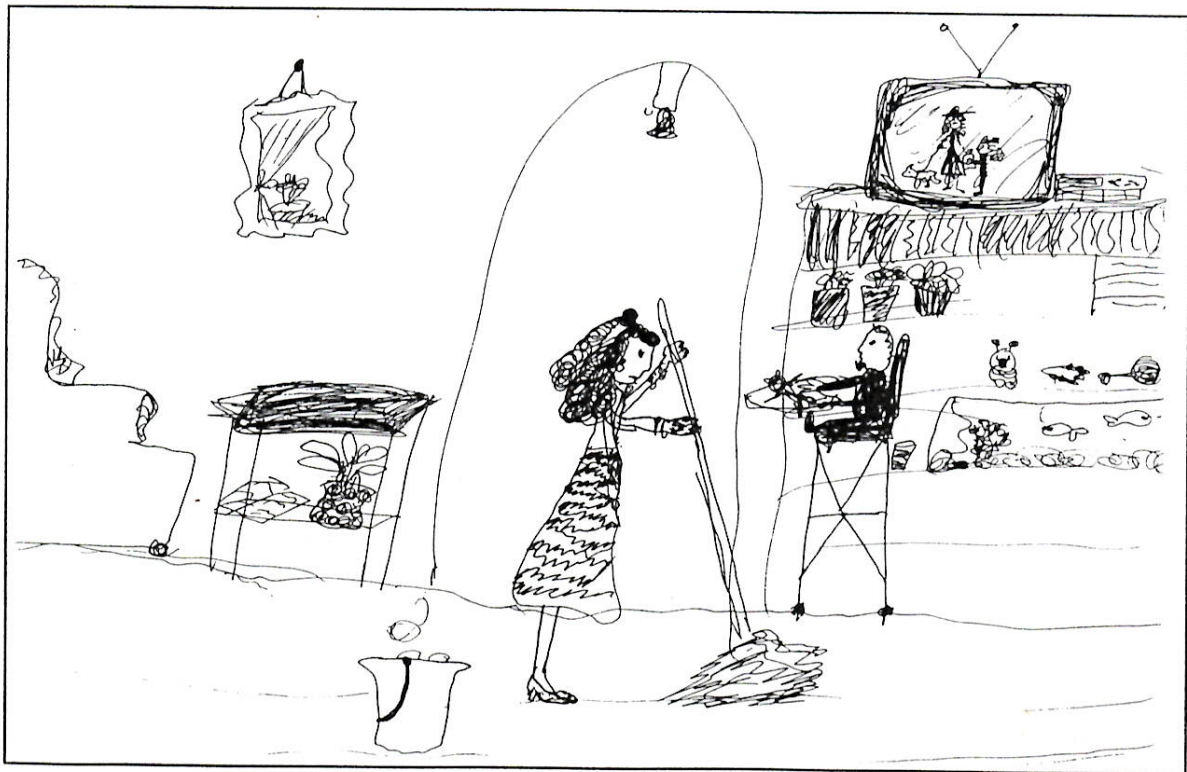


# LEAD Action NEWS

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*Mother mops up lead dust while baby plays in high chair. Illustration by Rose Lennon, aged 7.*

# Editorial

by Elizabeth O'Brien

There's been some movement [downward] at the [air lead monitoring] station and the word is getting around [both the truth about lead and the urban myths about benzene]. But the NSW State Government still fails to act in non-smelter/mining communities despite the Environment Minister's promises. So heaven help children in the other states where they don't even **talk** of action!

This issue of LEAD Action News is a minefield of information designed to help NSW lead-concerned citizens decide how to vote at the coming elections on March 25th 1995. The lead survey which was sent to all parties, flags all the major actions any government would need to take (see page 11). Results can be obtained by phoning the Community Lead Information Centre on (02) 550 0095, or phoning the party direct.

But first up, we have the summary of the available evidence of the connection between lead and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Up to half the children who suffer sustained high blood lead levels in early childhood will suffer ADD. According to Norman Swan of ABC's *4 Corners*, 16,000 Australian children are currently taking amphetamines with their breakfast for ADD, and presumably there are thousands of other children not being treated for ADD. Then voters can read about all the other well-established justifications for **preventing** childhood lead poisoning (see page 6) and about the actions that one mother (a local government councillor) was inspired to take, after her son became lead poisoned.

Pro lead in petrol propaganda (often anonymous) continues to overwhelm innocent newsletter editors everywhere, as well as car magazine editors whose readers are encouraged to believe that the availability of leaded petrol is a life or death issue for their cars (which totally ignores experience in Canada, Japan, Austria, the USA, etc that cars don't die when lead is phased out of petrol). The push, clearly backed by manufacturers of the lead additive for petrol, would like to convince us that everyone with a pre 1986 car should use leaded petrol so kids don't get leukemia. I said it last issue and I'll say it again - the amounts of benzene in leaded and unleaded (91-93 octane) petrol are **equivalent** in Australia. Benzene emissions are reducing, as are lead emissions from vehicles. Dr Colin Grant of the NSW EPA states that typical

Sydney ambient benzene levels are 0.5 to 3-4 parts per billion (ppb) which is minuscule compared to the "safe" level for occupational exposure (40 hours a week for 40 years) which is 5000 ppb.

On the other hand The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) revealed polonium 210 is yet another pollutant from leaded petrol, (along with dioxin: mentioned among the plethora of information on this matter in LEAD Action News Vol 2 No 4 Spring 1994). Polonium 210 "derives from an unstable form of lead in petrol and naturally occurring radon gas," and "could be linked to leukemia, brain tumours and kidney cancer in children." With over 1000 carcinogens in vehicle exhausts, its no wonder that the issue of the siting of new childcare centres on busy roads is creating so much controversy (see page 10).

I cannot overlook the fact that I have been credited in a letter to the editor of the SMH with being the driving force in the achievement of the reduction in Sydney's air lead levels (and presumably the air lead levels in other Australian cities) of 60% in the year to November 1994 (see Annual Report on page 14). I do not take this compliment lightly, rather I see that it places a grave responsibility on us to ensure that the toxic load on children, adults, and the whole environment, is reduced, not increased, due to The LEAD Group's work. And so it shall be!

In the next issue we'll look into the responsibilities of paint contractors. Can they simply sand off the old paint and leave you with a lead contaminated site or are there regulations to protect residents? We'll report on homes with 40 times the acceptable contamination level and a school with 160 times the acceptable contamination level. Plus more on how ultra-fine particles in the air can kill.

## Acknowledgments

**A big thanks to Leichhardt Council in Sydney's inner west for their two donations to support the work of The LEAD Group, totalling nearly \$6,000.**

**Thanks again to the newsletter production team of volunteers: David Ratcliffe, Noela Whitton, Steve Shamoos, Anne Roberts, Ann Gethin, Jason Bawden-Smith, Rose Lennon and members of The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board.**



# Can Exposure to Lead Cause ADD?

By Jason Bawden-Smith, PhD student, Department of Safety Science, University of NSW.

**Very little is known about the spectrum of causes of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder. One possible cause that has come to light in recent years, but has received little attention in Australia, is the role of environmental toxins, especially lead.**

## Health effects

Lead is a potent nerve poison that adversely affects many systems in the body. The organ systems that are particularly sensitive to lead are the central nervous system (specifically the brain), the kidney and blood-forming tissues. Recent studies have shown adverse neuro-psychological effects (e.g. reductions in IQ) at blood lead levels previously thought to be safe (10-15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$  [micrograms per decilitre]).

In his landmark study, Needleman (1979) showed that behavioural and performance problems in primary school children which included hyperactivity, distractibility, impulsivity, disorganisation, non-persistence, inability to follow simple instructions and overall poor functioning, were more prevalent with increasing dentine (teeth) lead levels. Furthermore, in a recent long term follow-up study (Needleman *et al.*, 1990), for children who had been exposed to moderate lead levels (greater than 20 ppm [parts per million] in dentine lead) in preschool years, the odds of those children dropping out of high school were seven times higher, and the odds of a significant reading disability were six times higher than for children exposed to lower lead levels. Children exposed to higher lead levels were also shown to have problems with attention and fine motor skills, lower standing in class, increased absenteeism, and lower vocabulary and grammatical-reading scores, even after the investigators controlled for other variables. Sciarillo (1992) found that 2-3 year old children with blood lead levels greater than 15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$  were twice as likely to have sleep problems, were five times more aggressive, four times more destructive and two and a half times more likely to have somatic problems than children with blood lead levels below 15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ .

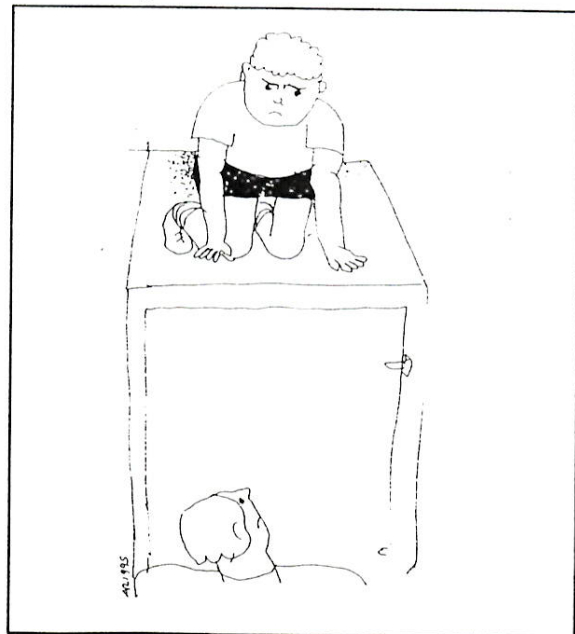
It must be stressed that lead is possibly only one of many causes of attention deficits, learning difficulties and behavioural problems in children. However, childhood lead exposure is one problem we know is present in many communities and one we know how to control.

## High Risk Groups

In general, infants and children are affected much more by lead exposure than adults since children:

- \* take in larger quantities of soil and dust than adults, through normal hand-to-mouth and play activities;
- \* absorb a higher proportion of the lead they take in than do adults, approximately 50% compared with adults who absorb only 8-10%. Also:
- \* lead is more harmful to the developing brain, nervous system and other metabolic activities of children.

Pregnant women (as surrogates for foetuses) are also a sensitive population and lead workers have long been recognised to be at risk because of excessive exposure.



(The ADD Child in the Classroom, illustration by Anne Roberts)

### Sources of lead include:

- \* Lead-based paint - the most common source of high dose lead exposure, responsible for the majority of cases of clinical poisoning in children;
- \* Lead in petrol - provides a small but significant dose for the whole population;
- \* Stationary sources - e.g. smelters and mines may provide a high dose source for the surrounding community;
- \* Contaminated dust and soil - as a legacy of past production of lead, as well as past uses in paint, petrol and other sources;
- \* Occupational and hobby exposure - e.g. battery breaking, lead-lighting;
- \* Drinking water - minor source for the whole population;
- \* Lead in food - a small percentage of food cans in Australia are lead-soldered.

### Ways to reduce exposure

Keep pregnant women and children away from homes (pre 1970's buildings may contain lead-based paints) which are undergoing renovations. Ensure soft furnishings and carpets are removed from the work area or covered by plastic. Do not use equipment that may liberate hazardous dusts and fumes (e.g. sanders, heat guns). Thorough clean-up must be undertaken at the end of the days work and at the completion of the job. The work areas should be vacuumed with a HEPA [high-efficiency particulate air] filter equipped vacuum cleaner, and all surfaces cleaned by wet mopping/wiping.

Dust in ceilings will often be lead contaminated. If cornices are in good condition then the risk of "dust leakage" is probably low and in some cases a worse situation may be created by disturbing the dust. If you are considering building an attic or adding a second storey, dust should be removed.

Many pre-1960 premises may have contaminated soil especially around the perimeter of the dwelling. These areas must not be allowed to be accessed by children and good ground cover (e.g. grass) should be maintained at all times.

Other important measures that help reduce lead hazards include:

- \* Ensuring diet is adequate in calcium, iron, zinc and not excessive in fat;

- \* Washing children's hands and face regularly, particularly before eating;
- \* Wet mopping all floors (avoid dry sweeping) and wet wiping window sills and wells with high phosphate (5-8%) detergents (avoid feather dusting);
- \* Washing toys and dummies frequently;
- \* Do not store food in open cans, particularly if they are imported;
- \* Use only fully flushed cold water for drinking, cooking and preparing infant formula;
- \* Ensure take-home exposures are not occurring from parental occupations/hobbies;
- \* Washing vegetables before consumption.

### Is your child at risk of lead poisoning?

Excessive absorption of lead is one of the most prevalent and preventable childhood health problems in most industrialised countries today. There is considerable evidence that even very low blood levels of lead may have a deleterious effect on the foetuses of pregnant women and on young children .

In response to this evidence the National Health and Medical Research Council in June 1993 set a goal of below 10  $\mu\text{g/dL}$  [equivalent to 0.48 micromoles per litre ( $\mu\text{mol/L}$ )] lead in blood, for all Australians. The Council stresses the urgency of achieving this goal in children aged 1-4 years because of the adverse effects on intellectual development. For individual children Council recommended a range of graduated responses depending on blood lead concentrations commencing at 15  $\mu\text{g/dL}$  (education on ways to minimise exposure and reduce absorption and environmental assessment with remediation if appropriate).

Blood lead levels are only a reflection of a child's recent interaction with the environment and not a measure of total lead in a child's body. The level depends on the amount of lead a child absorbs through taking in dust, soil, paint, food, water, or other substances containing lead. Once absorbed, lead is distributed to bones, teeth, soft tissues, hair and other areas of the body. Blood lead levels provide a good indication of recent lead exposure (3 to 4 weeks) and teeth are an indicator of historical exposure. Analysis of lead in hair, while costly, is not a reliable indicator of past exposure, due to possible lead contamination on the outside of the hair, and the lack of long-term epidemiological studies to provide an interpretation of the results.



## Which children should be tested?

Most children with lead poisoning show no symptoms unless the child has been recently exposed to very high levels of contamination (blood lead levels of 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ ).

Children who may be at risk of having elevated lead levels (without an obvious cause for concern) and whom one might consider measuring their lead levels include the following:-

- \* Children aged 12-48 months who live in or are frequent visitors to older dilapidated housing with peeling paint.
- \* Children aged 12-48 months who have been present during "unsafe" renovations of older housing (painted before 1970).
- \* Children with pica living in older housing with peeling paint and exposed soil.
- \* Children aged 12-48 months living near lead smelters, battery breaking yards, lead ore bodies, or on highways with heavy traffic.
- \* Children exposed to the less common exposure pathways eg. lead hobbies, folk medicines containing lead, etc.

Blood lead levels should be collected by a trained paediatric blood collector on venous blood using proper techniques and lead-free equipment.

The basic management of young children with elevated blood lead levels includes:

1. Identification and removal of the source of lead, or removal of the child from the source.
2. Improved nutrition and administration of iron supplements where appropriate to minimise lead absorption.
3. Education on ways of minimising lead exposure.
4. Chelation therapy when indicated.

## What about school age children?

There is increasing evidence that exposure to lead during pre-school years may cause behavioural and learning disorders similar to children diagnosed with ADD (see "Can exposure to lead cause ADD?").

As most children diagnosed with ADD are of school age it is likely that their blood lead levels will be low (remember blood lead levels are only indicative of recent exposure). However, if they

were exposed to lead during their first 3-4 years of life (i.e. when they are most at risk) lead would have accumulated in their bones and teeth. Therefore, by measuring dentine (tooth) lead we are able to determine whether children have been previously exposed.

If parents are interested in assessing whether their child has been exposed to lead during earlier life they need to:

1. Collect their child's two top front baby teeth (upper central incisors usually fall out between the ages 5-8). Other teeth may be measured but the results may not be as reliable;
2. Wrap the teeth in tissues then plastic to prevent damage during transport;
3. Enclose the teeth with details of the child's age, sex, your address and phone number and a history of the age and type of construction of the house the child resided in during his/her first four years, his/her play patterns (e.g. time inside versus outside), mouthing tendencies and any medical history, in an envelope. Enclose a \$60.00 non-negotiable cheque made out to Graeme Waller and Associates and post it to:

Graeme Waller and Associates  
PO Box 369  
CHARLESTOWN NSW 2290.

If you have any queries please contact the author on (02) 664-2782 or Graeme Waller on (049) 431 877.

### *Editor's notes:*

1. *LEAD Action News vol 2 no 3 Winter 1994 quoted a different price for tooth lead analysis, but the above price is the correct one.*

2. *By ascertaining from teeth that lead poisoning has occurred, parents will have solved one mystery in the ADD saga, and will be motivated to increase efforts to protect siblings or other young children from the same source which poisoned their ADD child.*

3. *There is preliminary anecdotal evidence that low level chelation therapy treatment may be useful in improving the learning and social behaviour of lead affected children. Chelation therapy (intravenous EDTA) for the treatment of lead toxicity is one of the services available at Omnicare Medical Centre, 2 Brady St, Mosman, Sydney. Ph: (02) 960 4133. ❖*

# The Problems Parents have with Lead

by Elizabeth O'Brien

The health effects of lead extend beyond effects on IQ. Effects on learning behaviour affect educational outcome and are long term.

## Clearing up lead problems has a multitude of benefits, including:

- ◇ smarter children with less attention deficits, greater reading ability, more success at school;
- ◇ improved personal and household hygiene which guards against illness (especially asthma) and other toxins;
- ◇ improved nutrition;
- ◇ removal of old paint and repainting creates a more aesthetic urban environment;
- ◇ covering bare soil contributes to the greening of the urban environment;
- ◇ if public housing is made lead-safe governments set a good example to the rest of the community in taking responsibility for a preventable health problem;
- ◇ if child-care premises and schools are made lead-safe, parents can feel confident that their government cares about the educational outcome of the institutions it approves/funds. Also, parents can confidently discount the educational/child-care institution as a source of lead, should their child become lead-poisoned;
- ◇ legislation for compulsory lead-safe certification of older houses makes purchasers of older houses feel secure that their government is protecting them;
- ◇ legislation for lead-safe premises encourages

the development of a lead abatement industry thus reducing unemployment;

◇ legislation to make mandatory the certification of lead abatement contractors and assessors gives consumers faith that their government is looking after consumers' interests;

◇ phasing out lead from petrol makes clear the need to legislate to control for other toxins in vehicle emissions;

◇ taxing the production of lead either from mining or secondary smelting (recycling) creates a fund for lead abatement of low socio-economic housing and encourages research into alternatives to lead in products where lead is not essential;

◇ legislation to reduce the ambient lead in air standard protects the health and learning potential of residents around lead mines and lead smelters and gives everyone the confidence that the health of a minority is not being sacrificed for the sake of export dollars;

◇ solving lead problems makes communities and governments better at solving problems of other toxins;

◇ if governments set action guidelines for soil lead levels, soil lead testing then becomes worth doing, and everyone knows what to do about contaminated soil;

## Management of Lead:

Due to all the failings of government, actions by parents in the management of lead, become the most important factor in whether a child is lead poisoned or not.

## Lead Flow Chart





## Actions Parents Can take to Cut the Flow of Lead in the Lead Flow Chart

### Petrol ➔ Surfaces

- ◇ Check if your car can use unleaded petrol;
- ◇ Drive fuel-efficiently and reduce your car use;
- ◇ Do not undertake servicing or dismantling of old cars on your property;
- ◇ Avoid homes or child-care within 10-20 m of major roads;
- ◇ Vote according to which party promises to eliminate lead from petrol by 1996 and still provide appropriate fuel for older cars.

### Paint ➔ Surfaces

- ◇ Test for lead in any pre-1970 deteriorated paint;
- ◇ Use barrier methods and consistent clean-up until safe removal can be organised;
- ◇ Negotiate a contract with a professional renovator with experience in lead abatement to remove lead paint hazards, guaranteeing no dispersal of lead, and approved disposal of debris;
- ◇ Protect children, women of reproductive capacity and pets from renovation works.

### Industry ➔ Surfaces

- ◇ Avoid homes and child-care near lead industry;
- ◇ Vote according to which party promises to regulate to establish a standard for lead in ambient air, instead of just a goal.

### Surfaces ➔ Hands

Whether the source is petrol, paint or industry, the major pathway of lead poisoning is via soil and dust (residual) contamination. Therefore:

- ◇ Wet down and then remove old carpets, replace with washable hard surfaces;
- ◇ Wet wipe all hard surfaces your child may contact, at least fortnightly, preferably twice weekly;
- ◇ Stop track-in of dust;

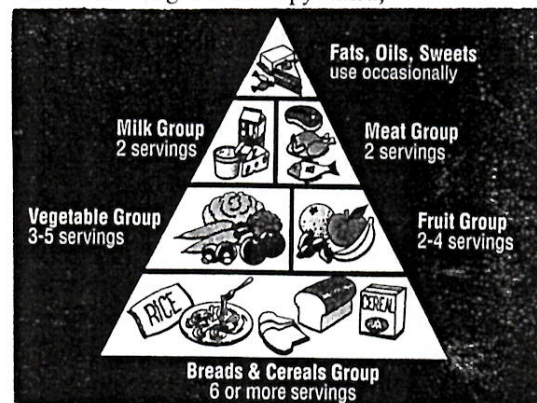
- ◇ Cover bare soil;
- ◇ Mop paths, verandahs;
- ◇ Before purchasing a house which is likely to be lead contaminated, have a lead assessment done and negotiate a fair price for the house taking into account the cost of removing lead hazards.

### Hands ➔ Mouth

- ◇ Wash children's hands constantly;
- ◇ Use a brush to clean under fingernails;
- ◇ Don't allow children to eat away from the table;
- ◇ Pin dummies to clothing;
- ◇ Ensure supervision sufficient to prevent the child eating old paint or contaminated soil;

### Mouth ➔ Blood

- ◇ Ensure adequate iron, calcium and zinc in the diet;
- ◇ Ensure that fatty fast foods are not consumed too frequently;
- ◇ Stick to the good food pyramid;



- ◇ Ensure children have frequent small meals, especially before playing in the morning.

### Blood ➔ Bones and Teeth

- ◇ Fruits with lots of pectin eg apples and pears, MAY reduce blood lead levels. Eating them certainly can't hurt. ❖

# Case Study - A Mother Takes Action!

by Michelle Calvert

Late in 1994 my two year old son was found to have a blood lead level of 33  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , more than three times the "National Goal". The impact of this discovery on my husband and I was profound. We were initially confused but as we grappled with the information about lead poisoning the confusion gave way to guilt and then fear for the welfare of our son. At the same time we were desperately trying to establish how this calamity had happened.

It was a matter of chance that I had Ian tested for lead poisoning. I had read an article in the local paper drawing attention to the problem and identifying old houses, especially those being renovated, as a prominent cause. Our Haberfield (8 km west of Sydney city) home was being extended and renovated, although we were not actually living there during this process, we were living with my Mother also in an old home at Haberfield. From our tests it seems that Ian had eaten paint flakes from an external wall of Mum's old laundry. The quantity could not have been much more than an area about the size of a ten cent piece. It is probably this fact which filled us with anger, because we think of ourselves as well informed people. We were aware, we thought, of the danger of lead in paint and in petrol but aghast at the tiny amount of paint necessary to cause such a potentially serious problem. I was angry because I was ignorant of how little exposure a toddler needs to become seriously harmed by this insidious substance. Why weren't we as a community forewarned and therefore forearmed about this problem? Surely this is a health issue and the responsibility of Government!

Since that time my research tells me that the inner west of Sydney is populated with large numbers of potentially affected children and I am alarmed and indeed anxious that this fact, which is well documented, has been shelved or conveniently set aside as an issue too difficult and complex to deal with.

One recent South Australian study indicates that the possible number of children with blood levels above the National Goal is in the order of 200,000 to 400,000 children Australia wide. If this is correct the implications for "Australia - the clever country" are obvious. But the real tragedy here is for the children themselves who, because of the insidiousness of the effects of lead and the lack of

obvious symptoms are left untreated and as a consequence fail to reach their full potential.

The National Goal should be an environment which is "lead safe" through the stringent control of any addition of lead into the environment and careful management of lead contaminated sites. Such a target may not be achievable in the immediate future, but a target it should remain and strategies put in place to achieve that aim.

Lead contamination is no doubt the most significant and preventable public health problem facing us today. Its resolution mandates that a number of priorities be established. The first of these and the easiest to achieve is the **elimination of lead in petrol**.

Herbert Beauchamp of the Toxic Chemicals Committee said in 1992;

"Australia has the second highest motor car ownership in the world, the highest concentration of population in cities, and produces the highest per capita lead load from petrol sources. While lead used in petrol accounts for only 7% of the lead used in the Australian environment, it contributes 90% of the lead in air and thus constitutes the greatest threat to the most sensitive population - children under four. Sydney air receives 800 tonnes of lead from petrol every year."

Unlike our economic peers we have not eradicated lead from petrol. The U.S.A. and Japan have taken this initiative and have shown a definite correlation between reduced lead in petrol and reduced population blood lead levels. It is disappointing that we tolerate a petrol lead level higher than many other OECD countries.

The removal of lead from petrol is the easy problem to solve. It is achieved by the stroke of the legislative pen. Infinitely more difficult is the removal of existing lead from the environment. Such as:

\* lead contamination in soil - the soil in my "safe" suburban yard had a reading of 11,259 ppm [parts per million] around the perimeter of the house where window sashes and sills had been scraped free of old flaking paint;

\* ceiling dust - the legacy of fallout from 50 or



more years of the internal combustion engine and 100 years of neighbours' renovations and coal and wood burning;

\* lead in construction - lead flashing and plumbing fittings; and the list goes on.

By far the most dangerous source of contamination is lead in paint in pre 1970 housing stock. My personal story demonstrates this perfectly.

In recent times we have been persuaded by paint manufacturers that painting is easy, safe and child's play. This "do-it-yourself ethic" has concealed the danger inherent in older leaded paints. It seems just as acrylic paints have masked the dangers of lead paint - the ease of use of these new paints and the years have masked the knowledge that these leaded paints pose a grave threat to our families.

A massive education campaign is required so that all are made aware of the prevalence of leaded paint in old homes and the dangers of its removal, as it poses a direct threat to children and the foetuses of pregnant women. More particularly we must advise of the kind of care and methods which must be taken to minimise these dangers.

We need to raise the awareness of home and building renovators whether professionals or "do-it-yourselfers". They must understand the dangers for themselves; the need for scrupulous methods so that contamination of the immediate environment does not occur; and the implications of careless removal and disposal methods for the broader community.

As a Councillor on the Ashfield Council in Sydney I have succeeded in introducing some positive measures which other Councils may follow and which may find expression in future State Government strategies.

Ashfield Council issues information brochures dealing with the health and safety issues associated with lead to each applicant for a Development or Building Application and more importantly now imposes the following as a standard condition on planning and building approvals that involve the removal of external paint.

"External paintwork shall not be removed from any building on the site without written approval having been obtained from Council.

An application for approval shall be submitted to

Council's Environment and Health Department and shall include:-

- \* Certificate from an independent testing lab of the lead content of the paint to be removed;
- \* Name and address of the person who will be carrying out the work;
- \* Details of the method of removing the paint; and
- \* methods of containing and disposing of the paint residue.

There are other important measures which are called for and which may eventuate in the future. Among these is the need for funding of research into the physiological effects of lead on children; a kinder method of testing children for lead and a program designed to screen all children at risk.

Concurrently with the infant immunisation programme a questionnaire devised to reveal potential "at risk" children should be instituted. The questionnaire should seek to identify factors such as:

1. whether renovations are being or have recently been carried out;
2. age and condition of house;
3. parent/fellow occupant occupation or hobby;
4. proximity to major road or lead source.

Where an answer indicates a risk - a follow up blood test should be ordered and if elevated blood lead levels are detected, professional assistance should be given to identify and contain the source of pollution. I am disappointed in the initial reporting of the Lead Taskforce recommendations that **random** blood tests for under sevens will be undertaken. Children under four are most at risk and it appears that testing seven year olds will only confirm what we already know. A large number of our children have been damaged by lead. We need to intervene at a time when positive action could be taken for the child.

It is clear that there is scope for an industry to flourish in the area of lead removal and decontamination of sites. This would involve the setting and maintenance of adequate standards of performance and protection for consumers from frauds and charlatans.

Overall, you will agree, the difficulties associated with lead contamination of our environment are many. Fundamental to their resolution is Government acknowledgment of the problem and an acceptance of the responsibility to act. ❖



# Childcare Centres on Main Roads - New Guidelines

by Ann Gethin

The LEAD Group has obtained draft guidelines for Local Approvals of Childcare Centres being prepared by the Local Government Association. Under these guidelines environmental site assessment must be provided by the applicant and must demonstrate that the site is a safe distance from hazardous industries and "safe from any other environmental health hazards such as high lead levels." This second point raises the question of whether air, or soil and dust samples will be used to determine the level of lead hazard. Air samples alone will not be adequate if there has been a build up of lead at the site and the soil is contaminated. Children using the centre still risk lead poisoning, particularly those between ages 1 and 2 with their high amount of hand to mouth activity.

The guidelines also state that "Sites such as old service stations are inappropriate for the establishment of child care centres." Although clearly a desperately needed guideline for child care centre approval the appalling situation of existing childcare centres on old service station sites needs to be rectified.

Paul Ellercamp, the chair of the Kirrawee Precinct Committee in Sutherland Shire in southern Sydney, stated that two childcare centres were approved on old petrol station sites in the Sutherland Shire. One case was not approved by the Sutherland Council only to be approved by the Land and Environment Court, and the second was approved by the Council. It is located in an industrial area with astroturf placed over the tarmac. "Not even a new shelter was provided for the kids who are now consigned to this place every

day, alongside the roar of trucks and cars and amidst their fumes, in the baking sun."

A recent press release from the Sutherland Shire Council relating to the location of child care centres did not mention banning them on the sites of old petrol stations. Their concern appeared to be mainly with locating child care centres on busy roads. Although this concern is to be applauded, their proposal to use air lead as a determinant of planning approval (even if taken in 'peak hours of traffic') misses the point. The vast majority of old petrol station underground fuel storage tanks are known to leak, thus contaminating soil and groundwater with volatile organic compounds as well as lead.

There are no specific rules to assist authorities assess the lead or other toxin contamination of a site.

Sutherland Shire Council recently adopted a resolution (an interim measure until a formal policy can be adopted) saying it would no longer approve child care centres on heavily trafficked roads until a full risk analysis of lead and other airborne contaminants has been completed. We hope they won't be missing soil and dust lead. If the lead is already there, the airborne lead is just adding to the contamination. Lead is just one reason not to have child-care centres on busy roads. For the full story, the Total Environment Centre's fact sheet on "Air Pollution from Motor Vehicles in Sydney" can be purchased by posting a \$2 cheque to TEC, Shop 1, 88 Cumberland St, Sydney, 2000. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed business envelope. ❖

## A Conference on The Toxic Playground - Hazardous Chemicals in School and Child Care Environments

Thursday 4th May, 1995. At the State Library in Sydney.

Presented by Total Environment Centre. Phone (02) 247 4714.

Of major importance to parents, teachers, students, administrators, child care managers.

### *Workshop topics include:*

- How to establish a chemical audit for schools and child care centres;*
- Useful guidelines to create a toxic-free environment in schools and child care centres;*
- What are the procedural steps to put draft legislation initiatives into operation.*



# Survey of Lead Policies for the NSW State Election

by Herbert Beauchamp, Anne Roberts and Elizabeth O'Brien, Total Environment Centre

*This survey was sent to all parties with candidates in the NSW election and replies were requested by 8th March 1995. Candidates were asked to answer in the light of party policy, not their personal view.*

*Options for every question were limited to "Yes", "No" or "Undecided".*

1. Do you acknowledge that there is a serious problem with the preventable environmental health problem of childhood lead poisoning in NSW, specifically in older urban communities with multiple sources of lead contamination?

The remaining questions 2-13 are about the steps that can be taken to ameliorate this problem.

## 2. Sydney Lead Centre:

i) Will you support the fast-tracking of the Sydney Lead Centre which was promised for Sydney by Environment Minister Chris Hartcher in November 1994 to be opened in early 1995?

ii) Will you support broadening the functions of the government proposed Lead Centre to include coordination of blood lead and environmental lead contamination screening in targeted older urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong?

3. **Lead content of petrol:** Will you support a two stage phase out of lead in petrol resulting in zero lead added to petrol by the end of 1996 as proposed in both the Motor Vehicle Emissions and Lead Parliamentary Select Committee Reports?

4. **Switching to unleaded petrol:** Will you agree to use the registration and insurance notifications as an opportunity to permanently mark those pre-1986 vehicles capable of running on unleaded petrol, and to notify the owners of same?;

5. **Reformulated petrol:** Will you amend the Clean Air Act to control benzene, total aromatics, 1,3-butadiene and olefines as per the proposed California Clean Air Act 1997?;

6. **Car-use reduction schemes:** Will you agree to introduce car-use reduction schemes and to do so as a priority in areas where a high proportion of cars are pre-1986?

## 7. Lead in Air:

i) Will you amend the Clean Air Act to change what is currently only a goal into a standard for ambient lead in air, which is not to be exceeded?;

ii) Will you amend the Clean Air Act to allow for a maximum lead in ambient air standard of:  
1.0 ug/m<sup>3</sup> (micrograms per cubic metre) by 1996;  
0.5 ug/m<sup>3</sup> by 1998 and;  
0.15 ug/m<sup>3</sup> by 2000.

## 8. Housing:

i) Will you introduce a tax on lead to set up a fund for use on a means tested basis for lead abatement of housing with a high risk of lead exposure of children?;

ii) Will you implement an inspection program of public and private housing in order to identify lead hazards (ie housing with a high risk of lead exposure of children)?;

iii) Will you implement a lead hazard abatement program for high risk public housing?;

iv) Will you set up mechanisms for notification of potential purchasers by vendors of housing containing lead hazards?

## 9. Food and Drink:

i) Will you amend the Clean Water Act to require house and other building owners to take remedial action if the 90th percentile of a sampling of tap water exceeds a lead level of 15 ug/L?;

ii) Will you amend the Poisons Act to phase out the use of lead glazes and lead in crystal by the year 2000?;

iii) Will you introduce legislation for the incremental reduction of lead in food which also involves a limit of 0.05% lead or lead compounds in fertilisers?

10. **Lead Use Reduction:** Will you introduce a Lead Use Reduction Act which requires the reduction by 10% per year in the total amount of primary lead used and ensures growth in the recycling and secondary lead processing industry?;

11. **Screening:** Will you introduce targeted blood lead screening in urban areas with a high prevalence of lead hazards (such as old housing, past or present industry and traffic)?;

12. **Lead Abatement:** Will you introduce legislation which requires lead abatement contractors and assessors to be trained and licensed?

13. **Lead Hazard Assessment** in publicly-owned, -financed, -insured or -certified **childcare premises:** Will you introduce lead-safety as a criterion in quality certification of all homes and centres where young children are under the supervision of paid childcare workers?

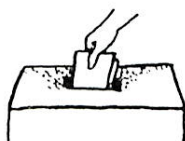
Jeff Angel, TEC & E O'Brien, LEAD Group. ❖

## NSW Elections '95: Making the Most of your Vote on 25/3

by Anne Roberts, Total Environment Centre

the NSW Constitution, and which therefore require a referendum, to change the Constitution.

**What the elections are about  
What "preferences" are, and how to use them to best effect**



**How to fill in the ballot papers correctly**

*When you go to vote on March 25, your name will be checked off, and you will be given three ballot papers to fill in. One will be for the election for the Legislative Assembly, a second for the election for the Legislative Council, and a third for referendum questions.*

### Legislative Assembly

You are voting for the person who will represent your electorate in the 99-seat Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly is the main law-making body of the State Parliament. Whichever political party wins a majority of electorates forms the Government, and runs the State until the next election.

### Legislative Council

Your vote goes towards electing 21 Legislative Councillors - half the number of seats in the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly are the two "Houses" that make up Parliament. The Party which holds Government (that is, which has a majority in the Assembly) does not necessarily have to have a majority in the Council.

### Referenda

You are voting on matters not provided for under

### Legislative Assembly: Making the most of your vote

(1) **Fill in the ballot paper correctly**, otherwise you risk having your vote declared **"informal"**; in which case, it is not counted as a vote for any candidate.

Write the number "1" in the box next to the name of your most preferred candidate. Your number "1" vote is your **"primary"**, or **"first preference"** vote.

Write "2" in the box next to the name of your next preferred candidate, and so on. (Hence the word "preferences", to describe how voters have numbered the candidates.)

**Do not use ticks or crosses. Print the numbers carefully, fully inside the boxes. Do not scribble anything which could identify whose vote it is.** (Votes are required to be anonymous.)

(2) **Don't just vote "1" for your most preferred candidate, and leave the other boxes blank.**

Otherwise, if your candidate is eliminated ("excluded") because they are the one with the least number of votes at any stage of the count, your vote is "exhausted", and cannot go on to help elect anyone.

(Major Parties try to frighten voters by telling them a vote for an Independent, or minor Party, is "wasted" - it isn't, *provided you indicate further preferences.*)

(3) **Use the opportunity to convey a message to major Parties: You can be a major party voter, but think some of the issues Independents or minor parties have raised are important, and want the major parties to know this.**



The best way is to give your **FIRST** preference to the Independent or minor party candidate, and your **SECOND** preference to the major party candidate of your choice.

If you put the major party first, and minor parties second, and the major party candidate wins or is runner up, there is no record of your having shown support for the minor party. (The Electoral Office keeps a record of how preferences were allocated on the ballot papers of all other candidates in each electorate.

**Or you can give your primary vote to an Independent, or member of a minor party, because you want them to win.**

### **Legislative assembly: How votes are counted**

To win, a candidate has to get 50% of the votes, plus one vote.

The first round of counting is to count the number of ballot papers marked "1". If there are only two candidates, one of them will win on the first round. If there are more than 2 candidates, it may happen that no-one gets 50% plus one, of the primary votes.

The candidate with the fewest primary votes is excluded. Preferences are *distributed*, which means, each ballot paper of the excluded candidate is given, as a full vote, to the candidate marked as the next preference, on the ballot paper. (Thus, if a candidate is excluded after Round one, this candidate's ballot papers are handed on to whoever is marked "2".) Ballot papers which do not show continuing preferences are exhausted, and thus there are fewer votes in the count.

The process of excluding candidates continues, until one candidate has 50% plus one, of the votes remaining in the count.

### **Legislative Council: making the most of your vote**

**The ballot paper for the Legislative Council** has candidates' names grouped in columns. For each political party or group, there will be a single box above the columns of names, separated by a horizontal line. **There are two ways to fill in the ballot paper correctly:**

\* **"Ticket" vote:** Write the number "1" in the box

above the line, next to the name of the party or group you prefer. Your vote will go towards helping elect candidates on the party "ticket".

**Do not use ticks or crosses. Do not fill in any other boxes, either above or below the line.**

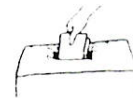
\* **"Below the line"** Write consecutive numbers, starting with "1", in the boxes alongside the names of the candidates, below the line. You can write the numbers in any order, but you **must** number at least 15 names, and **may** number them all.

**Use numbers, not ticks or crosses. Do not fill in any boxes ABOVE the line.**

*It is difficult to make the most of a below-the-line Legislative Council vote unless you thoroughly understand how the votes are counted. This is complicated, and defies brief description.*

**It is easier to cast a ticket vote, and most people do.** A poster displayed in the polling station will show how Parties have allocated preferences.

### **Legislative council: How votes are counted**



**To be elected**, a candidate must achieve a **quota**, that is, a certain proportion of the total **formal** vote for the whole State. (A formal vote is one where the ballot paper has been correctly filled in.) In the coming election, a candidate will have to get 4.54% of the total formal vote. (About 165,000 votes.) Surplus votes are passed on, to the next candidate on a Party "ticket" or on a "below the line" vote.

*Eventually, there may not be enough surplus votes to elect any more candidates, yet there may be two or three candidates still to be elected. What happens then is that the candidates with the least number of votes are excluded, in turn.*

Whoever is marked as next preference (whether on your ticket, or below-the-line vote) on each excluded candidate's ballot papers gets the vote given to them. If the candidate shown as next preference is already elected or excluded, the vote goes on to the next preferred candidate on the ballot paper, until all 21 candidates are elected.

### **Referenda**

There will be two questions, requiring a "yes" or "no" answer. **Put a TICK in the "yes" box if you agree, or in the "no" box if you disagree.** ❖

# 1995 The LEAD Group Annual Report (for 1994)

by Elizabeth O'Brien, National Coordinator of The LEAD Group

## Membership

The LEAD Group has around 90 members in Australia and their support is much appreciated.

## Volunteers

We have had another full and excellent year's work from David Ratcliffe, office manager; Noela Whitton, media watch and support in every way including child care; Carol Bodle of Desktop Workshop put out three out of the four newsletters (a fantastic effort); Cathy Jin and Steve Shamoos did great work around the office.

## Consultants

Dr Rosemary Aldrich and John Wlodarczyk of the Newcastle Environmental Toxicology Research Unit (NETRU) are welcome additions to the Technical Advisory Board, along with Jack Haley, Manager Engineering and Environment, NRMA (who replaces Peter Caldwell). We are sad to have lost the consultancy services of Dr Louis du Plessis who was our expert on landfill and incineration issues and made many valuable contributions to the Working Groups of the NSW Lead Taskforce, as did so many of our other consultants. Shirley Gibson, our Leadlighting adviser left the Board, as she has moved away from Sydney. Michelle Calvert has joined the Board as our adviser on Local Government.

Thank you to all our consultants for their advice throughout the year.

## Network

Our networking connections have gone international, with much contact between the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning (USA), the Environmental Defense Fund (USA) and the United Parents Against Lead (USA), at whose exhilarating inaugural meeting in May 1994 I was present.

## Committee

Kerry O'Donnell has resigned as Treasurer after 3

years' excellent work; her place has been taken by Allison Jacobs. Kerry will continue as Deputy Treasurer, a valued member of The LEAD Group.

Michelle Calvert has joined the Committee. Michelle is a Councillor on Ashfield Council, and is advising Ashfield and other councils about lead from her personal experience of the problem.

Joanne Paterson of the Committee, kindly ran an information stall at Sydney University on their environment day. Until this week our Vice President, Fred Salome has always made his laser printer available. (At last we have a Sharp printer which belongs to The LEAD Group.)

## Donations and Grants

Our auditor, Arthur Andersen, refunded our entire \$5,000 audit payment, enabling us to obtain the full benefit of our 1994 grant from D.E.S.T. (federal Dept of Environment, Sport and Territories). The Grant for Voluntary Conservation Organisations (GVCO), for \$10,000, was specifically for administrative costs, rather than equipment, was conditional upon having audited accounts.

Canon has continued to service the photocopier free of charge - a very valuable ongoing donation. The original donation (of the photocopier) being in memory of Marie Bissaker, who died of kidney failure due to lead poisoning.

Lou Casmiri (a member of Drummoyne Rotary), of National Laser Printers, arranged for us to receive a magnificent cost-price laser printer from Sharp. The plain paper fax machine donated by Xerox continues to give excellent service.

## Services

**Counselling:** As the only counsellor at the Community Lead Information Centre, I dealt with hundreds of requests for counselling, each one taking from 5 to 60 minutes, typically 10-15 minutes. A particularly bad case of childhood lead poisoning required 3 home visits and many hours of counselling and following up. Many callers are referred to the Community Lead Information



Centre by Environment Protection Agencies and Health Departments or Public Health Units.

**Library:** lots of people used our library in 1994, some students kindly made donations of articles.

### **Activities**

#### **Media:**

In November and December 1994, when the NSW Parliamentary Select Committee was holding its hearings, lead issues received extensive media coverage. The release of the NSW Lead Task Force report around this time also kept us very busy with the media.

ABC TV's respected and popular series, "GP", featured an episode on a child suffering from lead poisoning due to paint ingestion. Members of The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board, and I, were extensively consulted by the scriptwriter.

#### **Publications:**

Four newsletters were issued for last year. A new information sheet "About the LEAD Group" was compiled, and is automatically issued to anyone making an inquiry. Our regular information sheets were updated. The LEAD Group assisted in the preparation of Total Environment Centre's Fact Sheet on Lead.

The Commonwealth EPA heavily consulted our Technical Advisory Board during the preparation of its Lead Alert series of booklets and brochures.

#### **Conferences:**

I received a Travel Fellowship to attend the "Global Dimensions of Lead Poisoning" conference in Washington DC, and the "Building a Lead-Safe Future" conference, also in Washington DC. The highlight of the trip was doing community advocacy work alongside international environmentalists at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York.

When speaking at the International Lead Abatement and Remediation Conference at Newcastle, in June 1994 in Australia, I managed to impress upon the Parliamentary Secretary for the NSW Minister for Health, the need for regulations to protect home renovators from lead contamination of their homes. The Parliamentary Secretary has been investigating the possibilities.

### **Balance Sheet**

Measuring our Achievements against LEAD Group Objectives:

Funding was available this year for the first time, from the Federal Government.

The NSW Environment Minister Chris Hartcher has promised that a Lead Centre will be set up in Sydney by early 1995. It is not clear whether the Lead Centre will be open before July, 1995.

The NSW Lead Task Force has presented its report and has been dissolved. This means that future action in NSW is contingent on the setting up of the Lead Centre referred to above.

Lead in petrol fell nationally, by around 50%; NSW has gone to 0.2 grams per litre as of January 1995, the LEAD Group had proposed 0.15 by June 1993; only Shell took up the challenge, reducing its level to 0.15 by mid-1994, and 0.1 by January 1995.

Three monthly average air lead levels around major roadways, as far as we know, have fallen below 1  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  (micrograms per cubic metre) before our target date of 1995. Sydney reported a drop in air lead of 60% between November 1993 and November 1994. However smelter communities still suffer air lead levels in excess of the outdated goal of 1.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  and the review of the goal looks as far away as ever.

The Commonwealth EPA has sent lead educational materials to every GP in early 1994 and put out a package of brochures and pamphlets with the assistance of members of The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board.

We look forward to further progress towards our objectives in 1995 and the elimination of childhood lead poisoning in Australia by the year 2002.

### **Hopefully Seeking Sponsorship**

I would be *very* pleased to receive sponsorship to attend a conference in Canada in July 1995, as it aims "to facilitate and encourage interaction and discussion between community, agencies and organizations, allowing the sharing of solutions for concerns common to community lead programs" and will feature speakers from the best lead poisoning prevention programs in the world. ♦



## Lead in Literature

### "Lonesome Shorty"

by Garrison Keillor

*Lonesome Shorty is one of the excellent short stories from "The Book of Guys", a best-seller by Garrison Keillor, first published in 1993 by Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc. First published in Great Britain in 1994 by Faber and Faber Ltd, London. Reprinted with kind permission of Faber and Faber publishers and the author.*

*Apart from all the "hot lead [bullets] flying", look out for the hidden "lead" references:- the use of the word "plumb" as in the terms "plumb out of" and "plumb loco" from the Latin "plumbum" meaning lead and the Spanish "loco" meaning crazy in US slang. The second meaning of "loco" according to the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary is a poisonous leguminous plant. In the US, cattle eating loco are affected by a brain disease (loco disease) and in Australia, loco disease is a similar brain disease affecting stock eating Darling Pea. "Plumb loco" could therefore be freely interchanged with the term "plumb crazy" in your conversations. [A vocabulary-building tip from your editor!]*

The summer before last, I was headed for Billings on my horse Old Dan, driving two hundred head of the ripest-smelling longhorns you ever rode downwind of, when suddenly here come some tumbleweeds tumbling along with a newspaper stuck inside - I had been without news for weeks so I leaned down and snatched it up and read it trotting along, though the front page was missing and all there was was columnists and the Lifestyle section, so bouncing along in a cloud of manure I read an article entitled "43 Fabulous Salads too Freshen Up Your Summertime Table" which made me wonder if my extreme lonesomeness might not be the result of diet. Maybe I'm plumb loco, but a cowboy doesn't get much fiber and he eats way too much beef. You herd the cattle all day, you come to despise them, and pretty soon, by jingo, you have gone and shot one, and then you must eat it, whilst all those cattle tromping around on the greens takes away your taste for salads, just like when you arrive at a creek and see that cattle have tromped in the water and drunk from it and crapped in it, it seems to turn a man toward whiskey.

I thought to myself, Shorty, you've got to get out of this cowboy life. I mentioned this to my partner, old Eugene, and he squinted at me and said, "Eeyup."

"Eugene," I said, "I've been cowboyin for nigh onto two decades now. I know every water hole between Kansas and the Sierra Nevada, but consarn it, I miss the company of my fellow man. Scenery ain't enough for me, Eugene, nor freedom. I'm sceneried out, pardner, and freedom is vastly overrated as an experience, if you ask me. I got to be with people. I'm a *people* cowboy, not a cow cowboy."

A few miles of purple sagebrush drifted by and a hawk circled high in the sky.

"Do you hear what I'm sayin'? I inquired.

He said, "Eeyessir."

I said, "Give me a home where the buffalo roam? It don't follow, Eugene. Buffalo have nothing to *do* with home, nothing at all. And I'm sick o'deer and antelope, Eugene. I'm sorry if this sounds like a discouraging word, but animals do not make for a home, Eugene. Not on the range nor anywhere else."

I continued, "And whoever wrote *The air is so pure and the breezes so free, the zephyrs so balmy and light* never spent time driving cattle, I can tell you that."

He grunted.

A few miles later, I said, "You ever think of just calling yourself Gene, Eugene? Gene is more of a cowboy name. Eugene is sort of a bookkeeper's name. How about I call you Gene, Gene?"

He thought this over for a few miles as we jangled along, eating dust. Then he said, "You do that and I'll lay for you and jump you and gouge your eyes out and bite off your ear."

"You'd rather be Eugene, then?"

"Eeyup."

We rode along for a ways. "Is there some topic you have a desire to talk about, Eugene?" I inquired.

"Nope."

A taciturn sidekick is like buying a ticket to see the sun set. Who needs it? You go humping along the trail, you would like some conversation, but no, Eugene could no more think up things to say than he could sing *La Traviata*.

That night, I was feeling low. The wood was wet and the campfire smoked, the beans were cold and the pork half raw, the mosquitoes descended in a cloud, and then it took hours to get the cattle bedded down, and as I was fetching a camp stool from the saddlebags, Old Dan accidentally stepped



on my foot and about broke it. I hopped around on the good one and swore a blue streak, but none of it woke Eugene. He was wrapped in his blankets, dead to the world. I sat down and listened to Dusty Joe on night watch, slowly circling the herd and singing 'Tenting Tonight on the Old Campground,' but all he knew was the chorus, and he sang that over and over.

I approached him where he sat on his horse on a little rise and asked him if he could not vary his performance.

"The cows like it," he said.

"That may be so," I replied, but you are drivin me crazy. Why'n blazes can't you sing something else? Sing 'Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie' for Pete's sake or 'The Night Herding Song'. Lay off the tenting tonight - it ain't even a cowboy song, for cryin out loud."

He said it was the only song he knew.

I remarked that it was a poor cowboy indeed who couldn't make up some songs of his own. "Just sing *I ride an old paint, I lead an old Dan, I'm goin' to Montan to throw the hoolihan*, and then keep making up new verses."

But of course he was stubborn and wouldn't do it. I got back to camp and I hear the damn tent song start up again, and of course the wind carried it right back to us.

To distract myself, I sat down and drew up a list of pros and cons on the back of a picture of my mother.

#### *Reasons to Be or Not to Be a Cowboy*

Freedom to be your own man. *The awful loneliness of doing so.*

Most beautiful country on God's green earth to look at. *No home, nowhere to sleep but on the cold ground. You get a bad back, pretty soon you're too bent over to look at scenery.*

Good old Dan - What else can he do but ride the trail? *You can't live for your horse, especially not one who steps on you.*

Love to be with my pals. *Those cheating lying gin-soaked idiots? They all moved to town a long time ago.*

The West must be won for the White Man. *I done my part.*

The chance to be a True Cowboy, who stands up for what's Right and Fair. *Fine, but it's time to settle down and start building up equity. You have got nothing to show for your hard life, nothing.*

So it was an even draw, six of one, half a dozen of the other, but my foot hurt me so bad, I couldn't sleep. I dosed it with a few slugs of

whiskey and only managed to give myself a sour stomach, and I kept hearing, *Tenting tonight, tenting tonight, tenting on the old campground*, and when morning came I announced to Eugene and the other boys that I was packing it in.



*(Illustration by Rose Lennon, aged 7)*

I said, "The problem is I don't drink enough water and I don't eat right. That pork last wight was full of fat, for example. And riding a horse, you never get the cardiovascular exercise you need. I've got to think about my health." Well, you'd a thought I'da put on a dress and high heels the way they laughed and carried on. I said: "I quit. I'm a cowboy no longer. It's a rotten lonely life and I'm done with it." And I jumped on Old Dan, who luckily was right there, and I rode away.

I headed into a friendly town named Pleasant Gulch, having read in the paper that it offered a healthy climate, good soil and water, good schools and churches, a literary society, and "all the adornments of advanced civilization." *That's for me*, I thought. I became deputy to Sheriff Dibble, a full-time job with a decent pension plan, and bought a condo over the saloon. The realtor, Lefty Slim, had a four-bedroom ranch house with great views for cheap - "Must sell, owner is wanted for murder," he said - but I had seen all I wanted of ranches, so I bought the condo. Partly furnished with a nice walnut bedroom set and dining-room table and carpet, and I could move in right away because the previous owner had been shot.

I bought sheets and towels and hung up blue dotted-swiss curtains. You miss curtains so much on the trail; there's really no way to hang them. (I know. I've tried.) And I bought myself a set of china. A cowboy gets sick of the sound of his fork



scraping a tin plate, and this was the first *good china* I ever owned: four place settings with salad bowl, soup bowl, cup and saucer, dinner plate, and dessert plate, plus two platters, two serving bowls, gravy boat, teapot, and soup tureen, in the Amaryllis pattern.

The truth was, I didn't know three other people in Pleasant Gulch well enough to invite to dinner, but I felt confident I soon would because the town was perfect, its lawns and porches and street lamps so welcoming and warm compared to rocks and buttes, I hiked around town twice that first evening, just to absorb the beauty of it, and then returned home and fixed pork and beans, but they looked like cassoulet on my Amaryllis.

I had eaten exactly two bites when shots rang out and some cowboys whooped and bullets tore through my curtains and one busted two teacups, and another one hit my good serving platter and blasted it to smithereens. I was so pissed off, I stalked downstairs and out into the street, which was deserted except for a cowboy lying face down in the dirt.

"What in the Sam Hill is going on around here?" I yelled.

He said he had been shot clean through the heart and was done for.

I knelt down by him and yelled, "You busted my Amaryllis china, you dink! I came in off the trail to get away from your ilk and here you are messing around in town. Well, not for long."

He asked me to take a letter to his mother in Pittsburgh.

"Your mother has no interest in hearing from you, so don't even think of it. You're nothing but a filthy savage and death is too good for you," I said. And then he died, presumably. At any rate, he didn't have any more to say. Next day, I went back to the General Store to replace that serving platter, and they were plumb out of Amaryllis. And that night, the old couple next door banged on my door and said, "You're gargling too loud in there, Mr. Shorty, it's driving us nuts, and you twirl your rope and jingle your spurs, and your yodelling is a pain in the neck. No more *yodeladihoo* or *whoopitiyiyo*, okay?"

I told them that it was my home and I would yodel in it as I pleased.

So they called the sheriff and he said, "Sorry, Shorty, but they're right. We have a yodeling ordinance here and also one against gargling after ten p.m."

I got so dagnabbed mad, I stomped home, put my Amaryllis into saddlebags, climbed on Old Dan, and left town at sundown. I was burned up. I yelled at them, "Okay, I'll show you! You can take

your damn piddling laws and ordinances and regulations and stuff em in your ear!" And back out on the range I went. Frankly, I'd left so many towns by then that I was used to it and didn't get nearly as mad as in the past. Leaving town is what cowboyn is all about.

You find a nice place and it's wonderful and then suddenly you can't stand it. So you drift off down the trail and get wet and miserable and lonesome till you can't bear it for another minute, so you gallop into the nearest town and are overwhelmed by the beauty of society - cheap floozies, old coots, preachers, lunatics, hoboes, schoolteachers, old scouts with their sunburned faces and their voices raised in song, the jokes and gibes and yarns, the barn dances, the woman who invites you to stay the night - *people are great when you haven't seen any for a few months!*

So you find a job and an apartment, settle down, get comfortable, think "This time it's for real" - and two minutes later you are broken hearted, mad, miserable, and back in the saddle again. This is the basic cowboy pattern.

From Pleasant Gulch me and Old Dan headed for Dodge, with all the china, and ten miles beyond the Little Crazy River, a rattler sprang at us and Dan shied away and I slid off and we busted a gravy boat! And one morning a grizzly came into camp and I reached for something to throw at him and I tossed my teapot- it was the worst trip, and the next night, two cougars snuck in and stole my pants as I slept and it was snowing and I headed for a little town called Pit City. Rode along in my underwear, cold and soaked to the skin, and a woman waved from a porch, people smiled at me, and a nice lady cried out from a white frame house: "My brother Dusty is just your same size, mister - if you need a pair of pants, you can have one of his. And if you haven't eaten I'll rustle you up a plate of grub. And if you care to set and talk a spell, why, that'd be just hunky-dory."

The Andersons. Euphonia and Bill Anderson. Kindest people you'd ever meet.

I sat in their toasty warm kitchen by the coal stove and gabbed for three hours and told them everything about myself, personal stuff, and it was satisfying.

"Your problem is that you never found the woman you loved enough to make you want to come in off the range and settle down," said Euphonia. She introduced me to their daughter Leonora, a beautiful redhead who worked at the Lazy Dollar Saloon - "as a bookkeeper," Euphonia emphasized.

Leonora treated me like the lover she never



had. She and I went for long walks out across the prairie to the ridge above the town. I sang to her, "Mi amor, mi corazon," and she liked that pretty well. We got close. She did my laundry and saw the nametags on my shirts and started calling me Leonard, which nobody had done since I was a child.

"You're a gentle person, Leonard. Not like other cowboys. You like nice things. You ought to live in town," she said, lying with her head in my lap in a bower of prairie grass.

I told her, "Leonora, I have tried to live in town, because the cowboy life is a hard, wet, miserable, lonesome life, so town is wonderful, but doggone it, you go there and two days later, somebody kicks you in the shins and it's back to the saddle again. A guy can't live with people and he can't live without them. And besides, I am a cowboy and have got to be on the range." I spat on the ground to emphasize this.

"When you fixin to go?" she inquired.

"Tomorrow. Mebbe Tuesday."

"For long?"

"Six months. Mebbe longer. Depends."

"Six months is a long stretch of time to be away from a relationship," she said.

"Sometimes it is," I said. "And sometimes it's just long enough."

"Well, Shorty, you just go and do whatever you're going to do, because that's what you're going to do anyway, makes no matter what I say. I know cowboys," she said.

I cried, "Well, if I don't cowboy, tell me - what would I do for a living in town?"

"You could write a western," she said.

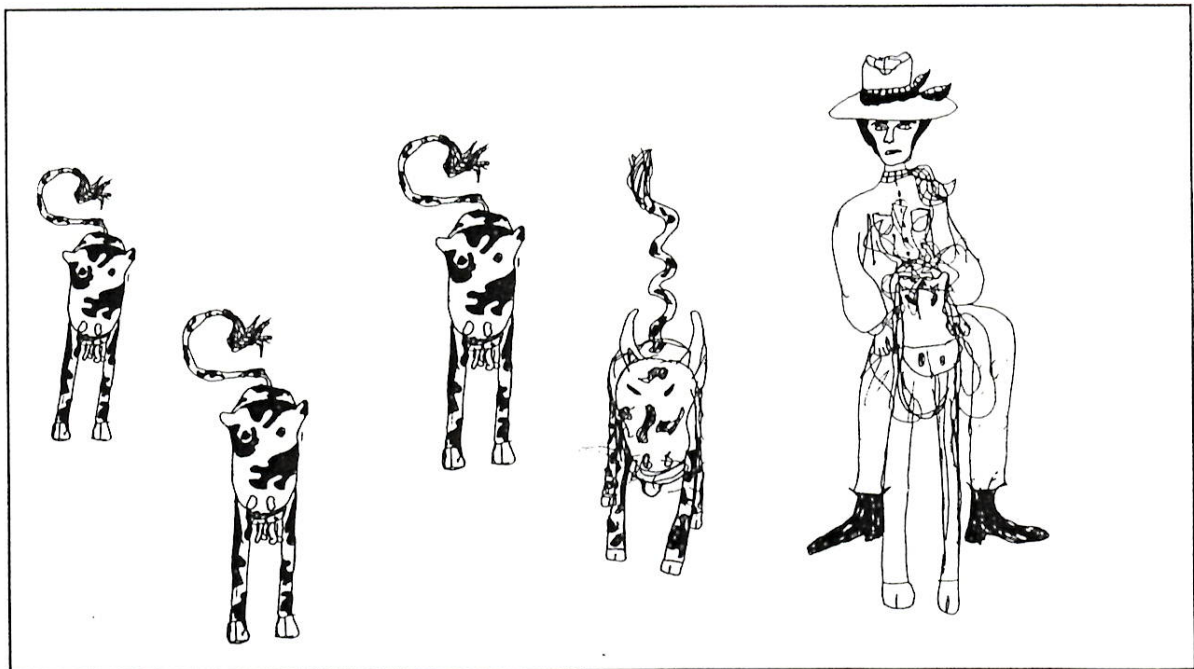
So I started writing a western novel with lots of hot lead flying and poetic descriptions of western scenes:- "The setting sun blazed in the western sky as if a master painter had taken his brush to the clouds, creating a multihued fantasy of color reflecting brightly off the buttes and mesas." That night I showed it to Leonora. "Not what you'd call a grabber," she said.

I sat there with my face hanging out and wished she'd say *Well, it ain't all bad, actually some is rather good, Shorty, and I loved where the dude cuts down the tree and the bear bites him in the throat*, but of course a sweetheart isn't going to tell you that, their critical ability is not what attracts them to us in the first place.

She was the prettiest woman I ever knew in my life, the sweetest, the kindest. I discovered that Amaryllis was Leonora's china pattern too. She had four place settings, as I did. Together, we'd have eight. It was tempting to consider marriage. And yet she had a way of keeping me on a short rope - she'd look at me and say, "What are you thinkin?" Nuthin, I'd say, nuthin in particular. "What is it?" she'd ask. *I don't care to talk about it*, I'd say. "Silence is a form of anger," she said. "A person can be just as aggressive with silence as they can be with a gun."

*[That's all we have space for folks. To find out whether Leonard marries Leonora, you'll just have to go buy "The Book of Guys" by Garrison Keillor. Highly recommended.]* ❖

*(Illustration by Rose Lennon, aged 7)*



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