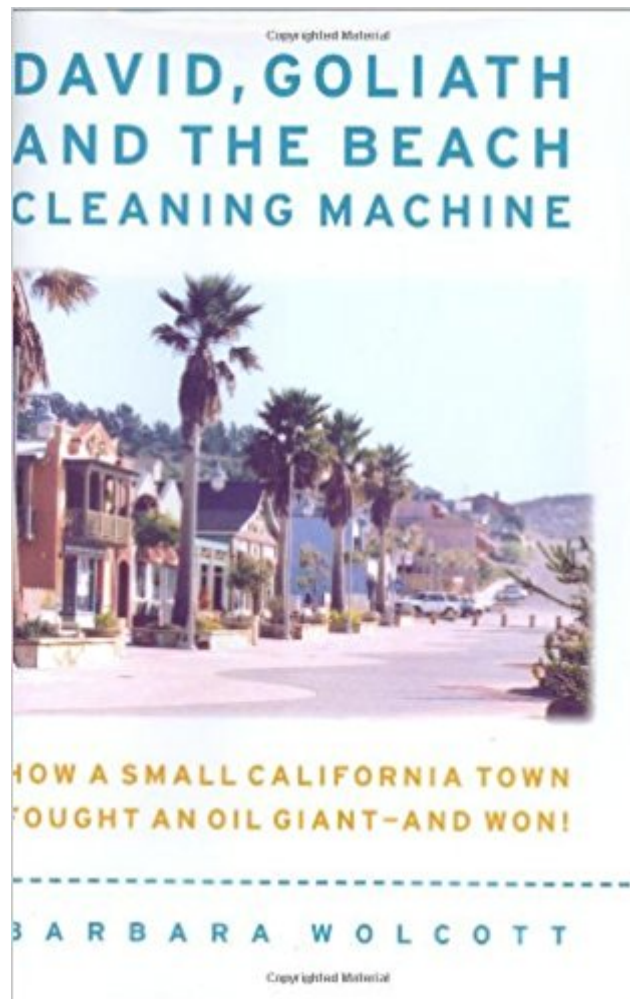


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David, Goliath And The Beach Cleaning Machine: How A Small California Town Fought An Oil Giant And Won (Capital Currents)



Synopsis

During an early morning run, Saro Rizzo, a young attorney from Avila Beach, California, stumbled yet again over picnic debris, and determined to get his little town a beach-cleaning machine. Ringed by mountains and nestled between Santa Barbara and Monterey, Avila Beach was an isolated little oil town of some four hundred aging hippies, scattered professionals, and active octogenarians. It was not a community of protestors. Rizzo innocently began his crusade by requesting a donation from the local oil giant Unocal. Through a series of events rich in deceit, controversy, and greed, a massive oil spill and an environmental disaster were exposed. Written by Pulitzer-prize-nominee Barbara Wolcott, "David, Goliath and the Beach-Cleaning Machine" is the hard-charging story of this heroic quest started by a son of immigrants, only two years out of law school, who rallies his town of fierce independents to take on a corporate giant -- and win big to the tune of \$18 million in damages as well as an estimated \$100-200 million for clean-up. Rizzo's suit was the first of nearly sixty, including some filed by Ed Masry of Erin Brockovich fame. As a result of the massive clean-up, beautiful Avila Beach has been almost totally leveled and the townspeople are fighting to save those buildings that represent their history and sense of place. Now that the town is in the spotlight as a model of environmental rescue, the beach-cleaning machine has arrived!

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Customer Reviews

This is a compelling story and a page-turner of a book. My only problems with the book come down

to two related issues and one editorial lapse. After introducing the fact that Erin Brockovich and attorney Ed Masry ("fresh from their success in Hinckley, California, with a major Pacific Gas and Electric settlement") showed up in Avila Beach ("to add to the community's confusion")(p. 81). The author only five pages later begins a paragraph with the statement, "The Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) settlement was very important to Avila Beach..." At first one must assume that the settlement mentioned at page 86 is the Hinckley settlement. One must read on for three more paragraphs before one gets the hint that maybe the settlement referred to is not Hinckley but Diablo Canyon. Actually, this reader had to read pages 81-92 three times before he was able to make the connection. Secondly, the author continually castigates the Brockovich/Masry role in Avila Beach. This reader is not disputing Barbara Wolcott's assertions, but he is wondering why, after all the exhausting research and extensive interviews copiously rendered in the Bibliography, she did not obtain Brockovich and Masry's point of view? If they refused to be interviewed, then say so. Finally, at page 193 a poem by Stephen Vincent Benet appears with no attribution as to its publication source. Despite the above critical remarks, this is a must read, especially for those who doubt that Corporate America can do anything but good.

Really enjoyed this book.

A thought-provoking book that's an easy read. I grew up near Avila Beach and we all just accepted oily feet and hands as part of the beach experience. This is a wonderful book that shows the powers of big corporations to delay, obfuscate and derail justice, using high-powered lawyers, and the legal system against the people. It makes you proud that the system worked. And it makes you wonder what the big oil companies are up to now, or the mining companies, or other big businesses.

I read this book in its entirety the day I received it in the mail. It is an incredible story, one that is told in a riveting narrative. I absolutely could not believe the lengths to which this oil company went to deny, delay, and stonewall the efforts of so many different people and organizations to hold them responsible for an underground oil spill they had undeniably caused. This book was an eye-opener. If you care about the environment, about energy, or about the law, read this book. I hope someone makes a movie out of this thing; it is such a great story.

Having had the privilege of proof-reading this book I came away awestruck on how one man with a principle and fearless resolve took on a task so humongous it staggers the imagination. The sheer

complexity of tiptoeing through the morass of political organizations and getting them to agree on one subject at the same time without any ruffled ego's is amazing. Money, power, and revenge all figure prominently in this titanic epic on how one man started a snowball that took down a huge oil company's oil pollution stance from "crumbs" to "total capitulation". Following this scenario step by step through the court rulings and the political shenanigans is quite a task for the reader and the included diagrams help keep everything straight. Just authoring this book had to be a nightmare of data collection and review. My work involved repair of electronic communications terminals with hundreds of thousands of wires and potential problems and the complexity of which is on par with what transpired in this book. I was very impressed on how the story was assembled and presented and I do not think there are many authors around who could handle the complexities and present them as well as they were.

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