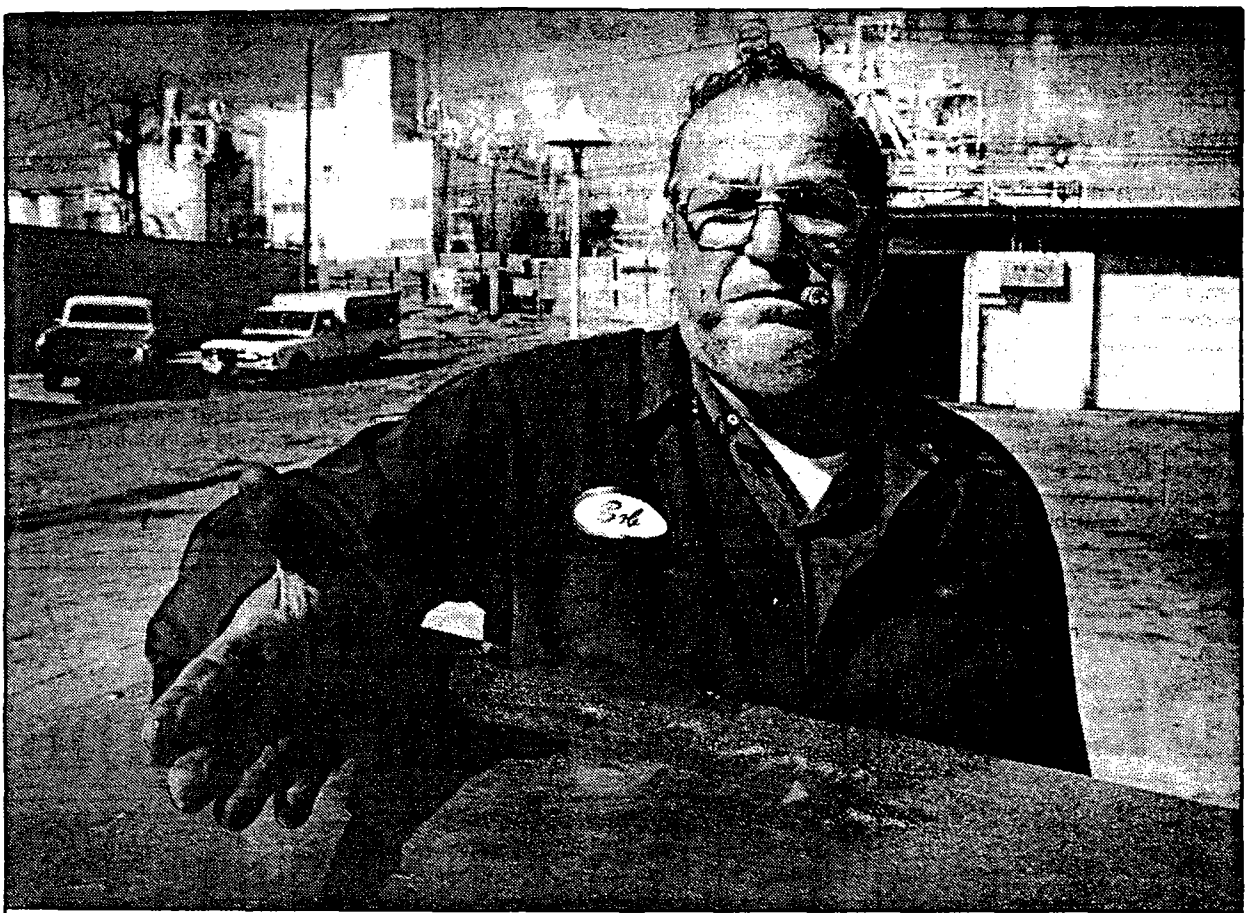
ST. LOUIS GLOBE DEMOCRAT, October 3, 1984



Globe-Democrat/Rick Stankoven

Bob Willams, owner of B&W Auto and Truck Service, inspects the 'white stuff' that settled on his gas pump and, he claims, drove him out of business by sticking on cars.

Station owner says 'white stuff' is forcing him to close business

By BILL SMITH
Globe-Democrat Staff Writer

"That white stuff," Bob Williams calls it. Tiny dots falling like flecks of snow and settling on the tops of his gas pumps, on his blue pickup and on his customers' cars parked at his service station in the 8000 block of Alabama Avenue.

For five months, he said, he has complained to the city's Division of Air Pollution Control, to Monsanto Co. officials and to anybody else who cared to listen to him about the flecks — flecks that he claims often caused damage to the paint on the vehicles parked on his lot.

Earlier this week, he said, he gave up.

"I'M CLOSED," he said this week. "As soon as I empty my gas tanks, that's it. I've been here eight years.

"Now," he said, "I'm dead in the water."

Williams, a 50-year-old cigar-chewing mechanic who has operated the B&W Auto and Truck Service, 8025 Alabama Avenue, since 1977, filed suit in July alleging that emissions from the Monsanto Co.'s Carondelet Plant at 8201 Idaho Ave. were settling on his customer's cars and costing him business.

Since May, he estimates, the problem has cost him at least $13,000. "Good cash business," he says.

HE IS ASKING for something in excess of $8 million from Monsanto in the St. Louis Circuit Court suit, accusing the company of loss of business and income, and physical and mental discomfort.

The suit claims Monsanto violated city pollution ordinances and alleges that the discharges constitute a health hazard.

But Monsanto Co. officials say that Williams is wrong. The dust, they say, is no more than a by-product of the plant's phosphate operation.

It is no more dangerous than baking powder, they say.

"WE'VE CONDUCTED extensive tests on this powder," said Sarah Collins, a manager for public affairs for Monsanto. "The dust does not cause paint damage," she said. "There is no health hazard.

"It's just like a fine dust that can be washed away."

She said she is aware of no other complaints except those made by

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