

# Editorial



## Contamination at EPA is more than skin deep

Anne (Gorsuch) Burford's gone, but that doesn't solve anything at the Environmental Protection Agency. She only presided over or directed an agency with wide evasion of responsibility.

President Reagan defended both Burford and his administration's environmental policy last week, saying environmentalists wouldn't "be happy until the White House looks like a bird's nest." With typical Reagan clairvoyance, he went on to assess the motives of her critics. "I don't think the people who were attacking her were concerned about the environment. I think this administration and its policies were their target. I don't see how they can look at themselves in the mirror in the morning."

The case against the Reagan environmental policy is simple enough to make. Agency personnel has dropped by about a third, from 14,075 when Reagan got in, to 10,396. In the last year of Carter's presidency, about 200 lawsuits against air and water polluters were referred by EPA to the Justice Department; last year there were about 100. Anne Burford called this doing more with less.

In efforts to get rid of the stink, Burford fired the administrator in charge of toxic waste dump cleanup, Rita Lavelle, for being too close to the chemical boys. ("Yes, pot, I am black. Kettle.") Then Burford flew to St. Louis to announce that EPA was buying one of its very small suburbs called Times Beach, contaminated with poisonous dioxin and she took on five new deputies who actually had experience in the field.

These were last ditch efforts to shift the blame for the mess at the EPA and make Anne Burford look like a Save the Whales true believer. But few people were fooled by these actions from a woman who was facing a contempt of court citation for refusing to send documents to Congress. Even Burford's own resignation seems most likely another attempt to get the heat off EPA, one that won't work.

"Anne Gorsuch is not the issue," said Oklahoma representative Mike Synar. "The issue is the operation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the implementation of our environmental laws."

The most crucial single task which the EPA is charged with right now is the administration of the Superfund, a fund used to clean up chemical dumps for which no single corporate polluter can be

blamed, or for which the culprit can't be identified. The Superfund, since its creation in 1980, has reached \$1.6 billion, raised by a tax on the chemical and oil companies. Most waste sites have a clear corporate culprit that is responsible for taking care of its mess, and even here Burford has been unusually lenient, preferring to settle cozy agreements out of court with the companies rather than subject them to the expense and unfavorable judgments of court.

Superfund work itself has gone relatively slowly, and many critics charged Lavelle with a heavy business bias. She did attack one of the agency lawyers in an unsigned memo for "systematically alienating the primary constituents of this administration, the business community," and her appointment calendars show that quite a lot of chemical lobbyists took her out to lunch.

Much of the Superfund issue has a greasy Watergate feel or smell to it, complete with charges of perjury and claims of executive privilege, changed testimony and unexplained erasures in agency documentation. Perhaps the most ridiculous point in the scandal was reached when it was discovered that Rita Lavelle had two paper shredders moved just outside of her office. "It seemed like a good idea," she whimsically explained; the agency had mistakenly ordered two extra paper shredders and a "helpful clerk" offered them to Lavelle's office, in case she should need them.

Some liberals have said the only way to handle the EPA mess is to put the agency into an independent status, where the president can't get to it, and run the EPA by a five-member, bipartisan commission.

This, said Rep. James Scheuer, "would remove the EPA from the extreme ideological swings of policy and practice that have degraded and politicized the agency's work product."

This probably wouldn't be any solution — the president has more or less control over all the administrative work in the government; even the Federal Reserve System, for example, generally does in the end what the president wants it to. If you want to change the kind of enforcement done by a presidential administration, you've got to change the president.

## 'The waves aren't the same'

SYDNEY, Australia — I made it to the beach Saturday, somewhere I had never been before. Oh, I had been to Peony Park in Omaha, which has sand, but the waves just aren't the same.

It was a beach north of Sydney called Gilgola. It's in a cove, with high cliffs on either side of it. Someone said the cliffs make the waves that are coming into shore higher than they would be without the cliffs.

Three kids and I went out there, and we sat down on the sand. The two girls who were with us just sat and sunned themselves, making it to the water twice



Bob Glissmann

the whole time we were there, for a grand total of five minutes.

That's what most people were doing — sunbathing. Apparently it's considered OK to sunbathe topless on the beaches here. I must have seen 24 . . . no, make that 12 females sunning themselves without tops on. (I know, I know. Cheap, sexist joke.) Not to mention all the males with no shirts. Tsk, tsk.

But I made it to the water. You just kind of walk into the ocean and when a big wave comes at you, you turn around and let it push you back. This gets old after about a half an hour, however, when you decide to walk straight into the waves. But then you get raked, and that's no good.

After you start breathing again, you start swimming out to sea. There are helicopters and small planes flying overhead looking for sharks and drowning people, so you feel relatively safe, especially when you wear a life preserver. Ho ho ho.

Then, you can't swim, really, because you have to keep watching for the waves coming in. You are out about 100 yards from the shore and this 10-foot high wall of water comes at you. Do you wait for it to crush you or do you swim into it? I swam into it. Right after it started to break.

## Spring break — the true story?

Spring break starts tomorrow, and I still don't know what I'm going to do. It seems that everyone else has plans, even the campus bigwigs. So today I'm speculating as to what next week's "What I Did

### Brian Stonecipher

During Spring Break" reports will say. Daily Nebraskan Editor Margie Honz would write:

I stayed in Lincoln and kept producing newspapers — it was so much fun! I wrote all of the stories just the way I wanted them to be written and I made the editorial section 14 pages long! I finally had the opportunity to write bad things about everyone that wrote bad things about me, and wrote what I really think about the ASUN elections, the NU Board of Regents, the Publications Board and anyone else that has inherent problems with a student newspaper. But do you know what the best part was? There were no letters to the editor — a sure sign of editorial perfection.

I just wish there were more spring breaks in a semester. The UNL Police Department Chief of Police would write:

I finally cleared this campus of all of those law-evading, irresponsible, unreliable, disrespectful, untrustworthy, spoiled rotten, bleeding-heart communist students. It's been a struggle all year long; I mean they'd just keep coming back for more

(For those of you who have never been to the beach, a "breaking" wave is a wave that is falling down after it has peaked. When the wave falls to the level of the rest of the water, it splashes all over. If you are caught at the bottom of the breaking wave, you get turned upside down and pushed back toward shore. Most of you probably know this, after swimming down in Miami before or after the Orange Bowl or whatever, but please bear with me and your other fellow Nebraskans who haven't experienced this sort of thing. Thanks.)

When the wave hit, I was hurled backward and couldn't do anything. It was a feeling of total helplessness I hadn't experienced since the Chem. 109 final my freshman year. And I swallowed a lot of water. A lot of water. The water . . . it . . . it . . . tasted like SALT! Sick. It's like that concoction your mom used to give you when you had a sore throat. Salt water. That's it.

When I returned to the beach, all the grains of sand within five feet of me jumped on me before I could dry off. The only reason my legs didn't get sunburned (the skin on my cheek just under my eye began peeling today) was because they were coated with sand. My sand-covered hands looked like cinnamon toast, except with little hairs sticking through. The backs of my hands looked like that as well.

Today is the Wednesday after the Saturday at the beach, and I stopped finding sand in my clothes sometime yesterday. It's hotter than heck today, about 95, accompanied by the hottest wind I've ever felt before.

There's always somebody around here going to the beach so I'll probably go back tomorrow. But first, I'm going to learn how to play squash. Oh yeah, and I've got homework.

I have to exchange my money, too. Prime Minister-elect Hawke devalued the Australian dollar 10 percent. That means if I cash in \$500, I get \$50 now that I wouldn't have had if I had exchanged the traveler's cheques last week. What a deal.

Well, I think I'll write about gambling in New South Wales next week. Until then,  
Bob Glissmann

even after we taught them those lessons with the tow trucks. But we finally caught up with them. On Monday of break, I towed every one of those cars that either didn't comply with official UNL parking policies or didn't have a genuine UNL parking permit. And it worked. None of those cars returned to give us any trouble and we didn't have any violations for the rest of the week. Except one. My own mother came to visit me over break and parked her car for two hours and one minute in a two-hour zone. Well, I had her car towed faster than she could say, "But sonny, I was only there two hours and now it's dark and I don't have any money in my checking account and *IM YOUR MOTHER!*" Well, she left Lincoln vowing to never speak to me again, but that didn't really bother me, since it's part of my job. I mean, the law is the law.

The people at the registration office would write:

The *darndest* thing happened last week during spring break, and we just can't figure it out. Apparently someone broke into the office and found the boxes of pre-registration packets that the students have just filled out. They tore into each envelope and cashed all the \$25 checks and then tossed all of the packets into the paper shredder. Now our job is impossible! I mean, we have tons of little strips of paper which have either student names on them or course numbers, but not both. So we spent the rest of spring break guessing which students wanted which classes.

Continued on Page 5