

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: WITNESS FILE (W-2279)
FROM: CGP
REM
LKB
DATE: November 2, 1990
RE: INTERVIEW WITH KEN A. ROBERTS

On July 25, 1990, we met with Ken A. Roberts, a former Manville employee, whose current address and telephone number are:

5836 Lupine Drive
Littleton, CO 80123
(303) 779-1152

Mr. Roberts graduated from Bucknell College in Louisburg, Pennsylvania in 1956 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in biology.

From 1956 until 1959, Mr. Roberts was employed by Sears Roebuck as a Management Trainee.

1959-1960

Mr. Roberts joined Manville as a trainee in the Industrial Engineering Training Program at the Manville Plant. After the six-month training period, Mr. Roberts' first assignment as an Industrial Engineer was in the Industrial Products Division, Manville plant, "E" Building, where Thermobestos was manufactured and involved a study of moving drying carts more efficiently. His supervisor was A. Jung. There were no health or safety aspects involved in this position.

1960-1962/63

In 1960, Mr. Roberts transferred to the Thermoflex shop in "C" Building, Manville Plant, serving in the same capacity as Industrial Engineer. Mr. Roberts believes his supervisor at this time was Dan Gallagher. His main responsibility was the development of a standard data base for work management of industrial products manufactured there. The primary product in this building was Thermoflex, but other products manufactured were Min-K and Thermomat, which was a metal-sheathed Thermoflex sold to the aerospace industry. Mr. Roberts stated that this was not a particularly dusty shop. Steve Previte was the cost accountant in "C" building and may have knowledge of the asbestos content of Thermoflex. Two of Mr. Roberts' co-workers in "C" Building were

MTS 007833

George Brooks and Henry Ennis, who recently retired from the Zellenople Plant. John Hess served as the Design Engineer designing Thermoflex blankets. They were mostly involved in the development of unique products to meet specific customer requests.

1962/63-1964/65

In 1962/63, Mr. Roberts transferred to the Packing and Friction Materials Division as a Development Engineer in "A" Building, Manville Plant. This building contained the molded packings shop, mechanical packings shop, clutch facing and brake lining shop and asbestos shop. His supervisor was Kerm Beyard, who is deceased. His responsibilities included a continuous cost reduction program by modification of the manufacturing process. Charles DeBiase was the Industrial Engineer supervisor at that time. In this position, Mr. Roberts interacted with individuals at Research and Development in the development of new processes and products to meet specific customer needs.

1964/65-1966

In 1964/65, Mr. Roberts became Special Products Chemist for the rubber laboratory, which was located in the back end of "B" Building. His responsibilities included the development of new rubber products such as pipe rings and quality control responsibility for "A" and "B" Buildings. Willie Specian reported to him during this period.

1966-1972

In 1966, Mr. Roberts became Development Supervisor for the textile group of the Packing and Friction Materials Division, located in "A" Building, Manville Plant. Bill Brennan was the development engineer reporting to him. During this time, Manville began focusing on textile mills for asbestos cleanup. Frank Zetti was the Textile Engineer. Clint Burnett relayed the message throughout the company that he wanted more activity in the area of asbestos cleanup. In a meeting with the Manville Plant Manager and H.B. Moreno, Division General Manager, Mr. Burnett stated that he did not care what it cost to clean up those operations. Messrs. Burnett, Moreno and Roberts continued meeting quarterly through approximately 1970 to discuss the cleanup operations.

Some dust control measures developed and implemented at this time included: (1) introducing more water in production such as the wet twisting process and using rollers to wet the fiber during weaving operations; (2) enclosing the carding equipment; (3) new dust collection systems; and (4) new equipment for the dust house on the roof of "A" Building. Mr. Roberts stated that although they spent years trying to solve the spinning process dust problem, no solution could be found, and they finally ceased trying.

Mr. Roberts stated that at one time there were approximately 270-275 people under his supervision. One year later there were only 55.

In 1968, use of respirators became mandatory at Manville's manufacturing facilities. However, it was not until 1970-71 that union cooperation made this a reality.

It was during this period of time (approximately 1968) that Mr. Roberts first became involved in the area of health and safety at the Manville plant.

During the early to mid 1960's, Manville manufactured blue cloth from crocidolite fiber purchased from Turner-Newall. In approximately 1965, Manville also purchased some blue fiber from GSA. The blue cloth sold to the government, including the Navy, was manufactured pursuant to government specifications.

By approximately 1970, Manville was manufacturing asbestos textiles for internal use only. Textiles were purchased from A & R Simon in New York and rebranded for resale. A & R Simon manufactured textiles from asbestos fiber obtained from Japan.

In approximately 1972, Manville ceased the sale of asbestos textiles.

Mr. Roberts stated that he represented Manville at the Asbestos Textile Institute meetings as a member of the Air Hygiene Committee from approximately 1966/67 through 1972. He became chairman of that committee in approximately 1969/70 and remained as such until 1972.

1972-1977/78

In 1972, Mr. Roberts became Foreign Projects Manager for the International Division, LAFE (Latin America/Far East), and had responsibility for all plants, whether wholly owned or partially owned (licensees, minority interests), within that territory. During this period, he worked as a liaison for asbestos operations abroad providing dust control, phasing out asbestos operations such as the manufacture of Fibra-Flo, etc. Some of these operations included MEISA, an asbestos-cement operation in Mexico (Asbestos de Mexico), and the Fibra-Flo operations in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Jalisco, Mexico.

In 1974, Mr. Roberts was asked by Larry Blair of the Licensing Department to undertake a project that lasted approximately one week and visit the government of Bulgaria to improve productivity at the asbestos textile facility located in Sevlivo.

1977/78-1980

In 1977, Mr. Roberts joined Corporate Industrial Engineering as an Industrial Engineer and had responsibility for projects such as productivity seminars, improved reporting, etc.

1980-June 30, 1988

In 1980, Mr. Roberts became Manager, Product Safety in the Health, Safety and Environment Department, and reported to Jim Leineweber. His primary responsibilities were the development, maintenance and distribution of Material Safety Data Sheets for Manville products and acting as a liaison between Manville and the public and private sectors regarding health and safety aspects of Manville products.

Mr. Roberts involuntarily retired June 30, 1988.

When asked how fiber purchased from outside vendors was packaged, Mr. Roberts replied that in the mid-1960's some fiber was shipped in burlap bags, but most vendors had changed over to pressure packaging by this time. Pressure packaging was developed by Manville in the mid-1950's.

Mr. Roberts stated that during the embargo (approximately 1966), Manville purchased chrysotile Rhodesian fiber from the Belle Mead GSA depot, and that some Rhodesian fiber was shipped from South Africa.

Mr. Roberts has not given deposition or trial testimony in any asbestos health litigation.

cc: Asbestos Textile Institute Subject File
Asbestos Textiles Product File
Manville Plant Subject File
Respiratory Devices, General, Subject File