SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS
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CLOSE SCRUTINY OF FOUR PATIENTS

Being Kept on Them by Doctors in Rare Disease

THREE MEN HAVE DIED
Disease Followed Visit Into Hugh Empty Tank

Four of seven men who set out to clean corrosive substances from the bottom of a vast gasoline tank on the Savannah river less than a fortnight ago are now under the most close, constant and expert medical observation and care in local hospitals to avert development of a dangerous disease, so rare as to be unknown in medical annals of this section. The other three are dead.

A j nt funeral service is planned this afternoon for [redacted] and [redacted], brothers, [redacted] the third victim, this afternoon will go to his [redacted] alone. All three were colored. Brown's wife survives. The [redacted] single. Their mother lives.

The lone white man in the case, [redacted] right. The same holds true for the other [redacted] and [redacted] a brother to the two dead men of that name. Nevertheless, a daily vigil is kept in the four cases. Doctors have refused them discharges from hospitalization.

The disease against which the medical men guard is tetraethyl lead poisoning, product of an industrial and chemical age. Mixed in gasoline to provide an anti-knock agent which works with excellent results in automobile and airplane motors, it has no danger in that form. The proportion is too minute. Breathed into the lungs as a dust, it is quite dangerous.

The Standard Oil Company, which employed the men to do the cleaning job, not only has provided the vest care possible locally to aid the men, as well as helped their families, but has had a specialist in such a case make an airplane trip here from Cincinnati. For that matter, it has long taken elaborate precautions to prevent such things from happening. And it has had no such trouble here before.

A frank account of the matter was given to the Morning News by Herbert Coons, Savannah agent of the Standard Oil Company, when approached for the facts last night.

Oil tank corrosion, Mr. Coons explained, is almost inevitable because of a particular precaution taken against fire. To gaurd against this danger, water is placed in the tanks, and since it will not mix with the gasoline, it quickly settled to the tank bottom. Naturally, this causes rust. There are many other factors which cause corrosive substances to gather on the tank bottom, too.

The particular tank which had to be cleaned is a large one, capable of holding over 1,500,000 gallons of gasoline. It stands near the river, and is load-

ly from tankers which come into port. Although the tankers' vats are horoughly after each cargo is unloaded, still corrosive substances get in the reservoir tanks. In fact, there has been an unusual amount of this here, and the company has been taken steps to solve this.

About two weeks ago the superintendent of the plant informed Mr. Coons that the tank in the case was leaking, and that it showed evidences of rusting. To prepare for the customary cleaning work, the same strict care was taken to protect the workmen as has proved completely effective in the past.

The tank was first pumped dry. It was then thoroughly steamed at a high temperature for a full ninety-six hours. The last precautionary move was to air the tank for over forty hours. No danger was indicated from past experience or company research.

The men went into the tank, which was open so that fresh air filled it, and performed their work just as it is normally done. The next day Mr. Kitchens reported he felt sick. The company provided him with the finest of medical aid, and this doctor ordered him to a hospital right away. It was not long before the colored men reported they were ill. The company had them placed in a special ward in an unexcelled local hospital.

Despite these things, and the flying trip here of the Cincinnati specialist, [redacted] died Thursday. His brother, [redacted] and [redacted], followed Friday. Although the surviving men seemed so well, they asked for hospital discharges, their doctor ordered them to remain in these institutions. And the watch goes on.