

FILE NAME: General Electric (GE)

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EX 551.

Mr. Philip Drinker,
55 Van Dyke Street,
Boston, Mass.

May 5, 1932.

Dear Phil:

I have been laid up for a few days and was unable to reply to your recent letter. It pleases me to see that you maintain an interest in such lovely things as asbestos bodies and I hope the following comments to make concerning your recent questions.

As you no doubt remember we cited the fact that the asbestos body had already been analysed by Bragg's technique and we criticized this analysis on the basis that in order to obtain the asbestos body in pure form it was necessary to treat the lungs with agents which would hydrolyze the asbestos fibre and destroy its crystalline structure so that no crystal pattern would result on the x-ray film. This problem has intrigued me for some time and I talked it over at great length with a man who has been doing the same work for the General Electric Company in Schenectady for several years.

It has been definitely shown that treatment with sodium hydroxide or hydrochloric acid does destroy the typical patterns produced with the x-ray asbestos fibre. The only technique which I can think of which might suffice for collecting the asbestos bodies would be to incinerate the lungs at a moderate temperature and separate the asbestos bodies from the ash by filtration or centrifugation. If this technique could be employed the asbestos bodies would not be altered and a true solution of the question of hydrolysis of the fibres in the cases of asbestos would be obtained.

Can you offer pieces of unfixed asbestos lung for this work? If so I will be glad to obtain asbestos bodies for you.

With best personal regards, I am,

Yours very truly,

DONALD E. CUMMINGS, ASST. DIRECTOR.

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