

March 2, 1933

Mr. H. M. Maxwell
The Standard Oil Company
Sales Department
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Arch:

The situation of your employee, Mr. [REDACTED] as outlined in your letter of February 28th, is not entirely accurate. I shall undertake to give you a clear picture of the matter as I see it, after which I shall hold myself in readiness to cooperate with your people in any possible way.

From time to time during the past two years, some one of us has seen various cases, for the most part skin irritations, which have occurred among the employees of your company. As you are undoubtedly aware, there have been a number of cases of dermatitis of one sort or another associated with the handling of gasoline. These conditions seem to have increased in number since Ethyl Gasoline was introduced on the market. Statistics can not be obtained on the matter but the tendency to ascribe these cases to the handling of Ethyl Gasoline has led me to believe either that there are more such cases in recent years or that they are of a somewhat more severe character than was formerly the case. You will remember that some time ago, I expressed myself as believing that these conditions might be due to certain compounds which occur in "cracked" gasoline as differentiated from ordinary natural run gasoline. We have thus been interested in getting at the facts in this matter for some time and it is for that reason that we have been interested in seeing such cases as originated locally. August of 1932, Dr. Machle was told about the case of [REDACTED]

On August 3rd, he saw him at the Good Samaritan [REDACTED] with your Dr. Reps. After this he wrote Mr. Weber of your company. I attach a copy of the letter. In October, arrangements were made that your local representative should have Mr. [REDACTED] come to the Laboratory and be under our observations for such period of time as might be necessary to determine the character of his dermatitis. At this time he was practically well though there were still a few lesions of the skin. Our purpose was to determine the causative agent of his dermatitis and if possible, to correct it. Thus it is hardly fair to call it experimentation in the sense that Mr. [REDACTED] might be regarded as a disinterested person. It became apparent from the first tests that the primary causative agent was some ingredient of gasoline, and with further observations it became clear that if Mr. [REDACTED] was to continue in his

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occupation, some way of eliminating his unusual susceptibility to gasoline had to be found. It was thus clear in our minds and was made clear to Mr. [REDACTED] that we were not merely doing tests for the purpose of our own information, but that his health and his future occupation were involved in the matter. No one of us in this laboratory would think of doing experimental work on human subjects which were not in the interest of the subject himself, nor could we consider any experiment justified if there were reason to believe that it would be injurious. Thus we proceeded with Mr. [REDACTED] exactly as we would with any other patient who had a specific sensitivity to some organic substance. His skin was tested with minute amounts of a variety of materials in order to establish which one or ones might be the offending materials. In the course of these tests, Mr. Miller developed a considerable reaction which caused the quiescent skin lesions to flare up. Even this is not an unusual circumstance in the study and treatment of such conditions. One may frequently get reactions which are greater than he anticipated. It was apparent therefore that the clinical study of the condition was not without certain risks, although there was no danger to life. Mr. [REDACTED] was put in the hospital on two occasions and was finally discharged the last time only when the lesions had cleared up. During the period of his hospitalization, he was seen by two dermatologists, as well as by Dr. Machle. On his return home, his skin condition flared up again. There is no reason to believe that this latter flare up had anything to do with his treatment at our hands. It was rather the result of some unknown agent in his home environment. The fact is that Mr. [REDACTED] is very sensitive to a number of things other than gasoline. Whether this was produced originally by his gasoline exposure is difficult to determine but it is true when one has a specific sensitivity such as for example to food materials or to the pollen of plants (as in asthma and hay-fever), he is very likely to be sensitive to a number of other substances to a lesser extent. With Mr. [REDACTED] recovery from his dermatitis, we felt that we were justified in discharging him from our care and that although we had not been able to cure his sensitivity or to prevent the recurrence of his dermatitis, yet we had not done him any injury and we were returning him to your company's employ in substantially the same condition that we had found him.

As I see the situation, it is as follows: Mr. [REDACTED] is a definite industrial problem; he was an employee of your company when this problem originated; we as physicians have attempted to treat him and to eliminate his difficulty and we have not succeeded; as a consequence of this fact, the problem which you had prior to our care of him is still your problem and it was not modified in any substantial way by our treatment except that we now know some of the agents that were responsible for his original condition. The only other factor wherein this situation is different from other medical care is that during the period of our observations, all of the expense was borne by this laboratory. The man was at no time an employee of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation nor does the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation have any responsibility; rather this laboratory and Dr. Machle and myself as physicians, are responsible. In this matter we were not acting as agents of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation.

At the present time, both Dr. Machle and I hold ourselves in readiness to do anything for Mr. [REDACTED] that we can. However, we do not feel justified in continuing our observations, not so much because of the risk involved as because we have not found it possible to rely altogether on Mr. [REDACTED] cooperation. We have found that he was not following instructions exactly as they were given and this made it impossible to interpret accurately the experimental observations. Thus we did not feel that we could do anything more for him. Incidentally, I have known about the details of the handling of Mr. [REDACTED] and I have personally approved of the procedures with relation to your local personnel department. I repeat, I feel that we have done everything we can for Mr. [REDACTED] and that we have not done him any injury but have given him at least the service of demonstrating that he can not continue to handle gasoline without a repetition of his skin condition. Just what can be done about this by your company, I do not know, but we are unable to prevent further recurrence of dermatitis. Hence our advice to Mr. [REDACTED] would be to change his occupation. This is difficult at this time and it is unfortunate for Mr. [REDACTED] but I do not believe the situation would be altered one bit if we were to keep him under our observation for six months or a year. I do not think the laboratory would be justified in doing this since the industrial situation involved is not of our making. From my point of view, it is exactly as though we had found an incurable cancer in one of your employees after some period of study. In that situation we could not cure the cancer but we would not in the natural course of events expect to support the patient, even though we recognized his pitiable state. The only difference is that in this instance the condition does not involve danger to life, and moreover, since it developed in the course of his employment and since it is related to gasoline, it is clearly occupational.

I trust I have made my point of view clear. I do not present it in an argumentative way and in view of the relationships which have existed between us personally and between your local people and our group at the laboratory, I should not wish to enter into an argument. Consequently, when you have considered what I have said, I would be glad if you would write to me and tell me exactly what you think about it.

With kindest personal regards,

Very truly yours,

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