Who's Killing Hempstead Harbor?

By Harry Pearson
Newsday Environment Writer

This is a detective story. The purpose of the investigation is to find out who is killing Hempstead Harbor.

That it is being killed ought to be self-evident. Rats infest its shoreline. Garbage floats, unchallenged, in its waters. Dead fish turn up on its beaches weekly in summer. Children swim in waters contaminated by industrial wastes and partially treated sewage. And, unless there is a stiff wind, the air is obscured with a palish-blue smog. The head of Adelphi University's ma-

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rine sciences institute, A. Harry Brenowitz, took his first close look at the harbor in August and was appalled: "You don't have to be a scientific expert and run water quality tests to know that Hempstead Harbor is dying. It is a scandal and a disgrace."

Hempstead Harbor also is, in microcosm, an ecosystem which resembles the ecology of all Long Island. Virtually every kind of pollution that troubles Long Island now can be found on or in Hempstead Harbor.

There is thermal pollution from the Long Island Lighting Co.'s red-brick power plant at Glenwood Landing—the discharge of thousands of gallons per minute of hot water into the harbor, a discharge that aggravates algae blooms in summer and reduces the dissolved oxygen necessary for plant and animal life to survive in the water. The plant's stacks discharge sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the air.

The sewage treatment plant at Glen Cove operates beyond its capacity. It is clogged with toxic industrial wastes which interfere with the plant's operation, further reducing its capacity to clean up the human wastes that pass through it. The sewerage plant at Roslyn, though smaller and less plagued by industrial wastes, is the prime source of contamination at the south end of the harbor.

THERE are two troublesome incinerators on the harbor. The Town of North Hempstead's incinerator at Roslyn contaminates the air with smelly emissions from its stack, contaminates the water with leachate (highly poisonous acids from garbage) from its huge landfill operation and partially treated residue waters from a settling pond.

The Glen Cove incinerator, built in 1932 and obsolete even by 1950 standards, has not one iota of air-pollution control equipment. Fly ash from the plants settles over Glen Cove and Sea Cliff. Leachate from the town's landfill operation, across the street from the incinerator, finds its way into the groundwater and into the harbor.

On the west side of Hempstead Harbor, there is a 1,040-acre hole, larger than Central Park, left in the earth by sand and gravel operators—principally Colonial Sand & Stone Co. and William J. McCormack Sand—who town officials say have operated for years without regard for the town's sandpit ordinances. The silt from the vast operations has, by scientific estimates, filled up nearly half of the harbor since 1900, making it far shallower. (Officials of Colonial have not responded to requests for interviews; McCormack Sand has gone out of business.)

There are repeated oil spills in the harbor—at the LILCO plant, at virtually all of the five oil storage depots and at Colonial.

Along Glen Cove Creek, in the northeastern corner of the harbor, at least two, perhaps more, industries discharge highly toxic wastes into the harbor—directly and without treatment.

Each time it rains, runoff waters from the streets plunge down the steep, green hills surrounding Hempstead Harbor, discharging asbestos, oil, excrement, chemicals and pesticides through the 104 storm-drain pipes along the 14-mile shoreline.

And there is pollution (engine oil and toilet wastes) from the four marinas and countless pleasure boats that sail and motor incessantly over the harbor in summer.

The contrasts—bathing beaches within sight of sewage treatment outfalls—are sometimes dramatic.

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Rats are nocturnal creatures, which probably accounts for the fact that the 1,000,000 or so people who swim in the harbor each summer seldom see them.

And so it is that summer mornings just before dawn, the Ratman of Hempstead Harbor clambers down the cliffs near Tilley's Beach at Sea Cliff to check his traps.

Ratman has auburn hair and a spontaneous, nearly mischievous smile. Several years ago, before he went off to college, he began trapping the rats "just for fun." (No, he has not seen "Willard.") He also toyed with higher economics: "I was thinking of skinning them and making watchbands out of them, but then I was afraid nobody would buy the bands when they found out what they were made of.

"Two traps," he says, "that's all I need. I picked them up at a garage sale. I use bacon, because the smell goes everywhere and that brings them in. I chain the traps to a tree so they can't drag it away.

"The older rats are wise to it, so all I catch are the young ones. The traps catch them by the neck and strangle them. That way it's instant."

Ratman estimates he could bag as least 50 rats a day with his two traps, but allows that he wasn't some sort of rat freak, so he didn't push it. "But," he says, "if I had about 10 traps and planted them all round the harbor, I could get you 1,000, if you wanted them." Not, he says, that such a campaign would make a dent in the rat population.

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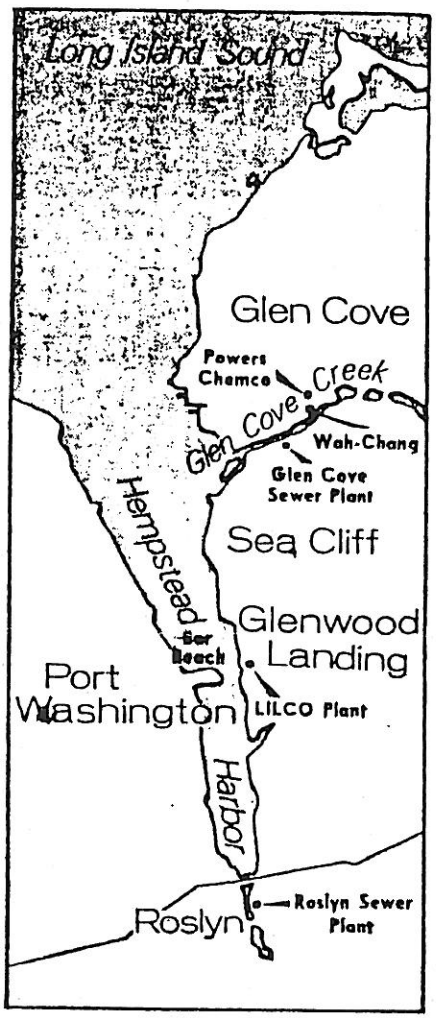
Not all the clues available to the amateur detective are obvious.

"The bay may *look* great," particularly after a storm or heavy rain, says M. Grant Gross of the Marine Sciences Research Center at the State University at Stony Brook, "and that often deceives people into thinking Hempstead Harbor is in better shape than it is."

Gross and his men sampled the bottom sediment at the northern end of the harbor. (In the more polluted section beyond Bar Beach, which juts nearly across the harbor opposite Glenwood Landing, the channel was too shallow to accommodate the team's research vessel.) "In a healthy harbor, with a good clean sand bottom," he said, "a one per cent concentration of organic matter would be considered high. In Hempstead, we found a much higher level of organic matter than we expected, 10 per cent. That's close to the top range of bottom organic matter we have experienced." New York Harbor, the worst in the nation, has a concentration running from 15 to 20 per cent, Gross says.



What does this mean? Simply, Gross explains, that there has been over the years a heavy concentration of sewage and nutrients contaminating the bottom of Hempstead Harbor.

Just this week, Gross announced that the nitrate levels were so high in three North Shore harbors—including Hempstead—that he would advise Glen Cove, which is thinking of expanding its sewage plant, to proceed slowly. Reason? Technological advances *may* provide a way to remove nitrates soon. Otherwise? Increased nitrates from sewage plant wastes may hasten the death of Hempstead Harbor. Why? Nitrates are to marine waters what phosphates are to freshwater—they can boost the productivity of the waters to the point of self-strangulation.

Still, it is difficult to pinpoint with any exactness the condition of Hempstead Harbor. The evidence is scattered, rather like pieces of a disassembled mosaic.

IN PART, this is because there has been no systematic scientific study of Hempstead Harbor. During the past summer, the activity along its shorelines increased as teams from Stony Brook University, Grumman Ecosystems, the county health department, the State Department of Environmental Conservation, Adelphi University and C. W. Post College studied different aspects of the harbor—each, you might say, examining the elephant from his own perspective.

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Gross: "The truth is that we don't know very much about Hempstead Harbor."

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That "we" includes the water-pollution control division of the county health department, whose basic standard of measurement is the number of coliform in a given sample of water. (Coliform are harmless microorganisms which grow in the intestines and serve as a crude, very crude barometer of the amount of sewage in the water.) That "we" includes the state, which samples mostly for pesticide and sewage contamination of shellfish. (Hempstead Harbor shellfish harvesting has been illegal since 1941 because of sewage contamination.) That "we" includes the federal Environmental Protection Agency, which has sampled the harbor (for water quality) only once.

No one tests for the presence of harmful bacteria and viruses. No one tests the harbor for toxic-metal concentrations. No one has tested the harbor's marine life to find out if its water supports the diversity of sea life that a healthy body of water has.

Why bother? For one thing, people who come in contact with fecal wastes run the risk of contracting the following gallery of horrors: typhoid, polio, aspetic meningitis, diarrhea, hepatitis, ringworm, hookworm, tapeworm. Impetigo, a severe skin infection, occasionally occurs among those who swim in the harbor daily.

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Brenowitz: "Only a fool would swim in Hempstead Harbor."

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The eight beaches around Hempstead Harbor fall under the jurisdiction of the health department water-pollution control division, which relies on counting the number of human coliform it finds in a given sample of water as a safety standard. The analysis of the samples takes from two to five days to complete—which is much too long if a water crisis were to develop. Many scientists agree that the analyses aren't terribly reliable since the actual number of coliform are not determined, but rather a most *probable* number, which can range from 10 times more to 10 times less than what's actually there. On top of this, the county averages the results of nine different samples taken over several weeks.

During a rainstorm, the pollution count in Hempstead Harbor (coliform and otherwise) increases five times, principally as the result of storm-drain

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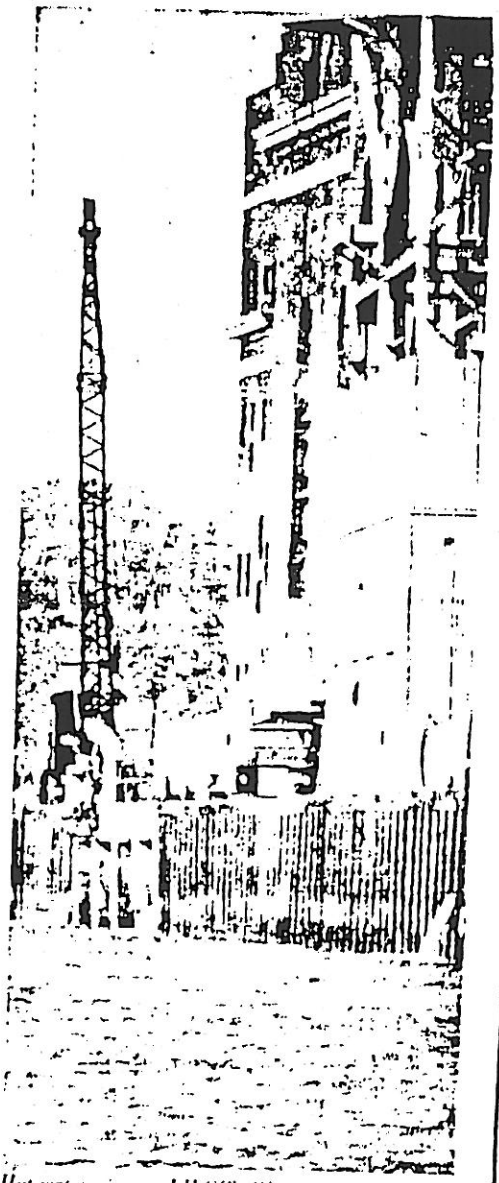
Newsday Photos by Dick Yarwood

Stacks at the Edmos plant pour smoke into Glen Cove air.

Assorted flotsam decorates the harbor behind Glen Cove Marina.

Garbage litters the north side of Glen Cove Creek.



Hot water pipes at LILCO's Glenwood Landing plant causes thermal pollution.

runoff. The coliform count on that particular day may well exceed the county standards. But once that count is averaged in with tests from eight other days, the final averages will not exceed the set limit.

Something of a double standard is involved here. The beaches are considered safe for swimming. But the shellfish in the harbor are not safe to eat. Swimming is considered safe in waters with more than 10 times the coliform of waters where shellfish harvesting is illegal.

The man who samples these shellfish for coliform and for pesticide contamination is John Woodworth, an enforcement officer for the State Department of Environmental Conservation. "Sure," he says, in his good-natured way, "people still go down there and take shellfish even though it's against the law." And patiently Woodworth, almost like a teacher, goes on to say, "And they eat these shellfish, even though they are running the risk of getting infectious hepatitis. I catch these people when I can, but one man can't be everywhere at once."

Maybe not. But Woodworth has, however, become the bane of Colonial, LILCO and several other companies.

He lives in Sea Cliff, has a boat and frequently fishes in the harbor. On such outings, he carries along a citation notebook and a collection of jars to make water samples. It often proves handy.

For example: On June 18, he was fishing near the LILCO plant at Glenwood Landing (a popular spot among fishermen since the fish are attracted by the heated-water discharges). "I noticed oil in the water," he said, "and I knew, from past experience, if I didn't have a sample, they would deny it and I wouldn't be able to prove anything."

LILCO, as it turned out, had not reported the spill to the Coast Guard, as required by law. ("It was only a gallon," a company official said.) And when Woodworth went to write out a ticket, he found the company using dispersants to clean up the spill, which is also against the law. Dispersants break up the oil, making the droplets finer and therefore more toxic since the finer droplets are more readily absorbed by marine organisms. He turned over his proof to the Coast Guard, which has not yet prosecuted the case. ("That happens all the time," Woodworth says unhappily.)

The firms that Woodworth finds polluting never escape a lecture, however. "I try to tell these guys, especially the ones who work right on the water,

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For the Record

Hempstead harbor holds 24.55 billion gallons of water at high tide. When the waters go out, the volume of the harbor drops to 16.7 billion gallons—a fairly sizable differential. The harbor's maximum depth is 35 feet; the average, 19 feet. Its shoreline is 14 miles long.

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what they have to do to protect the environment. The companies certainly don't tell them, and the men don't always know what is right and what is wrong."

Earlier in June, for instance, when we were out looking for industrial discharge pipes in the harbor, Woodworth's boat cut across an oil spill just off Colonial Sand & Stone's dock. He traced the spill to the dock—to an overheated barrel of oil on the dock which had expanded and was drip, drip, dripping into the water. He also found cans of dispersants there. He spent 30 minutes patiently explaining to the foreman he encountered just what the results of the oil spill could mean and what would happen if they used dispersants. As he pulled his boat away from the shore and dug his paddles into the sand, a huge blossom of oil from the bottom rose up: "You see," he said, "there's so much oil been spilled here that all you have to do is scrape the sand and create your own oil slick."

Later, Woodworth said, "The trouble is somebody's always polluting the harbor in some way. You'd have to be out here 24 hours a day and then you wouldn't catch them all, and sometimes you wouldn't be able to do anything about it if you did. The laws on pollution aren't always that clear."

The industrial waste discharges around Hempstead Harbor come from Powers Chemco and Wah-Chang/Teledyne in Glen Cove; the Harbor View Inn, LILCO and Harbor Fuel in Glenwood Landing; Texaco's oil storage depot and the Town of North Hempstead incinerator at Roslyn, and Colonial Sand & Stone in Port Washington. (These were established in water quality tests showing the presence of pollutants or contaminants. The 1899 Federal Refuse Act prohibits the discharge of all industrial wastes into navigable waterways and their tributaries, under penalty of a fine up to $2,500 or imprisonment up to a year.)

Under a recent interpretation of the 1899 act by the Nixon administration, industrial firms may seek permits which would allow them to discharge their wastes legally—provided they meet state water-quality standards. Except for the Harbor View Inn, the concerns listed have applied for such permits. None have yet been granted.

NONE of the permits have yet been granted. It will be largely up to the State Department of Environmental Conservation, which has not yet evaluated the applications, to determine if state water-quality standards are being violated. If they are, the federal Environmental Protection Agency will veto the permit, unless the industries involved agree to a pollution-abatement schedule. The Corps of Engineers, which will issue the permits, can call a public hearing before a permit is issued, but such hearings are not mandatory. Once the permits are granted, the pollutants discharged into Hempstead Harbor will have the sanction of law.

More disturbing, perhaps, are the polluters who are quiely getting away with their crimes. The Corps hired Grumman Ecosystems to conduct a "spy" flight over three areas around New York Harbor, one of them Hempstead Harbor, to find out if illegal discharges could be detected with specialized aerial photography. So far the Corps, inundated with applications for pollution permits, has not been able to check the pipes detected by Grumman against the applications.

There are also, to be sure, the occasional polluters whose activities may be legal but are environmentally harmful. Hudson Cement Co., near the sandpits actually pours concrete into the harbor waters ("We have a permit to do this," a company official says). Witnesses, including scientists, have seen oil leaking from the Phillips 66 depot into the water south of the LILCO plant (the company has a no-visitors policy and a large dog to back it up). Mobil Oil Co. has been convicted of spilling oil into the harbor, and a former Mobil official says that the firm still does not have safety features adequate to contain a major spill. Several private homes around the harbor—in Sea Cliff, Glen Cove and Roslyn Harbor—discharge their sewage directly into the harbor.

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Let us review the evidence: There are 104 storm-drain discharge pipes in Hempstead Harbor. Through these pipes comes the runoff from all the neighborhoods surrounding the harbor, runoff that includes pesticides from the four harbor area golf courses and countless private flower gardens; silt, asbestos, rubber, oil and grease from the streets; animal wastes—in fact, anything you can imagine that gets dumped out-of-doors.

There are, at least, 32 discharge pipes from industries and businesses that discharge everything from sewage to heavy metals from hot water to dishwater. There are, additionally, two municipal sewerage systems (at Roslyn and Glen Cove) which discharge partially treated sewage wastes into the harbor.

Not to mention the boaters. Not to mention those whose garbage is picked up and taken to the incinerators at Glen Cove and Roslyn.

So, one set of killers of the harbor is people. And in a rough sense, you might conclude that everyone is responsible for what is happening to Hempstead Harbor.

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In the northeast corner of Hempstead Harbor, Glen Cove Creek discharges its gray waters—gray from industrial and sewage wastes—toward the Sea Cliff beaches. Of all the areas in Hempstead Harbor, none is more troubled, or troublesome, than Glen Cove.

On the south side of the creek lie two city installations, an incinerator and a sewage treatment plant.

The sewage plant is designed to work efficiently—that is, to meet secondary sewage-treatment standards—when the sewage flow is 4,000,000 gallons a day (MGD). During the daylight hours, the flow through the plant is 5.1 MGD. One million gallons of that come from the city's many small industries, and contain a variety of toxic materials which interfere with the operating efficiency of the plant. The overall daily flow averages 4.6 MGD. When the plant's capacity is exceeded, as it is daily, what comes out is much dirtier and much more likely to contaminate the waters. Which is what is happening. Visualize, if you will, a sewerage plant as a speeded-up river, since what happens to human wastes in a healthy river (bacteria attacking and decomposing the wastes) happens in concentrated fashion and much more rapidly in an average sewage plant.

In the case of the Glen Cove plant, some of the toxic wastes from the industries flow into the already overloaded plant and kill the bacteria that are the backbone of waste breakdown. Those toxic metals pass through the plant untreated and wind up in the harbor.

The city incinerator, which officials have been promising to replace for years, is 39 years old. Its operating capacity is supposed to be 100 tons a day, although, in fact, it operates at about half that and with what the experts call "a bad burn"—which means that the garbage burned in the plant is not burned very well, leaving more residues.

The result is that the city, which generates well over 50 tons of garbage each day, must ship its excess to Bethpage for disposal, at a cost of well over $1,000 a week. The residue from the plant is hauled across the street to a landfill area and dumped, sometimes still burning. (That landfill property is, coincidentally, located adjacent to a school where minority-group students are in the majority.)

For months, there has been a controversy among the city and the residents of nearby Shore Road, the patrons of the nearby marina and the residents of Sea Cliff. Since the plant has no air-pollution control equipment, huge lumps of fly ash find their way into the water, onto boats (where they help peel off paint) and into the neighborhoods.

The plant foreman, Bill Graf, doesn't like his incinerator any better than anyone else does. "I just wish they would shut it down," he says. "The people come in here to complain about the ash and they say I use rubber tires to stoke up the furnaces. Well, everybody uses rubber tires to get the fires going. But I say, 'No we don't do that.' And I'm lying and they know I'm lying." (Glen Cove's mayor, Andrew DiPaola, has told irate groups from Sea Cliff and Glen Cove that the incinerator will be closed down in December, which apparently means that the town will have to rely on contracting with Oyster Bay Town to dispose of all its garbage, not just part of it.)

Just across the creek from the incinerator is one of the city's two industrial parks. At least two of the industries there, Wah-Chang/Teledyne, a tungsten manufacturer, and Powers Chemco, a photographic film manufacturer, discharge their wastes into the creek. DiPaola, one of Nassau County's few Democratic officeholders, says the city can require the industries to pretreat their wastes before discharging them (as most do) into the city sewerage system.

"But," he adds, "when you turn your back on these guys, they'll just go ahead and dump it without treatment, dump it anywhere they can, the sewer, even into the harbor—that's the way they operate."

IN YEARS past, DiPaola says, many of the industries north of the creek discharged their wastes directly into it—which was illegal. Since then, nearly all of these industries have hooked onto the Glen Cove sewerage system. (This does not, however, make it legal even though municipal sewerage discharges are specifically exempted from the 1899 Act. The U.S. attorney in the eastern district's Brooklyn offices says industrial discharges through sewers are not exempted from prosecution. However, the Corps of Engineers is not requiring those who discharge industrial wastes through sewers to get pollution permits. Another case of a double standard.)

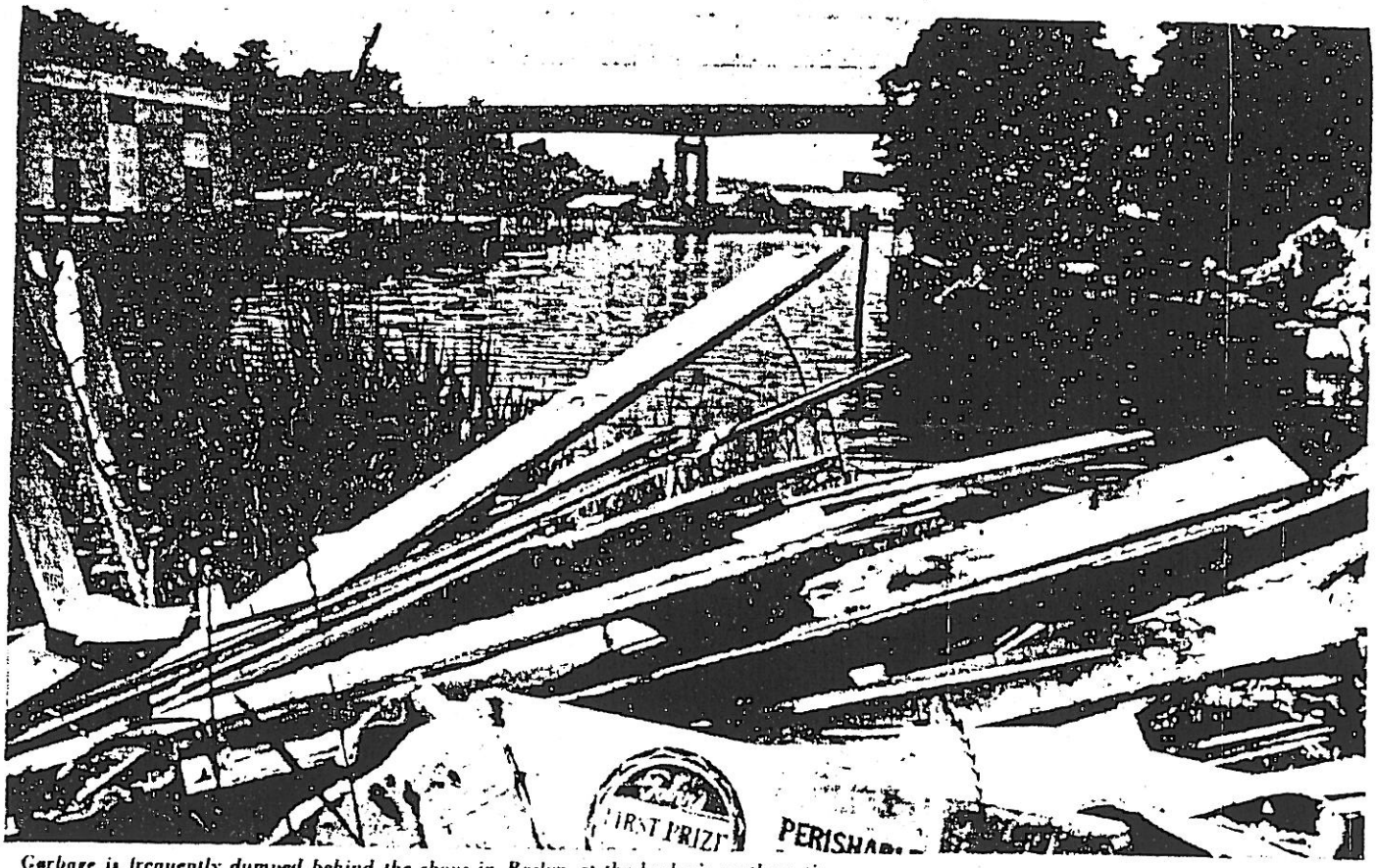
Powers Chemco has an 18-inch pipeline into Glen Cove Creek (just east of the Wah-Chang property) which dumps 190,000 gallons of waste water a day. A Newsday reporter found raw sewage in the discharge, in addition to the photographic chemicals. The company commissioned Holst, Holzmacher and McClendon, a Suffolk engineering firm, to study its problem and possibly come up with a satisfactory method of pretreatment. Neither Powers nor its engineering firm were sure exactly what components were in the waste waters, but indicated the possible presence of fluorides and cyanides.

Wah-Chang has four discharge pipes dumping 251,700 gallons of waste water each day. DiPaola says, "Wah-Chang has a long and notorious history of polluting." Wah-Chang, the mayor says, "was cut off from the city sewerage system a year ago because our plant couldn't handle their poison wastes without breaking down. They'd just dump it all in there at one time." Wah-Chang officials, who say they "voluntarily" stopped using the city system, deny that they seriously pollute the water, and add that they have in fact been installing waste-treatment facilities at the plant.

There is a considerable amount of bad blood between the city administration and Wah-Chang. DiPaola says: "Glen Cove doesn't need industries like Wah-Chang. I'll be glad when they pull up stakes and leave." Wah-Chang has been intimating, for years, that it is doing just that—phasing out its operation—and has told the mayor this is its last year of operation. (One of the former employes of the plant, Jon Schenck of Sea Cliff, questions this, saying the firm was supposed to shut down in August to install new equipment—surely not a sign of departure.) Among the many toxic metals the tungsten manufacturer discharges into Glen Cove Creek is arsenic. Acids are not uncommon, though company officials deny it.

One incident to illustrate the increasingly strained relations between the mayor and local industries:

One morning in August, DiPaola and the city's public works commissioner, Frank Festa, went to Edmos Industries, a textile manufacturer whose plant is located a few hundred feet west of Wah-Chang. Something had gone wrong at the sewerage plant during the night and, DiPaola said, "We thought Edmos might have discharged a slug of



Garbage is frequently dumped behind the shops in Roslyn, at the harbor's southern tip.

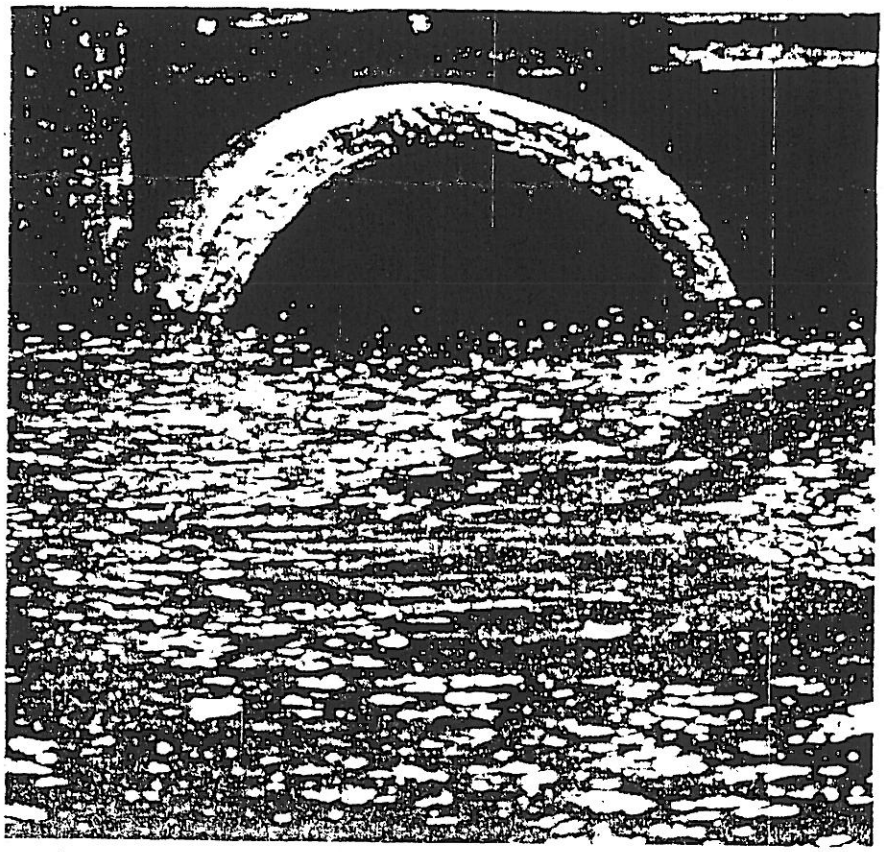
wastes into the sewer system all at once, instead of on a regulated basis."

Edmos officials went to some lengths to tell the mayor about the plant's new holding tank (1,200,000-gallon capacity) which was, they said, buried under the plant floor. Edmos also pretreats the wastes in that holding tank, its officials say, and the release of these wastes are pretimed to insure a regular, even flow. Whether coincidence or not, the day Di Paola, Festa and a reporter toured the plant, some of the pretreatment equipment wasn't working. The mayor said, "I want you to know that I intend to seal up these outfall pipes out here near your property if I hear any more complaints or any more trouble. You say you're not discharging your overflow wastes into the creek. When I seal those pipes, we'll see who this junk backs up on. That way we'll know for sure."

The reason for the mayor's suspicions: There is a discharge pipe just south of Edmos—dry most of the time—which, during rainstorms, turns out a rainbow of colors. (Edmos dyes the materials it makes at the plant.) "One thing is for sure: Edmos sure pollutes the air with all the smoke it lets out," the mayor says. "We've had the county air pollution people up here a half dozen times. Edmos is supposed to be installing some air-pollution control equipment to handle that."

The mayor also suspects that Columbia Ribbon and Carbon Manufacturing Co. (across from Wah-Chang) may be discharging waste waters.

The reason? DiPaola had seen a peculiar substance, bluish-purple, in the waters of the creek near the Powers Chemco outfall pipe. "Looks damned much like carbon paper or typewriter ribbon stuff to me," he said, and promptly ordered Festa to dump dyes into the plant's discharge lines. A company workman at Columbia complicated matters considerably by telling Festa that Columbia did have a discharge pipe adjacent to the Powers Chemco outfall. But, in fact, there was no pipe at the specified point, nor did the dyes dumped into



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Illustrates how easily attempts at detection can go wrong.

DiPaola has been under considerable pressure this election year from a Republican opponent, Norman Sorenson, who intends to make Glen Cove's environmental mess his No. 1 issue. It isn't surprising to hear DiPaola say: "I'll tell you this: You can't turn your back on these industries here. They're as sweet as pie when you're looking at them, but once you turn your back, they're polluting big as hell."

Sorenson isn't the only person in Glen Cove who attributes the administration's sudden interest in environment—including the announcement of a new sophisticated sewer-incinerator complex—to the forthcoming November elections.

The reason? Before the last election, the city announced a program for a new and sophisticated method of disposing of its garbage (compacting, baling and shredding). It hired an out-of-state firm that promised also to find disposal sites for the garbage. The last anyone heard of that idea was last year when the city council decided to drop the whole idea, partly because the company had not obtained all the necessary permits to proceed—though, strangely, the most important permit the firm lacked was from the city itself. Festa, who was not in office at the time, says it wasn't a "good idea" and said the firm wasn't producing. DiPaola says, "They promised to dispose of it for us, but they couldn't find places to do that."

This summer, the city hired a bright young engineer, Leonard J. Eder of Glen Cove, to come up with a new incinerator-sewer complex. The sewer system was going to be tertiary, in other words they would, Festa said—"get as close as possible to drinking-water standards in treating the wastes." (In 1968, the city hired another engineering firm to do an analysis of the wastes discharged by industries into the sewerage system and into Glen Cove Creek. The action resulting from that report has been minimal.)

FESTA and other city officials say there has been adverse reaction from county health department officials. If Glen Cove were to come up with a plant capable of tertiary treatment, they say, it would be embarrassing to those officials who say tertiary treatment is impractical, or impossible.

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Meanwhile, Graf, the foreman at the incinerator, says he sometimes wonders if "anybody, including our public fathers, really gives a damn about this mess over here . . . They call this place Graf's Maggot Pile because sometimes when the garbage gets really rotten, rotten enough to make you physically sick, those white maggots come crawling out all over the place. One day old Festa, he come down here and tells me, 'Bill, the mayor wants to know if there is anything he can to help, and I tell him, 'Yeah, you tell him to get off his ass and come down here and work for a day—then he'll know how bad it really is.' Old Frank, he just gives me a silly smile and that's that."

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It is far more difficult to determine who is responsible for the way Hempstead Harbor looks—and is abused today—than it is to detect who is doing the polluting.

No single agency has jurisdiction over the harbor. In fact, the jurisdiction is, in part, divided among the villages of Roslyn, Sea Cliff and Roslyn Harbor; the towns of Oyster Bay and North Hempstead; the City of Glen Cove; Nassau County; the State Department of Environmental Conservation; the federal Environmental Protection Agency Corps of Engineers, and the Coast Guard.

Public agencies with regulatory or planning powers either lack the funds to enforce their wishes, or the will, or, in the case of those with planning power, the necessary legal mechanisms to bring about

The only sort of plan by an official agency for the harbor as a whole is from the Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board in its master plan. That plan recommends phasing out the five oil depots on the harbor (but not LILCO's oil storage tanks) and preserving the harbor for essentially recreational uses. But comes the voice of reality. That plan, says Michael J. Tully Jr., North Hempstead Town supervisor, "isn't about to happen. The tax benefits of having those industries there are just too much for that to be a practical suggestion. Local taxpayers like those big industrial taxpayers."

But, without some sort of comprehensive land-use zoning by any agency with the authority to zone the entire harbor (itself a radical idea) developments are going to continue on a piecemeal basis—and not, if the past is any guide, with any great ecological sensitivity.

THE opposition, it might be added, seemed doomed, in fact, to continue on a piecemeal basis. There is no coalition or organization interested in protecting the entire harbor. The environmental groups in Roslyn and Port Washington have centered their fire on the North Hempstead incinerator and the sandpits. A so-called Hempstead Harbor Protective Association, concerned mainly with Glen Cove and Sea Cliff, faded into the mist a decade ago.

There are, meantime, plans afoot which, taken singly or together, might well spell goodbye to Hempstead Harbor's already ravaged waters and shoreline—plans that might well spell goodbye to the neighborhood atmosphere in the nearby towns and villages.

The sandpits: Mike Blumenfeld and members of his Port Washington ecology group are trying to stop any industries from coming into the sandpits once McCormack and Colonial have pulled out for good. They envision a recreational complex (of more than 1,000 acres) for the entire Island. They fear that the sandpits will go entirely to industry. The recreational scheme, Tully says, is hardly likely considering the value of the land for industrial purposes. "I think it may well turn into a warehouse storage area since that is the one use, industrially, that won't result in our having to tear up the present road system to accommodate the traffic."

The Town of North Hempstead has not yet approved a master plan for the sandpits. But it has zoned 165 acres at the south end of the pits for an industrial park. The developer of that tract, Seymour Malman of Great Neck, has been in court ever since fighting a determined Flower Hill attorney, Arnold Daum. The point of that protracted battle, of course, is to keep industry out of the sandpits.

Daum's prospects do not look good. And in the town's original plan for the sandpits, 75 acres more are to be zoned for industry. Nassau County owns 250 acres at the northern end—land assessed at $6,000,000, for which the county paid in excess of $20,000,000. That county land is supposed to be used for a park. (County officials call the purchase "a white elephant" and say they have no funds to develop the site.)

Tully's ideas about the land are a little contradictory. But he does foresee (or did last month) a planned community there, along with industries and parks. Also, last month, members of Nassau County's Planning Commission presented (in a private session) an updated version of their plan for something called Sands City, a sort of industrial park, high-rise apartment, commercial, parkland development. Such a plan would, Tully says, necessitate paving over the southern end of the harbor—under the Roslyn viaduct—to create exits for the heavy traffic that would be generated by the new city.

"We sure as hell will raise a storm," Tully said, "if we try to widen the roads through Roslyn to get the traffic out. So we'll probably have to create a traffic diamond and use Willis Avenue to get the

ing a gigantic recreation area. "It's too expensive to do that now," he says, sounding, insofar as he can, a little wistful about the whole thing.

At present, plans for most of the sandpits are still moot since Colonial still has enough sand to continue mining (at its present rate) through the year 2000. Tully estimates the company will "pull up stakes in about five to seven years." He said, "It's running out of sand. You know, McCormack has already closed down, so I think it's only a matter of time before we get rid of Colonial." The piecemeal way in which the sandpit land is presently being sold leads the more pessimistic Port Washington environmentalists to believe that once Malman's industrial park goes through, the rest of the sandpits will go to industry. Who wants to live next door to an industry? This is the reasoning they employ.

(Neither Tully nor his predecessors have been able to make Colonial comply with the town's sandpit ordinance. Colonial has recently undertaken some restoration of the pits, but not much. Tully could, presumably, revoke the company's mining permit—renewable each year—but he has not.)

LILCO recently completed unpublicized negotiations for two tracts of property north of its Glenwood Landing power station and across the harbor from the sandpits. It now has control of all the land (except a tiny section occupied by the Harbor View Inn) down to Tappen Beach—a considerable chunk of real estate.

It is no secret that the 827 megawatt nuclear plant the company wants to build at Shoreham is tangled up in hearings and legal proceedings which will keep LILCO from having Shoreham in operation by the company's 1975 deadline. But what isn't known is that LILCO, as an alternative to Shoreham, is planning to turn Glenwood Landing into an enormous power generating site.

At present, the plant there produces 350 megawatts of power. Two gas turbines under construction (south of the plant) will raise that total to 450 megawatts. The company is planning, in the next few years, to install a minimum of 450 megawatts of additional power on the property it has acquired. It has gone to some lengths to keep this knowledge from the public.

THE new units, arranged in 50 megawatt gas-turbine complexes, will not require additional cooling water from Hempstead Harbor—or so LILCO says. (The present plant discharges 274,000 gallons of heated water per minute—water 19 to 24 degrees hotter than the ambient harbor water.) But it will increase the air-pollution problem at Glenwood Landing, since the company intends to use fuel oil to drive the generators. Its experts deny that there will be any serious pollution increase, or that the new units (which are air-cooled) will create fogs and heavy mists around the plant. They also deny that there will be a noise-pollution problem.

The addition of these new heavy-industry facilities will, however, cause at least some change in the character of Hempstead Harbor—aesthetically and, perhaps, in their effect on land values in adjacent residential communities. The company's development may—although no one can say for sure—seal the fate of Hempstead Harbor as an industrial port and, maybe in years to come, as a deteriorating residential area.

There are other plans, admittedly more speculative, such as the possibility often advanced by state planners that the Oyster Bay-Rye bridge would become, in fact, a bridge from Mamoroneck to either Sands Point or the sandpits. Another specter looming is an old Corps project still on the books to dredge the entire harbor to create a new shipping channel.

If the Corps carried out such a proposal (and Tully says it is actively planning to do so), the present beaches might well be altered beyond recognition—not to mention the rest of the shoreline around the harbor's waters.