

Another family sues W.R. Grace

By GARY L. DORION

CAMBRIDGE — Another Woburn family has filed suit against an employee of the Cryovac Division of W.R. Grace & Co., claiming he and others hid, misrepresented and distorted the nature, extent of use, and disposal of toxic chemical wastes at Cryovac's East

Woburn plant.

Reached last night, Paul Shalline of 13 Sylvan Way, Wayland, Cryovac's pollution control officer, declined comment.

He is the only defendant named in the suit filed by William F. and Frances K. Donovan, 365 Salem St., Woburn and their children, Kathleen F., Brian F.

and Margaret F., all of whom are minors, and Maureen, and William F. Donovan, Jr.

A 30-year employee of Cryovac, Shalline has been the person responsible for the purchase, use and disposal of chemical wastes and for all environmental and pollution control matters at the Woburn plant, the suit contends.

W.R. Grace & Co. denied allegations that it withheld or concealed critical information about the use and disposal of toxic waste at Cryovac, located at 369 Washington St.

Shalline has other, similar suits filed against him by East Woburn families who claim

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● Suit

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Cryovac's disposal of toxic solvents, including known carcinogens such as trichloroethylene, contaminated drinking water in wells G and H, resulting in severe illnesses and in leukemia-related deaths.

Attorney Jan R. Schlichtmann, representing the Donovans, said last night family members allege they were poisoned from the effects of toxic solvents. He said their injuries include birth defects, and heart, immunological and neurological problems.

Cryovac, which is northeast of Wells G and H, manufactures packaging machinery. The company employs over 100 people.

The Donovan suit claims W.R. Grace used and stored toxic chemicals there at least as early as 1960.

Surface and groundwater from the company's site moves directly toward Wells G and H, the suit states. It contends that toxic waste disposal on the ground flowed with surface and groundwater, along the surface of bedrock, and entered the wells.

The suit charges negligence against Shalline, contending he had a "duty to refrain from action which causes the plaintiffs to be unreasonably exposed to toxic chemicals which can cause personal injury, economic harm, illness, or which increases the risk of contracting illnesses."

The suit contends Shalline "knew or should have known" of the dangerous nature of these "ultrahazardous" substances.

The suit also charges a civil conspiracy that Shalline engaged in with other Cryovac employees to withhold critical

facts about Cryovac's alleged negligent disposal of toxic wastes.

The suit, which seeks unspecified damages, follows charges last summer leveled at Grace and Cryovac by a Woburn citizens group, FACE (For a Cleaner Environment), that Cryovac dumped far more chemicals than the firm previously reported.

FACE and a number of East Woburn families charged that that company had "regularly and habitually" dumped quantities of cancer-causing chemicals down a storm drain, polluting groundwater and eventually the two wells.

The charges were based on an environmental report by Weston Geophysical Corp., of Westborough.

The firm was hired by eight East Woburn families who filed a related suit against W.R. Grace and Beatrice Foods. That case is scheduled to go to a jury trial Feb. 18 in U.S. District Court, with Judge Walter J. Skinner presiding.

Beatrice Foods, which formerly owned a Woburn tannery, is also part of the earlier suit which charged the firm with having contributed to the aquifer pollution.

A federal grand jury in Boston has reportedly been investigating W.R. Grace & Co.'s Cryovac Division for its alleged failure to turn over information involving possible groundwater contamination in East Woburn.

The Office of U.S. Attorney William Weld has declined to comment on whether such an investigation is in progress.

Last Oct. 11, Unifirst Corp., a Massachusetts-based dry-cleaning and uniform rental company, reached an undisclosed financial settlement in connection with that firm's alleged chemical contamination of the same wells between 1975 and 1979.

The settlement, partly detailed in a several-hundred page agreement, stated that Unifirst continues to deny any liability or responsibility for leukemia-related deaths and illnesses among East Woburn families.

In those families, five children reportedly died from leukemia while three others presently suffer from the disease.

The proceeds of that settlement, estimated at \$1.2 million, are being used to finance the federal court action, according to the settlement documents.