

STANDARD OIL COMPANY

(INDIANA)

DR. BRYCE B. REEVE,
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL DEPT.

910 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE

CHICAGO, ILL. January 30, 1946

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
College of Medicine
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kehoe:

I am enclosing copy of correspondence we have had from Thermopolis, Wyoming in regards to a case where an individual is suing the city for blindness and is claiming that his trouble is due to the handling of leaded gasoline. I realize that the information present is very meager as far as details are concerned, but the City Council has asked for information and guidance in regard to defense of this claim.

As this claim more or less pertains to leaded gasoline, I thought it would be of interest to you, and I would like to have your guidance and advice in regards to further correspondence.

This is not the first time we have had information where someone at the Mayo Clinic has inferred that certain cases may be the result of lead poisoning from handling leaded gasoline.

I shall appreciate receiving your comments as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

B B Reeve M.D.

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Thermopolis, Wyoming
January 16, 1946.

Standard Oil Company of Indiana
Denver, Colorado

Re: File T
Attention D. F. Benton

Gentlemen:

Mr. P. B. McKiernan, who owns the Big Horn Garage here in this City, referred me your letter of January 11, 1946, and asked me to answer the same and give you what information I can concerning the claim of Dallas Langshaw against the City of Thermopolis.

Mr. [REDACTED] claims that in May 1943 he lost the sight of both eyes and has filed for compensation against the city. He worked for the City at the pumping plant for about three years prior to that time. Prior to that he was engaged in a garage and filling station business. He claims that prior to his losing his sight he suffered no ill effects in his sight. His first claim was based upon lead poisoning, or other poisoning caused by chlorine gas which was used at the plant.

After his Attornies found that Chlorine gas did not contain lead, or lead in sufficient quantities to cause poisoning, they now claim that he was poisoned from the use of gasoline. Gasoline was used in the pumping plant building only for the purpose of starting a small compressor in order to start the motors which pumped the water for the City. The amount of gasoline used in this was delivered in five gallon cans and poured into the tank of the small motor when necessary, the tank having a cap which was then screwed down so that the gasoline could not escape. The amount used was not more than five gallon each three months. The building in which the gasoline was used is approximately 40 ft. by 100 ft. in dimension with high ceiling and plenty of ventilation.

It is not known in what manner the Claimant handled the gasoline, but there was nothing in the way that it should normally be handled except as I have explained in this letter. The Claimant has not given the details of the manner in which he handled the gasoline, but it is probable that it would only be handled and placed in the tanks not more than once or twice a month.

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The Claimant first noticed the symptoms of his blindness shortly before his eyes were effected. His eyes were not effected at that time, but he states he had been ill quite a long time and at one time had had a fainting spell and before he went blind had sharp pains come up through his back and through his eyes, and that his eyes were painful. That after he became blind, there wasn't so much pain, that the main optic nerves were dead, and other nerves were dead with exception of some small nerve by which he could distinguish objects, and that the Doctor said the nerves turned white - that through a long period of time and by consulting 40 to 48 different Doctors, he finally went to Mayo Bros. Clinic.

All of the Doctors disagreed as to what was the matter with him. First he went to Dr. Carter and Dr. Vicklund in Thermopolis, both of whom told him that his condition was temporary and that he would shortly recover. This was before his blindness. At that time he thought it was chlorine gas, but one of the Doctors decided he had stomach ulcer. He complained of a pain in his leg at that time, and said he accumulated a fever known as Undulant fever, with the rheumatism for which he took rheumatism shots. Then he went to the Movius Clinic at Billings, Montana and the Doctors there, Movius Sr., and Movius, Jr., and Dr. Gordon decided that he had tularemia fever and sent a blood test to Helena, Montana; the returns on this blood test were negative. At Billings they decided he did not have ulcers, had a fever of 102, pain went away and stayed in his legs. He was sent to Dr. Davis of Billings for teeth examination. Went to Dr. James at Casper who told him he had a brain tumor - suggested he see Dr. Addison at Rochester. He went to Rochester to Mayo Clinic to see Dr. Addison about June 12, 1943. Addison said he had no brain tumor, says Mayo Clinic found lead in his urin.

He claims the Doctors at Mayos claimed lead poisoning had settled in his eyes and had already settled in his system. Approximately June, 1943, Dr. Phillip Hursema was main consulting Doctor with Doctor Addison, also Dr. Rucker.

Claimant admits that Mayos sent to Thermopolis for samples of Chlorine and other materials used at the plant and found no sufficient contents to warrant lead poisoning.

It seems the only way in which lead poisoning could have been contracted by this man was through use of the gasoline which I have described in this letter, and in fact his Attorneys now claim that he lead poisoning came from this gasoline.

This gasoline was not the high powered gasoline

which is advertised by you as containing lead - it is the medium or standard brand of gasoline. It does not seem possible that from the use of this small amount of gasoline, which did not exceed five gallon in three months, this lead poisoning could have been contracted. I understand there are some Medical authorities which claim that lead poisoning might, or could be caused by gasoline, but I do not know of any particular case where this ~~xxxxxxx~~ has been the fact.

I understand that it is customary for your hundreds of thousands of distributors to handle vast amounts of gasoline daily. I also understand that it is customary for workmen in garages where grease accumulates on their hands and faces, to wash with gasoline in order to remove the grease and do not know of any ill effects of this.

If the hundreds of thousands of men who are daily exposed to the fumes from gasoline which they inhale, & and from the use of gasoline in washing and other-wise handle it and getting it in contact with the skin where it may be absorbed and thus contracting lead poisoning, it would probably be of interest to the Company to know it. If this is not the case, and I think it is not, it might be of interest to you not to have a judgement in Court whereby a man had claimed to have contracted lead poisoning through the handling of gasoline.

I greatly appreciate your letter to Mr. McKiernam, and will very much appreciate any further information and a report showing the facts relative to the above matter.

Yours very truly,

C. W. Axtell

CWA:MH

P.S. We would appreciate an analysis shown the amount of lead in medium priced gasoline.

C.W.A.