

ETHYL CORPORATION

100 PARK AVENUE BUILDING AT 41st STREET

NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

February 4, 1959

Dr. K. V. Kitzmiller
The Kettering Laboratory
Eden and Bethesda Avenues
Cincinnati 19, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kitzmiller:

We are quoting copy of a personal letter that was received by a certain individual regarding the reported lead poisoning cases in Japan. We have agreed to keep this confidential and, therefore, are not using any names. We believe, however, the information will be of interest to you.

"In reply to your letter B-111, 4 November 1958 the information that your wish has not been released by the Army Board of investigation.

Although no official information is available. I spent a day at the POL Office discussing the causative factors of this case with the Operations Officer and the Safety Engineer. Here is the picture.

The Army in February awarded a contract to a Japanese tank cleaning firm to clean, as available eight 200,000 B Bl 105' x 90' underground concrete steel lined storage tanks that had contained leaded products.

The contractor employed about twenty men. The men were recruited from the water front (very cheapest kind of labor) or where he could get them.

The Army insisted they be given a complete physical by Japanese doctors before they started work also a test for lead.

The Army also insisted that complete personal protection be used including air line respirators with adequate ventilation.

Employees were given instruction in the use of this equipment and were checked constantly by Army Inspectors on the job.

From the health standpoint, the Army did everything that was possible to protect these men. The contractor even discharged employees that did not obey the procedures set up.

I believe it was in May that the first trouble developed.

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On investigation it was found that the Japanese doctors did not give tests for lead poisoning and in some instances did not know how nor were they properly equipped to do the tests.

Finally the Army General Medical Laboratory was allowed to do tests on all personnel still living and perform one or two autopsies.

The lead count ran from 27 to 400. Personnel with lead counts as low as 68 were dead while others with counts as high as 300 showed no ill effects.

Investigation also brought out the fact that all the personnel who died attended a party shortly before the first casualty. Whether these men died from food poisoning or lead was never determined.

Opinion:

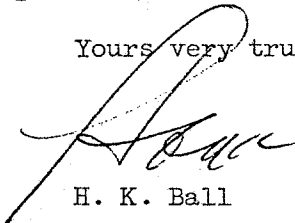
1. There was nothing exceptional about the job.
2. The Army went beyond its requirements to safe guard the men.
- ✓ 3. Japanese doctors know little about lead poisoning or test methods.
4. The Army supposed the men were being checked for lead because it was required on the physical but in reality no tests were made nor were the men in the early stages of their sickness treated for lead poisoning.
5. In this instance there appears to be a complete lack of industrial health inspection, testing and enforcement on the part of the Japanese Public Health Department.

John this is about all I can tell you. The contractor and his men were well aware of the dangers but they did not respect this danger. A test on the woman who washed and laundered their clothes showed no lead count.

If the doctors had given proper treatment in the early stages not a man would have been lost. They thought the men had colds and in most cases were treating for colds and vitamin deficiency. It was a ghastly mess and I am glad I was not involved.

Sorry there is so little to tell but if and when the army releases the report will try and get a copy to send you."

Yours very truly,



H. K. Ball

HKB:vb
cc: Mr. J. J. Frey
Mr. M. A. Taylor

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