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ACCIDENT AVERTED: With a 98-car Burlington-Northern coal train waiting, a track repair crew positions new rails near Denver Wednesday. The track was torn up when an earth moving machine crossed it. A sheriff's deputy ran along the track and warned the engineer as the train approached, and the engineer managed to stop a scant 200 feet short of the broken rails. (AP Laserphoto)

Asbestos

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recommended a "mass media notification," rather than trying to seek out and notify each former employee individually.

It was Chase who urged that the Veterans Administration, the Civil Service Commission or some other agency be given the job of notification.

Senshow Ralph Nader's public Citizen organization obtained the memo, made it public, and urged Secretary of the Navy W. Graham Claytor Jr. "to immediately endorse this progressive position and begin the long-overdue process of notification of these potential victims."

Public Citizen said it disagreed that some other agency should do the notifying. It contended that "the Department of Defense agency with the largest budget should bear the burden of notifying and compensating its former employees."

The Nader group urged that the Defense Department also use Social Security or Internal Revenue service records to try to send a letter to each possible victim of asbestos exposure. It said the department should then provide free periodic checkups.

Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe, director of Nader's Health Research Group, brushed aside the reluctance by some other specialists to publicize their concerns before the government had completed its plan.

"If they were really working full time, they would have it set up by now," he told the Post-Dispatch. "Delaying paying money is what it amounts to. The hidden agenda is liability, on the part of the government and the suppliers of asbestos."

A hurried-sounding Navy spokesman who has been assigned full time to the asbestos issue, answers questions by reading prepared replies. These add up to a denial that the Navy has accepted any responsibility of liability.

As for Adm. Chase's memorandum, the prepared reply says, "It is merely one aspect of an overall review of the Navy's asbestos program and should not be construed as an order or directive."

In less formal terms, the spokesman said, "The navy is trying to come up with a comprehensive program, and that's a piece that leaked out."

The Navy was warned long ago. Its chief occupational health physician, Capt. George M. Lawton, told a conference on shipyard health in Los Angeles in 1975 that "a wave of asbestos-induced cancer" had been predicted for the 1970s.

Dr. Irving J. Seidkoff of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York, described the shipyard problem last November in a monograph that has been widely circulated.

He emphasized the long time lag from exposure to the onset of disease. Especially with light exposures, it can take as long as 30 or 40 years for the disease to appear. Even with heavy exposures, the "latency period" may be 15 to 25 years. Early X-ray changes may be seen after 10 or 15 years.

What can cause the disease is the dust composed of fine airborne slivers of the grayish fibrous mineral wherever it is mined, manufactured into insulation material, handled by workmen, or ripped out in the demolition of buildings or the repair of ships.

Selikoff reports that 20 percent of all deaths among asbestos workers are due to lung cancer and 6 or 7 percent are due to mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung cavity or the abdomen. Cancers of the esopohagus, stomach, colon-rectum, empharyns, larynx and kidney also show up in excess numbers of asbestos workers.

British and Dutch studies in 1965 showed instances of mesothelioma among other shipyard trades—not just asbestos workers but also other blue-collar workers including shipwrights, welders, laborers, and even draftsmen.

Another ailment is asbestosis, the formation of a moss-like thickening in the lower lobes of the lungs, where the tiny asbestos fibers obstruct the flow of blood. A common side effect is enlargement of the heart.

Mesothelioma is almost 100 percent fatal, and it is almost never found in a person who has not been exposed to asbestos.

Selikoff, working with the metal trades department of the AFL-CIO, has conducted several surveys of shipyard workers to determine what crafts may be affected. He has concluded that no trade is immune, although incidences vary.

Despite restrictions by the Navy and by some private corporations, Selikoff has concluded that a large proportion of the workers in a shipyard—perhaps 20 percent, perhaps as many as 45 percent—have suffered a considerable asbestos exposure in the past. The percentage will increase with time, even without further exposure, because of the asbestos retained in the body, he says.

Moreover, Selikoff says, the high proportion of X-ray changes in the lungs traceable to asbestos exposure raises the serious question of future cancer from the same past exposure.

The extent of possible liability was indicated recently when 445 asbestos workers or their survivors in Tyler, Tex., won $26 million in a settlement of their lawsuits approved last month by a federal court. The federal government's share of the damage payment was $5.3 million.

The plant where they worked, owned by PPG Industries Inc. and the Corning Glass Works, had been used since 1954 to turn raw asbestos into insulation sleeves. When the danger of the thick dust was recognized, the plant was closed, many of the machines were buried, and the burlap bags that had been used for asbestos were traced across the country, where they had been used to wrap Tyler's Famous Rose Bushes for shipment.

Former Rep. Robert E. Sweeney, D-Ohio, now practicing law in Cleveland, said he had just concluded 26 asbestos workers' suits with a combined settlement of $1.44 million and has another 26 cases pending. He said he knew of about 15 other lawyers in the country who specialize in asbestos cases.

Sweeney criticized a pending bill by Rep. Millicent Fenwick, R-N.J., that would restrict an injured person's damages from asbestos exposure to set monthly payments to be financed by industry and the federal government.

Sweeney charged that the bill was written in the legal department of the Johns Manaville Co. in Denver, which markets 70 percent of the world's asbestos. He noted that the company was founded in Manaville, N.J., in Mrs. Fenwick's district. She has acknowledged that company attorneys helped draft the legislation.

As of last December, the Navy said it had been named defendant in 112 lawsuits relating to asbestos illness or death for total claims of $344 million. In addition, it faces 38 administrative claims, totaling $36.2 million.

Industry and the Navy have taken drastic steps to reduce the use of asbestos and to provide ventilation and warning labels where the substance still is used.

But John Robinson, president of the AFL-CIO Metal Trades Council at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California, says he found 30 or 40 cases of material labeled "asbestos free," sent them to be analyzed, and found that they contained 40 to 95 percent asbestos. He says he is saving one of the cases for evidence in a possible damage suit.

An indication of the size of the notification problem is provided by the Defense Department's current experience of using the press to try to trace its 250,000 former employees who were exposed to low levels of radiation in atomic tests.

In that case, the government knew the names, although it had no easy way of converting the old military serial numbers into the Social Security numbers now used. One problem was the loss of 8 million names in a fire at the St. Louis Army Records Center.

Of the 250,000 persons being sought, the department has heard from only 16,000, but the calls were enough to tie up parts of the telephone system and require 100 workers and 20 toll-free lines at the peak.

Dr. Phillip L. Polakoff, who has been studying asbestos disease at Mare Island, is proceeding with his own program in cooperation with local unions. He plans to use mobile vans to provide chest X-rays, pulmonary function tests and advice such as to stop smoking, which can multiply the chances of death from mesothelioma by about nine times.

His advice to persons who have been exposed, in the distant past or more recently: "See a doctor. See a lawyer."

In Washington, Dr. Marvin Schneiderman, associate director of the National Cancer Institute who helped to draft the plan of action that is taking shape, advises a visit to a physician for anyone who believes he or she has been exposed to asbestos.

"Ask for a chest X-ray, a lung function test and possibly also a lower bowel and rectal examination," he says.

"And find a physician who will listen—not one who will tell ye to go home and come back when you start spitting blood."

Bomb

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their South County home. Police said that he had planted a bomb at his mother-in-law's home in Paducah. The bomb did not go off.

Ohlhausen remained in critical condition at a hospital today. He was able to speak briefly Wednesday with family members and police. He told authorities that he did not know who had put the bomb in the vehicle, police said.

Police said also Wednesday that the wiring of the explosive in the Ohlhausen case was similar to that in the St. Louis County bombings.

A federal investigation of Steinkoetter includes a series of events in Paducah. The Post-Dispatch pieced together this chronology from interviews with investigators and principals involved.

Last March, Steinkoetter's father-in-law, Lee Roy Walden, a 36-year employee of St. Louis Ship Co., was found dead outside his home on the outskirts of Paducah. There was a bullet wound in his forehead, and a .45 caliber pistol was found beneath his body. The county coroner ruled the death a suicide.

Some family members and employees of the Paducah Marine Ways, a subsidiary of St. Louis Ship Co. said at the time that they doubted whether Walden would take his own life. But one investigator quoted Walden's wife as saying that "he had been depressed about work."

Steinkoetter's wife, Leigh Ann, was the only surviving child of Walden and his wife. She would have inherited about $150,000 on the death of her mother.

Steinkoetter was out of work and in debt, investigators and a family member said. Federal authorities have charged Steinkoetter with planing a bomb in his mother-in-law's house.

The bomb was a pipe bomb packed it a large brown tape cassette. It was planted sometime during the Christmas holidays when the Steinkoetters visited Mrs. Walden, authorities said.

The bomb would have gone off if the cassette had been picked up, a Kentucky state trooper said. The cassette lay on a shelf in a work area of Mrs. Walden's garage for about 1½ months.

On Feb. 13, Steinkoetter held his family hostage in their $70,000 home in the 400 block of Blairmoor Terrace in the Mehlville area of S. Louis County. Mrs. Steinkoetter managed to alert by telephone an older daughter who lived elsewhere. The daughter called police, who distracted Steinkoetter while his wife and the children escaped. He then surrendered to police.

Afterward Mrs. Steinkoetter told police about the cassette bomb and said her husband had planned it so that she would inherit Mrs. Walden's estate.

Kentucky State Police located the bomb and a demolition team from Fort Knox disarmed it.

Reports about the bomb and Steinkoetter's arrest frightened Ohlhausen, friends said. An employee at the Paducah subsidiary told investigators that Ohlhausen told him he was no longer "just apprehensive" about Steinkoetter but was now "very frightened."

Ohlhausen told the employee that he was "taking precautions" in starting his personal car. The vehicle in which he was injured was one of three available to St. Louis Ship Co. employees.

A neighbor of Ohlhausen in St. Louis, Robert Martin, said that Ohlhausen had told him recently that he and Steinkoetter were not on good terms, but that he did not think Steinkoetter was the "South County bomber."

Steinkoetter worked for St. Louis Ship Co. for three months, from Aug. 17 to Nov. 15, 1976. He and Ohlhausen were two of four members of the project engineering group. Ohlhausen was in charge of capital improvement maintenance at three company barge construction yards, but was not Steinkoetter's immediate supervisor.

Investigators said that Ohlhausen was nevertheless "involved" in Steinkoetter's departure from the company during his probationary period.

The relative of Steinkoetter said that Steinkoetter blamed Ohlhausen and one other member of the engineering group, but appeared most angry at Ohlhausen.

A spokesman for St. Louis Ship Co. denied that there were hard feelings between Ohlhausen and Steinkoetter. He said that Steinkoetter and the company mutually agreed that Steinkoetter "could not do the work" and that he left willingly.

Steinkoetter did not regain permanent employment, a family member said. For the 11 months prior to his arrest, he had been unemployed. The relative said that Steinkoetter experimented with explosives during that period.

In early autumn of 1977 some neighbors of Steinkoetter complained to police that a suspicious object had been put in a large garbage container in the vicinity.

County police found an ether bomb there, which they say they later determined Steinkoetter had made. The bomb was taken to a landfill and detonated.

The first of the South County bombings was Oct. 7, when Ronald T. Sterghos escaped serious injury when a charge of dynamite exploded on the ground under his automobile in the parking lot of the apartment complex where he lived.

The second bombing killed Robert C. Jackson on Oct. 18 on the parking lot of an apartment complex near Sterghos'. Authorities have found no link between Steinkoetter and Sterghos, a Monsanto Co. employee, or Jackson, who worked for United Parcel Service.

Mrs. Flynn, who lived with Ohlhausen, was the third victim. She was killed Nov. 3, when she started the car customarily driven to work by Ohlhausen. He was taking her car to be repaired that day.

Mrs. Walden refused to be interviewed. "That gal is terrified, and she's got good reason to be," an agent of the U.S. Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau said.

Steinkoetter has been arrested six times, but never convicted, police said. One arrest in St. Louis County in 1962, when he was 26, attracted public attention.

Steinkoetter was a key witness in a drug trial. A month later, his first wife reported that he had been abducted by two men.

Five days after the "abduction," Steinkoetter reappeared and said he had escaped. After three hours of police questioning about his escape, he admitted that the abduction had been a hoax.

He said that he had been having financial problems and decided to stage the abduction after reading a newspaper account of a staged disappearance by a Ladue man.

A family member said that the first Mrs. Steinkoetter had not been told by her husband that he expected to make money by the staged abduction. "He just told her that he was leaving for good; that's all she was interested in, and that's why she went along with the lie," the family member said.

In their 1964 divorce, his first wife said that she had been "beaten on numerous occasions and once threatened with a loaded revolver."

Another Town Retaken, Ethiopia Says

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopian forces, sweeping south through the Ogaden plateau, reported retaking their second town in four days in their counteroffensive to quell the Somali revolt in eastern Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian military command in a broadcast communique said its troops recaptured the town of Degbubur, 95 miles southeast of the key town of Jijiga, which the Ethiopians regained Sunday.

Western military observers said the Somalis' loss of Jijiga turned the seven-month-old war sharply in Ethiopia's favor.

The Western Somali Liberation Front conceded the loss of Jijiga Wednesday and said its forces retreated "to the mountains and countryside," to continue their fight to annex eastern Ethiopia to neighboring Somalia.

"How long do the Russians and Cubans think they will stay there and defend those towns for the Ethiopians?" asked a spokesman for the Liberation Front in a broadcast from Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

Dahir Hussein, Somalia's charge d'affaires in Nairobi, said the Ethiopian assault on Jijiga began with "wave after wave" of planes bombing and strafing the town, followed by armored helicopter transports bringing tanks manned by Russians and Cubans.

He said the Somalis were still waging "intensive battle" in the Jijiga area.

Ethiopia said earlier that part of its forces were advancing toward the Somalia border 40 miles east of Jijiga, but it has denied repeatedly that it has invasion plans.

The recapture of Jijiga, the only sizable town in the Ogaden Desert that was in Somali hands, was Ethiopia's first major victory since its army started a counteroffensive in January with Soviet and Cuban support.

The Somalis captured Jijiga last September and went to the outskirts of the two other major towns in the area, Dire Dawa and Harar, but were unable to take them.

Jijiga, a town of about 11,000, is at the junction of roads to Somalia and the southern Ogaden. It commands the eastern entrance to the Kara Mulo Pass, which connects the highlands of Central Ethiopia with the arid, Somali-held plain bordering Somalia.

Native Somali tribesmen supported by Somalia captured 90 percent of the Ogaden last summer, but most of the area is sparsely populated. Ethiopia's counteroffensive started after huge shipments of Soviet weapons and Cuban troops arrived to strengthen the Ethiopian forces. The U.S. government estimates that there are 11,000 Cuban troops and 1,000 Soviet technicians in Ethiopia, and Western diplomats in East Africa estimate that thousands of Somalia's regulars are bolstering the Liberation Front.

Crash In Egypt Kills 4 Americans

CAIRO, Egypt (UPI) — Four American scientists and two other persons were killed Wednesday in the crash of a twin-engine plane near the town of Aswan, reports from the area said.

The small plane, chartered from the domestic Pan Egypt airline, was flying from an oasis in Egypt's western desert to Aswan when it apparently had engine trouble, crashed and caught fire.

Reports identified the four Americans as employees of the Agriculture Ministry working on government plans to reclaim desert areas. A fifth American had stayed behind at the oasis. Their names were not immediately available.

Inquiry On Firestone Steel-Belted Radials

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on Wednesday began an investigation of defects in Firestone 500 steel-belted radial tires.

The agency said the investigation was the result of more than 500 reports from consumers reporting blowouts, out-of-round tires and tread separations in the tires. These included reports of 30 accidents and two injuries.

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