

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**ANNE MCDONOUGH**

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION AND ACTION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH  
IN AMBLER (REACH Ambler)

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

Lee S. Berry

at

McDonough Home  
Ambler, Pennsylvania

on

20 January 2014

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

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THE CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
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## **ABSTRACT**

**Anne McDonough** grew up in State College, Pennsylvania, the youngest of four daughters. At Pennsylvania State University she majored in biology and environment and in education. She now teaches science at Wissahickon High School. Her husband is a biomedical engineer and pulmonologist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. To be close to their jobs they settled in Ambler, which also had the advantage of a small-town feel. Though they knew about the area's asbestos-containing waste, they decided that the EPA's remediation had the risk under control.

McDonough says that as a scientist she is more concerned about the unknown substances in our everyday lives than about the remediated asbestos. Risk is everywhere, she believes, but people should not live in fear. In the case of the proposed high-rise, though, she thought that digging would send the asbestos airborne, at which point it would become dangerous. McDonough regards her role as being an educator. She was chosen for the REACH teaching project, which involved setting up a website about asbestos; it is a three-year science course for high-school students that she hopes will teach students when and how to become active in their communities, as well as basic science concepts.

McDonough talks a little about the changes she has seen since she moved to Ambler, especially the improved economic situation and the increase in college-bound high-school students. She credits the citizens of the various affected boroughs and townships with identifying the asbestos danger and with successfully petitioning for inclusion on the EPA's National Priorities List; she acknowledges the ongoing oversight by the community. She believes that containment with continuous air monitoring is the best solution. She emphasizes the importance of communication between EPA and community.

## **INTERVIEWER**

**Lee Sullivan Berry** earned a master's degree in medieval studies from the University of Notre Dame, and a bachelor of arts degree in religious studies from the University of Pennsylvania. As a staff member in the Center for Oral History, Berry conducts background research and oral-history interviews, edits transcripts of completed interviews, and coordinates with interviewers and interviewees to finalize transcripts. She was the lead interviewer for the REACH Ambler project and has presented her work at meetings of the American Society for Environmental History and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

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