

August 15, 1933

Mr. R. L. Jordan,

Dear Bob:

As per your recent request I have today been in North Judson, making some investigation into the illness of [REDACTED], agent for Johnson Oil Refining Company at that point, reputed to be ill from lead poisoning.

My first call was at Keller's service station, Johnson dealers in North Judson. Having previously met Mr. Keller, a conversation was struck up, and gradually quite a lot of information was volunteered on the matter in question. The following information was given by Mr. Keller.

[REDACTED] is about sixty years of age. He has been seriously ill for six or seven weeks. At first the illness was diagnosed as lead poisoning, but later it was diagnosed as anemia. Keller states that the anemic condition is supposed to have been brought on by an improper diet, saying that [REDACTED], who is german, lived mainly on meat, shunning all vegetables.

Keller ridicules the idea that [REDACTED] could have lead poisoning, saying that even if it was possible to acquire it from gasoline that [REDACTED] wouldn't have it, for his son (Hankey's) has handled most of the gasoline trucking and handling for a long time. Keller says that [REDACTED] hadn't done much work for a long time, stating that when he did do a couple of days hard work he would then have to lay off, claiming to be sick. (I don't know whether or not it was Keller's intention to insinuate that Hankey was lazy.)

Keller states that according to blood tests, etc., made at the LaPorte hospital, no lead poisoning was indicated. Keller probably got most of his information from [REDACTED] son who delivers gasoline and oil to Keller's station almost every day. (Incidentally, Keller was at one time employed in a white lead manufacturing plant, and consequently feels that he knows quite a lot about lead poisoning.)

All of the above information was volunteered by Keller without his having any intimation that I had any special interest in the case. As far as he knew, I just stopped in to buy five gallons of gasoline and talk a while.

My next call was on Dr. A. Fisher of North Judson, attending physician in the case.

The information received from Dr. Fisher is as follows:

_____ suddenly took very ill, with much vomiting. Dr. Fisher immediately diagnosed the case as lead poisoning, and is apparently still of the opinion that that is the trouble. He states that the blood tests, etc. made at the Laporte hospital indicated "some" lead poisoning. According to Dr. Fisher, he does not believe that sufficient lead could be absorbed through the skin from gasoline to cause illness, consequently, he believes that the illness was probably brought about by inhaling the fumes of Ethyl gasoline. He states that he believes that Hankey is more susceptible to lead poisoning than the average person.

_____ can move his hands and feet but has hardly any strength in them, being unable to hold any kind of an article in his hands. Dr. Fisher expects that he may die at most any moment.

Dr. Fisher says that while he was on his vacation a short time ago another physician was temporarily called in on the case. This other physician attempted to treat the case by administering Fowlers Solution. (Arsenic, I presume.) The other physician started off by administering 8 drops which Dr. Fisher considers an abnormally large dose to start off with. (He said that three would have been more nearly proper.) He says that Fowlers Solution seemed to have an adverse affect on the patient, and he can't understand why the other doctor wanted to administer it, anyway.

I naturally entered into no controversy whatsoever with Dr. Fisher, making my call as casual as possible, talking very little, and letting him volunteer whatever information he would.

Due to the serious condition of Hankey I made no attempt to contact him or members of his family.

To sum it all up, our one informant, Mr. Keller, feels sure that _____ does not have lead poisoning. Our other informant, Dr. Fisher, is of the opinion that it is lead poisoning. Judging from the information received from both of them, the other doctor (or doctors) that have been on the case probably disagree with Dr. Fisher's diagnosis.

I have considered going to the LaPorte hospital to seek more information on the case but have decided that I might be going too far in so doing.

Hoping that at least some of the foregoing information may be of some use, I am

Yours very truly,

B. R. Jones.