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TO: Frank Stowers

FROM: ANN THOMPSON

RE: PLAYBACK AIRED ON WCHS AT 6 & 11 P.M. ON FEBRUARY 21, 1979.

DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 1979.

PLAYBACK AIRED ON WCHS-TV AT 6 & 11 P.M. ON FEBRUARY 21, 1979, WITH JIM READER REPORTING.

JIM READER: SOME TENSE MOMENTS THIS MORNING OFF THE INTERSTATE AT WEST CHARLESTON. A CHEMICAL TANK TRUCK BEGAN FALLING APART. THE TANKER TRUCK CARRYING FLAMMABLE CHEMICALS BUCKLED NEAR I-77 AT THE WESTMORELAND STREET EXIT ON CHARLESTON'S WEST SIDE. A NEARBY GRADE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED AND SOME THOUGHT WAS GIVEN TO EVACUATING THE AREA. THE CHEMICAL DID NOT SPILL FROM THE TANK, AND THAT EVACUATION WAS NOT NEEDED. POLICE SAID THE TRUCK SAGGED IN THE MIDDLE BUT THE CHEMICAL WAS NOT LOST. THE CHEMICAL WAS PUMPED INTO ANOTHER TANK TRUCK AND THE SAGGING ONE LEFT. THE CHEMICAL WAS CALLED QUEMANA, A HIGHLY EXPLOSIVE CHEMICAL SIMILAR TO GASOLINE. THAT ACCIDENT AND OTHER ACCIDENTS EVEN MORE SERIOUS, HAPPEN FREQUENTLY IN THIS AREA BECAUSE OF THE CONCENTRATION OF SO MANY CHEMICAL PLANTS. SCIENTIST ARE ONLY BEGINNING NOW TO DISCOVER THE EFFECT CHEMICALS HAVE ON THE ENVIRONMENT. TERRY ANZUR TODAY BEGINS A THREE-PART SERIES, CALLED "THE CHEMICAL PERIL". TERRY..

ANZUR: WELL JIM, OUR STORY BEGINS WHERE THE CHEMICALS BEGIN, IN THE FACTORY. BACK IN 1974 THE UNION CARBIDE PLANT IN SOUTH CHARLESTON WAS THE FOCUS OF A NATIONAL CHEMICAL CONTROVERSY. DR. IRVING SELIKOFF, A LEADING JOB SAFETY EXPERT, WARNED SOUTH CHARLESTON WORKERS THAT THEY HAVE A HIGH RISK OF DEVELOPING ANGIOSARCOMA, A RARE LIVER CANCER. THAT'S BECAUSE THEIR JOBS EXPOSE THEM TO HIGH LEVELS OF VINYL CHLORIDE. NOW, WE CAN'T SHOW YOU ANY VINYL CHLORIDE BUT WE CAN SHOW YOU SOME OF THE PRODUCTS IT HELPS TO MAKE. PRODUCTS ALL OF US USE EVERY DAY. PLASTICS FOR WHICH WE PAY A HIGH PRICE. AS OF TODAY, IT HAS CONFIRMED THAT SIX SOUTH CHARLESTON WORKERS HAVE DIED OF ANGIOSARCOMA, THAT'S ONE FOURTH OF ALL THE KNOWN DEATHS FROM THE DISEASE AMONG VINYL CHLORIDE WORKERS IN THE WORLD. EVEN THOUGH THE SOUTH CHARLESTON PLANT NEVER PRODUCED MORE THAN TEN PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S VINYL CHLORIDE SUPPLY. UNION CARBIDE OFFICIALS EXPLAIN THE HIGH DEATH FIGURE BY THE FACT THAT VINYL CHLORIDE HAS BEEN PRODUCED HERE FOR SO LONG, SINCE THE 1930'S. BUT WHEN THE DANGER OF ANGIOSARCOMA WAS MADE PUBLIC, BACK IN 1974, THINGS BEGAN TO CHANGE IN SOUTH CHARLESTON.

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: THE REPORT WAS LIKE A HOUSE AFIRE - WE HAD TO PUT THE FIRE OUT.

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ANZUR: UNION CARBIDE NOW LOOKS BACK ON THE VINYL CHLORIDE SCARE AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW INDUSTRY HELPED GOVERNMENT FIND THE PROBLEM AND CLEAN IT UP, BUT ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY VINYL CHLORIDE WAS A CLASSIC CASE OF FOOT DRAGGING AND ENVIRONMENTAL BLACKMAIL.

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: YOU SHOULDN'T WAIT UNTIL THE DEAD BODIES START APPEARING BEFORE WE REGULATE THESE HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS. IN FACT, IN THE CASE OF VINYL CHLORIDE WE HAVE DOCUMENTATION SOME THIRTEEN YEARS BEFORE THE STANDARDS WERE FINALLY IMPOSED THAT SOME CANCER RESEARCH SCIENTISTS WERE SAYING THAT VINYL CHLORIDE IS A SUSPECT CARCINOGEN. ABOUT FIVE YEARS BEFORE THE STANDARDS CAME OUT THEY WERE FINDING IT IN MICE AND THE LESSON TO LEARN IS THAT THE CHEMICALS THAT WE SUSPECT OF CAUSING CANCER, PARTICULARLY FROM ANIMALS EXPERIMENTS, SHOULD BE REGULATED IMMEDIATELY.

ANZUR: THE SOUTH CHARLESTON PLANT STOPPED PRODUCING VINYL CHLORIDE IN 1976. THE PLANT WAS TOO OLD TO MEET SAFETY STANDARDS AND THE PROCESS WAS SOLD BUT VINYL CHLORIDE CHEMICALS ARE STILL PROCESSED HERE AND I WAS ASSURED THAT EVERY SAFETY PRECAUTION IS TAKEN TO PROTECT THE WORKERS. WE ASKED FOR PERMISSION TO GO INSIDE THE PLANT AND VIEW THE SAFETY MEASURES IN OPERATION, BUT THE CLOSEST WE GOT WAS THE PLANT GATE. BUT I DID SEE A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR VINYL CHLORIDE WORKERS. IT WON'T WIN ANY ACADEMY AWARDS BUT IT PULLS NO PUNCHES ABOUT THE HEALTH HAZARDS INVOLVED. SAFETY MEASURES FROM DANGER SIGNS, TO GAS MASKS, TO EVACUATIONS, ARE ALL COVERED AND THE WORKER MUST PASS A TEST ON THE MATERIAL WHEN THE TAPE IS OVER; BUT THE REAL TEST COMES ON THE JOB, ANY EXPOSURES OVER THE FEDERAL LIMIT SHOW UP ON A COMPUTER PRINTOUT. DOES THIS MEAN THE WORKERS ARE SAFE?

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: NOT NECESSARILY, ALL WE CAN SAY IS THAT THE LEVELS OF VINYL CHLORIDE ARE A LOT LOWER NOW, BUT THE PEOPLE WORKING IN UNION CARBIDE AND THE PEOPLE LIVING IN SOUTH CHARLESTON ARE STILL BREATHING TRACE AMOUNTS AND NOBODY CAN GUARANTEE IT IS SAFE.

ANZUR: WORKERS GET ROUTINE PLANT PHYSICALS AND WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG OR THERE IS AN ACCIDENT, A WORKER IS PLACED ON RESTRICTION. ON THE DAY WE TAPED THESE INTERVIEWS, EIGHTEEN WORKERS IN THE VINYL CHLORIDE SECTION WERE OFFICIALLY ON RESTRICTION. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS WHO WERE EXPOSED TO VINYL CHLORIDE BEFORE 1974 AND HAVE SINCE RETIRED OR MOVED AWAY?

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: WELL, THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE EMPLOYMENT OF UNION CARBIDE HERE AT THE SOUTH CHARLESTON PLANT ARE OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE PERIODIC PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS IN THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF OUR HOME OFFICE IN NEW YORK.

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ANZUR: WHEN THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO AN UNUSUAL RISK OF CANCER AS PART OF THEIR JOBS, IS IT REALLY FAIR TO EXPECT THEM, SAY AFTER THEY HAVE RETIRED OR SOMETHING, TO GO TO NEW YORK AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE FOR SOMETHING THAT WAS A RESULT OF THEIR EXPOSURE WHILE IN THE SERVICE OF UNION CARBIDE?

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: WELL, I THINK THIS IS A CHOICE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL WOULD MAKE.

ANZUR: THE LOCAL SAFETY CHAIRMAN OF THE MACHINISTS' UNION REFUSED TO BE INTERVIEWED. WHY, HE SAID, WE ALL KNEW THE RISKS WHEN WE TOOK THE JOB, OR DID THEY? BRAIN TUMORS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED AMONG VINYL CHLORIDE WORKERS AT A CARBIDE PLANT IN TEXAS AND NOW THE COMPANY WILL REVIEW FIFTY THOUSAND MEDICAL RECORDS. ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN: I AM CONVINCED THAT VINYL CHLORIDE IS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG; IT WAS ALMOST A FLUKE OF RESEARCH THAT WE HAPPENED TO DISCOVER THE AMAZING TOXIC AND CANCER CAUSING EFFECTS OF THIS CHEMICAL AND BASED ON OTHER RESEARCH THAT HAS BEEN DONE. I AM CONVINCED THAT MANY OTHER CHEMICALS BEING HANDLED AND BEING BREATHED-IN KANAWHA VALLEY ARE JUST AS DANGEROUS AND THERE ARE NO STANDARDS SET TO PROTECT WORKERS AND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY FROM THESE CHEMICALS.

ANZUR: YES, THE VINYL CHLORIDE SCARE MAY BE ABOUT TO HAPPEN AGAIN. TOMORROW WE WILL LOOK AT SOME CURRENT HAZARDS UNDER STUDY IN THE KANAWHA VALLEY.

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