

Mr. D. B. Lewis

New York

Mr. H. K. Ball

Tulsa

Continental Refining Company
Artesia, New Mexico

December 18, 1944

AIRMAIL - PERSONAL

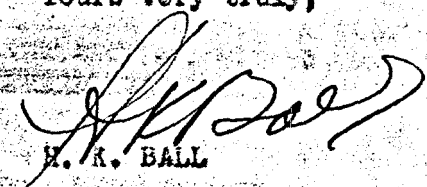
Dear Oscar:

We are attaching hereto copy of Cliff Lenington's report on his activities for the past week. As you know, Cliff spent his entire time at the Continental Refining Company's plant in Artesia investigating the exposure of several men who were repairing a 10,000 barrel leaded gasoline tank. Also attached you will find a copy of the Artesia Advocate for Thursday December 14 which discusses this tank cleaning exposure.

I think you will agree that this was handled very well on the part of the newspaper. If there are any further articles in the newspaper we will see that copies are sent to you.

Cliff's report is complete and we believe covers the "gap" in this story. Undoubtedly the report and the findings of the Medical Department will fully complete this story so that we will know what to do in the future to prevent the recurrence of such a situation. We will definitely keep you advised as to any further developments.

Yours very truly,


H. K. BALL

HKB/hmr
Attach.

cc: Dr. R. A. Kehoe - Personal - Airmail ✓

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N 24591

Mr. L. F. Shank

Dear Mr. Shank:

The following were my activities for the past week:

Monday I received a call from Mr. Gillespie, Continental Oil Company's Superintendent. He informed me that four men had been hospitalized after working in a tank which had been previously cleaned starting November the 27th and was finished November 29th and which cleaning was observed and reported by me.

This week I mailed you a detailed supplementary report after receiving the above information. In the mean time Mr. Gillespie and Dr. Stroup, the physician in charge of the above cases made contact with our Kettering Laboratories in Cincinnati, Ohio. These two men were at a loss to determine the cause of the above illness and as a last resort in their attempt at diagnosis they decided to call me in regard to the possibility of lead poisoning and especially since one case was becoming particularly serious. It was for this reason that they contacted me and I in turn contacted our Tulsa office which resulted in Dr. Stroup's above mentioned consultation with the Kettering Laboratories.

The foregoing resulted in Dr. Schradin making a trip accompanied by me, to Artesia, N.M. In the following paragraphs I will attempt to explain in detail all the conditions surrounding this tank and hope that in some way we might hit upon what actually happened to these men. Possibly some of the other Safety Engineers upon reading these circumstances might have some ideas or experience in regard to any of the conditions which occurred. I am not going into detail in regard to the physical condition of the above patients as that is strictly up to Dr. Schradin. As I see it my concern in this matter lies in the condition of the tank, the procedure used in cleaning the tank and what ever information I gained on my last trip there after the repairs had been almost completed and how this work had been carried out and what if anything had occurred that was unusual.

As I stated above we started this tank cleaning on November the 27th and finished it November the 29th. Let me make it clear here that this tank was cleaned for the purpose of pouring concrete only. They were definitely informed that this tank was not lead free and consequently was unsafe for any type of hot work. Let me digress from the subject a moment and state here that in my opinion, and my reports will bear this out, a tank is never lead free unless it has been sandblasted. By this I mean absolutely safe for any type of work. I do consider certain types of cleaning as being safe for certain types of work and I state now that in my opinion this tank was safe for the type of work to be done and my examination on my second trip back bears me out in that the bottom of this tank was safe to be worked on in the orthodox manner, and for what they said they were going to do.

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This tank cleaning progressed without incident and all safety precautions were observed. We finished the cleaning in the evening and the tank bottom was dry that is the sludge had been removed and the bottom swept with fuller's earth. They turned in the steam that night and according to their reports the tank was steamed the nights of the 29th and 30th. Then the tank lay idle one day and then the steam was again on the night of December the 2nd and was steamed all day and night of the 3rd. The tank lay idle until the 9th of December when they started work. Before work started the tank was tested for gas and was found to be gas free. Thirteen men entered the tank to pour the concrete. Four men out of these thirteen were hospitalized and one of these men, Huey Nobles was one of the original tank cleaners and he was dismissed from the hospital after one day. At noon two of the men complained that they were not feeling well and the above Huey Nobles was one of them and he did not re-enter the tank and is now well, the other R. L. Bynum, the man who became most seriously ill and finally died re-entered the tank and finished the day's work. The complete list of the men and their condition will be forwarded to you by the Medical Department and there is no need for my duplicating it, however, if you so request I have it available.

This was a 10,000 barrel tank with a curved roof and had been in service 25 years and was installed second hand. It had a 25" manhead, one 4" and 6" opening at the opposite side from the manhead, one 4" and 6" opening on the roof. This tank did not have a water draw. The bottom leaked but not sufficiently to drain off the steam condensate, so before work was started a hole had to be punched in the bottom so the water could be drained. When Mr. Gillespie, Dr. Schradin and I looked at the tank for the purpose of finding leaks there was no evidence of such leaks. As you know it was first thought when hearing of this accident that the condition of this tank bottom was so bad that there might have been a possibility of sludge oozing through the bottom and thus causing a hazard. Upon examination this condition has been eliminated entirely. The only thing that they did in their procedure in repairing this tank that I personally have had no experience with and which may or may not have contributed to the accident was that an air hose connected to their compressor was installed in the tank opposite from the manhead the idea of which was to give the men more air while they worked. Now, as I see it there are several possibilities connected with this procedure. Tests were made and our Medical Department will evaluate them.

As far as the cleaning and the repair of this tank is concerned there was nothing that was done that was not in accord with our known rules and regulations for safe

If there are any questions in your mind which I have not answered I would appreciate hearing from you. There are so many things concerned in a situation of this type that it is difficult to report them. If you, with more knowledge than I, have any criticism of my handling of this affair from start to finish, it would be fully appreciated. I had the same situation to arise I could not do differently and my main interest is in the prevention of a re-occurrence.

Very truly yours
C. E. Lenington

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