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Madelyn Chaber

Esso's Dr. Eckardt

Dear Madelyn,

I have never had occasion to focus on Exxon as a defendant in the asbestos litigation before. Over the weekend, I recalled that Esso Dr. Robert E. Eckardt co-authored with Phil Drinker an editorial in 1954, titled "Experimental Lung Cancer". It said in the main that we should not assume that agents causing cancer in experimental animals will also cause cancer in humans, but did state that substances including "asbestos ... are today most suspect as human pulmonary carcinogens."

I have now located the March, 1952 page listing the members of the Cancer Prevention Committee that was active in New York starting in the late 1940s and into the early 1950s. I had it slightly wrong, the Esso doc on the Committee was McIver Woody, not Eckardt. But the 3/52 issue of the journal "Index of Proceedings" suggests that there was a series of papers presented at a gathering of the Committee. I have the one by William Smith, parts of which on asbestos follow, but I do not have the other papers listed in the "Index of Proceedings" -- in particular, I would be interested in the introductory paper by Smith (starting on p. 187) and the one by Hueper (starting on p. 204), but they should all be checked to find every one that mentions asbestos and see what indications there are that these proceedings are from an actual gathering of the committee which included Dr. Woody.

Also attached is my note of a meeting I had with Dr. Eckardt in 1990, in which he told me of writing the Esso Health Hazards Handbook, a 2 volume treatise, starting in 1955 and since revised periodically. The company declined to let him publish it.

Please call me if you want to discuss this stuff, and by the way please let me know if you can come up with additional evidence from the sources I suggested, including the Medical Bulletin, published by Std. Oil of N.J. I have additional papers by Eckardt (the reason for my encounter with him is funny), which may be of some interest. One thing you should do is check Index Medicus to find other papers by Eckardt in the 1940s and 1950s. You might as well also see if Woody published anything of interest, say from 1940-1955. I would also like to know if anybody you've talked with (Phil Harley, Hershel Hobson, etc.) have come up with anything in discovery.

Following are:

1. March 1952 excerpts of Arch. Ind. Hyg. Occ. Med. identifying Woody as a member of the Committee and discussing lung cancer (Smith) and lung cancer/pleural mesothelioma (Cartier) from asbestos.
2. 1954 editorial by Eckardt and Drinker in same journal
3. Notes of my meeting w/Dr. Eckardt

I have gone ahead and tried to help you with this but have little idea of how important you think this stuff is. I hope to hear from you soon, and in any event wanted you to be well prepared for this, whether you call me to testify or not.

With best wishes,

*Barry*