

Mr. S. M. Wagner

Los Angeles

Carl Abell

Los Angeles

Death of [REDACTED] alleged lead poisoning from drinking ethyl fluid.

December 21, 1944

Dear Mr. Wagner :

In line with Mr. O. B. Lewis's request of Dec. 13, I have investigated this matter, and have the following to report :

[REDACTED] truck driver, died in the General Hospital, Los Angeles, on Nov. 27, 1944, of what appeared to be acute lead poisoning. I have seen the hospital's record of his illness and death, the police report covering the case, and the entire file on his case in the coroner's office. They are not entirely in agreement.

The hospital record opens with the statement that he had taken a mouthful of concentrated tetraethyl lead from a bottle which he found in a drawer at the service station at 3800 East Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, when he opened the station at about 8 a.m. on Nov. 27. It was a whiskey bottle, so he believed he was taking a drink of liquor. (He was unable to read English). He said it tasted bad, and made him sick at his stomach, which continued. The hospital record also noted a condition of violent diarrhea.

A later note by one of the doctors stated that a bottle of Nu-power had been found near him, which appeared to be slightly less than full. It also commented that the station operator had had a whiskey bottle containing Ethyl Gasoline in the station, but that he reported he was unable to find this later in the day.

Death occurred at 8:30 p.m. of that same day. The reason given in the hospital records was "acute lead poisoning".

3800 East Olympic Blvd. is the address of a large super-service station operated by Albert Manookian. I am quite familiar with the station, as it has been dealing 100% in Associated products (Now Tidewater) as far back as I can remember. I bought gasoline there quite frequently through the years as far back as 1931, and has been under the same management all that time. There do not appear to be any living quarters on the premises, but Aroff has given this as his home address on a number of previous occasions when he was in the General Hospital. They have four sheets in the hospital record of his last illness, but the file covering his previous stays in the hospital is about three quarters of an inch thick. He was without family, and always gave Manookian's name as

his closest friend.

At the Coroner's office I was shown the entire file on the case, which included the police report and the report of the autopsy surgeon.

The police report noted that [REDACTED] was found suffering at 8:10 a.m., and was sent to the Georgia St. Receiving Hospital in the Hollenbeck Police Station ambulance immediately. According to this report, he had taken a swallow from a bottle of "Nu-Power Pep". From Georgia St. he was transferred to the General Hospital at about 11.25. This is Police File No., DR-A 24,968, Hollenbeck Station, signed by officer F.P. Earl, Badge 575.

Copy of the autopsy surgeon's report is attached. There was no record of any chemical analysis in connection with the autopsy. Receipt for the body was signed by Manookian.

Throughout the hospital and the coroner's records, there appeared to be a confusion in the spelling of the man's name. It was written as Aroff on both the police and the hospital records, but was filed as [REDACTED] and we had difficulty locating the file. It was also written as [REDACTED] in the coroner's office, but changed to Croff.

I drove down to the station to look around, but did not interview the manager on this subject. As I approached the station, Ed Roedel, city sales supervisor of Tidewater, and Mr. Kunkel, manager of their Vernon distributing plant, were just driving out. I stopped them, and discussed it with them. Kunkel was familiar with the incident through previous conversations with Manookian. The latter had visited [REDACTED] at the hospital the day of his death. Apparently [REDACTED] was a heavy drinker, and had asked Manookian for a bottle of whiskey, which had not been forthcoming.

Manookian is regarded very highly by Tidewater. They report that his conduct during the rationing period, and at all previous times, has been exceptionally clean. They know of cases when he has been offered truckloads of Ethyl Gasoline by drivers for independent companies, and has turned them down.

I went into the station later and bought gasoline. The attendant regretted that there was no Ethyl Gasoline available, so I bought five gallons of regular. Went into the station house, ostensibly to phone the office, but actually to see what was on the shelves, which I had ample time to do, as there was another party using the telephone. There was absolutely nothing questionable in sight - not even Nu-Power.

I believe, but could not prove, that what [REDACTED] drank was Ethyl Fluid. I suspect that Manookian had a small bottle, probably a flat whiskey bottle, of the fluid on hand for his own use, as there is no evidence to date that he was peddling it. I doubt if he would peddle it. It appears to me that he disposed of it as soon as he knew of [REDACTED] illness, to prevent becoming involved in any consequences of his friend's death.

Should any additional information be desired, I will be glad to carry the investigation further.

KE 0016989

Carl Hill

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CORONER

I performed an autopsy on Sam [REDACTED], male, age 45, on 11-29-44 at the Los Angeles County Coroner's Mortuary, and found the immediate cause of death : Acute Lead Poisoning.
Due to: Ingestion of tetraethyl lead solution.

Examination :

The lungs are practically consolidated from intense hypostatic congestion. The heart is normal in size and appearance and the coronaries are thickened, the right to the point of occlusion. The aorta shows slight atheroma. The liver is extra large, firm to hardness in consistency, pinkish yellow in color. The kidneys are swollen on cut section, the surface appears granular and structural characteristics of cortex and medulla are gone. The stomach mucosa appears dark drab in color.

(Signed)- Frank R. Webb, M. D.
Chief Autopsy Surgeon.

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