your time. Note: Silently suffering in Michigan

Sincerely



Rhea A. Gibson  
616-633-8247  
[r.a.gibson@hotmail.com](mailto:r.a.gibson@hotmail.com)

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  19  0

# 3 April 2011 at 6:34 pm

**Rhea Anne Gibson** said:

Adding to my post: Also, I suffer from sever pain at night in arms, neck and hands. I have unexplained swelling in my lymph nodes including throat and groin area. I also suffer from high Epstein Barr levels since puberty. I was in special education thru my school years. At that time, my mother was living in Ada Michigan and Big Rapids Michigan areas. For many years my mother has spoken of the PBB contamination during the time that I was conceived and born. She also informed me that it went on for an entire year before anyone was informed of the contamination, and that she was consuming milk and meat products through out the year. I decided to look up information regarding PBB, and found that there have been many people affected by this. I would like to know what they are doing about it. I would like to be part of a study for I know that this has affected my entire life. I feel as though everyone that was affected by this highly toxic chemical who has suffered there whole life should be compensated by the state of Michigan or government.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  17  0



# 3 April 2011 at 6:57 pm

**Chris** said:

go to:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=n-YDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA19&pg=PA19&dq=effects+of+PBB+Michigan&source=bl&ots=X3x5dxBz-6&sig=IwWKnJ4cJg5KCiGpZyzCbZU8h=en&ei=VPKZTdazIK610QGZ\\_vtkCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CDKQ6AEwBgK#v=onepage&q=effects%20of%20PBB%20Michigan&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=n-YDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA19&pg=PA19&dq=effects+of+PBB+Michigan&source=bl&ots=X3x5dxBz-6&sig=IwWKnJ4cJg5KCiGpZyzCbZU8h=en&ei=VPKZTdazIK610QGZ_vtkCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CDKQ6AEwBgK#v=onepage&q=effects%20of%20PBB%20Michigan&f=false)



This is what was happening in May, 1977. Good reporting, good piece of history.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  10  0

# 4 April 2011 at 12:36 pm

**Rosie** said:



We live in central Wisconsin – on a dairy farm. I had never heard anything about this until this past weekend. An acquaintance told us that his farm had been lost in Michigan to this contamination. His cows were shot and buried. He moved to Wisconsin to start over. I also am wondering why more studies have never been done, how far did the contaminated meat and milk get shipped, etc?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  11  0

# 10 April 2011 at 2:51 pm

**Donna** said:

I have been sick and diagnosed with Crohn's disease and have seen numerous doctors for this, I also have joint, back, and other health issues which nobody seems to be able to figure out. I have lived in the state of Michigan all of my life and was a baby when this contamination occurred, resulting in drinking a lot of contaminated milk from this time. I have been a part of this health PBB study in the state of Michigan, and then all at once I never heard from the state of Michigan until a couple of years ago to inform me that everybody's personal information from that study had been compromised!!! The doctors I have seen all seem to go all out when I first see them but as time goes by they seem to back off especially when the PBB comes into the equation. It is my understanding that the chemical PBB traveled through the cows system and somehow Tuberculosis bacteria or germ transferred out of the cows udders, this has caused intestinal tuberculosis in people who don't even know they have it and it looks like other intestinal diseases, and the only way you can find it is by doing a special acid suave of the intestinal tissues. Anybody with these problems should look up intestinal tuberculosis on the internet. One thing is for certain there is a huge cover-up still going on over this issue from the state of Michigan. The least they could do is offer people free medical care. Some of these doctors don't even want to discuss the issues. The part that really amazes me is why haven't any of these attorneys brought a class action lawsuit on behalf of all the victims of this?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  15  0

# 16 April 2011 at 9:43 am

**Gail** said:

I was raising my family in Michigan in the 1970's and consumed much PBB contaminated food. I'm now 65 and when I see so many people around my age with leg and knee problems, it reminds me of the cows I saw be slaughtered in the movie about the PBB problem in Michigan. Does anyone out there, besides myself, think there's a connection? PBB affected the joints of these cow's because they could hardly stand up. I don't recall the generation before mine having these joint problems, do you? Think about it and please respond. I'm putting blame on PBB for my arthritis condition and my husband and so many others I know who are all born and bred in Michigan.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 12 0

# 17 April 2011 at 8:51 am

**brad** said:

i was born and raised on a small dairy farm i think sometimes why i have some of the health promlems i do now as a 40 year old man.we now and have been living in south ga. for 20 years.the many dr.say they just geuss why.i wonder if this has any thing to do with the milk.....

Like or Dislike: 3 1

# 26 April 2011 at 7:33 am

**marie** said:

i have been terribly sick for 25 yrs+ w/ cfs/me, so i KNOW....how the goverment does not give a ! HOOT ! about those of us,who have been CONTAMINATED, by ONE, OF THEIR (MANY)DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS !

Has ANYONE ONE done research into what "OTHER PLACES" WHERE THIS HAS HAPPENED ???

ODDS..100% ...many other areas, the same thing happened !!

i am sooo sorry for ALL, who are so sick,trust your heart & DONT let some 'uncaring terrible rude dr w/ no knoweledge' tell you 'its all in your head' .. BS...follow your instint.

May God reach out & touch your Hearts, to those who are sufferings.

Blessings,  
an angelonduty

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 1

# 14 May 2011 at 11:59 pm

**marie** said:

PS: Rachael,

" IT WAS 'NOT'...A 'accidental poisoning' of Michigan dairy "

" Lord, Please,May We ALL Wake Up & 'SEE' ..THE REAL TRUTH" to the 'Goverments Poisoning' of the Human Population "

"WE CAN NOT COVER OUR HEADS..EARS...ANY MORE,..TIME TO SAY 'NO MORE'!

this is said, w/ Hope, Faith & Blessing's,  
an angelonduty

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 15 May 2011 at 12:14 am

**Mike** said:

I was born in Michigan in 1968 on a farm and grew up on PBB contaminated milk, it was all I ever drank. I have had so many weird issues health wise, such as gout when I was healthy and 30? Growing up with chronic pain out of nowhere including my liver, arms, had very up and down mental issues, horrible insomnia, but was somehow very good in school. Now I'm an alcoholic and my liver is gone already. Not that I haven't earned a bad liver by excessive drinking, but it makes me wonder if my liver has ever been good. I can't get any information about all these tests that they did on me, I don't know where I went for them and my parents have always maintained there was no effect from it. Even though both had major personality changes and physical issues after. They did a long term test on my older sister who drank very little milk, but she doesn't want to talk about it either. Every agency I've tried to contact never responds. I have always been curious what PBB causes, there had to be a reason the cows were dropping dead, calves still born, I remember seeing all of that!! I have my suspicions that all involved just made it go away with money and lobbyists. Anyways doesn't matter for me now, but my sister is next on the list that probably won't make it to 50.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 8 0

# 22 May 2011 at 5:37 pm

**Dave Rowbotham** said:

I was born in Detroit in 58 and grew up in Jackson. I loved dairy products. I have had severe hypertension and raised ALTs since my early 20's. Al tho I have had many minor issues the raised ALTs have always made the doctors scratch there heads. Ill feel lucky if I make it to 70 with only these issues.

Like or Dislike: 3 0

# 2 June 2011 at 12:52 pm



**Shelly** said:

We lived about 3 or 4 miles from a farm that had to deal with this catastrophe. I will never forget one Sunday the local news reported that The farm owner had shot his entire herd of cows to keep them from suffering. I remember that sight plainly everytime I drive by there. It was a very sad day.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 9 0

# 14 June 2011 at 9:20 pm

**Bill** said:

During the years of the PBB fiasco, I worked for an auto parts manufacturer in Alma and lived about five blocks from the Michigan Chemical plant in St. Louis. One of our foreman came down with a malaise which defied diagnosis. He consulted many medical specialists and was even sent to a psychiatrist to no avail. This went on for an extended period of time. He and his family lived on a small farm on the Pine River north of the chemical plant. Later one day his wife was reading a farm journal and found an article describing PBB poisoning and screamed at him, "OMG this is you!" He was tested and found to have one of the highest levels of PBB in his body among many who were tested.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 15 1

# 23 June 2011 at 10:59 am

**anonymous** said:

I lived in Michigan during those years. I remember it well. My daughter was born in 1974 and I breastfed her for almost 3 years. She has adrenal hyperplasia. I read a study that girls like her from that time, have periods one year earlier on average. She had hers at 9. She had many adrenal problems including high levels of testosterone, poly-cystic ovaries, hirsutism (excessive hair growth). She had trouble bonding with her children, like she has something missing in her hormones, even though she is "organic", had her children at home, and lives a back-to-the-earth lifestyle. She is totally obsessive and anxious about not being poisoned again or letting her children be poisoned to the point of continually moving. Obviously she needs counseling about what happened, but her body has been permanently changed as has her psyche by PBB.

My mother died of Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC), and even though I was told that I had breastfed out the PBB of me, which I feel horrible about, I just had a biopsy for IBC. I have kept myself informed from afar, because I moved away to the west coast to protect my family. I talked to the head scientist handling studies in Michigan several years ago, and he said funding for generational studies were hard to come by except for some of the farm families. I heard of one still active study where the participants are girls who were in utero, and breastfed during that time, like my daughter. Does anyone know any participants in that study? I'd love to hear about the results. It would ease the grief my family deals with to hear that we're not alone. I'm starting to think a lot of the mental illnesses in our young adult population is not Bi-Polar it's PBB.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 13 0

# 29 June 2011 at 9:50 pm

**jim** said:

I drove a truck in the late 1970s. I believe it was off of Mt. Tom Road/M-72 north of Mio, MI. They had trucks lined up full of dead cows. They had dummies of Governor Milliken and others hanging by nooses. The State Police were there in droves. People protesting were getting their heads busted. The traffic was slowed to a crawl. I seen one guy being escorted by police with blood running down his face. Their must of been hundreds of cows in all those trailers. They were like gravel trains. I remember people saying they were burying them in a clay lined pit there.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 14 0

# 12 July 2011 at 4:07 pm



: said:

My family, wifw, three young kids and I, lived just outside of Traverse City during the period—actually moved there in May of '73 and moved out in April of '74. Among us we have suffered many of the ailments described above. I have two questions

Like or Dislike: 3 0

# 19 July 2011 at 4:16 pm

**Robert** said:

Oops, I prematurely submitted the comments above.

My two questions are:

Have there been any individual lawsuits, not by farmers, but by consumers affected by the milk and/or meat?

Is there any way to test for BBS in ones body after all of these years?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 7 0



# 19 July 2011 at 4:22 pm

**Pat** said:

When our children were growing up we thought we should have some chores for them to learn responsibility. So, we purchased some baby chicks from the hatchery in St. Louis, this was '70's to mid 80's. Some of the baby chicks hatched with crooked feet, so badly, that they could not stand up. My mother-in-law told us not to raise or eat

them, but to destroy them, there was something badly wrong with them. Her's eating and drinking — did the PBB get in the chicken feed that you bought at the elevator too?

Two sons, have had disc trouble in their backs, (mid-thirties) one son with digestive issues and he remains quite thin. We bought milk from a dairy company out of Saginaw who raised only Gurnsey cows. They are still in business.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  8  0

# 22 July 2011 at 1:36 pm



**Cheryl** said:

The contamination happened in 1976.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  8  1

# 22 July 2011 at 3:50 pm



**lori osborne** said:

I had my first daughter in Jackson Mich. in 1976 , and she has had alot of medical issues all her life , from IBS to a mental break-down, and i'm seeing issues in my grand children..is there any end to this ?



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  9  0

# 27 July 2011 at 10:49 am



**Robert** said:

Shelley, if I'm not mistaken, this started about 1974...I left Michigan in the fall of 1973 to go to college out of state...it became an issue a year or two after I left. Unfortunately, I was there during much of the summers while I was in college, but thankfully, wasn't consuming milk.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  7  0

# 17 August 2011 at 10:26 pm



**Robert** said:

the contamination of the animal feed occurred in May, 1973. The first symptoms began showing up in cattle in late fall 1973. The existence of the problem was not admitted publicly until mid 1974. Most Michigan dairy products and beef were consumed in-state at that period of time; not much was shipped out of state.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  12  0



# 18 August 2011 at 12:38 am



**Paul** said:

The contaminated cows were buried in a specially constructed landfill near Kalkaska. The State of Michigan guaranteed that the PBB would never leak from it, but, monitoring wells were drilled outside of the landfill. Well guess what? I read an article a few years ago that said PBB is turning up in test groundwater samples. I don't claim to be a psychic, but, at that time (1974), as a MI DNR employee, I scoffed at the guarantee.

Let's face it folks we are poisoning our environment in many different ways and we will all face the consequences in many different ways. It is just one of the many factors of mortality in the human population, and is related to our choices of economic level and lifestyle.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  13  0

# 18 August 2011 at 8:47 pm



**anne** said:

I grew up just a few miles from where the contaminated animals were buried. I remember so well the talk about what was going on and people wondered why they chose kalkaska county to use as a burial ground. It was in the late 70's, early 80's that my sisters and I were told we had Spastic colons, known today as IBS. My mom has Lupus and has had for 13 years, my grandpa was diagnosed with PMR and polymyocitis in the 90's. My son has Crohns disease...too many coincidentals. Never thought about a possible connection until now. Sad, sad, sad.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  10  0

# 20 August 2011 at 9:55 am



**laura manship** said:

I grew up in St. Louis, MI. The last 7 years, I have lost a 39 year old brother to Pancreatic Cancer, a brother of 48 to Colon Cancer and a Father to Colon cancer at 82. My mother has now been diagnosed with breast cancer for the 2nd time and has spread to her Lymph Nodes. My mother lives by herself now only a block from the pine river. When they were "cleaning" the pine river of it's poison, all of our vehicles were covered with this film and it ate the paint off the cars... what did we get? We got a gift certificate for a free car wash! Now, my family is dying one by one of cancer... I have two other sisters who none of us can have children, and have had polups, and tumors. I blame the St. Louis Chemical plant for all of this. Who can I go to on this? What can be done for my family? All the cancer's and dieses that can not be explained in young people now... it all falls back onto the chemical plant. Can anyone advise me where to go from here??

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  11  0

# 25 August 2011 at 1:27 pm

**TOM** said:

I was born in 1971 and am not sure if me and older brothers were contaminated but all of us have problems with are stomachs and swallowing.All of us were to young to no of this pbb at the time but our parents did tell us of it in the 1980s.The thing is I purchsed a cabin just outside of mio mi about 7 years ago and while hunting in the huron natinol forest me an a friend came across a big open area with a perfect square of deep sand.The square of this sand is aprox 4 to 5 acers nicely leveled and built up on edges so we decided to ask around on what this spot was from locals that had lived there in the areasince the 60s an 70s.We were told by many residents that it is were they buried the cows that had pbb in the 70s for that area.Now I am not sure of all the facts but this info came from alot of residents and we did take a soil test that contained pbb from the site.There are many different stories abot how the cows were buried some say the hole was lined some say they just dumped them in there and some say they put a dye in the hole so if there was any leakage it would be detected.This spot is located on pennsylvania crossing off of mt tom rd just north of mio . I think it is a shame they would just bury them in our national forest and does the gov even monitor these sites today to see if there is any contamination leakage.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 12 0

# 2 September 2011 at 8:52 am

**Loretta** said:

My husband and I just finished watching the movie "Bitter Harvest". This is a heartbreak. I pray for everyone that has been hurt and made sick with pbb. Did all the milk and food stay in Michigan? We must have good food and drink in this country. We need leaders that make sure of this.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 11 0

# 2 September 2011 at 11:06 pm

**Mary** said:

My husband and I lived in Kalkaska, MI during this time (1972-1976). I gave birth to our first child (5/73) and he developed extreme diarhea at age 4 weeks and continued to lose weight. I was breast feeding him until we finally found a doctor that placed him on yogurt. His weight dropped from 8 lbs 1 oz to 4 lbs 8oz. Twenty one years later he was diagnosed with IGA Neuropathy. He has since had a kidney transplant.

Our second child was premature and has suffered with undiagnosed digestive problems since birth. Due to his size and difficulty in feeding I was unable breast feed him. He was also born with a rectal deformity.

Our youngest(daughter/twin died before birth) was born with inflammatory/pain issues and was hospitalized the first time at age 6 months with an undiagnosed illness. She woke at 6AM screaming from extremem pain and could not be consoled. All tests came back negative and at the time her pediatrician felt she needed to be transferred to a larger hospital, but before she could be transferred she went to sleep and he allowed her to sleep. When she woke up she appeared to be fine. This pattern continues to this day and she is 31 years old. She had to have her thyroid removed when was 22. She suffers from digestive, inflammatory problems and degenerative disc disease.

If I ever thought I should not breast feed my children I would have had them on formula from the first day. I thought breast feeding was the best I could offer them. Our two youngest children were born in Evansville, IN. I wish there would have been a national health warning that if you were contaminated with PPB you should not breast feed. I am also amazed at how quiet this has been in the health care field. I have brought PBB up at every medical facility we have had our children at from the Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Kosair Children's Hospital, Louisville, Western University, Chicago Vanderbilt, Nashville and several other medical facilities and the only doctor that was aware of PBB and considered it as a contributing health factor was when we went to Ann Arbor University Hospital. I would think PBB contamination should be mentioned in every medical school across the nation considering the number of people that were affected, and considering how transient Americans are.

I also have degenerative disc disease, thyroid issues and have knee problems.

My husband and I both were born and raised in southerm IL and none of our cousins have children with health problems, yet all three of our children have significant health issues. I have two grandchildren and I pray they will be spared any health problems related to this incident.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 10 0

# 4 September 2011 at 5:07 pm

**doug** said:

once again we see our governments handiwork.it pains me to see things like this. if this kind of thing doesnt stop soon,we better make sure we are insured. how i long for the good old days,when a mans word was good for anything!

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 1

# 10 September 2011 at 5:38 pm

**raymond** said:

i would really like to know how much of michigans dairy products were shipped out of state in 1973 to 1975.i doubt it was all sold in state.why were they putting it in the feed.they put fluoride in are water here why its toxic.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 5 1

# 22 October 2011 at 11:18 pm

**scott** said:

may god bless you all

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 1 November 2011 at 6:32 am

**LJB** said:

I am sad to hear there are many more questions on the board than answers.

Stats on me & mine: Mother has "mystery" thyroid illness that doesn't allow her to walk upstairs in her own house without having to stop and "rest". Still trying to work but it's very very hard for her.

Me: Pheochromocytoma taken out, now possible uterine tumors. Waiting on blood work for thyroid. Because I was unaware breast fed daughter.

Daughter: Bad bad vision problems, no one in either side of family even wears glasses. We are all very short, most under 5 ft, stunted growth maybe.

Why aren't docs in the area still testing for these "side effects"?

I should have been told so I could make decisions based on all the info.

As everyone is asking can I still be tested for PBB presence

I will now go and watch bitter harvest. Problem being for me & my female family we are getting dismissed as "kooky almost hysterical women" when we present these all to real issues.

Mother has given up looking for help, so very sad to me. I keep trying to find help but always ends up with all the docs asking me if I'm depressed and handed anti-depressants. I'm sure if I bring this issue up they will just look at me weird. That sucks!

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 9 November 2011 at 9:54 am

**Paula** said:

There is a movie about the cows and the PBB and all the trouble farmers went thru and how the state ignored them  
The movie is called Bitter Harvest it's very good

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 8 0

# 19 November 2011 at 11:01 pm

**John** said:

How did the fire retardant get into the feed in the first place?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 1

# 23 November 2011 at 10:56 am

**Deb** said:

I lived on a farm contaminated with PBB and saw first hand what happened to our animals. My whole family was contaminated (proven by blood tests) and we now suffer the after-effects of contamination. We have many autoimmune diseases. I chose not to breastfeed my children who were born in '77 and '79 due to the contamination. I was highly encouraged by my Dr. to breastfeed and they would test my milk. The results would be returned to me in 6-8 weeks and then I could make a decision to continue to breastfeed or quit. I didn't want to take any chances after I saw the condition of our cows and calves. It divided our community and yes, my parents were blamed for more husbandry. We took care of our cows exactly the same before the contamination as after so that was not the case. Our vet was super and very supportive and helped us so much. He also assured us that it wasn't poor management on our part.

My Mom kept some of the feed that we feel the contamination was in. She sent some to a lab to be tested and it came back positive for PBB. Soon after, the State of MI contacted my parents and wanted all of the feed that we had sampled sent in to them for "testing". My Mom told them that the sample she sent in was all she had and kept it hidden in our freezer for years.

My family was tested for contamination but I opted out as I was pregnant for my first child and did not want to worry as there was nothing that could be done if I had a high contamination level. All members of my family tested positive with my Father and one sister have very high levels. They both have numerous health problems. We all seem to have some form of autoimmune disease. I wish I could be involved with some testing as I did not do that at the beginning. I also was not included in any of the settlement that my parents received. They used their settlement money to pay all debts, auctioned their farm equipment and sold the farm. They did not profit from this in any way and in fact lost lots and lots of money. Very dark period for my whole family.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 11 0

# 8 December 2011 at 11:59 am

**ANNYON** said:

I was on one of the PBB farms as a child. Our cows were shot, we got new cows, and again they got PBB. It was horrible. This is very, very real and the symptoms and illness reported are very real. My family has suffered greatly because of PBB. Thank God that in Heaven we'll all have perfect, PBB-free bodies.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 7 0

# 4 January 2012 at 9:26 pm

**Melinda** said:

My Father died of Colon cancer, when he was 60 years old. There was no family history of the disease. I was born in 1958, ate Beef served to me in the 70's and drank milk. I have bowel problems, digestive problems that sprang out of no where in my early twenties. My Mother is still alive and is 90 years old, she drank very little milk, and ate very little beef. She does not seem to be effected by any health problems relating to this situation. I think that this contamination effected everyone differently. I remember this situation. What is sad, is that the State of Michigan has not put out information to the population on what we should be watching for, so this problem is going to go on for generations.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 11 0

# 7 January 2012 at 9:54 pm

**John H** said:

I am one of the original 8 people who work in the department that manufactured BP-6, (PBB) for Michigan Chemical. I breathed it, ate my lunch in it, and have no ill effects at all. Some people look to blame whatever they can for what ever problems they have. It wasn't good stuff, but I don't believe it was near as bad as the media made it out to be.

Hot debate. What do you think? 2 32

# 10 January 2012 at 8:22 pm

**DARREN** said:

I WAS 10 AND LIVING NEAR A DAIRY FARM. I REMEMBER ALL THOSE COWS BEING SENT DOWN STATE TO BE SHOT IN THE HEAD AND DROPPED INTO A BIG PIT. WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE PIT AREA. ALSO REMEMBER THAT THE FARMERS ONLY GOT PENNIES ON THE DOLLAR FOR SOMETHING THEY HAD NO CONTROL OF

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 10 0

# 14 January 2012 at 10:43 pm

**Jan** said:

My daughter married a dairy farmer in Michigan who's cows were infected by the PBB's in the feed . Her husband ate the meat and drank the milk and all of their children had birth defects as: pituitary dwarfs, (midgerts) pigmentosa retinitis ( blindness) bone dyspepsia, all their joints bend backwards. All 3 grandson born with this.

My grandson's are on full disability for the rest of their lives.

Is there anyway they can sue the government for this terrible tragedy to get some kind of re compensation? They can never marry or have children or a normal life.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 9 1

# 16 January 2012 at 8:10 pm

**Lisa** said:

Yes, Pennsylvania Crossings near Mt Tom Rd in Mio MI that is where the cows were buried. My family is from Mio. I was born in 75. My parents have shared the sad story of that day.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 20 January 2012 at 8:14 pm

**Kay** said:

Yes, it was in the chicken feed, too. My father owned a hatchery and a farm with laying hens. He lost so much money that he lost the business that my grandfather started in the 1940s.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 29 January 2012 at 10:03 pm

**Vickie** said:

I grew up in Sault ste marie, born in 1963. My grandfather owned a dairy farm and I can remember all the talk but that was the last I ever thought about it. Now I have crohns disease and many family members suffer from much the same afflictions. A friend suggested I google the subject of PBB and auto immune disease. I am shocked!!!! All these stories hit so close to home for me. Could this explain the pain I suffer and the suffering of my family?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 7 1

# 30 January 2012 at 7:16 am

**Alison** said:



what farms where affected in the cadillac areaby this disease?

Like or Dislike: 0 0

# 9 February 2012 at 1:15 pm

**Anyone else love Nature? - Christian Forums** said:



[...] important to our own well-being. And we destroy some of ourselves along the way. I'm one of the poster children for that and my daughter is not too far off. If it weren't for supposedly woo-woo alternative [...]

Like or Dislike:  0  0

# 18 February 2012 at 8:26 am

**CHRISTINE** said:



I AM DEALING WITH CYSTS And chronic pain. Have autoimmune thyroid disease. i think i should get tested.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  6  0

# 19 February 2012 at 9:41 pm

**darnell** said:



I'm 42 now I am just now wondering if health issues are from pbb, I was 6 eating beef from a rope in a barn, to dipping a milk jug in bulk tank for ceareal , where do I start legelly

Like or Dislike:  1  0

# 9 March 2012 at 3:30 pm

**Shelley** said:



Thank you Deb for your detailed story. I'm sorry for your family's history. As for my update, I am still cancer free after 10 years. So far my children and grandchildren are OK. I've lived in the Whitehall area since 1979 and we had another big environmental disaster involving Hooker Chemical dumping chemicals into the White Lake that empties into Lake Michigan. There is now a cancer study being done for anyone who has lived in the area, so hopefully there will be some answers. I wish a study would be done about the PBB years. Hopefully we are learning from our past mistakes.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  5  0

# 6 April 2012 at 11:07 am

**Carol T.** said:



Mother Jones magazine covered the heck out of this issue in 1977 – way beyond what mainstream media dedicated to coverage. Significant for many readers was the percentage of the population who had PBB present in breast milk, about 94 percent of people tested.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  9  0

# 6 April 2012 at 9:42 pm

**teri** said:

I was 10 at the time. I watched them bury all the animals in a hole only to watch them dig them up later. The state said to bury, then changed their mind when the water became contaminated. When my horse became ill, I took him to MSU vet. hospital. The young vet tech told me the horse had pbb in him even though the horse had never consumed any tainted feed. The horse has been drinking the same well water as myself and family. All these years I have lived with knowing "it's not IF I'll get cancer but WHEN. Well today, April 10, 2012, I was told I have cancer. I do love my county, but I do fear my government. I have always know that the State of Michigan spent more time covering up than helping.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  12  0

# 10 April 2012 at 3:39 pm



**Christine** said:

I was in my early twenties and breastfeeding my child when the news finally broke, alerting the public about the PBB poisoning. I sent a sample of my breast milk to the health department and sure enough, PBB was found in my breast milk. I was reassured by my gynocologist and my baby's pediatrician that the benefits of breastfeeding far outweighed the risks of the PBB for my nursing baby. So I continued to breastfeed.

Now all these years later, I caught the movie Bitter Harvest on Netflix. Possible effects of PBB chemical poisoning on the human body included (but were not limited to) hair loss, skin sores and/or rashes, memory loss/confusion, damage/tumors to internal organs, among other symptoms. Many symptoms, or a combination of symptoms, could strike at any time. Or, symptoms could skip a generation and manifest in our children. The PBB's remain in our fat cells for life. We cannot rid ourselves of them. A chill ran through me as another possibility was discussed in the film – PBBs could remain dormant in the body for decades, and then suddenly, inexplicably, an attack of arthritis or autoimmune disease could strike.

I was recently diagnosed with RA and fibromyalgia, and I am now legally disabled. Funny though, the doctors remain puzzled because fibromyalgia normally occurs after an illness, like the flu. I had no such symptoms. Was the PBB poisoning in my body the trigger that set my body into a tailspin? I can't prove it, but four years ago I was active, gardening, bike riding, working, and attending grad school. Now I have trouble walking and managing self-care. I am 57, living in the body of an 85 year old woman.

The agencies that put public health so low on their list of priorities should have trouble sleeping at night.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  11  0

# 11 April 2012 at 9:10 pm

**Brian Bienkowski** said:



Christine, thanks for the comment.

I urge you to read our more recent article about PBB and what research has found about long-term effects:

<http://greatlakesecho.org/2012/02/22/michigan-passes-pbb-health-study-on-to-emory-university/>

Thanks,



Brian Bienkowski

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  7  0

# 11 April 2012 at 11:41 pm

**Four Minutes of "Bitter Harvest" « Sensitivity Road** said:

[...] you want more background on this incident, go here to read a current interview with the woman who authored the book upon which the movie was based. [...]



Like or Dislike:  1  0

# 20 April 2012 at 3:49 am



**Teresa** said:

Though I was raised in Michigan most of my life, I feel rather fortunate that my father was relocated about the time all of this started. We did drink contaminated milk for a few months however. My father & brothers were bigger milk drinkers. My younger brother has had testicular cancer and has suffered from Crohn's and arthritis since his 30's. My dad passed away of stomach cancer a few years ago in his early 60's. I have occasional uterine cysts that flair up, and had an unusually early period, at the age of 9. It was rather embarrassing, the first girl in my class. I stopped drinking milk when I was about 10 due to the news of the PBB and to general distrust of milk products anymore. I also stopped eating poultry in the mid 70's due to a change of flavor, a chemical I began noticing that did not smell or taste right. Our family moved back to Michigan in 1977. I have pretty much eliminated all red meats and try my hardest to find organic sources for all meats if I do. An ever expanding garden from organic seed stock produces enough canned goods for a year. Luckily so far I do not have the health problems that many 45 year olds that have lived in Michigan often do. I don't trust packaged or processed foods, in any part of the food chain. The FDA does not prevent disease or encourage optimum health, but instead is driven by mass consumption and profit.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  9  0

# 27 April 2012 at 12:08 am



**Rhodes** said:

While all of the PBB contamination was primary in the State of Michigan but I can without a doubt tell you that the contaminated products went far beyond the state of origin! These products and by-products was distributed throughout the country and to who knows??? It is kind of like a herbicide for example, it goes on the leaf of the plant the toward the root system then to the soil where then it is degraded and suposably un-harmfull or at the least tollerable by humans and animals!? I am saying that I was not raised in Michigan nor ever resided there. I was raised and living in the state of Illinois when this crisis with PBB took place. I am 52 years old and have some / a lot of the same unexplained symptoms that the people that did reside in that state. I began having multiple symptoms about the time this was going on. I was 13-14 years old. Further more on the main topic – PBB poisoning : this is one of those toxins that stay in the fatty tissues of the body and begins to mutate genes in every generation thereafter- just like DDT and many other toxins. Another one, just for another example is Chlordane pest / termite control product that was produced in the late 1940's and was used on over 1 million plus home not including indutrial and apartment complexes abroad! The doctors as well as the polititions in our poluted sosociety aren't going to reveal no more of these things than nessary!!! – look at the nuclear disasters that have taken place just recently. Radiation of that magnitude Would Not just effect Japan! Go all the way back to Schemoble in the 1970's – that haze floated copleately around the earth contaminating every human on earth to some extent! I realize that PBB is quit a different story but again, that meat, milk and bi-products went to hundreds of other food sources and producers of even such as canned goods made from that stock before it was reavealed and shut down! I think that could have contributed to my unexplained illnesses and unspecified hematology reports. Doctors shrug their shoulders and hand out SSRl medicines "anti-depressants" of all kinds and names like candy as if it is a wonderdrug and cure-all!



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  8  0

# 3 May 2012 at 4:45 am



**Larry** said:

PBB was the best



Like or Dislike:  0  6

# 3 May 2012 at 11:07 am



**james** said:

I WAS A WORKER IN THE PBB DEBACLE AT VELSICOL AT THE TIME OF THE MESS. WE WERE LIED TO AND TO THIS DAY THE STATE HAS DONE NOTHING TO HELP THE WORKERS OR THE NEIGHBORS. THERE ARE ONLY 6 OF US LEFT THAT HAVE A RIGHT TO SUE VELSICOL THE REST ARE DEAD. ANYONE READING THIS FEEL FREE TO CALL ME. HOPEFULLY SOMEDAY WE WILL HAVE SOMEBODY HELP US AND NOT JUST THE ENVIROMENTAL PROBLEMS. 989-708-0059

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  10  0

# 5 May 2012 at 9:13 pm

**Lynn** said:

I was a young woman at that time and drank a lot milk. We believed that milk was good for us. I did not have any specific issues until at 54 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Of course I can't prove anything but in reading about breast cancer and what courses of action could be taken, I learned that the rate of breast cancer in MI for young females of that era are much higher then for other states. Just something for people to be aware of, it doesn't just have effects on our offspring.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 6 0

# 16 May 2012 at 7:09 pm

**Jeff** said:

I am the son of the farm animal veterinarian who originally diagnosed the problem on his client, Rick Halbert's farm. My father also wrote the first technical article on PBB for the American Veterinary Medical Association Journal shortly after it's discovery. His name was Dr. Ted F. Jackson. My father was warning the Michigan State legislature at that time that there were no safe levels for PBB in the human food chain. He had been running feed tests with animals and was discovering such things as genetic mutations happening in a lot of the contaminated animals. PBB is/was a bio-accumulating chemical which basically would store in the body fat and continue to accumulate in humans eating foods with any level of PBB in them. He felt there was no safe level to set for PBB in any foods (milk, meat, etc). Unfortunately, he died shortly after his discovery and before the full extend of the spreading poison was revealed. Edwin Chen also wrote a good book on PBB in the late 70s and worked with me on a screenplay about this subject, which I was never able to get funded. It ran under two titles, CATTLEGATE & TOO MANY DRUNK COWS. I did a brief 28 minute documentary on PBB in the early 80s, where I interviewed some of the farm families affected and a Dr. Alpha Clark, DVM. I utilized some footage in that documentary from an excellent BBC documentary amde in the late 70s and I haven't been able to track it down these many years later, although, the name John Fielding sticks in my distant memory as possibly one of the producers. My documentary was made with the purpose in mind of promoting fund-raising for my feature film. I did a PR junket in Michigan in 1983 promoting my film project. I do have that documentary available through my website, <http://www.taoslandandfilm.com>. Also Dr. Irving Selikoff from the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine was doing a long term human health study back at that time. I'm sure he's passed on by now. Essentially, the Michigan State Govt. along with the insurance companies & Farm Bureau and the chemical companies, gave large settlements to the first tier of highly contaminated farms and then legislated what they called acceptable levels of PBB in food products and forced the majority of poisoned farmers in Michigan into a horribly compromised position of having to sell their contaminated food products into the human food chain or face being forced into bankruptsy via their FHA Farm Loans. Many of these farm families were seeing the human health effects on their families. It was a bad moral dilemma...Best, Jeff Jackson

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 11 0

# 3 June 2012 at 1:07 am

**D. Ford** said:

I lived in Kalkaska Michigan from 1969 until 1988. I have severe Crohns disease, my immune system is shot! Lots of surgery lots of medical bills (good times). I have never been tested. One will never get the straight story, kinda like Agent Orange. PBB it taste like chicken 😊 Hello to all of you back home.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 9 0

# 22 June 2012 at 3:03 pm

**Jane-Ann** said:

I lived in Central Michigan and my family was severely harmed by PBB. My twin sister and I have many problems including autoimmune, siezures, digestive, cancer, thyroid, skin, and reproductive. Our daughters, who we breast-fed, are now beginning to develop these same issues.

We have suffered enough, now we have to watch them suffer too? Really?

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 9 0

# 20 July 2012 at 7:05 pm

**Tina Morris** said:

I lived in Freemont Michigan in 1974-, my family lived two miles from the grain elevator at the edge of town across the street from a Dairy and five miles from ground zero where over 5000 cattle were taken and killed and buried in a clay lined pit. We drank raw milk from across the street every day. We saw the health problems of the calves. I even used to help put medicine in the calves eyes to help one of the problems. Little Bully, my broter's new born bull who came from there sadly died he was very young. My other calf had problems too. I suspect it has contributed to my many physical problems also no way to pinpoint for sure but the more chemicals you are exposed too the more problems that occur. Look at Gulf War Syndrome. I worried for many years about this with no way to find out any helpful information. Very tragic.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike: 7 0

# 18 August 2012 at 1:47 am

**Jennifer** said:



My name is Jennifer. I grew up playing on my grandparents farm in Paw Paw, Michigan from mid 1970s to approx 1990. I have found some articles with regards to this situation where individuals with dairy farms in Michigan were also coming down



with Hodgkins disease in the late 1970s, after the theory that farmers who were poisoned with PBBs were also developing Hodgkins. Hodgkins is rare, and is not typically associated with heredity.

I have an aunt who, at 16 years old (around 1976ish), developed symptoms and was diagnosed with Hodgkins disease. This would have been approximately around the year 1976 or '77. She had passed away after struggling for approximately 7 years with the disease, in 1983. Her family drank their cow's milk straight from the milkhouse every day.

I would like to add this information to a national database for consideration as a link to further improve the knowledge of possible links between PBBs and Hodgkins disease. Please share any info or links that you have to help me pass this information along for consideration. Thank you. [justjen76@comcast.net](mailto:justjen76@comcast.net)

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  5  0

# 30 September 2012 at 9:45 am





**Mary** said:

My parents bought a side of beef that was contaminated. My mother had her breast milk tested and her levels were off the charts. Shortly after this and before I was born, my parents built a farm and we went 'organic' consuming mostly what we raised and grew including milking our own cow and eating our own beef that was fed by our own crops.

Regardless of never neither of us having directly consumed the contaminated meat, milk or other food products. My younger sister and I both have Poly-cystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), hypothyroidism, digestive issues and some weird skin reaction to water among many other strange symptoms.

Whether you ate it directly, consumed breast milk or not, the very fact that my body was formed in the body of a person still contaminated with PBBs still seems to have impacted our health.

I would like to see some research on the impact this has had on the health of Michigan citizens. I would also like to see the companies who are still continuing on in business to this day (under the same name or not) fund and pay for any costs associated or resulting from this.



Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  4  0

# 13 October 2012 at 5:30 pm



**Patti** said:

I lived in the Michigan area and the area where so many persons were affected by contaminated milk and meat. I remember it so clearly. Now I am 52 and for the majority of my adult life starting probably in my senior year really, I started having symptoms that were vague. I had unexplained thyroid symptoms that would come and go and odd muscle issues w/weakness. Later I would develop an autoimmune disease that no family member could explain as no one had this. I now deal w/so many issues from neuropathy, to myositis, to and autoimmune disease and thyroid disease. It's so odd that one person can have so much wrong w/them w/no real explanation and I always seem to go back to that time in my life. It's just that I can't seem to not wonder if that time in my life and that experience didn't have any part to what I have dealt w/in my current life and what I have now passed onto some of my children sadly. Disease that I can't seem to explain nor show that runs in my family on either side. How could a state get away w/such negligent w/o being accountable to it's citizens? I often have wondered that. I am so glad though that it is finally out in the open. Thank you.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  4  0

# 5 November 2012 at 3:13 pm



**Jay** said:

I was still young at the time, but I remember it all very well.



The only reason the state admitted it had a problem was because one farmer sent samples to OUT OF STATE labs. Until then, the state was denying there was anything wrong. The state admitted to the problem less than two days after the farmer reported what he had done.

The state was trying to cover it up. And even after the fact, the lawsuit settlement explicitly stated that nobody else could sue. The state cut everyone off from their right to sue.

Today, you look at the available literature, and you might think PBB poisoning was not so bad. It seriously degrades memory and cognition. Since it stores itself in fat, anyone who is exposed will re-poison themselves every time they try to lose weight. I never hear about it, but they used to tell women to NOT breast feed their children as they will only end up poisoning their children.

Before the state admitted to anything, I remember my mother throwing out milk because it smelled funny. Some milk was so poisoned that it had a red tint – but was still sitting on the store shelves.

The poisoning was FAR WORSE than they're telling it today.

Well-loved. Like or Dislike:  7  0



# 27 November 2012 at 12:51 am



**PJ** said:

Just finished watching the movie "Bitter Harvest" and found it to be scary and sad for the people of MI..I also would be interested to know how far this contamination may have extended due to the products made from contaminated milk meat chicken etc. since the shelf life of canned goods such formula, soups, etc, is quite lengthy. I have 3 sons born during those years, the youngest of which has many medical problems that began at birth and continue today. I feel for those in MI affected by pbb and also realize to that there are many more contaminates out there that we don't even realize

we have been exposed to and this results in medical mysteries for many people.. We need better testing standards and more doctors willing to look outside the box when diagnosing illnesses that make no sense, Sounds like money, greed and being job scared is more important than human life to me..We are not only destroying our world but those that live in it. WHAT DO OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS HAVE TO BATTLE TO OVERCOME WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN CREATED BY THOSE WHO ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR. It is a shame.

Well-Loved. Like or Dislike:  5  0

# 15 December 2012 at 8:39 pm



**Bonnie** said:

This happened in 1970 and when my son was born in Dec 1971 The University of Iowa hospital would not let me nurse my son because chances were pretty good the milk had been sold right here in Iowa. I got these little white bumps on my breast to this day and when I soak in a tub or shower sometimes a white stuff will come out. I wonder if this is the PBB/s coming out 43 years later and if there is any way to get it out now.....

Like or Dislike:  1  0

# 18 February 2013 at 1:35 am



**Karen** said:

We lived in Michigan 1974-1980. We ate beef, pork and chicken . We also consumed milk and milk products. I had a miscarriage in 1978. I had decided not to breast feed on any future babies I might have because of the PBB. I will never forget seeing all those pitiful animals on television being shot and put in the mass grave. I remember crying as we watched farmers shooting whole herds.

In 1980 I had a beautiful baby. She is now 32 and has had numerous health problems from birth . BowI, kidney problems, cysts on both ovaries beginning at age 12 and many throughout the yrs since.

I now have thyroid problems, fibroid tumors, hair loss and a rash on my leg that first appeared in 2004. I have gone to 3 dermatologists and 5 different drs. It is getting worse and no one really knows what it is. I go to a different dermatologist next week to have a biopsy done. It is so uncomfortable and itches so bad that I scratch it while sleeping. Can not express how bad it burns and itches.

My husband had rashes when we first moved from Michigan in 1980-1986. This was unbearable that he could not be out in the sun without socks or shorts on. When the sun was on the exposed skin of his legs or feet. He would have to run into the bath and run cold water until the burning and itching stopped. He has had numerous cysts, basal cell and squamous cell tumors removed.

I did watch the movie a few yrs ago that Ron Howard was in. It was so sad.

My families illnesses may not be connected to our living in Michigan for those 7 yrs. but I will always wonder. Since Michigan was so great on not helping and not following up with all those families they started the study on we will never know. My heart goes out to those farmers and families that not only lost their farms and probably a lot have lost loved ones because of a large companies greed and our corrupt government not following through to help the victims instead of a cover up.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

# 21 February 2013 at 7:42 pm



**Cathy** said:

Where did Gerber get the meat for the meat sticks that they were producing and selling nationwide in the early to mid 1970's? The FDA refuses to return my phone calls regarding this. Gerber is and was in the heart of cattle country, Battle Creek and Fremont from what I can determine. The reason I am inquiring is because I have been tenaciously researching as to why my daughter has thyroid issues with no family history of it. I fed her these meat sticks in late 1975 and 1976, and it is my understanding that 'low levels of PBB' were accepted in the food chain at that time. I will get my answer.

Like or Dislike:  3  0

# 7 May 2013 at 6:54 am

**Michigan contaminated and no one cares - The RAnts of RA** said:

[...] Poisoning Michigan: Author revisits PBB crisis 30 years later [...]

Like or Dislike:  0  0

# 28 May 2013 at 7:33 pm



**Mari** said:

Born and raised in Fremont michigan. My grandparents owned a farm in the 70's. Emory university does a study on my family every so many years. They send us a kit and we send them urine samples.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

# 11 June 2013 at 8:16 am



**ang19** said:

I have been researching this topic and found in one documentary that food was pulled from store shelves and from homes of the contaminated. Is this true? If so, did they have meat shipped in from else where and did they raise prices for Michigan residents?

What a horrible thing to happen to people and farmers. I have read many articles and many of the comments posted and it sounds like there is so much we may never know because someone was trying to cover their rear! How sad-it cost the health of

so many—and still does.

If anyone has knowledge of what they did with the dairy and meat after they discovered the contamination—I would be most grateful to hear your story!

Like or Dislike: 1 0

# 10 July 2013 at 10:33 am

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