

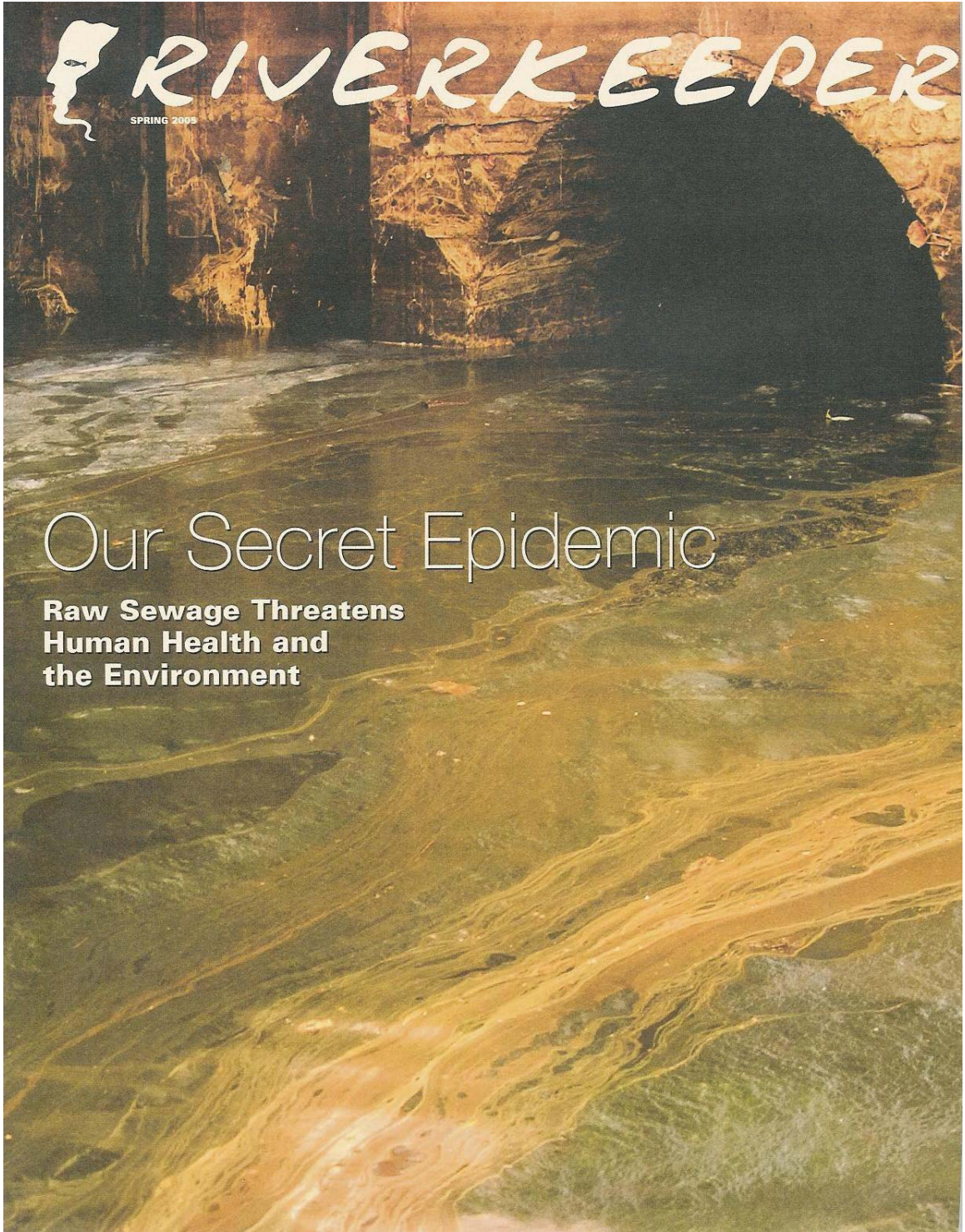


RIVERKEEPER

SPRING 2008

Our Secret Epidemic

**Raw Sewage Threatens
Human Health and
the Environment**



UNsung

JOE AND JONI DIMAURO

HEROES

BY ALEX MATTHIESSEN

When people talk about socially responsible business, they often think of industry titans Ted Turner and Bill Gates, who after becoming billionaires have made very generous contributions to society. Then there are the innovators, people like Paul and Nell Newman who are folding almost all their profits into the non-profit community. However, few of us recognize some of the hardest working folks who everyday make contributions to their communities while working in the stores and restaurants that are right next door.

Two of these amazing people are Joni and Joe DiMauro who make it part of their business mission to give back to the communities in which they have lived their entire lives. Twenty-six years ago, Joe decided to leave the world of New York City advertising and buy a little business called Mount Kisco Seafood. Then in 1997, he and his wife, Joni a former Westchester County social worker, bought a restaurant in Mount Kisco called The Fish Cellar. Joni left her job as a Westchester County social worker to run the restaurant, while Joe continued to operate Mount Kisco Seafood.

Look on the program of just about any nonprofit event in Northern Westchester and you will most likely see a "thank you" to Mount Kisco Seafood and The Fish Cellar. Riverkeeper has been fortunate that Joe and Joni, along with their entire staff, have chosen to go all out for us.

It all started about six years ago when Joni and Joe attended their first Riverkeeper Shad Festival; they fell in love with the event and the concept. It was a beautiful day and there was an incredible feast with people from all walks of life coming together to celebrate the environment and the river. For two people who start each day with a "toast to the fish" and pay



respects to the environment, Joni and Joe knew right then they wanted to become involved in a bigger way. From that moment on, they have put their heart, souls and business into the Shad Festival making it one of the premier events in the Valley.

Joe has been purchasing his fish at the Fulton Fish Market for 26 years and he asks every one of his vendors to make a donation to the Shad Fest. What is not donated by their vendors, Joe and Joni donate from their businesses. They pull every favor and connection they have for the event and the result is the Riverkeeper's 2,000 guests are treated to a delectable smorgasbord of poached salmon, shad roe, and other delicacies, along with organic wines and locally brewed beers.

In addition to the food and beverage sponsors, the entire staff from Mount Kisco Seafood and The Fish Cellar comes to Garrison to cook and serve on the day of Shad Festival. "Our staff loves it," Joni says. "In fact, one year one of our wait-staff was so excited about the event and Riverkeeper that she went home and made a donation online that same evening." "The day is long, usually extremely hot behind the stoves, a lot of hard work, but we all love it," says Joe.

Why do they put so much effort into supporting Riverkeeper? "Because there is nobody else out there like you guys who are protecting the environment," says Joe.

As local business people, Joe and Joni

want to be advocates for the environment. They recycle everything in the Fish Cellar from every wine bottle to the cooking oil they use. At both businesses, they watch for the advisories concerning the fish market. For example, they were one of the first markets to pull Chilean Sea Bass – an over-harvested species with extinction on the horizon. Joe explains, "I still have customers who request it, but I have to explain to them that I won't carry it because there are almost none left. I may lose a customer because of it but we have to respect what is happening to our environment."

Another example of their sustainable environmental business practices includes not selling caviar at the market because the demand is depleting the sturgeon fish. Being the dedicated businessman that he is, Joe did some research and found a Massachusetts company that does not harm the surgeon during caviar harvesting, thereby allowing Mount Kisco Seafood to offer caviar during this past holiday season.

Joe gets some of his information from a weekly newsletter called Nibbles that brings attention to the issues in the water. He also reads National Fisherman and other publications to keep up on the topics that might affect his business. Joe told me, "I have always tried to stay aware of what is happening. The mercury in fish was of concern to me ten years ago. If a pregnant woman comes to my store I will talk to her about the fish she can eat while she is pregnant and nursing. We can't save the world, but we can do our part in our area. It's all about giving back what you can."

Riverkeeper recognizes Joe and Joni as our unsung heroes for their business practices and personal choices and commend them for serving our communities so generously. ■