

August 30, 1966

Mrs. E. Asche
Editorial Department
The National Encyclopedia of
American Biography
James T. White & Company
101 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10003

Dear Mrs. Asche:

Unless I misunderstand your meaning in the letter of August 26 addressed to me concerning Earle Webb, you have been misinformed about the medical potentialities of gasoline containing tetraethyl lead. (The term "ethyl gas" is a colloquialism which, at present would be spoken of as "leaded gasoline" or, better, gasoline containing tetraethyl lead.) Such gasoline is quite useful as a motor fuel but it is useless otherwise. The effective ingredient, tetraethyl lead, is an highly poisonous material, which has been surrounded by elaborate precautions in its manufacture, transportation and handling. The benefit it has brought to medicine is an indirect one, in that the medical investigations which were necessitated by its poisonous properties, have thrown considerable light on the behavior of lead compounds, generally, in the animal (and human) organism, and on the means of preventing lead poisoning. The Kettering Laboratory came into existence on the background of these investigations, and, to the extent of the usefulness of this Laboratory, Ethyl Corporation, under the guidance of Earle Webb, was the prime mover in bringing about this benefit to medical research and medicine. This is a fairly long story.

I am not certain that this is a satisfactory answer to the question which you have in mind, and I am somewhat loath to leave the matter without further exploration of your purposes. As it happened, Earle Webb was a dear friend of mine, and I would like to see his biography take a form that would be both correct and worthy of him. I would be glad to assist you, therefore, in any way that may be appropriate. On the other hand, I am leaving the country on September first, to be gone until very near the end of October. I shall be at the Waldorf-Astoria in the late afternoon of August 31st around 5:00 p.m. or a little later, perhaps, and for a short time on the morning of September 1 (before going on board the French liner, France). If you should wish to telephone me there or, better, leave a message for me to call you, it might be useful to speak further to your question.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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August 26, 1966

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
Kettering Laboratory
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Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Dear Sir:

A biography of the late Earle W. Webb, former president of the Ethyl Corporation, is being prepared for publication in a forthcoming volume of this Cyclopedia. According to information supplied us medical applications have been made of ethyl gas. Would you please tell us what medical applications have been made of ethyl gas, and what part the Ethyl Corporation had in such applications?

Any assistance you can give us in this connection will indeed be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) E. Asche
Editorial Department

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