

Somerville - Smith

Minimata on the Maribyrnong

IN THE 1950s the fishing village of Minimata on the southern Japanese Island of Kyushu was plagued by a strange disease. It was a slow and subtle form of mercury poisoning that initially killed many victims within a year.

The onset of mercury poisoning is so slow in some however that cases from Minimata are still being certified to the current day.

Toxic

It would appear that Melbourne might be in for a mini Minimata on the Maribyrnong River. Recent reports put the toxic levels for arsenic, mercury, lead and other heavy metals at tens of thousands of times the safe limit.

Every week hundreds of people fish these waters most taking home their catch to eat. None of these fishermen have ever been warned about possible danger nor has their catch ever been tested.

The source of the trouble appears to be an old fertilizer site where for years they used waste from chemical processes as landfill for the swampy riverbanks.

For over a hundred years this went on until the Port Authority took over the site in 2001. Apparently unlike private business the Port Authority didn't have to do a clean up or

Little Johnny Gets A Woodie

LITTLE Johnny AKA "The man of Steel" - George W's friend was recently graced with a Woodie.

That is the Woodrow Wilson Award for public service, one of the few American awards that can be conferred on a foreigner. In a rather appalling video from George W that accompanied the award, Little Johnny is lauded as a Great Leader and George's true friend.

When is all this sickening love fest between George and Johnny going to stop? When Australia becomes the 53rd state of the Union?

To put the Woodie award in context however, previous winners include Betty Ford, who had so many problems that they named a detox clinic after her!

even consult with the Environment Protection Authority.

Dredging

There has been virtually no testing of the site or the silt at the bottom of the bay. It is the disturbance of this silt through the proposed dredging of the bay that worries the Blue Wedge Coalition.

This may be just the beginning of revelations about contaminated sites in Maryibyrnong. New housing estates have recently been built on old defence industry land that was formerly used for the manufacture and storage of high explosives.

The chemicals used in the production of high explosives are some of the most toxic in use, and one can only speculate how much contamination has occurred at these sites over the past century.

In the Government's scramble to make a quick buck out of soaring land prices have they handed some people a potential poisoned chalice???

A Final Halt to Holt

AFTER 37 years of theories of conspiracy and abductions, the Coroner has finally found that Harold Holt drowned at Cheviot Beach.

On that day, he said, the sea was very treacherous and Holt's ego and knowledge of the area both contributed to his unwise decision to go swimming. So it ends with a whisper after all these years.

In the weeks following Holt's death, a whole string of accidental deaths and odd occurrences caused many Journalists, cops and others in the know to become very nervous.

These people knew of the real man behind the mask and all the secrets he had so well managed to keep quiet.

I don't believe in defaming the dead so I will say no more on all that, however here is a little story about those times that may put it all into perspective.

I was working with my father at the time as a research assistant come general gofer on the biggest story of the time, what really happened to Harold Holt?

Damning Evidence

John Somerville-Smith was writing a book about the disappearance and had come up with particularly damning evidence about various intelligent agencies and their purported role in his disappearance.

Notice after all these years I'm still wary of naming names.

The Herald Sun ran a serialized excerpt of the more sensational parts of the book in their Saturday features section.

It made the TV and radio news as well and J.S.S. spent the weekend declining invitations to be interviewed by various media personalities.

Office Ransacked

On Monday morning, we went into the office we were renting on Albert Road and before we even got to the door we knew something was terribly wrong.

For a start, there was no door. It along with every stick of furniture and typewriter in the place had been smashed to pieces.

Not a single note, file or piece of paper remained in the office. "I think someone is trying to tell us something" my father said - we walked out of that office and walked away from the story. I don't believe we even discussed it again. Death by drowning - I don't think so. Come back in another 37 years and it may be possible to tell the truth then.

For The Unannointed, Sid is the son of the infamous John Somerville-Smith, journalist and commentator of the 1970s.



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