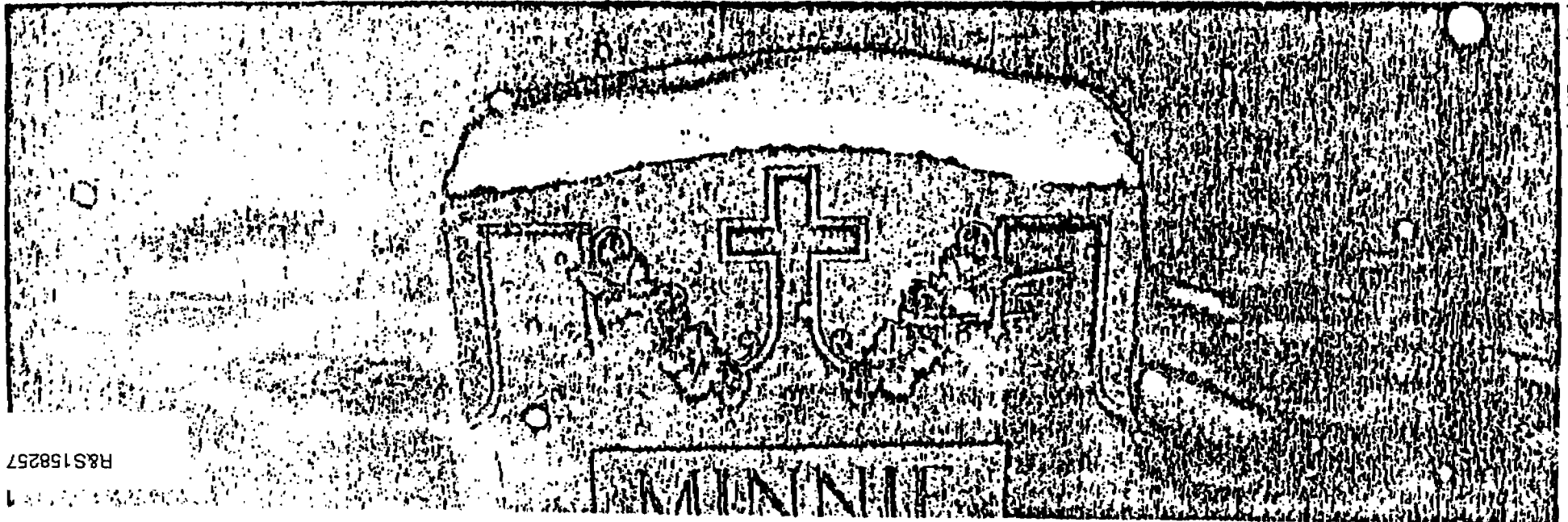


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Cancer Cover-Up



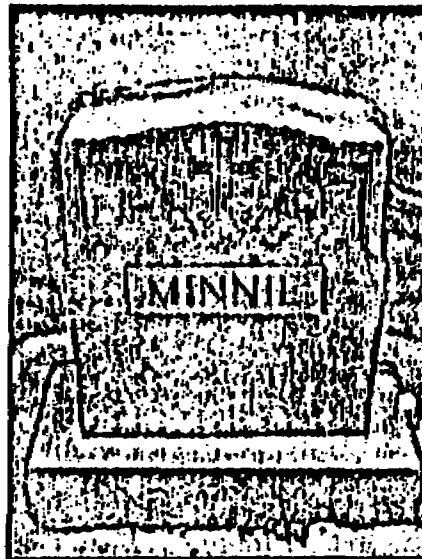
Monsanto's Cancer Cover-Up

This report by Don Michak and Paul Bush is the second of three articles that will appear in the *Advocate* on the Monsanto Company's Springfield operations. This article reveals, for the first time, the details of a systematic effort by Monsanto to deny its employees information about exposure to dangerous chemicals.

The results in the latest in a string of studies of mortality among Monsanto workers was published in a *Boston Globe* article last week by Michak and Bush. Predictably, that independent study, which was conducted by Dr. Kenneth Rosenman of the University of Massachusetts and demonstrated a link between workplace exposure and cancer among workers, was refuted by Monsanto in local papers.

It's not the first time. Since 1976, there have been six studies of Monsanto workers and, with the exception of the company-funded studies, Monsanto executives have disputed the results. By now a clear pattern has emerged. Monsanto says that these studies are complicated matters, that the methodology is not right or the source of the data is suspect. Yet Monsanto refuses to cooperate in the independent studies and, as Bush and Michak's story makes evident, the company even attempts to obstruct the studies by denying access to data.

If that pattern—damaging studies followed by Monsanto's



Tobey photo

rebuttal—isn't enough to make people suspicious that the company is hiding something, then the documents uncovered by Bush and Michak should leave no room for doubt. One document, written by a Monsanto personnel manager, describes corporate policy as giving "as limited a response as possible" to union requests; that "whenever possible... union requests should be resisted."

Despite Monsanto's efforts to obfuscate the results of the studies, the facts are simple. Vinyl chloride is a recognized carcinogen. Not even Monsanto disputes that. Workers at Monsanto have been exposed to that substance, sometimes in quantities sufficient to intoxicate them, since the company began using the substance in 1948. Despite these incontrovertible facts, the company persists in its assertion that there "is no evidence of adverse health effects."

Clearly Monsanto is protecting itself and deliberately trying to mislead the public and its employees. And it is doing so at tremendous cost to its workers, many of whom have toiled in the Springfield plant most of their adult lives. The issue now, said Dr. Irving Selikoff, a noted occupational health physician, "is the company's legal, ethical, and moral obligation for the surveillance of these people and for their treatment when they become ill."

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Cancer Cover-Up

(Continued from Page 1)

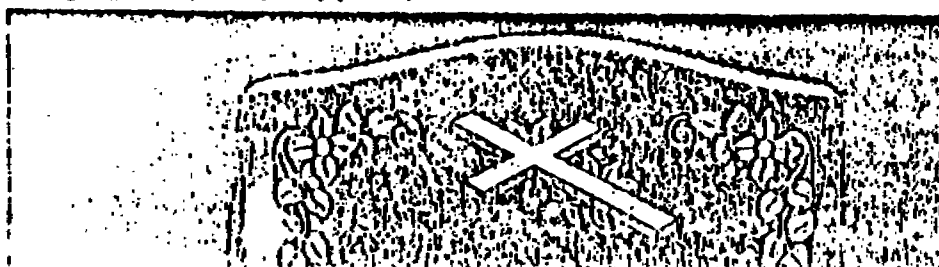
On May 17, 1980 in the Baystate Medical Center, Charles Giroux became the 27th U.S. worker to die of liver angiosarcoma, a rare and fatal liver cancer. The disease is known to have four causes; exposure to vinyl chlorides is the best-documented. Giroux's obituary noted he was a member of the "Monsanto 25 Year Club," but not that he retired as the senior worker in Monsanto's vinyl chloride division, where he worked for 15 of his 31 years with the company. The company remembered Giroux in a printed announcement to employees posted 10 months after Giroux's death. Springfield Plant Manager James Shriver said only: "You should know that we recently became aware of the death of a former Monsanto Springfield employee who had an angiosarcoma of the liver. As you know, this form of cancer has been associated with exposure to vinyl chloride."

Not far from where Charles Giroux is buried in Indian Orchard's St. Aloysius Cemetery lies the older grave of Clarence Messier. Like Giroux, Messier was exposed to vinyl chloride and other chemicals at Monsanto where he worked as a kettle operator for 29 years. Messier died on November 29, 1973, while still working for the vinyl chloride division. His death certificate lists "cause of death" as "post necrotic cirrhosis," an unusual diagnosis meaning cirrhosis discovered after death. Even more unusual is that "Cooky" Messier was not a drinker. Liver angiosarcoma, however, is commonly misdiagnosed as cirrhosis. In an unpublished out-of-court agreement reached in 1976, Monsanto settled a workers' compensation claim filed by Messier's widow, a claim concerning "liver disease" linked to vinyl chloride exposure.

Vinyl chloride (VC or VCM) is a colorless gas used to make the second-most widely utilized U.S. plastic. VC is a proven human carcinogen and has been classified as a "hazardous air pollutant" by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It



Eric Wengstrom, who worked at Monsanto for 18 years, says Building 85 workers used to complain about poor ventilation, "but all they ever kept telling us was, 'Aw, it ain't going to hurt you.' Well, it ain't going to hurt you," he said, "it's going to kill you." (Tabey photos)



The Louisville physician spotted the cancer potential of VC only because it caused an exceedingly rare tumor. The chemical has since been linked to cancer of the lung, brain and other organs, and to a host of other health problems, including pneumoconiosis. According to the EPA, VC causes at least twice as many cases of cancer at other body sites as cases of liver angiosarcoma. Levels as low as 10 ppm are now recognized as cancer-causing, and many experts consider the present OSHA limit of 1 ppm too high. "There is no way to demonstrate the safe level of a carcinogen," says Dr. Joseph Wagoner, former chairman of NIOSH's Occupational Carcinogen Committee.

For 26 years officials at the Springfield plant were required to follow no standard other than an industry-recommended limit of 500 ppm. Designed to prevent explosions rather than occupational disease, even this level was routinely exceeded. In 1965 an explosion rocked part of Building 86 when a spark ignited VCM used to produce PVC. Men jumped from second floor windows to escape the flames, and only after this incident was the VCM operation moved to a separate building. Workers say they were constantly threatened by fumes from poorly ventilated reactor kettles, suffering from dizziness, nausea, numbness and even fainting.

In a letter to Monsanto after a state inspection in 1968, Mass. Bureau of Occupational Hygiene Director Harvey Elkins wrote, "Personally, I am not convinced that small but measurable amounts of this gas [VC] are not present most of the time in the areas where the reactors are in operation." At the bottom of the inspector's report are noted the words "I have had men overcome." When data collected by Monsanto was forwarded to NIOSH in 1974, levels of VCM in certain areas of the Springfield plant were reported as high as 6500 ppm.

Monsanto used two production processes to make PVC in Springfield. In Department 80, VCM was polymerized into a fine paste resin, and into larger PVC polymer particles in Buildings 84, 88 and 91. In Departments 81, 501 and 511, PVC was compounded into various products, including film and powder, in Building 85.

"As this thing progressed," explained Eric Wengstrom, who worked for 18 years in Building 85, "you're talking about a

...molecular unit (monomer) which when pressurized and mixed with plasticizing chemicals forms molecular chains (polymers) of polyvinyl chloride resins (PVC). PVC is usually a white granular powder that is molded and shaped into a variety of products, including plastic pipe, phonograph records and house siding.

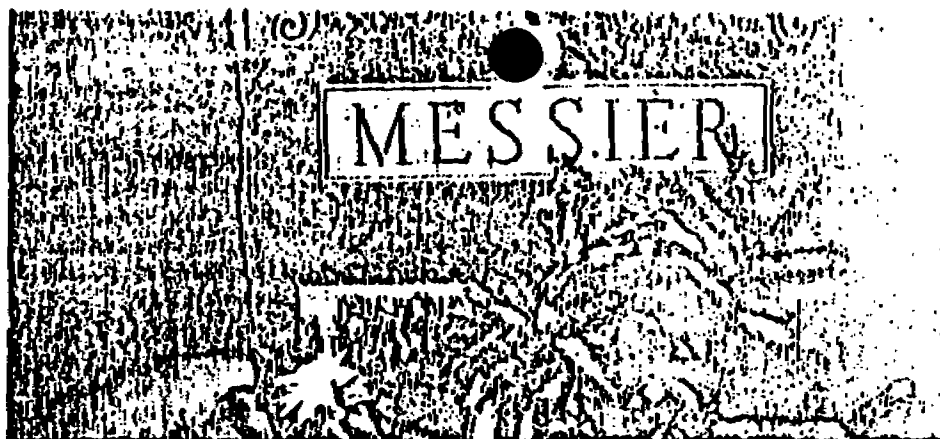
Monsanto first produced PVC at Springfield in 1948. By 1965, 20 percent of the plant's workforce was involved in VC polymerization and PVC fabrication, and in 1971 peak production was reached with 130 million pounds of PVC produced.

Four years later, Monsanto made "a business decision" and phased out the entire VC operation in Springfield. Workers say they were told the shutdown resulted from the overwhelming cost of new health and safety regulations. As local workers were laid off in 1973 and 1974, Monsanto Company enjoyed record profits, planned millions of dollars worth of capital expenditures for 1975 and 1976, and had recently expanded PVC production capacity in Japan, Mexico, and Spain.

Since 1974, the VC departments have been at the center of an unresolved cancer controversy in Springfield. The plant has been surveyed, monitored or studied by the Massachusetts Division of Occupational Hygiene, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Monsanto Company medical department, company-contracted researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and, finally, the University of Massachusetts Division of Public Health.

Every major study found more deaths than expected when compared to either the rest of Hampden County or the entire U.S. Of 591 deaths over a 26-year period, for example, 127 were from cancer. By using mathematical tools, epidemiologists were able to uncover small cancer clusters, such as 26 digestive cancer deaths, which were significantly above average. In the same way, four pancreatic cancers out of 51 recorded deaths among workers in one VC building—Building 85—convinced at least one government scientist something was seriously wrong in Springfield.

Monsanto has disputed or minimized many of these findings, and company officials have steadfastly maintained that the plant is safe. "We have found no evidence of any adverse health effects attributable to PVC



or VCM exposure," Monsanto Vice-President Monte Thordahl wrote in a 1974 letter opposing OSHA's exposure standard for vinyl chloride. Company spokesmen have repeated the message after each new study. Last summer Monsanto's Epidemiology Director, William Gaffey, told local reporters there was "no conclusive evidence" that employee's work with chemicals caused cancer in Springfield.

But in two reports released last October by Dr. Kenneth Rosenman of the UMass Division of Public Health, researchers discovered higher than expected numbers of deaths from lung cancer, Hodgkins disease and lymphatic cancer among specific groups of VC workers at the plant. The studies were the first in six years to be conducted without company funds. They were also the first to examine mortality by worksite, something Monsanto claimed was nearly impossible to do because of poor record-keeping. As a result, some of the workers' worst fears about work in areas like Building 85 have been confirmed. During contract negotiations with the company in 1976, a member of the union bargaining team called Building 85 "a living death house." "I accused the company right across the board," said John Kendarian, "I accused them directly of what was in there. If I was wrong," he added, "I would have been liable for dismissal, but I haven't seen them do anything."

...

Monsanto can't do anything to improve health and safety conditions in departments shut down more than seven years ago. It can begin to monitor the health of those who

may be affected by past exposure to vinyl chloride. After potential victims have been identified, says occupational health physician Dr. Irving Selikoff, "the issue is what is the company's legal, ethical and moral obligation for the surveillance of these people and for their treatment when they become ill."

As early as the 1930s, exposure to large amounts of VC was known to be dangerous. In 1949 VC was linked to liver damage, but because the findings were reported by Russian scientists they were ignored.

In early 1974, a Louisville, Kentucky doctor examining B.F. Goodrich workers concluded VC exposure had caused the liver angiosarcoma deaths of at least four workers in one PVC plant. On the very day of his announcement, the chemical industry released findings from tests first performed in 1971 and repeated in 1973, which conclusively linked VC to liver angiosarcoma in animals. After subsequent reports in the press, a congressional committee confirmed that the chemical industry trade association had withheld that data for 18 months. A nationwide VC alert was issued by the government, and emergency standards were set limiting worker exposure to 50 parts per million (ppm), or 10 times lower than the previous industry standard. Within one year, worker exposure was again reduced to only 1 ppm over the course of an eight-hour work day. Government scientists also began an intensive search for other angiosarcoma victims. Previously angiosarcoma had caused the deaths of only 25 Americans each year, but the death toll climbed as workers were more closely monitored and earlier deaths re-diagnosed. The majority of new cases were workers at PVC plants.

...floor. It got to the Banburys [the mixing machines] where it was cooked. There they put the color in. It kept mixing until it got to a certain degree which made it like paste. Then it dropped down to the mill rolls which put more heat on it. It went from one mill roll to the next and then to an extruder, a screw-type, cam-shaft affair that turned it into a flexible paste."

Nearly continuous heating caused adverse working conditions. "The fumes were tremendous, especially in the winter when all the doors and windows were closed," said Harold Williams, a Building 86 worker, who was occasionally shifted to Building 85. "There were fumes all the time," agreed John Kendarian, who worked as a janitor in the building. "Sometimes on the second floor where the locker room was you'd be choking and gagging."

According to Wengstrom, "The worst fume area was definitely the Banbury because you were confined in a small room with it. The mill roll men were confined to an area where fumes were pretty high, too. On the calender rolls they had what they called a 'shipwreck,' when that stuff broke and they had to rethread it. It was very bad for the reelers on the other end because they had to go underneath the calender and start rethreading. We used to bitch about the poor ventilation, but all they ever kept telling us was, 'Aw, it ain't going to hurt you.' Well, it ain't going to hurt you, it's going to kill you."

Within a year of the Louisville announcement, Springfield workers were required to wear respirators, and Monsanto had begun efforts to reduce workplace exposure during "normal operation" to levels below 200 ppm. But according to workers, some of the changes created new hazards. "They had a box," Stanley Bycenski said, "what they called a fresh air box [where respirators could be removed]. They set it outside the door right beside the fans that were drawing the PVC fumes out of the building. We were picking the fumes up and carrying them back in our face masks. And we were wondering why we were walking out of there with big heads like we were drunk." Vinyl chloride intoxication occurs at levels above 1,000 ppm. Shortly after telling his story, Bycenski died of cancer.

When Monsanto shut down its PVC operations in 1975, the danger wasn't over for the 600 workers who had spent at least a

year in its VC departments, or for the uncounted who had worked there for shorter periods. "As little as one hour is enough to give you cancer," says Dr. Samuel Epstein, author of *The Politics of Cancer*. After exposure to VC, cancer takes roughly 20 years to develop, although shorter latency periods have been documented. At Monsanto, workers began to keep track of their former colleagues and to assemble "the death list."

In the spring following the government's VC alert, a group of about 50 Monsanto employees formed KOSHA, the Committee for Occupational Safety and Health Action (the group used "K" in its acronym to distinguish it from COSH groups, part of a national system of Committees on Occupational Safety and Health). This ad hoc group tried to encourage cancer studies and health monitoring at the plant, and to force both the union local and the company to meet their responsibilities to worried workers.

With the shutdown of PVC operations, however, International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) Local 238, which represents the Monsanto workers, had enough trouble. "No one in their wildest dreams would have thought that people with 20 years seniority here would be out in the streets," Local President Bufford Harris said in 1975.

Even if the union had tried to aggressively pursue the issue, company policy was designed to frustrate its efforts. Workers at another Monsanto plant in West Virginia recently filed two lawsuits seeking more than \$4 billion from the company, charging Monsanto had "a deliberate, fraudulent, willful and intentional plan to deny sufficient knowledge" to those requesting information about "occupational disease cases data, lists of all chemicals with which employees came into contact, all data on all monitoring, measuring, etc."

The charges are based on a memo written by J.S. Wonders, a personnel manager in Monsanto's Industrial Chemicals Division, dated November, 1977, in which Wonders describes "the latest thinking of our Corporate Law, Corporate Personnel, and Medical Departments." The memo states that, except for certain requests covered by OSHA regulations, local union representatives making requests "will be told time is needed to prepare a response (that it is a complicated question or that all parts of the data requested are not currently available). Eventually, according to Wonders, the personnel department should develop "as limited a response as deemed appropriate." The memo encouraged "a positive approach for a plant's industrial hygiene effort," but urged "whenever possible, broadside and/or antagonistic and/or suspicious union requests should be resisted."

KOSHA began to collect the death certificates of men who had worked in the VC buildings after initially concentrating on OSHA in an unsuccessful effort to interest

the agency in protecting Monsanto workers. Peter Friedland, a freelance writer who had reported on the group's activities for local newspapers, suggested they put together what became "the death list," and it was through him that Dr. John Lewis first met KOSHA members and examined the list.

Lewis was a NIOSH physician assigned to help out the Mass. Bureau of Occupational Hygiene. Lewis and a NIOSH statistician took KOSHA's death list, which contained 36 names of Monsanto polymerization workers, compounders and maintenance workers, and performed a simple epidemiological study. Allowing his data were "crude," Lewis nevertheless found that, "among workers said to have worked in PVC fabrication, 27.5 percent of the deaths—14 of 51—were from cancer. This compares to 16.5 percent of deaths caused by cancer nationally. Furthermore, four of these 14 cancers were pancreatic (35 percent). Cancer of the pancreas accounts for 5.5 percent of cancer deaths nationally." In such a small group, pancreatic cancer would have been expected to appear in less than one case. A Swedish study recently linked VC exposure to liver disorders and pancreatic cancer excesses, especially in workers with latency periods of more than 10 years.

What followed news of Lewis's findings set a pattern often repeated through six years of inconclusive studies. Monsanto criticized the study's methodology (how Lewis and KOSHA had collected the death certificates). Monsanto argued that some workers, including two of the four pancreatic cancer cases, were mistakenly included in the study group. At the same time, the company refused to provide Lewis with job-history records, telling him first, "We are looking into your request and we will reply within several days," and later that the few records which still existed were in very poor shape and almost useless.

For eight months without success, Lewis tried to get company help. A delegation which included NIOSH Director Dr. John Finklea visited the plant but was unable to convince Monsanto to cooperate. The company "was just not convinced there was a problem or that there was enough suspicion to justify further study," Finklea wrote in a NIOSH memo. Even a letter to the company's medical director in St. Louis, stating "there is further reason for concern since two of the four pancreatic cancer cases were only 42 and 44 years of age at death," went unheeded.

Without job history data from the company, chemical exposures could not be pin-pointed and cause and effect guaranteed. As a result Lewis's study was considered preliminary. A year later Monsanto finally accepted NIOSH's suggestion to cooperate with a follow-up study. The new study would not be conducted by Lewis, but by Robert Spirtas, Karen Stanislawczyk and Rose Kaminski. It would not focus on any particular work site, like the VC departments, but rather on mortality in the entire

(Continued on next page)



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(Continued from previous page)
plant workforce.

Part of the reason the Spirtas group never isolated Building 85 was Monsanto's refusal to release medical records, which contain occupational information. The company was "generally cooperative when it first got started, but when medical records were requested they wouldn't let us see them," said Stanislawczyk. "I really can't recall their exact words, but they just said they didn't have to do it, and they weren't going to do it." (When Monsanto finally did release medical records under 1980 OSHA regulations, individual workers who requested their files discovered the company kept detailed job histories back to 1945. In one case, Monsanto traced 22 job changes by one worker.)

The Spirtas group found 44 deaths from cancer of the digestive system and 26 deaths from cancer of the genitro-urinary tract, which includes the pancreas, liver and other organs. Both causes were significantly elevated and increased with time, suggesting "a possible occupational factor," such as "the ingestion of hazardous substances."

While NIOSH studied the plant, Monsanto did a study of its own using somewhat different methods and reaching very different conclusions. The company found no excess deaths when compared to Hamilton County rates, except for a statistically significant excess of prostate cancer in U.S.-born workers. "Unknown to us, Monsanto was doing its own little study with death certificates we had, plus some more," said Rose Kaminski. "So when we came out with our results, they immediately pulled out theirs and said, 'We found no problems, so there must be something wrong with your analysis.' We went back and forth about the limitations of each of our studies."

The NIOSH study was released in 1978 and recommended more study. Now four years since the VC alert, IUE representative Jack Suarez was moved to write the agency, "What does it take to expedite a follow-up medical study for these workers? All the past and present employees are apprehensive about their health. This issue must be clarified—are they or aren't they potential victims? . . . We need your help."

Help didn't arrive. Instead, the government allowed Monsanto to fund Dr. Gary Marsh of the University of Pittsburgh to conduct the recommended study. Allowing a company to pursue a follow-up study of its



Former Shift Supervisor Harry Carlson is suing Monsanto because he believes his cancer was caused by occupational exposure to chemicals at the Springfield Plant. (Tobey photo)

own workplace "was not a common experience," according to Dr. Richard Lemer of NIOSH. "The only reason we ever consented was because we would have complete review throughout the study." In fact, NIOSH's "complete review" consisted of a single-page critique of the Marsh study when it was completed.

Marsh's two studies confirmed Spirtas' general findings and echoed Lewis. Marsh considered occupational factors as likely contributors to the death rates, and he recommended more research on at least two causes, lymphatic system cancer and cancers of the throat and mouth, which "suggest the possible influence of work-related factors."

Before the company released his second report in November, Dr. Marsh said cancer excesses identified in previous studies remain unexplained by his new work because, "it is virtually impossible to isolate exposure to individual chemicals." Critics who were active in KOSHA, which disbanded in 1978 to allow the union leadership more room to maneuver on health and safety issues with the company, say Marsh made serious mistakes by including certain jobs in the wrong departments, and by incorrectly assuming chemicals were used where they were not. But Monsanto's biggest mistake may have been its decision not to study specific work sites, like the VC departments.

years counting the dead, but workers finally have proof VC was a killer in Building 85. The evidence comes from two studies supervised by Dr. Kenneth Rosenman while a professor at the UMass Division of Public Health, and performed by a team of graduate students in occupational epidemiology. The studies found 34 cancer deaths among the 110 males who died after working in Monsanto's VC/PVC departments. Among polymerization workers, cancer of the mouth was statically significant, while digestive tract and lymphatic cancers were higher than expected.

An unexpected finding was the elevated risk of lung cancer among Building 85 PVC workers that was not present among workers in other areas. Rosenman said the cancers appear to be work-related because "people who worked there longer—who had a longer latency period—had higher risks of dying of all malignant neoplasms." Even though the VC departments are no longer in operation, the studies suggest "employees remain at risk due to exposure in previous years."

For the first time, the group used job-history data from seniority lists obtained through the union at the plant. The lists contained occupational information the company had previously given the union, but had refused to provide to NIOSH investigators.

In a letter to Springfield plant manager James Shriver, Dr. Rosenman wrote, "We

looking at the mortality experience throughout the whole plant as has been done by the study you commissioned from the University of Pittsburgh, the results in high-risk areas such as vinyl chloride are diluted by areas without risk, and the overall results do not give a true picture of the risk of disease to your workers."

Scientists may never be sure exactly which chemical agents caused specific cancers like the lung cancers in Building 85, because a wide variety of chemicals was blended with VC. Even PVC dust, previously thought to be inert, is increasingly suspected to be cancer-causing (A material-safety data sheet distributed by Monsanto notes PVC "is a suspected cancer-causing agent."). During 1981, however, the death list climbed to 44, and included new cases of bladder, larynx, lung, kidney, colon and esophageal cancers.

Union local President Roger Soney said after the Rosenman and Marsh studies were released that he was tired of responding to questions about more studies of the Springfield plant. "The thing I find perturbing is that nobody ever comes out with anything definite." Yet one way to nail down causes and ensure early detection and treatment of cancer is health monitoring. "In a group of workers with high exposure to vinyl chloride," scientists in Louisville, Kentucky recently concluded, "close surveillance should be continued indefinitely." The same reasoning presumably went into the 1975 OSHA regulation on VC, which requires workers with more than 10 year exposure to be examined every six months.

Monsanto has never had to comply with OSHA's regulation. "Since they got out of business before the regulation came in, it makes sense that we can't hold them responsible," explains Regional OSHA Administrator Rudolph Ruyter. Monsanto has never screened those Springfield workers at highest risk for cancer.

Monsanto did perform liver function tests on 275 men before its VC operations were phased out, but, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the "usual battery of liver function tests cannot be relied upon to detect warning signals" of VC-induced cancer. Moreover, the company told the government in 1974 that approximately 600 employees worked in its four VC departments for a year or more, and some workers say there was a fifth department where people exposed to VC

GIROUX

BEYOND THE SUN IS ETERNAL DAY

Today photo

should have been counted. Employees of outside contractors, like local industrial cleaning companies, were never considered.

At least one Monsanto worker, Arkey Dederian, was never considered a member of the affected group but was exposed to dangerously high levels of VCM. He was a "pool" worker, one of the available employees from the general labor force, used wherever needed. For months, Dederian worked as a kettle-chipper and an operator's assistant, but the company does not list him as a VC worker because he never put 12 consecutive months in a VC department. Dederian says he was never given a physical or contacted about his exposure since he was laid off in 1973, after 18 years with Monsanto.

Dederian's work placed him in the highest risk category of all: the first seven U.S. workers to die of liver angiosarcoma were kettle-chippers. The job required workers to climb down into huge reactor vessels and chip the walls clean. At hand level, where they would be scraping, concentrations of VCM were estimated at 600-1,000ppm. The job took only an hour or two, but the chippers moved from one kettle to another. "Two guys on the shift were kettle-chippers and we'd be in a kettle the whole shift," said Dederian. Dederian once passed out inside a kettle because it wasn't properly ventilated. (In the late 1960s, Monsanto began using a chemical solvent to remove baked-on polymer and absorb unreacted VC in kettles. It claims solvent cleaning significantly reduced worker exposure, but hand-cleaning was still required every 100 batches. Louis Beliczky, Director of Industrial Hygiene for the United Rubber Workers, said such solvents proved relatively unsuccessful, and probably posed new health hazards.)

Dederian was not the only worker the company forgot. According to Harold Williams, "In Building 84 the operators cleaned their own kettles. Practically everybody that went in there chipped kettles at one time or another."

Although an inexpensive health-monitoring program has been developed by the Vinyl Chloride Research Project at the University of Kentucky, Monsanto is not one of seven major companies using the system.

carcinogens, but with threats to workers' safety like sharp edges and weak railings.

The lack of reliable data resulting from the shutdown of PVC operations stifled not only researchers studying cancer in the workplace, but also workers and their families pressing compensation claims and lawsuits against the company. Cases involving chemicals are almost impossible to win without specific exposure data. Suits filed on behalf of five Monsanto workers who suffer or have died from cancer are likely to be dropped for that reason, although attorney Morton Sweeney declined to comment. Monsanto has also refused to release what little data there may be.

Monsanto settled privately with the widows of Charles Giroux and Clarence Messier, sidestepping hearings by the Massachusetts Division of Industrial Accidents Board, and avoiding its day in court. There are no records of what the company may have admitted or denied, and the terms of its settlements are confidential. Some idea of the company's position can be had from records of a Hampden Superior Court case in which Mrs. Messier sued Monsanto in 1974 to produce records of her husband's exposure and to allow a team of experts to visit areas of the plant where he worked.

According to court records, Monsanto's lawyers refused both requests and argued "there could be a very real potential of creating employee fear and unrest if strangers were to come through the plant at any time during its 24-hour operation, gathering evidence on chemicals which are claimed to cause death." "There could be no way Monsanto could hide this from its employees," wrote Monsanto's attorney, "and it could cause a very embarrassing charged situation."

In at least one critical case, Monsanto flexed its political muscle in Massachusetts to influence government scientists studying the plant. According to Dr. John Lewis, a former Secretary of Economic Affairs who subsequently managed to discourage the up studies of specific departments at the plant. "There was this guy Howard Smith who was sort of a flunky for Dukakis, and extremely pro-business," said Lewis. "Monsanto went to him and said, 'I was about what I was doing. Since I was working with a state agency, he tried to make me out of them.'"

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kettle-chippers. The job required workers to climb down into huge reactor vessels and chip the walls clean. At hand level, where they would be scraping, concentrations of VCM were estimated at 600-1,000ppm. The job took only an hour or two, but the chippers moved from one kettle to another. "Two guys on the shift were kettle-chippers and we'd be in a kettle the whole shift," said Dederian. Dederian once passed out inside a kettle because it wasn't properly ventilated. (In the late 1960s, Monsanto began using a chemical solvent to remove baked-on polymer and absorb unreacted VC in kettles. It claims solvent cleaning significantly reduced worker exposure, but hand-cleaning was still required every 100 batches. Louis Beliczky, Director of Industrial Hygiene for the United Rubber Workers, said such solvents proved relatively unsuccessful, and probably posed new health hazards.)

Dederian was not the only worker the company forgot. According to Harold Williams, "In Building 34 the operators cleaned their own kettles. Practically everybody that went in there chipped kettles at one time or another."

Although an inexpensive health-monitoring program has been developed by the Vinyl Chloride Research Project at the University of Kentucky, Monsanto is not one of seven major companies using the system.

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Workers from the VC departments at Monsanto/Springfield are still dying. The cancer studies continue, plant bulletins are still posted, law suits drag on, and government inspectors—like reporters and their editors—lose interest. There has been no local outcry, no state investigation, no national scandal exposed. The death list grows longer, and the company seems to be getting away with murder.

After a year-long investigation, we can only conclude Monsanto has successfully exploited the weaknesses in government regulatory programs, using its political and economic clout to confuse, delay, and eventually co-opt the process. The Wonders' document suggests the company has followed a consistent policy of corporate cover-up, isolating the ad hoc workers' group KOSHA, stalemating IUE Local 288, and avoiding all public responsibility in the courts, in the workmen's compensation system, and on the shop floor.

Monsanto understood government agencies adjust to change at different speeds and in varying degrees. It encouraged jurisdictional squabbles and feuds over scarce resources among fledgling occupational health agencies. The company which advertises, "Without Chemicals, Life Itself Would Be Impossible," exploited the widespread ignorance of the effect of chemicals on health. Monsanto experts prevailed over Massachusetts Bureau of Labor and Industries inspectors who traditionally were concerned not with

records of what the company may have admitted or denied, and the terms of its settlements are confidential. Some idea of the company's position can be had from records of a Hampden Superior Court case in which Mrs. Messier sued Monsanto in 1974 to produce records of her husband's exposure and to allow a team of experts to visit areas of the plant where he worked.

According to court records, Monsanto's lawyers refused both requests and argued "there could be a very real potential of creating employee fear and unrest if strangers were to come through the plant at any time during its 24-hour operation, gathering evidence on chemicals which are claimed to cause death." "There could be no way Monsanto could hide this visit from employees," wrote Monsanto's counsel, "and it could cause a very emotionally charged situation."

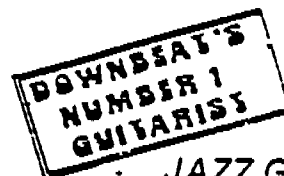
In at least one critical case, Monsanto flexed its political muscle in Massachusetts to influence government scientists studying the plant. According to Dr. John Lewis, a former Secretary of Economic Affairs subsequently managed to discourage follow-up studies of specific departments at the plant. "There was this guy Howard Smith who was sort of a flunky for Dukakis, and extremely pro-business," said Lewis. "Monsanto went to him and complained about what I was doing. Since I was working with a state agency, he tried to manhandle me out of there."

In a speech that received wide publicity two years ago, the chairman of the board and former president of Monsanto made a suggestion: "I believe," said John W. Hanley, "we should support harsh legal penalties for chiseling managers who willfully and unreasonably endanger the lives or health of others. . . . Individual managers who knowingly and recklessly conceal clear and ongoing conditions of serious worker or consumer dangers should be recognized as the villains they are."

But according to Anthony Mazzocchi, Health and Safety Director for the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, corporations like Monsanto should be held accountable. "We have to start thinking in terms of penalties where guilty corporations have to give up an element of their control. First infraction, they have to give up their medical department. Second, they have to give up some other managerial function to the workers. To me that's the only way we're going to move. I mean, the fines most companies get are nonsense. Most of the companies we deal with could pay the fines out of petty cash."

Shortly before he died, one of the workers on the Monsanto death list was told by his friends about Hanley's jail-for-managers speech. "They shouldn't have to go to jail," he reportedly said, "they should have to take care of us in the hospital and watch us die."

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