January 19, 1961

L. E. Curtis, M.D., Medical Director
Standard Oil Company of California
225 Bush Street
San Francisco 20, California

Tetramethyl Lead Study
131.31

Dear Curt:

I agree completely with your conclusions that the results of our joint survey of the occupational conditions and the people involved are entirely negative, and I wish I could agree with your proposal to bring the survey to an early termination. The latter, I cannot do.

The reason for my unwillingness to agree with you is the same thing that led me to accept completely the view expressed by the Public Health Service, unofficially to be sure, but nevertheless validly. Even if the Service would now agree to a modification of their suggestions (which I am certain they would not do) I would still insist that this survey must be conducted as it was planned, since the plan represented the minimum requirements of a realistic investigation. The question here is, purely and simply, one of time. If nothing shows up in a year we are reasonably secure with respect to the future. On the other hand, the failure to find evidence of exposure in six months, or even eight, is not sufficient to demonstrate the insignificance of the exposure. There is experimental evidence in support of this thesis, and therefore, we must, I think, be guided by it.

What has happened thus far is in strict accordance with my expectations, and I think it most unlikely that there will be any demonstrable change in the results at the end of a year of exposure. This, however, is what we set out to establish, one way or another, and all of our efforts up to the present time will have been wasted if we do not pursue this investigation to its logical and prescribed end.

In other words, this was not done to find out whether or not your Company's employees were faced with an hazard that would be significant in three to six months. I knew this was not the case. Rather this investigation was carried out to determine whether there was evidence of an exposure to lead that might become significant over a prolonged period of employment. We have shown that when people are exposed to inorganic lead in an essentially uniform manner in their employment - this being an intermittent exposure (40 hours or so per week) as differentiated from a

continuous type of exposure (every hour of every day) - in some six to ten months, they reach an equilibrium at which, from thereon there is no further increase in the concentration of lead in the urine or blood. This is the evidence that has determined the duration of this investigation. I think, therefore, despite the apparently profitless expenditure of effort and money, we should complete this job, make the report, and answer the question finally.

I have raised your question with technical people in the two manufacturing organizations. It is their view, that even if my argument was invalid - which no one believes - we should fulfill to the letter, for diplomatic reasons, the advice of the Public Health Service. There is certainly something in this view. On the whole, therefore, we are "stuck" with this job until it has been finished.

I would agree that there is no point whatever in any further chest films, unless for some other valid clinical reason you wish to follow up certain initial findings. Certainly this has no relevant exposure to lead.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK:ss

BC: Mr. Mr. George T. Kirby - New York.
Mr. J. R. Sabina

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