

IOWA STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS

AMES, IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
W. F. COOVER, HEAD

Dr. George Calingaert,
Research Laboratories,
Ethyl Corporation,
1600 West Eight Mile Road,
Ferndale, 20, Detroit, Michigan.

Dear George,

You may recall that a few years ago when you were here we went down to visit Mrs. Munn who was using sheet lead as a decorative medium. At that time we both cautioned her about the danger of working with lead.

Yesterday afternoon Mrs. Munn phoned me and told me that she had sent in a brief article to a magazine called "Craft Horizons" on the use of sheet lead as a decorative medium. In that short article she had reproduced two very attractive photographs of the chests she had decorated.

Shortly after the article was published the editor of the periodical had two letters from readers who were concerned about the use of lead. These two letters are numbered I and II of the enclosed material which Mrs. Munn sent me. Item 3 is a copy of a note to Mrs. Munn from the editor of the periodical. Item 4 is a copy of a letter by Mrs. Munn to the editor of the periodical.

As a background I might give you the following extract from her article to show what emphasis she did place on the danger of working with the material. In this extract the Belgian chemist she refers to is you.

"My first knowledge of its danger came one day when I was working on some pieces of lead and a friend, whose husband is a chemist, seemed a bit disturbed that I was working with this material. She told her chemist husband about my activities and from then on I had advice and counsel from some of the outstanding scientists of our country, which in itself was a thrilling adventure. These friends even brought a noted Belgium chemist to call when he was on the campus for a chemistry seminar. They all agreed that there was danger in the use of lead and they warned me to use extreme care in the way I worked with it. They said never to take my hands to my eyes, nose or

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mouth without first washing my hands well with soap and hot water, and of course never to eat food without taking the same precaution. I was never to work with the lead if I had a cut on my hands. I had worn heavy gloves because the tin-snips used in cutting were big and awkward and hard for me to handle. These men cautioned me that the gloves themselves would store up poison from the lead so that even greater care should be used. Heeding all of these precautions over the period of several years during which I have worked with lead, I have had no ill effects but have found much pleasure in its use and satisfaction in the finished results."

Mrs. Munn's concern now is to help reduce danger after the work is done. That is, she thinks it might be appropriate if she wrote a letter to the editor explaining how exposure to the finished art product might be reduced by some appropriate coating to the lead. May I know whether you have any suggestions on what sort of a coating or varnish might be applied to reduce the danger of exposure or contact with the lead once the art object has been completed? I made it clear to Mrs. Munn that if I got information it would be with the understanding that no names were to be quoted.

She feels that she made a reasonable case in emphasizing precautions in working with the material. What she would like to do now is to inform readers of the article that there may be ways of reducing the danger once the finished decorative work has been done with lead.

Needless to say she might have been spared the present concern had she taken the suggestions that you and I made. It was, however, too late then because she had already started and actually completed most of the work.

With kind regards.

Sincerely yours,



Henry Gilman

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