

# Fighting a Manufacturing Facility

by Diane Levy

I live next to a Tofu company in a lovely, small Northern California town with tree-lined streets. Sounds idyllic, right? Wrong.

The tofu company long ago outgrew its site and started manufacturing the tofu in another area when the town ran the production operation out a long time ago. Apparently, tofu in process smells really bad. So, the tofu company was in reality a trucking operation--15 diesel trucks ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when I bought my house over a year ago. They don't anymore.

I stayed on them with every polite, legal, ethical, "good business" maneuver I could find. I even tried Fung Shui--hey, this IS California--by putting Tibetan prayer flags along the fence that adjoins the property lines. I think the flags unnerved them--whatever works! I asked a musician friend to test the decibel level for me--it far exceeded anything produced by any rock band. My outdoor lights are set up so that if the tofu trucks cause too much reverberation, red lights go on. Totally legal, very unnerving to the owners.

I reported them to everybody that would take time to check them out--particularly any group dealing with environmental issues. I researched the manufacturing and transporting of tofu. Turns out that while some think tofu stems cancer, others think it causes respiratory problems and dementia--which my local newspaper, after an "anonymous" tip, did an at-length story on. Also diesel engines, those that they use to transport the tofu, cause cancer.

I reported them to the local police, only to find that the local police are covering for the tofu company, because their friendships go way back. So I began reporting them to the sheriff's office when the trucks woke the neighbors at 3 a.m. I introduced myself to the immediate surrounding neighbors, came across as sane, and got their support in calling the tofu company and/or the police every time something was amiss.

I also sent copies of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse's Good Neighbor Policy to the owners of the company, as well as town, county, state, and federal elected officials. The policy went to all surrounding businesses and neighbors. I pointed out to the tofu company owners the item that states, "Just because a company is making money, they don't have the right to make noise."

Also, because the tofu company runs about 20 trucks, doesn't care about the welfare of the town, and doesn't treat their employees very well, I called the Teamster's union--just to ask questions.

That did it. The owners of the tofu company have told me and others in town that they are moving the base of their operations. They asked me to "please don't stop our operation--we are a fresh food manufacturing company and can't afford down time." Sure.

Anyway, the point is to keep on it, act legally, stay calm and polite and accurate. I have copies of all correspondence in a 1-inch-thick file. There is nothing I said or did to the tofu people that could be

refuted by anyone. In fact, I've received the admiration of several long-time business owners, who (it turns out) hate the tofu people more than do I. They have asked me to run for City Council (which, of course, I will do).

I hope this helps everyone to stay on noise issues. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know.

Best to you all.

Dianne