

^{To Lea - Page} Dairy Deaths ^{Co.} Ruled Accident

Cause Of Explosion Not Yet Determined

Why escaping ammonia gas exploded last Friday at the Page Dairy, Wade and Knapp Sts., injuring 27 persons, two fatally, was undetermined today after an inquiry into the deaths of Frederick W. Brubach and Earl Spewak.

Coroner Paul Hohly ruled the deaths accidental.

Henry Page, Jr., general manager of the dairy, said that so far as was known no welder's torch set off the blast, as had been believed at first, but the gas must have come into contact with some source of heat in order to explode.

Still In Hospital

August B. Muenzer, plant maintenance superintendent, testified that a 9-foot drum 12 inches across containing 150 pounds of liquid ammonia under 350 pounds of pressure got out of the control of Carl Baker, 42, of 712 Nicholas St., and Mr. Brubach, chief engineer, as they were charging a new refrigeration system with ammonia.

Mr. Baker still is confined to Mercy Hospital.

Possibly they dropped it, Mr. Muenzer said, and the cylinder struck a flexible metal cable attached to a nipple on a vertical ammonia storage tank. The nipple broke off and ammonia vapor leaked from the tank, he said.

Tried To Stop Leak

The blast occurred six to eight minutes after the gas began to escape, Mr. Page said, because in that time Mr. Baker conducted Mr. Brubach, overcome while trying to stop the leak with valves, from the engine room to a rear alley and then crossed the street to turn in a fire alarm.

Mr. Spewak, 29, of 1938 Belmont Ave., an employee of the Industrial Insulation Co. which was installing insulation, and Mr. Brubach, 71, of 1511 Kelsey Ave., died Monday. Autopsies showed that their deaths resulted from inhalation of ammonia vapor and not from the blast, Dr. Hohly said.