

**Questions for the Army Corps from Charlie Bempohl, NW Current
August 6, 2004**

Response from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is placed below the questions
August 10, 2004

1. As I understand it, [address removed] in Spring Valley was one of the first properties remediated by the Corps in early 2003. Some months later, the owner overseeing the laying of pipe on the property, claimed he was gassed with Lewisite. The owner supposedly had in his possession glassware unearthed at the time of the alleged gassing. This glassware – bottles, I believe – was supposedly turned over to the Corps for evaluation.

Questions:

- 1. Do I have the facts right? Was the house remediated in 2003 (or at some point before the) and did the owner turn over glassware associated with the alleged gassing to the Corps?**
- 2. If this is correct, did the Corps come to conclusions on whether the owner was gassed with Lewisite, were the bottles AUES-related, did the bottles contain chemical warfare agent and/or Lewisite?**
- 3. Assuming the owner knew what he was talking about, how could the glassware have remained in the ground of the property after the property had been remediated?**

Answer:

Charlie, most of your information is inaccurate. Here is a sequence of events for that property that should provide the information you seek. If you need more clarification, please let us know.

**Timeline
Events occurring at [address removed]**

- **June 29, 2001** – Initial Property Arsenic Screening performed. Parsons takes 0- to 6-inch deep composite arsenic soil samples. Sample results are 81.2 ppm and 18.6 ppm. Both results are above the 12.6-ppm threshold, and the property is slated to have grid sampling performed later. These results are reported to the homeowner verbally, and arrangements are made for grid sampling. These results are also reported in a letter sent to the property owner November 16, 2001.

September 24 and 26, 2001 – Grid sampling and deep soil boring sampling is performed. Parsons makes a 6-foot-deep boring in the backyard, and soil samples are taken from every 12-inch interval and analyzed for arsenic. One sample is taken from the 1918 soil level (between 4-5 feet under the surface), and this is analyzed for the Point of Interest 16 list of chemicals (mustard agent and its breakdown products, lewisite breakdown products and cyanide). All the sub-surface arsenic levels are within background, and all Point of Interest 16 chemical results are non-detect. Parsons divides the entire property into 33 grids and takes one 0- to 6-inch deep sample from each grid. The samples are analyzed for arsenic, and 17 samples come back above 20 ppm.

- **Late May 2002** – During a conversation that the property owner had with Major Mike Peloquin, the property owner stated that the previous week he was gardening in his yard and noticed a musty and slightly sweet smell coming from the disturbed earth. He said he experienced a slight burning sensation in his lungs and later developed a headache that dissipated the following day. MAJ Peloquin orders Parsons to sample the area where the property owner was working that day and analyze it for Point of Interest 16 chemicals.

- **June 10, 2002** – Parsons takes the sample requested by MAJ Peloquin. All results are non-detect.

- **Winter 2002-2003** – Corps contractor, Severson Environmental Services, remediates arsenic soil from elevated grids on this property to the 2-foot level. Work includes removal of arsenic soil from area where property owner was working when he had the experience; neither ordnance-related items nor glassware are found in that area. On January 10, 2003, eight glass bottles were encountered while excavating in a different part of the yard. Work was stopped while the Huntsville Engineering and Support Center Site Safety Officer inspects the bottles. They determined that the bottles are domestic trash and not labware. They give Severson the approval to continue work
- **August 5, 2003** – Property owner attends the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) public meeting and relates his experience with being overcome to the audience during the question & answer portion of the meeting. He states that he believes that he encountered lewisite and explains that the Corps is looking for arsenic because it is a component of lewisite and it can be tested for. (See Responsiveness Summary, Appendix C, Dec 17, 2003 *Final EE/CA Report* for property owner's comments).
- **January 2004** – The Corps learns that property owner has glassware and a crushed metal bucket in his possession that was unearthed by a contractor fixing a sewer line that the property owner describes as at about 10-14 feet down in his front yard. The Corps contacts the owner about it. We do not know exactly when the sewer work was done, but the owner indicated it had been in the months just prior to our contacting him about it. The glass is mostly in pieces, but one bottle is unbroken. The Corps takes possession of the items and has them headspace tested for the presence of chemical warfare material. No chemical warfare material is detected. An archeologist examines the items, and it is clear that at least some are domestic trash, e.g., base of a soft drink bottle and an unbroken condiment bottle. Results of the headspace test are conveyed to the property owner in a letter from Craig Georg dated January 2004.