

Mr. V. H. Lewis

New York

Mr. H. K. Ball

Tulsa

Continental Oil Company
Artesia, New Mexico

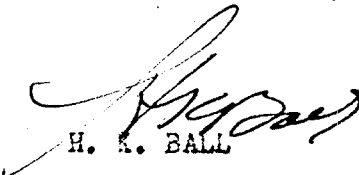
December 13, 1944

AIRMAIL

Dear Oscar:

Referring to our letter of December 12 we are attaching hereto a copy of a report from Mr. C. E. Lenington discussing circumstances surrounding the cleaning of blending tank #15, Continental Oil Company, Artesia, New Mexico. We will report further regarding developments at this point. At the present writing three of the eleven men are hospitalized and Dr. Schrader is expected to arrive in Amarillo momentarily. It is hoped that he will arrive in Artesia not later than Thursday. His delay in arriving, of course, has been because of inclement weather conditions in the midwest which have made plane travel impossible.

Yours very truly,


H. K. BALL

HKB/hmr

Attach.

cc: Dr. R. A. Kehoe - AIRMAL

KE 0021479

Amarillo, Texas
December 12, 1944

Mr. L. W. Shank

Re: Continental Oil Co. Tank Cleaning Artesia, N.M.

Dear Mr. Shank:

I was notified that the above company was to clean a tank starting November the 27th. When I arrived the tank had been steamed for some time and the pits partially dug. Since a contractor was to do the work he was not properly prepared for the job. Additional clothing and rubber gloves were necessary so these were purchased locally. Two blower nose masks were available. It was decided that the following day the work on cleaning the tank would start.

The following day three men were designated to enter the tank. These men were hesitant to do this work but the contractor assured the men that they would encounter no trouble as he had entered several tanks when he worked with the Continental and was at one time an examined blender.

The men were properly clothed with white coveralls, boots, rubber gloves, leather gloves, white caps and underwear if they wanted it. Two men wore mask faces attached to one blower and one man close to the manhead used the other blower and face piece. It was decided that since this tank did not have a water draw that two men would push the sludge to one man at the manhead and he in turn would shovel it out of the manhead into a shoot which emptied into the pit. A non-sparking shovel was used and attached to each man was a rope safety line. The man attending to the shoot wore a canister mask at first and later discarded it as the wind was from a westerly direction which made the wind blow away from the manhead and both blowers outside the tank. One man with the Continental Oil Co. acted for them and also attended to the safety lines. A complete change of clothing was made the following day.

At noon all men ate in town which necessitated the tank cleaners to take a bath at noon and then dressing in their day clothes. When returning each man dressed in the clothes he used when he left the job. At night each man took a shower before returning to his every day clothes. All of the equipment used during the day was washed with kerosene at a drain close to the treating plant and rinsed with water. This procedure was followed the following day when entering and cleaning up. To make sure that all sludge was removed a dump truck of used Fuller Earth was made available for drying the inside of the tank when all the loose sludge was removed. This was the last of the job and when it was placed in the shoot the final part of the Fullers Earth was dry.

The tank cleaners at the end of the job came out and told us that all sludge was removed, this was sludge and Fullers Earth, but when we looked inside the tank we noticed that some water was still standing at the manhead. The men threw in more drier and when this was completed we called the job complete. An attempt was made to use a light to look inside the tank late at night but this was unsatisfactory since only a small beam was available. The last cleaning was done with a broom as the tank sloped towards the manhead.

RE 0021480

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The reason for the cleaning of this tank was to determine the condition of the bottom. At the time the job was finished they still had not decided as to how they would do their repair work. However, Mr. Gillespie told me that he liked the idea of pouring a 3" concrete layer over the old bottom. I told Mr. Gillespie that the tank was being cleaned with that in mind and told him very emphatically that the tank as being cleaned was not fit for hot work repairs. I told him that if they decided to replace the bottom with metal the tank would have to be sandblasted around the side where welding would be done. This went also for the bottom. I was told that this tank leaked and that the water bottom was raised periodically. I mentioned also that if hot work was to be done that something would have to be done with the earth beneath the bottom as it could contain gasoline. Mr. Gillespie told me that only water was there if anything. However, he did ask how gasoline could be removed from the bottom and I told him that most companies steamed this area for some time before doing any welding inside. By bottom mentioned above I mean that beneath the metal tank bottom.

It was necessary that I leave as soon as possible since I had another tank cleaning waiting at Deming, N.M. I suggested when this tank cleaning started that it would hurry the job if a door sheet was removed but this was never discussed since it was told that they did not know how the bottom was to be repaired and that it would entail additional expense if a concrete bottom was poured. Mr. Gillespie said the concrete could be poured through the manhead just as well through a door sheet.

When I left Wednesday evening I called Mr. Gillespie and told him that the tank was finished and that if they were to do hot work another notification would be necessary. However, if concrete was to be used I saw no reason why they could not pour when the tank had been steamed. When I left that night the night operator turned steam into the tank. Apparently the tank was dry because Mr. Gillespie told me this week that when the chemist entered the tank before pouring the concrete, only about a barrel of water condensate from the steam was noticed.

Mr. Walter Nugent, tank contractor, mentioned to me that he intended to cut the fire wall so that gravel and sand could be placed near a concrete mixer near the tank. He stated that he would use a shoot to manhead and then the men inside the tank would have to carry it from there to other parts of the tank. As I mentioned before this was the only opening on this tank other than the fill lines which had been blind flanged. This tank did not have a top hatch so the only place of entry was through the manhead.

As far as the tank cleaning was concerned all safety precautions were used and the men were in good physical condition at the end of the cleaning. I feel certain that if they carried out my recommendations no lead hazards would be involved.

C. E. LEMINGTON

KE 0021481