

April 23, 1990

Peter Montague, Ph.D., Editor
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Dear Dr. Montague:

In the March 7, 1990 issue of your newsletter "Rachel's Hazardous Waste News #171" you published several statements on the work that Zack and I had allegedly done in connection with the health effects of occupational dioxin exposure. Because I have retired from Monsanto I no longer keep track of such things, so it was not until the following month that I requested from you, and on April 16 received, a copy of the memo by Dr. Jenkins and the extract from the brief by Rex Carr on which your piece was apparently based. As it turned out, I did not need these items in order to write this letter, but knowing that you had not done your homework before publishing the March 7 issue I did not want to be guilty of the same sin.

Whether or not you misinform your readers is ordinarily a matter between you and them, but in this case you have repeated an accusation of fraud that you had better be able to prove. If Carr's brief had said that my methods were wrong or that my conclusions were in error, then by quoting it you would be citing someone's opinion, which is entirely proper. What you actually did was to print that "Zack and Gaffey deliberately and knowingly omitted 5 deaths from ---" which is quite another matter in my mind and that of an attorney with whom I discussed the issue.

In order to avoid litigation which could be both embarrassing and expensive, I suggest that you retract the allegation and also the false statements about what Zack and I did. The truth is as follows.

1. Zack and Gaffey never studied any aspect of the health risks of the people involved in the 1949 Monsanto accident and cleanup.
2. Zack and Gaffey never calculated any mortality rates for any workers exposed to dioxin or not exposed to dioxin at the Monsanto plant where the accident took place. (Or any other plant, for that matter.)



3. The brief by Carr assumed, either from ignorance or malice, that both of the above had in fact been done. Zack and Gaffey were never summoned to testify, and the Carr brief was exposed in subsequent trial testimony.

The first two statements can be verified by reading the paper by Zack and me which is listed as Reference 4 in the newsletter article. Since this paper is mentioned neither in Jenkins' memo nor in the extract from Carr's brief that allegedly accompanied it I am curious, to put it mildly, about where you found it. In any case either you read it and lied about its contents or you didn't bother to read it. I assume the latter, at least for the moment. (But who fed you the reference, and why?) The third statement can be verified from the trial record. I rather think that Mr. Carr has a copy, but I bet he wouldn't be happy to show it to people.

Mark Twain once said that a lie can go around the world seven times before truth can get its boots on, so in a sense the falsehoods you promulgated are permanent and cannot be taken back. However, a formal retraction, containing the three points I mentioned above, will enable me to respond in the future to charges based on your newsletter by saying that the charges were retracted.

I urge you to take no action until you show both the newsletter article and this letter to your attorney. This will improve your position, because if he tells you that I don't have a case and you subsequently lose the lawsuit, you may be able to recover your money by suing him.

I expect to hear from you in this matter by May 15.

Yours sincerely,

William R. Gaffey

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