

Feeling depleted? It might just be the Uranium

by Candy Jones (www.candyjones.com)

I met with Jai Spidel in the heart of old Santa Fe. He was hosting a meeting for citizens interested in the hazards of Depleted Uranium, as well as the evolution of the Buckman Diversion Project and the potentiality of radionuclides migrating down from Los Alamos into the future Santa Fe Municipal water supply. We discussed the Albuquerque Journal's headline last week "Radioactive Material Spilled into Watershed" in which a water main break at the Los Alamos National Laboratory last summer spewed 4 million gallons of water from a former plutonium facility sending plutonium and other radionuclides to wash into the Rio Grande Watershed on July 5th. New Mexico officials finally decided to share last summer's events with the populace this January stating, "The release does not pose an immediate public health threat, and the word "immediate" caught my attention.

Jai moved our conversation to the subject of Depleted Uranium. He introduced us to former Berkeley, California Environmental Commissioner and Lawrence Livermore Geo-Scientist, Leuren Moret, whose life's work now is focused on educating the public about the dangers associated with Depleted Uranium by way of playing a portion of a DVD. "Since the beginning of the nuclear age introduced by the bomb test at the Trinity Site in 1945, and followed by the introduction of nuclear technologies such as nuclear power and depleted uranium, we have seen an alarming rise in chronic illnesses that were rare before the nuclear age, diseases such as autism, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, cancers," Moret said.

Jai is committed to bringing this veritable "Mother Teresa", as he puts it, to speak here in Santa Fe. No doubt, Leuren Moret is compelling, articulate, and knowledgeable, and her presence here in New Mexico would be poetic--here so close to where the atom began its hazardous course toward weaponry production.

I stood back from Jai's message and took a look at the messenger. Jai is the epitome of the American hero, with all of the components of movie star good looks, a strong jaw and cheekbones and handsome eyes. Jai played quarterback for the two-time national championship football team at Wittenberg University while pursuing a degree in Chemistry. He is bright, charismatic, clever, charming, and sports a contagious smile and laugh.



But now Jai is fighting for his life. Why? The answer is simple: he drank from his Santa Fe County well, a well now proven to contain dangerous levels of uranium. Jai had been feeling poorly for quite some time before the cause of Jai's malaise became apparent. His doctors had been baffled, until the answer came in the results of a hair test. I reviewed the 2006 Genova laboratory results. Jai's hair had 24 times the acceptable levels of uranium- the acceptable level is .0057, his read .1332 (see test results below)

After the hair test, Jai went on to have his well tested, a well he is still paying a mortgage on. In 2002, he moved to the property and drank from the well which has now been proven to have 214 micrograms of Uranium per liter. The County standard allows for 30 micrograms per liter, as is the EPA standard, although the World Health Organization argues, that 3 micrograms per liter is the acceptable level.

What does this translate to physiologically? Painful movement, severe bone pain, body numbness, black sweat, the disruption of the endocrine system and the systematic replacement of calcium with uranium in the bones. Long-term damage points to the brain, lungs, liver and kidneys. This once former championship athlete's sole form of exercise now is swimming when he feels up to it. The water's buoyancy reduces stress placed upon his now brittle bones.

One might ask: "How could something like this happen?" The answer seems appallingly simple. As it stands now, there are no public disclosure laws governing private wells! Neither the EPA, Santa Fe County, nor the state of New Mexico regulate private well water. Translation: "Buyer Beware! According to Mike Huber, a compliance operation Manager with the New Mexico Environment Department, "the safe drinking water act does not apply to private wells, but only to public water systems."

What can each of us do to protect ourselves? "Educate yourself," Jai says there are a number of companies that can take samples and have labs administer tests to determine the presence of radionuclide's in the water as well as other harmful elements. One such company is Custom Water Analysis (www.customwateranalysis.com), owned by Troy Cucchiara. Troy can come to your house and draw samples for radioactivity, which costs about \$100; other comprehensive test looking at many other contaminants cost several hundred more. Yet, given the cost of not checking, this seems a solid investment.

(for a list of certified laboratories, check out the New Mexico environment departments website www.nmenv.state.nm.us/dwb/index.htm)