

Monsanto

FROM
(NAME-LOCATION-PHONE)

D. R. Bishop - F3EE - 4-2891

*file
nitro cover*

DATE : August 5, 1983

cc. J. F. Hussey - F3EA
G. D. Ingenthron - F3EB
W. J. McCarville - G3WG
J. T. Nolan - D1A
L. J. O'Neill - F3EE
M. C. Throdahl - D1D

SUBJECT :

REFERENCE :

TO : T. M. Bistline - E2ND
G. Roush - G2WG

I would appreciate a prompt review by you and the carbonees of the attached draft reply to the August 4 New York Times article on Nitro (also attached).

In order for our response to have any impact, it needs to be sent out early next week.

Thanks in advance for your prompt attention.


Dan R. Bishop

DRB:ec

Attachments

P.S. I've already discussed this with the reporter and, for what it's worth, he has apologized for screwing it up!

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C10208

Monsanto

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Monsanto Company
800 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63188
Phone: (314) 694-1000

August 5, 1983

DRAFT

Letters to the Editor
THE NEW YORK TIMES
229 West 43rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Editor:

Your August 4 article, "Dioxin Leaves Mark on a City Called Nitro..." is flawed in its discussion of health studies of the workforce at Monsanto's plant there.

Your reporter inadvertently misinterpreted the facts when he stated that "One study, however, by Robert W. Baughman in preparation for a 1975 Harvard University doctoral dissertation, produced results differing with those (Monsanto-sponsored) studies."

The facts are these: The results cited as being produced by Mr. Baughman were not "produced" by him at all but, rather, were the acute (or short-term) clinical symptoms previously observed and reported by Drs. Ashe and Suskind following their examinations of employees between 1949 and 1953. They also reported, by the way, that all these initial symptoms, except some residual cases of the skin disease, chloracne, gradually cleared up. These short-term clinical symptoms were further documented in a mortality study, co-authored by Dr. Suskind, which was published in the January, 1980 issue of the Journal of Occupational Medicine (attached).

All of the Monsanto-sponsored health studies focused on the chronic (or long-term) health effects of exposure to dioxin. Any attempt to infer, as the article clearly did, that there is something controversial about short-term results differing from longer-term findings reflects a gross misunderstanding of the subject.

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Finally, Mr. Baughman's work was not a "study" of Monsanto's Nitro workers, as your article further implies but, rather, a review of the acute symptoms, previously reported by Ashe and Suskind.

We would appreciate having the record corrected on this matter.

Sincerely,

George Roush Jr., M.D.
Director, DMEH

CC: Mr. William Robbins
570 Lindsey Drive
Wayne, Pa. 19087

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C10210

Dioxin Leaves Mark on a City Called Nitro,

but Extent of Impact Is at Issue

By WILLIAM ROBBINS

Special to The New York Times

NITRO, W.Va., July 29 — The toxic chemical dioxin has left its mark on this city of 8,500 people, but just how deeply or extensively is at issue.

It marks men like E. W. Miller, who dropped in the other day at Diehl's Restaurant on Main Street. Mr. Miller, 74 years old, retired for health reasons from his job at a chemical plant several years ago. He stopped to talk with a younger man who continues to work at the plant, although he says he does not feel like doing so.

Both men are marked with the scars of chloracne, a skin condition resembling common acne but often far more severe and persistent. Chloracne is the first and most visible effect of exposure to dioxin, a contaminant formed in some chemical manufacturing processes. But the younger man and 178 present and former employees at the plant assert in a lawsuit scheduled for trial in October that dioxin has also left a heritage of suffering, debilitation and death.

In reply, the Monsanto Company of St. Louis, operator of one of several chemical companies that form Nitro's principal economic foundation, acknowledges the link between dioxin and chloracne, but says its studies have found no evidence that exposure to dioxin produces long-term health problems.

The case is but one of a growing number that are focusing attention on dioxin's hazards and its unknowns. Millions of dollars is being spent to clean up dioxin deposits that have been found in Missouri and New Jersey; millions more is at stake in a joint lawsuit in which Vietnam veterans claim damages for being exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange, which was contaminated by traces of dioxin.

Suit Involves a Herbicide

In the Nitro case, the lawsuit is based on the medical records and recent examinations of several current workers, others such as Donald B. Stover, James R. Phillips, and William C. Wilson, who are retired workers, or the heirs of others such as Cleo Smith, who died recently after joining the litigants in the lawsuit.

The litigants contend that they are suffering varied health problems resulting from exposure to a dioxin contaminant in a herbicide named 2,4,5-T, which Monsanto produced at its plant here from 1948 to 1969, and exposure to some other chemicals.

The contaminant in the herbicide goes by the scientific name 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, or TCDD, which has been described as the most toxic poison ever produced by man. It is the most potent of the 75 compounds known as dioxins.

"I felt pretty good about producing a weed killer," said Mr. Stover, visibly agitated, sitting with his wife and a 36-year-old daughter in the gloomy interior of one of hundreds of homes built here in World War I for workers producing nitrocellulose, an ingredient in the making of gunpowder and the source of the town's name. "I didn't know it was a man-killer, too."

The litigants say their conditions contradict repeated scientific reports of failure to prove links between dioxin and long-term organic damage in humans, though cancer and damage to kidneys, liver and nerves have been

produced in laboratory animals in experiments using dioxin.

The complaint charged that health problems resulting from exposure to the chemicals had included, besides chloracne, various forms of cancer, heart disease, mental illness and nerve and kidney damage.

In a response filed in 1981 the company denied allegations of damages. In its latest filing, the company asked that the suit be dismissed, asserting that its claims were barred by a statute of limitations. Trial is to begin Oct. 24.

"The Monsanto employee group has been one of the most medically studied populations in the world," Dan Bishop, a company spokesman, said today. "At least three separate health studies have been conducted on employees at this location, and other than the skin condition chloracne no long-term

health problems that could be associated with exposure to dioxin have ever been found there."

Part of the literature on effects of dioxin exposure is based on studies that were begun after an industrial accident in 1949 at the Monsanto plant here that resulted in the exposure of hundreds of workers to the dioxin.

Exposure 30 Years Ago Cited

Both the wife and the daughter of Mr. Stover, a 72-year-old retired Monsanto employee, suffer health problems that they attribute to exposure 30 years ago to Mr. Stover's work clothing.

Mr. Stover complains of aches, pains, organic damage and nervous tension, and he says he often breaks into tears without apparent reason. Mr. Phillips has had several operations for skin tumors and lives in an artificial

environment to aid his breathing. Mr. Wilson, whose thickened and corrugated skin, deeply pitted with chloracne scars, hangs in folds on his face and arms, attributes a diagnosis of brain damage to dioxin exposure. All say they rarely feel able to leave home long enough to visit places like Diehl's Restaurant.

The suit against Monsanto was first filed in 1961 by 32 current and former employees and members of their family or heirs in Federal District Court in Charleston, the state capital, about 15 miles from here. It has since been amended as others have joined the suit, and subsequent revisions have simplified the complaint, which originally asked for \$2.65 billion in damages.

"Monsanto is terribly disappointed that these employees saw fit to take

this action," Mr. Bishop, the company spokesman, said. "We will vigorously protect our interests and reputation as the litigation proceeds."

The first findings of the studies of the plant came in the 1950's from one financed by Monsanto and conducted by Judith Zack, a company epidemiologist, and Dr. Raymond Suskind of the University of Cincinnati. They said they had found no abnormal number of deaths as a result of cancer or heart disease among the workers exposed in the accident.

A later and wider study conducted for the company in 1960 confirmed the earlier results, though it found a high rate of bladder cancer among Monsanto employees. "This finding," it said, "reflects the established and previously documented association between exposure to paraaminobiphenyl (PAB) and cancer in man. PAB was used at Nitro from 1941 to 1952. It was discontinued when its cancer-causing potential was confirmed."

The most recent study of Monsanto's work force here, conducted by Dr. Suskind, produced no evidence of long-term health effects other than chloracne among workers who had produced 2,4,5-T, according to a preliminary report released by Monsanto in 1982.

Reached at his office in Cincinnati, Dr. Suskind declined to discuss the results of that study, saying he was still assembling his data in preparation for publication.

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Paragraph
at issue:

Another Study Is Different

One study, however, by Robert W. Baughman in preparation for a 1975 Harvard University doctoral dissertation, produced results differing with those studies. That study, conducted among workers exposed in the 1949 accident, found resulting symptoms including "severe pains in skeletal muscles, shortness of breath, intolerance to cold, palpable and tender liver, loss of sensation in the extremities, demyelination of peripheral nerves, fatigue, nervousness, irritability, insomnia, loss of libido and vertigo."

A study by a Chicago physician commissioned by lawyers for the plaintiffs has produced results similar to those of Mr. Baughman, according to some of those interviewed.

A large number of documents in a voluminous file in the Nitro case have accumulated in the Charleston court, but an order by a Federal judge has sealed sensitive papers from public scrutiny.

But an idea of the kind of medical claims the case may produce came this week in interviews with six of the litigants, a former worker who suffers from problems similar to theirs but has not sued and reviews of published reports on problems suffered by others. In many instances they reported symptoms similar to those reported in Mr. Baughman's dissertation.

"As long as Monsanto pays my pension and my medical bills I'm satisfied," said Mr. Miller, whose problems, he said, have included cancer of the bladder and muscular tension. "I'd never sue them."

Many workers worry that an effect of the suit may be to drive Monsanto out of Nitro, according to Larry Ratliff, regional sub-director of the United Steelworkers of America, the union that represents the company employees.

Mr. Stover, his face pitted with scars of chloracne pustules that continue to

erupt 30 years after his last exposure, seemed in constant motion, leaning forward, settling back and shifting his position as he sat on a sofa discussing his experiences at the Monsanto plant and what he said had been the results.

"I don't have any nerves at all," he said. After snapping at his wife, Virginia, over an interruption, he added: "You see how irritable I get."

He was unable to sleep more than a few hours at night and cried frequently over "any news, or no news at all," he said, and medical diagnoses had confirmed heart disease and a lesion in a lung.

Meanwhile, he said, he has suffered cramps and aches and pains in his legs and a numbness in his fingers, toes and the bottoms of his feet.

Since 1963, his wife complained, he had shown no interest in sexual relations. "I just have had no sex drive," he said.

He had dug 2,4,5-T with a trowel from a production vessel and some of the substance had often contaminated his clothing, which he wore home, he said.

His daughter, Ramona, who sat beside him, had dark rings dotted with pimples under her eyes, and she turned her head to display scars and large pustules behind her ears.

"She was always one to climb up in her daddy's lap before he could change his clothes," Mrs. Stover said.

"She cries at night like her daddy," Mrs. Stover said. "She has sleeping trouble, too, and it seems like she's always expecting something bad to happen."

Mrs. Stover, who said she had undergone operations for cancer of the bladder, said she attributed her own problem to contact with her husband's work clothes.

Mr. Phillips, 70, who complains of extreme sensitivity to cold and of breathing difficulties, has had to live in a house with automatic controls that regulate heat and humidity.

"They were here, here, here, here and here," he said, pointing to places on his face, in one ear and on an arm where he said tumors had been removed.

Mr. Wilson, 76, who bears some of the worst scars attributed to chloracne, said he also suffered from nervousness, shortness of breath and pains in his legs. But the worst discomfort, he said, pointing to the chloracne marks, came from "these things." Sometimes, he said, "they feel like pins and needles."

Among the litigants with the most serious complaints was Cleo Smith, who died at the age of 53 before the suit was filed. The cause of death was said to be bladder cancer and heart disease. Mr. Smith had told reporters of at least 17 operations to cut cancerous cysts from his skin. Some were "as big as an egg," he said.

Those interviewed included three current workers, all in their late 50's but all three, each of whom complained of aches, pains and numbness in their legs, asked not to be identified.

One of them, describing a production process, said he had spread 2,4,5-T on trays in preparation for drying, smoothing the layers with his bare hands.

For working with the herbicide, he said, employees received extra pay of 4 cents an hour under a contract negotiated by their union. "We called it the T-rate," he said.

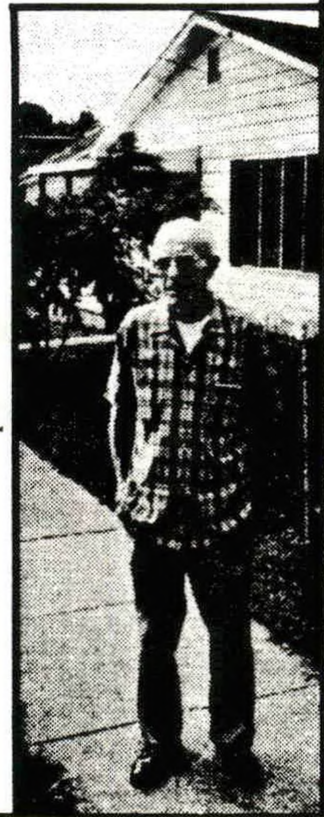
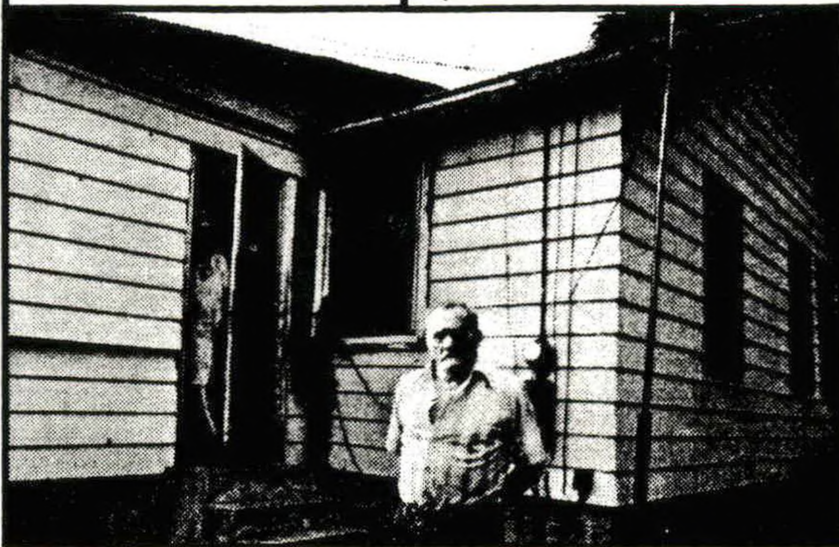
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The Monsanto Company chemical plant at Nitro, W. Va. Below, Donald B. Stover and his wife, Virginia, at their home in the town. At right, James R. Phillips. Mr. Stover and Mr. Phillips worked at the plant and say their health has been affected by exposure to dioxin.

The New York Times / Loren Fisher



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