

Jacksonville, Florida
July 30, 1948

Mr. M. A. Taylor
Mr. E. C. Jones
Dr. R. A. Kehoe ✓
Mr. E. K. Locher
Mr. H. K. Ball

Gentlemen:

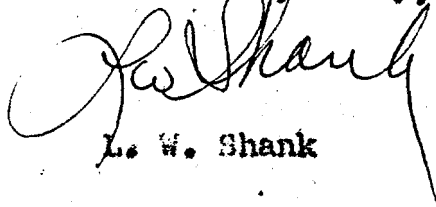
Attached hereto is a factual report of my interview with Mr. L. E. Williams of Tank Cleaners, Inc. In this report there is no comment as to the writer's personal opinions, nor shall I attempt to make any. I wish to make my position clear to all concerned.

Mr. F. Y. Mercer was employed by me and Mr. R. L. Jordan. I consider him one of my closest personal friends. Both Mr. Jordan and I have a high regard for him and his integrity in both an official capacity and personally. He will, undoubtedly, have comments to make regarding the attached report.

I trust that Messrs. Mercer, Taylor, and Baldwin as well as the members of the Medical Department will understand that I am acting simply as a reporter and interviewer. The appraisal of the report attached hereto should be entirely out of my hands, and I have only an academic interest in it to the extent that I was requested to make it and have made it in accordance with the statements that were given to me by the parties interviewed.

If there is any further action required on the part of the personnel of the Southern Region or me, please advise and we shall, of course, cooperate in every way possible.

Yours very truly,



L. W. Shank

KE 0006699

N 7649

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT
TANK CLEANING ACCIDENT
WILMINGTON, N. C.**

CC: New York Safety (2)
Dr. R. A. Kehoe (1)
Mr. M. A. Taylor (2)
Mr. R. L. Jordan (1)
Southern Region (2)

On July 28th Mr. R. L. Jordan and I interviewed Mr. L. E. Williams, General Manager of Tank Cleaners, Inc. and, in accordance with the questions given us by the New York Safety Department and by the New York Legal Department, we received the following information from him.

Mr. Williams advised that Joe Miller, construction foreman for the Pure Oil Company, Chicago, called him approximately two weeks before the tank cleaning to make arrangements for the cleaning of these tanks. At that time Mr. Miller expressed the opinion that these were fuel tanks. Arrangements for the work were made between Mr. Miller and Mr. L. E. Williams. Notification of the cleaning is supposed to have been sent by Mr. R. W. Williams, Terminal Superintendent of the Cape Fear Terminals. The contract between Tank Cleaners, Inc. and the Pure Oil Company was signed by R. W. Williams of the Chicago Office of the Pure Oil Company. The Pure Oil Company will pay the bill.

Pure Oil Company of Chicago required Tank Cleaners, Inc. to take out an owner's protective policy in the name of the Pure Oil Company and the Cape Fear Terminal Company. The premium was paid by the Pure Oil Company. The policy was written in the amount of \$200,000 and was placed with the Travelers Insurance Company. The broker handling the policy was Stockton, Whitley, Davin & Company, Bay and Laura Streets, Jacksonville, Florida. In addition to this policy, Tank Cleaners, Inc. has a policy with the Coal Operators Casualty Company of Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

This policy is in the amount of \$50,000 for individual and \$100,000 for two or more individuals. It also was placed through Stockton, Whitley, Davin & Company. The local adjuster for the Coal Operators Casualty Company is Mr. Dwight Smith, Manager for Crawford & Company, 617 West Adams Street, Jacksonville, Florida. As of the present writing, no claim has been filed since all insurance companies are awaiting the final settlement and accounting of the case before making any payment.

KE 0006700

N 7649.01

Tank Cleaners, Inc. is a Florida Corporation, incorporated in Florida March 12, 1946. Its officers and management are as follows:

J. H. Coppedge, President. Mr. Coppedge also owns the Diesel Corporation, a deep-sea towing company; and the J. H. Coppedge Construction Company.

Mrs. Anna M. Coppedge is Vice President.

Mr. W. H. McCoy is Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. McCoy is an attorney and acts as the attorney for the company. His address is 121 Graham Building, Jacksonville, Florida.

Mr. L. E. Williams is manager and owns 25% of the stock of the company.

Ownership of the Cape Fear Terminals, as far as we can ascertain, is 100% in the hands of the Purcell Company of Chicago. We are unable to obtain any information regarding the ownership of the Carolina Terminal but since it is under lease to the Purcell Company this information will undoubtedly be obtained from either the Purcell Company in Chicago or at the Cape Fear Terminals in Wilmington, N. C.

Inquiry was made into the history and tank cleaning experience of H. H. Nichols who acted as foreman on the job. Mr. Nichols went to work for Case & Company, a tank cleaning contractor working out of Atlanta in September 1944. He was employed in the capacity of a tank cleaning laborer and did work inside the tanks. He did considerable of this work and was employed in this capacity for about 1½ years. He was then appointed Storekeeper and Purchasing Agent and served in this capacity until January 1946. He severed his connection with Case & Company at that time and went to work with the Otis Elevator Company at Dallas, Texas. He entered the service of Tank Cleaners, Inc. about May 15, 1948 and was appointed as a solicitor for tank cleaning contracts. The Cape Fear job was his first as foreman. He had been working in Wilmington with Mr. G. H. Smith, an experienced foreman, and because of his past experience and because of his having worked with Mr. Smith he was judged capable of handling the job at the Carolina Terminal and was therefore placed in charge. While working with Mr. Smith they had cleaned two 25,000 barrels in May, following which they returned to Jacksonville. When the Cape Fear job came up Nichols was sent back to Wilmington, in charge. Mr. L. E. Williams accompanied him and was with him when he cleaned the 40,000 barrel tank. Mr. L. E. Williams feels that Mr. Nichols is quite capable. He has known Nichols since September 1944 and always found him a reliable employee.

Following the obtaining of the above statistical data, we went into some of the details of the actual tank cleaning operation itself. Mr. L. E. Williams was acquainted with the contents of Mr. Mercer's report of June 18, 1948, copies of which are in the hands of all parties to whom this supplement is addressed. Mr. Williams denied that any such conversation had taken place and states emphatically that his memory is quite clear on this subject.

We then proceeded to a discussion of the events in chronological order. Mr. Williams states that in the afternoon of Friday, June 18th, tanks #1 and #2 were pumped out and that at approximately four p.m. Mr. Mercer told him that from all appearances these were not leaded tanks and that there was no need for him, Mercer, to stay. According to Mr. Williams, Mr. Mercer said that he would return for the cleaning of the 40,000 barrel tank. At three-thirty p.m. on Friday Mr. Williams stated that the actual cleaning of Tank #1 began and that it continued until five-thirty p.m. William Davis was in the tank for two hours, Ray Rouser was in the tank for one hour. Mr. Williams further stated that during these two hours he and Mr. Mercer were together on the fire wall of the tank. Gloves and boots were used but no masks were used.

Mr. Williams states that he arrived at the scene of the tank cleaning, i.e., the Carolina Terminal, at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning. The men were then in the tank without protective equipment. He instructed Mr. Nichols to notify Mr. Mercer when the 40,000 barrel tank was to be cleaned. Mr. Williams then left. He was later notified by Mr. Nichols that Mr. Mercer arrived about ten a.m. on Saturday.

In view of the fact that Tank A was perfectly dry, Mr. Williams bought dust respirators for his men but later learned that these had not been used.

Mr. Williams ^{added} had this information. He stated that on Friday while sludge was being pumped from Tank #1, Mr. Joe Miller of Purcil Company suggested using a 3 inch hose instead of a 2 inch hose. Upon being advised that Tank Cleaners, Inc. had only 2 inch hose on the job, Mr. Miller offered to lend them 3 lengths of 3 inch hose. A pick-up truck was sent to the Cape Fear Terminal to get these, and upon its return Messrs. Williams, Mercer, and Nichols did the mechanical job of hooking up the hose, using two lengths on the discharge side and one length on the suction side of the tank.

From memory, Mr. L. E. Williams gave me the following schedule of the tank cleaning work:

Tank Number One - This was cleaned on Friday with entry beginning between three-thirty and four p.m. The crew consisted of

who spent approximately two hours in the tank, and who spent approximately one hour in the tank. When the men quit work at approximately five-thirty there remained about 30 minutes work to be done. On Saturday morning William Davis entered this tank and completed the work in a period estimated to have been between 30 and 45 minutes.

Tank Number Two - At approximately nine a.m. on Saturday work shifted to Tank #2 with and entering the tank. Both worked until about 11:30 and then cleaned up for lunch. At approximately one p.m. alone re-entered the tank and finished work at approximately two p.m. There was no work done on Sunday.

Tank A - Tank A was cleaned on Monday with the men starting activities at approximately eight a.m. worked in this tank approximately 6 hours, was in it for 4 hours. Nichols spent approximately 30 minutes in this tank, completing the work. Nichols had previously spent about five minutes each in Tanks #1 and #2 to inspect the work done by the other men. It should be noted that Nichols time in Tanks #1 and #2 was very limited but that he did have 30 minutes of continued exposure in Tank A.

The subject of sleeping in a tank or tanks at Fisher's Island, Miami, Florida was discussed. Mr. Williams stated that he had questioned J. F. Sova, the tank cleaning foreman on that job; Ed Williams, a tank cleaner; and Curtis Nelson, a tank cleaner who is reported to have made the statement that the men slept in the tanks. All of these men state that there is a misunderstanding. They claim that the workers climbed up and slept on the top of the tanks and not in them. On Thursday morning I personally questioned Curtis Nelson who denies having told anyone that he slept in a tank at Fisher's Island. He states that he did tell one of our representatives that he, Williams and Davis slept on the top of a tank at Fisher's Island one night, due to the mosquitoes.

There has been no publicity either in Wilmington or in Jacksonville regarding this accident. No lawsuit is expected, the insurance companies have not as yet made any settlement as they are awaiting the final outcome of the case and an exact accounting of the dependents involved.

On August 10th, 1946 there will be a hearing by the Florida Industrial Commission to determine the cause of death and to establish the dependents of . This hearing will be held in the Florida Theater Building, Jacksonville, Florida, at 10 a.m.

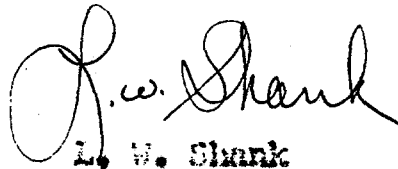
is reported to have a legal wife who deserted him about six years ago to go with a colored preacher in Atlanta, Georgia. He has a common law wife in Jacksonville with whom he was living at the time of the accident. There is no record of his having had a divorce from his first wife and there may be some question as to whether or not he was legally married to her. This will probably

ished at the hearing. He has two children - a girl about of age and a boy about 15 or 16 years of age. The girl ed to have a full time job and to be supporting the boy ionally contributes part time earnings.

also was hospitalized shortly after Davis and later dismissed, and was returned to the hospital about a week or ten days ago. He was released on Monday, July 25th, and will return to light work about the middle of next week or approximately August 3rd or 4th. Mr. L. E. Williams was advised not to use him for some time in any capacity where he would be exposed to lead and Mr. Williams has agreed to so use him.

has a common law wife with whom he is living in Jacksonville, and has a wife in Atlanta to whom he may or may not be legally married. She is reported to be living with a common law husband in that city. No claims are expected from any of these quarters.

A duPont representative has been sticking his nose into the affair. A Mr. Burchleigh contacted Mr. Joe Sovo, Foreman for Tank Cleaners, Inc., recently, and attempted to pry some information out of him. Mr. Sovo told Mr. Burchleigh that he knew nothing about any accident, and referred him to Mr. L. E. Williams. To date, Mr. Williams has not been contacted by Mr. Burchleigh. Mr. Williams states that he has no intention whatsoever of holding any discussions at any time with any duPont representatives and will confine any discussions of this case to representatives of the Ethyl Corporation.


L. W. Shank

The above is in accordance with the statements that I made to Messrs. R. L. Jordan and L. W. Shank of the Ethyl Corporation.


L. E. Williams, General Manager
Tank Cleaners, Inc.