

# SOME METHODS FOR TREATING TAR SANDS TAILINGS

## PART 2

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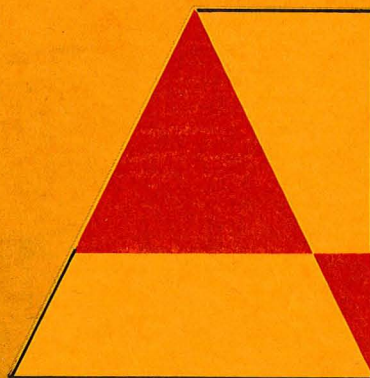
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environment



SOME METHODS FOR TREATING TAR SANDS TAILINGS

PART II

THEORY OF CO<sub>2</sub> PROCESS

prepared by National  
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for ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT

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### APPENDIX I

CALCULATION OF OPTIMUM pH FOR CO<sub>2</sub> TREATMENT - PRACTICAL  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This remaining part of the report deals with the theoretical aspects of the reactions between carbon dioxide and tailings.

From the experimental results described in Part 1 it can be stated that:

- 1) the  $\text{CO}_2$  is the active reagent responsible for the complete and rapid separation of the sludge and
- 2) the separation rate depends on the pH of the mixture.

Two experiments were carried out to compare the influence of  $\text{CO}_2$  and air on the sedimentation process. Two samples of tailings No.4 ( viz. 4 - 5 - A15 and 4 - 5 - 15 ) were separately placed into two glass beakers and heated to  $50^\circ\text{C}$ . The samples were stirred while being heated and their pH was adjusted to 5 with  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ . Then air was introduced to sample 4 - 5 - A15 and  $\text{CO}_2$  to sample 4 - 5 - 15. The residence time for both air and  $\text{CO}_2$  was 15 minutes. The percentage of sediment (%S) was observed over a period of ten days. The results of these observations are shown in Table 1 and Graph 1 which show that a much higher percentage of sediment was obtained with  $\text{CO}_2$  than with the air.

According to the results given in Part 1 (see pp 11 Figure 2 - 2, pp 17 Figure 2 - 5, pp 18 Figure 2 - 6) the fastest separation occurred at about pH = 5 for both No.3 and No.4 tailings. ( The separation at pH adjusted to less than 4 was very slow. ) These results are in agreement with the findings of M. V. BAPTISTA and C. W. BOWMAN<sup>1</sup> which show that the highest rate for the separation of solids from tar sands slurries occurs at pH values between 4 and 8. They did not use  $\text{CO}_2$ . J. LEJA<sup>2</sup> also discusses the importance of pH but also the influence of bi-



carbonate and sulphate ions on the solidification of soap-like films in the upgrading of metal ores.

## 2. THEORY

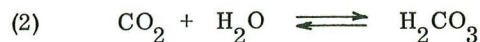
The pH of the tailings on leaving the bitumen extractors is in the range 8.3 to 8.8. In this pH range naphthenic acids exist in the tailings mixture as water soluble naphthenic salts  $R - COOM$  where  $M$  is mainly  $Na^+$ ,  $K^+$  but can be also  $Ca^{++}$ ,  $Mg^{++}$  and other metal ions. The existence of these salts has been described by M. V. BAPTISTA and C. W. BOWMAN<sup>1</sup> and others. The presence of these salts has been confirmed by infrared spectrograph SG1 from untreated tailings No.4 showing absorption at  $1600\text{ cm}^{-1}$  which is typical for salts of organic acids.

Naphthenic salts dissociate in water according to the following manner:



The existence of this dissociated soap-like salt gives the emulsion its stability.

Introducing  $CO_2$  to the mixture results in carbonic acid according to the equation:

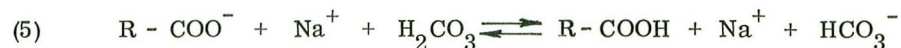


Due to the dissociation of carbonic acid in aqueous solution:



the concentration of hydrogen ions increases and the pH of the solution decreases.

It is assumed that the reaction between dissociated naphthenic salts and carbonic acids is the most important reaction for breaking the emulsion:



Naphthenic acid ( $R - COOH$ ) which is formed by reaction (5) is insoluble in water and is carried with the hydrocarbons to the surface of the water. If the dissociation constant of naphthenic acid ( $K_{a_{R-COOH}}$ ) is much higher than that of carbonic acid ( $K_{a_{H_2CO_3}}$ ) then the concentration of  $R - COO^-$  in the solution does not change. If  $K_{a_{R-COOH}} < K_{a_{H_2CO_3}}$  then the equilibrium of reaction (5) goes to the right and the product of the reaction is  $R - COOH$  which dissociates according to:



and the dissociation constant of this reaction is as follows:

$$(7) \quad K_{a_{R-COOH}} = \frac{[H^+][R-COO^-]}{[R-COOH]} = K_a$$

The stability of the emulsion depends on the amount of  $R - COO^-$  in the mixture.

It is assumed that in the original untreated sample:

$$(8) \quad [R - COO^-] + [R - COOH] = C$$

where  $C$  is a constant.

From (7):

$$(9) \quad [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a [R - COOH]}{[H^+]}$$

From (8):

$$(10) \quad [R - COOH] = C - [R - COO^-]$$

Substitution to (9) gives:

$$(11) \quad [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a (C - [R - COO^-])}{[H^+]}$$

Rearranging (11)

$$[H^+] [R - COO^-] = K_a C - K_a [R - COO^-]$$

$$[R - COO^-] ([H^+] + K_a) = K_a C$$

$$(12) \quad \therefore [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a C}{K_a + [H^+]}$$

$$\text{since } pH = -\log [H^+],$$

$$\therefore [H^+] = 10^{-pH}$$

$$(13) \quad [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a C}{K_a + 10^{-pH}}$$

$$\text{if a) } pH \longrightarrow 0 \text{ then } [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a C}{K_a + 1} = x$$

$$\text{b) } pH \longrightarrow \infty \text{ then } [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a C}{K_a} = y$$

$$(14) \quad y > x$$

From (14) it can be assumed that a)  $[R - COO^-]$  is lowered on lowering the pH and b)  $[R - COO^-]$  is increased on raising the pH.



## 3. DISCUSSION

1) The introduction of any reagent which does not increase the hydrogen ion concentration,  $[H^+]$ , cannot cause any change in the chemical equilibrium. In such a case the  $[R - COO^-]$  would remain constant and since the existence of  $R - COO^-$  in the sludge is necessary for the emulsion to remain stable the emulsion would not break.

2) It has been found that introduction of an acid, other than  $H_2CO_3$ , as the source of  $H^+$  results in a certain percentage of sediment but that the rate of sedimentation is much lower than that obtained with  $CO_2$  ( see Table 1, Graph 1 ). Consideration was given to the study of J. LEJA<sup>2</sup> which referred to the ease of soap formation in the presence of alkyl sulphates but which did not fully explain this phenomenon.

3) Equations (12) and (13) are limited by the following conditions:

a)  $[H^+]$  never approaches infinity nor does pH approach zero.

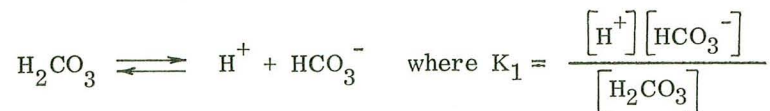
$$\therefore [R - COO^-] = \frac{K_a C}{K_a + [H^+]} \neq 0$$

$\therefore$  it is not possible to convert all the  $R - COO^-$  to  $R-COOH$ ,

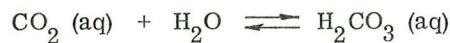
$\therefore$  there will always be some salt in the sludge.

b) The concentration of  $R - COO^-$  ions as in (12) and (13) is limited by the minimum pH attainable with  $CO_2$ , which is around 4. Graphs 2,3,4 and 5 show the pH change caused by  $CO_2$  in an acidic solution, a basic solution and distilled water at two different temperatures. These results are in agreement with

those of COTTON and WILKINSON<sup>3</sup>, FISHER and PETERS<sup>4</sup>, OLSON and YOUNG<sup>5</sup>, and others who discuss the strength of  $\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$  in solution. Carbonic acid is exceptional in that the directly measured first dissociation constant  $K_1 = 4.47 \times 10^{-7}$ ,  $\text{pK}_1$ , 6.38, does not refer to the following process:



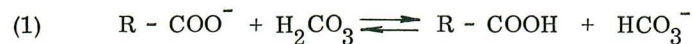
Since  $\text{CO}_2$  in solution is largely present as the more loosely hydrated species,  $\text{CO}_2$  (aq), and only partly in the form  $\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$ , then the following equilibrium is more appropriate:



In this case the  $\text{pK}_1$  value is about 3.5 and a  $K_1 = 3 \times 10^{-4}$  is obtained which indicates that a much stronger carbonic acid can be obtained than the previous value of  $K_1 = 4.47 \times 10^{-7}$  indicates.

#### 4. CALCULATION OF OPTIMUM pH FOR $\text{CO}_2$ TREATMENT

From Part 1 ( viz. pp 18 Figure 2 - 6 and pp 21 Figure 2 - 8 ) it can be deduced that the highest sedimentation rate occurs when the initial pH is adjusted to about 5 before injecting  $\text{CO}_2$  ( pp 28 sample 4 - N - 15 and pp 21 4 - N - 5 ). The mathematical calculation ( given below ) of the rate of reaction:



tends to support the experimental results.

Rate, R, of reaction (1) is:

$$(2) \quad R = K [R - \text{COO}^-] [\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3]$$

Carbonic acid dissociates in aqueous solution as follows:



$$(5) \quad K_2 = \frac{[\text{H}^+][\text{HCO}_3^-]}{[\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3]}$$

where  $K_2$  is the first dissociation constant for  $\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$

The amount of undissociated and dissociated acids at the same pH and constant temperature should be constant:

$$(7) \quad [\text{HCO}_3^-] + [\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3] = b$$

where b and a are constants.

From (5) and (7) :

$$(9) \quad K_2 = \frac{(b - [\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3])[\text{H}^+]}{[\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3]}$$

$$\therefore [\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3] K_2 = b[\text{H}^+] - [\text{H}^+][\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3]$$

$$\text{or (11)} \quad [\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3] = \frac{b[\text{H}^+]}{K_2 + [\text{H}^+]}$$

Substituting (11) and (12) into (2) :

$$(13) \quad R = K \frac{a b K_1 [\text{H}^+]}{(K_1 + [\text{H}^+])(K_2 + [\text{H}^+])}$$

where K, a, b,  $K_1$  and  $K_2$  are constants.

Naphthenic acid dissociates in aqueous solution as follows:



$$(6) \quad K_1 = \frac{[\text{H}^+][R - \text{COO}^-]}{[R - \text{COOH}]}$$

where  $K_1$  is the dissociation constant for naphthenic acid

$$(8) \quad [R - \text{COO}^-] + [R - \text{COOH}] = a$$

From (6) and (8) :

$$(10) \quad K_1 = \frac{[\text{H}^+][R - \text{COO}^-]}{a - [R - \text{COO}^-]}$$

$$\therefore K_1 a - K_1 [R - \text{COO}^-] = [\text{H}^+][R - \text{COO}^-]$$

$$\text{or (12)} \quad [R - \text{COO}^-] = \frac{K_1 a}{[\text{H}^+] + K_1}$$



Let  $k = K a b$

$$\therefore (14) \quad R = k \frac{K_1 [H^+]}{(K_1 + [H^+])(K_2 + [H^+])}$$

$$\therefore R \longrightarrow 0 \quad \text{as} \quad H^+ \longrightarrow 0$$

$$\text{and} \quad \therefore R \longrightarrow 0 \quad \text{as} \quad H^+ \longrightarrow \infty$$

From (14) :

$$(15) \quad \frac{R}{a b K} = \frac{K_1 [H^+]}{(K_1 + [H^+])(K_2 + [H^+])}$$

See APPENDIX I for practical examples.

## 5. INFRARED SPECTRA

Infrared spectra were obtained for solid samples ( using KBr pellets ) of untreated tailings No.4 ( SG 1 ), for the sediment resulting from treating tailings No. 4 with  $CO_2$  and for the extracted bitumen from the surface of tailings No. 4 during  $CO_2$  treatment. ( SG 2 and SG 3 respectively ). SG 3 shows a very strong absorption of aliphatic hydrocarbons (  $2840 - 2950 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  for  $-CH_2$  and  $-CH_3$  groups ). However, SG 1 and SG 2 show strong absorptions for carboxylate salts (  $1400 - 1450 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $1580 - 1620 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  ) and inorganic salts at  $1000 - 1100 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Although not quantitative, this spectra support our preliminary measurements of oil recovery during  $CO_2$  treatment which we estimate to be at least 50% of the bitumen found in the tailings. The peaks at  $3400 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  to  $3700 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  belong to the hydroxyl group which indicates the presence of  $H_2O$  and possibly  $-COOH$  although the typical

carboxyl absorption of organic acids at  $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$  might not show because of shielding by the broad peak of carboxylic salts.

Samples of tailings No.3 and No.4 both untreated and treated with  $\text{CO}_2$  were extracted with carbon tetrachloride and carbon disulphide. Infrared examination of the extracts showed the presence of carboxylic acids and salts ( $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $1600\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and aliphatic hydrocarbons ( $2840 - 2950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ). There was no evidence of aromatics. Similar spectra were obtained by M. V. BAPTISTA and C.V.BOWMAN<sup>1</sup>. In the case of untreated samples of tailings No.3 and No.4 the peak for carboxylic groups ( $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) shows splitting in  $\text{CS}_2$  solution (SG 6, SG 7 and SG 8). This splitting did not occur in  $\text{CCl}_4$  solution. The absorption for carboxylic acids ( $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) in treated samples (SG 9 thru SG 13) was stronger than the carboxylate salts absorption ( $1600\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ). This difference was less pronounced in the spectra for untreated samples (SG 6, SG 7 and SG 8). The difference in the size of both peaks is clearly seen in the spectra of those samples extracted with  $\text{CS}_2$  (SG 7 compared to SG 9, SG 10 and SG 11). The relative size of the  $-\text{COOH}$  peak to the  $-\text{COO}^-$  peak is shown on each spectrograph. This indicates an increase in naphthenic acid concentration due to  $\text{CO}_2$  treatment as shown in equation (5) pg 3.

The spectrum for recovered bitumen (SG 14) shows a much higher proportion of aliphatic hydrocarbons compared to acids. The  $1460\text{ cm}^{-1}$  peaks (asymmetric  $-\text{CH}_3$  bend and  $-\text{CH}_2$  scissoring) were compared to the  $-\text{COOH}$  absorption at  $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in spectra SG 12, SG 13, and SG 14. The results of these

comparisons agree with those of spectra SG 3 and SG 5 .

The spectra SG 4 and SG 5 show the relative amounts of hydrocarbons in the sediment (SG 4) and in the extracted bitumen from the same sample during the  $\text{CO}_2$  treatment. The hydrocarbons in these samples were dissolved in equal volumes of carbon tetrachloride.

#### 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- i An attempt was made to explain chemically and mathematically the influence of carbon dioxide on the separation of tar sands tailings.
- ii The mathematical derivation of the optimum pH ( around 5 ) to obtain the highest reaction rate is presented. From the chemical point of view the phenomena of the special position of  $\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$  is not fully understood and further research is suggested.
- iii Preliminary experiments for additional bitumen recovery from tar sands tailings were succesfull and it is recommended to carry on further research to determine the highest possible rate of bitumen recovery.

The presented work was done in very short period of time and additional time is required to continue in this research.



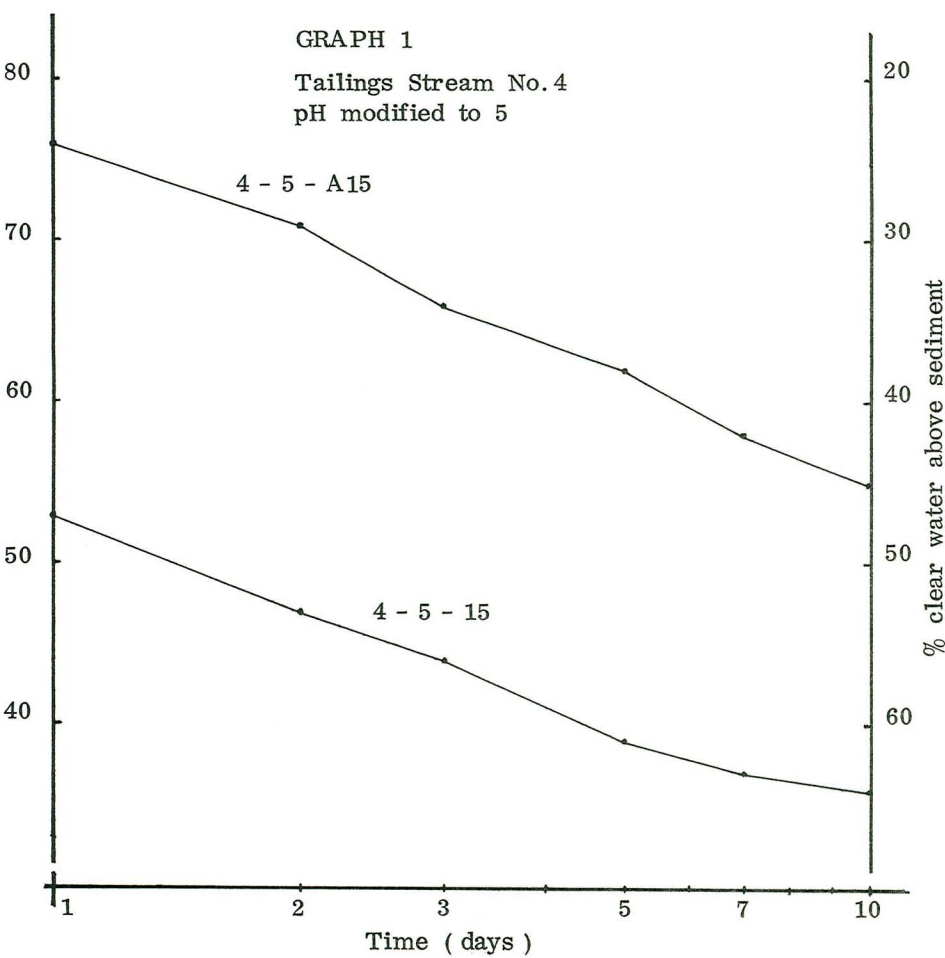
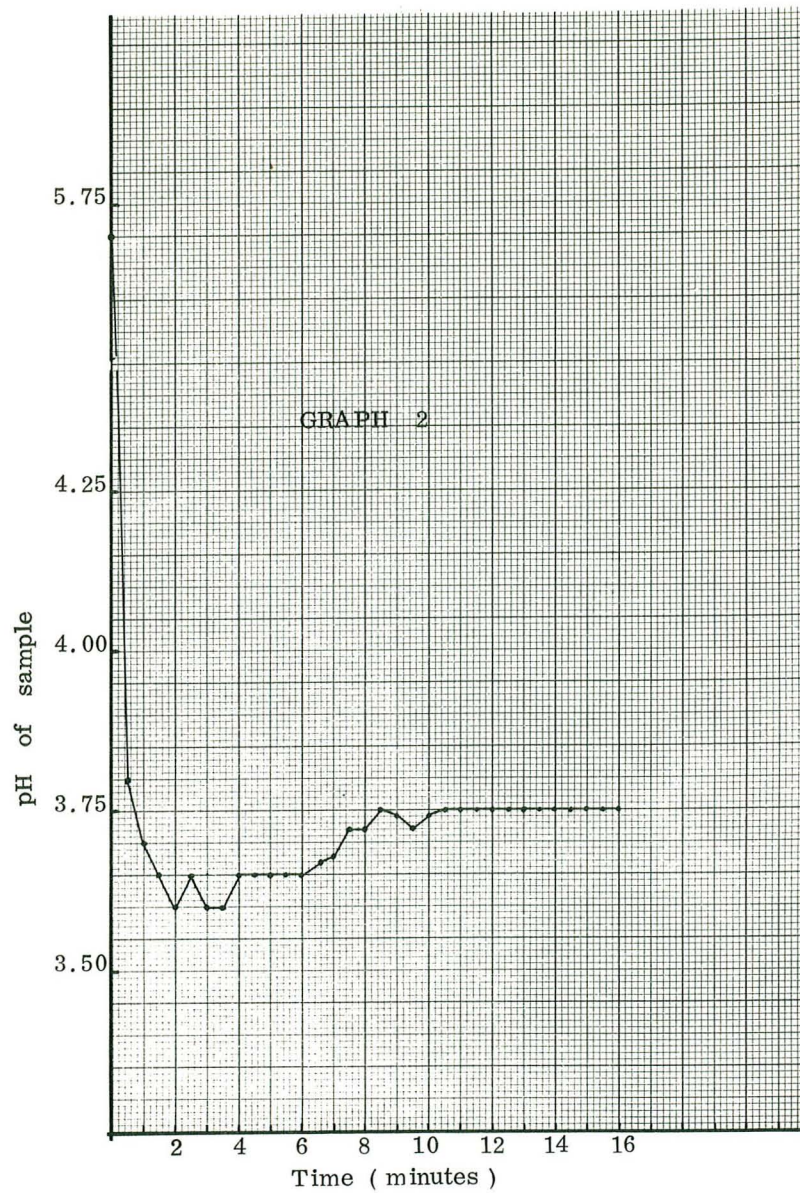


TABLE 1

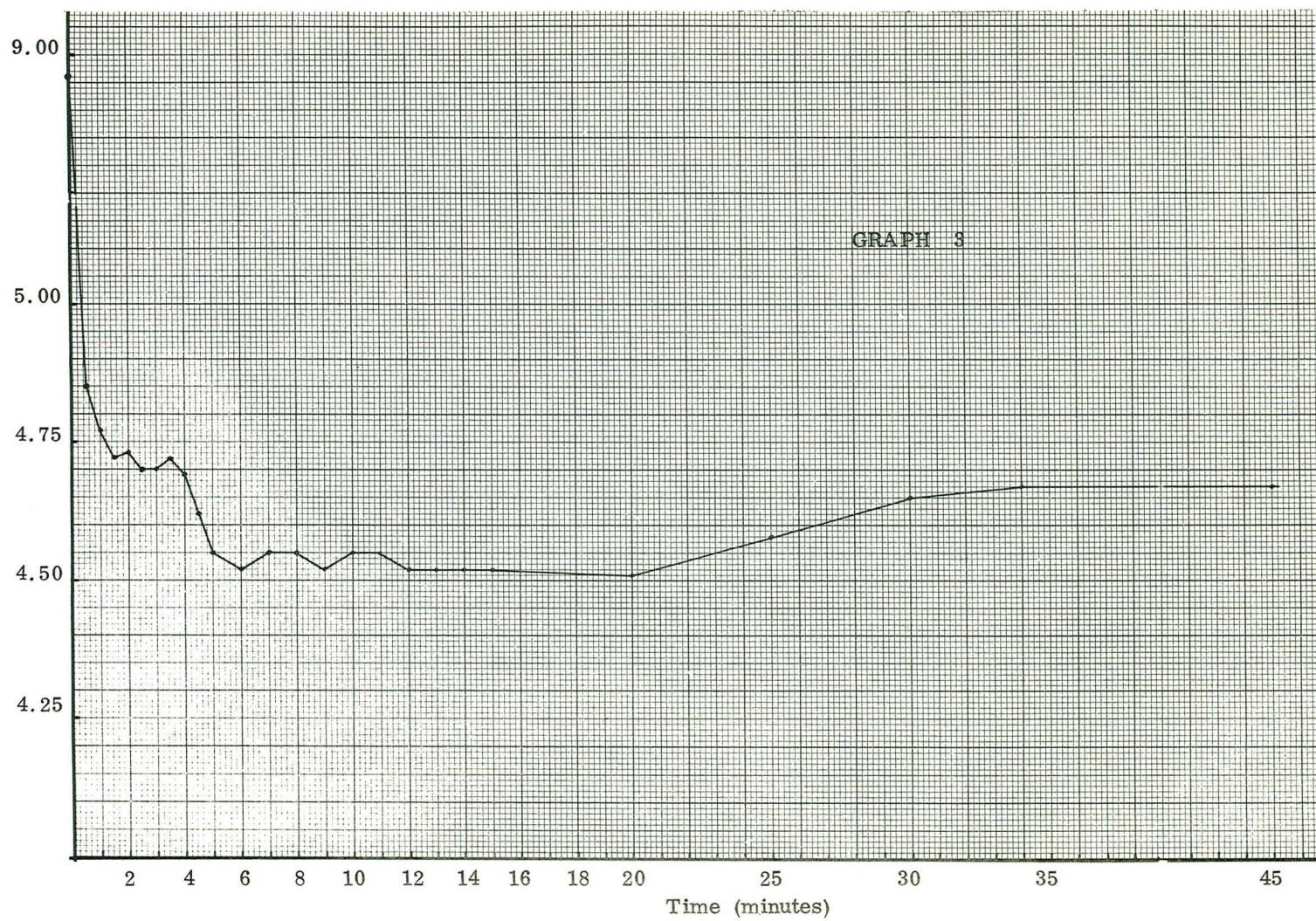
Sample	4 - 5 - 15	4 - 5 A15
Initial pH	8.3	8.3
Modified pH	5.0	5.0
CO <sub>2</sub>	15 min.	---
Air	---	15 min.
Temperature	50° C	50° C

SEDIMENTATION TEST

Time	%S	%S
0	100	100
1 day	53	76
2 days	47	71
3 days	44	66
5 days	39	62
7 days	37	58
10 days	36	55









pH of sample

7.00

4.25

4.00

3.75

GRAPH 4

2

4

6

8

10

12

14

16

18

20

25

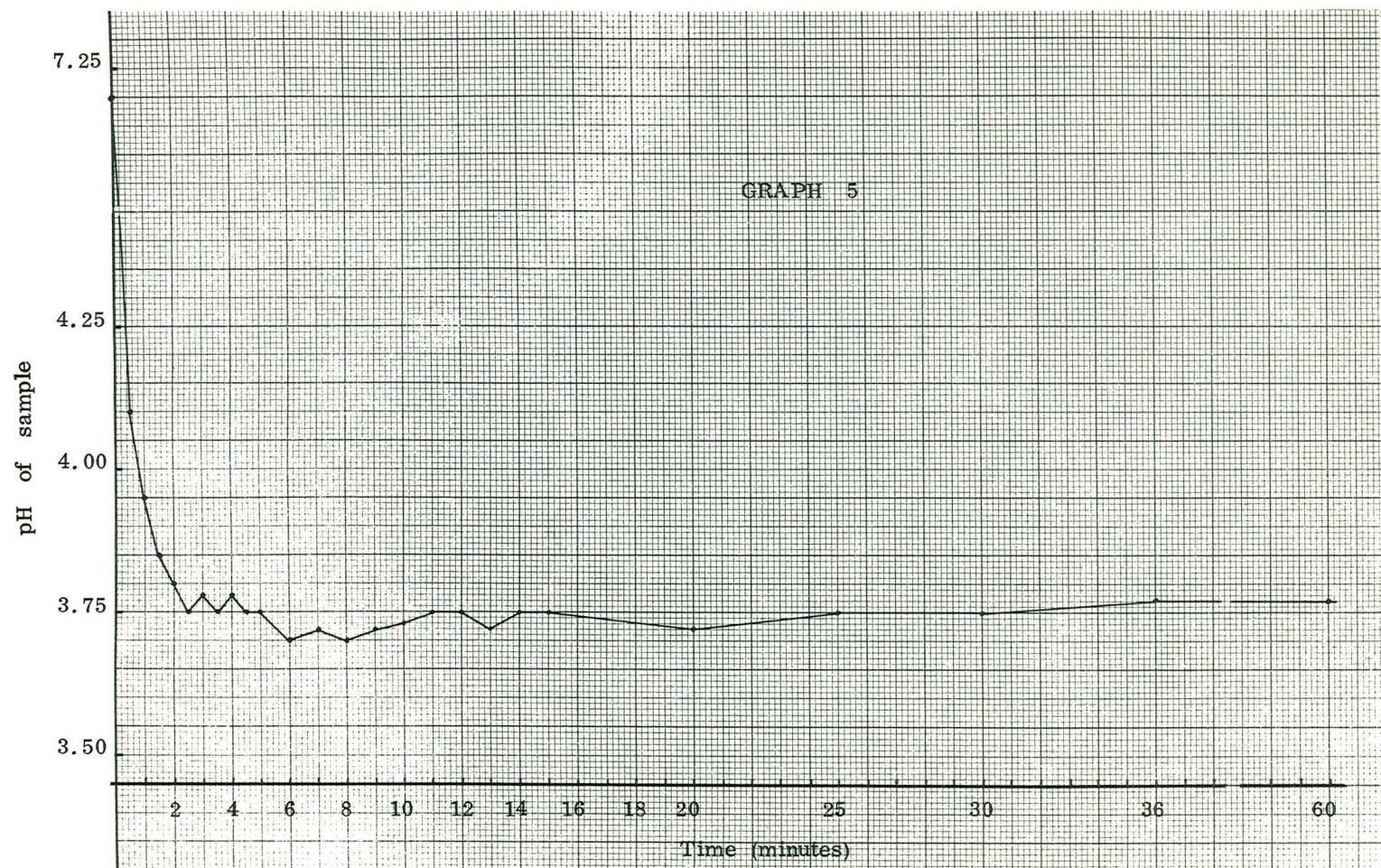
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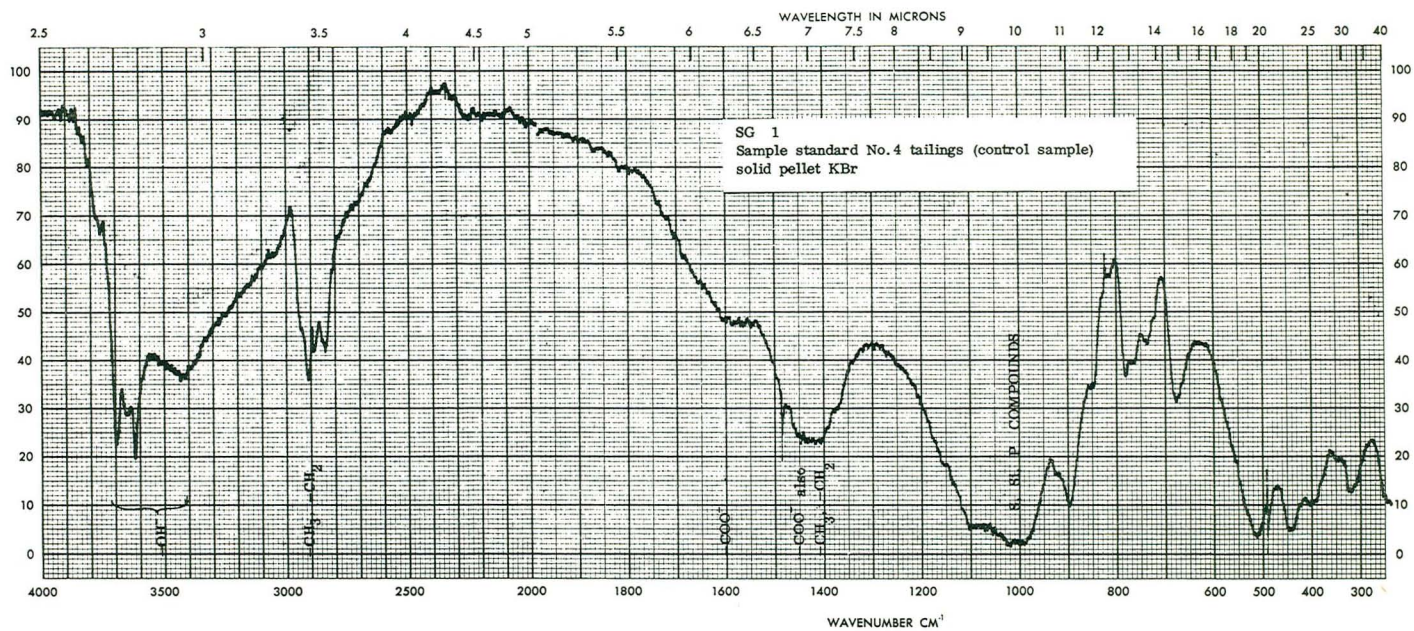
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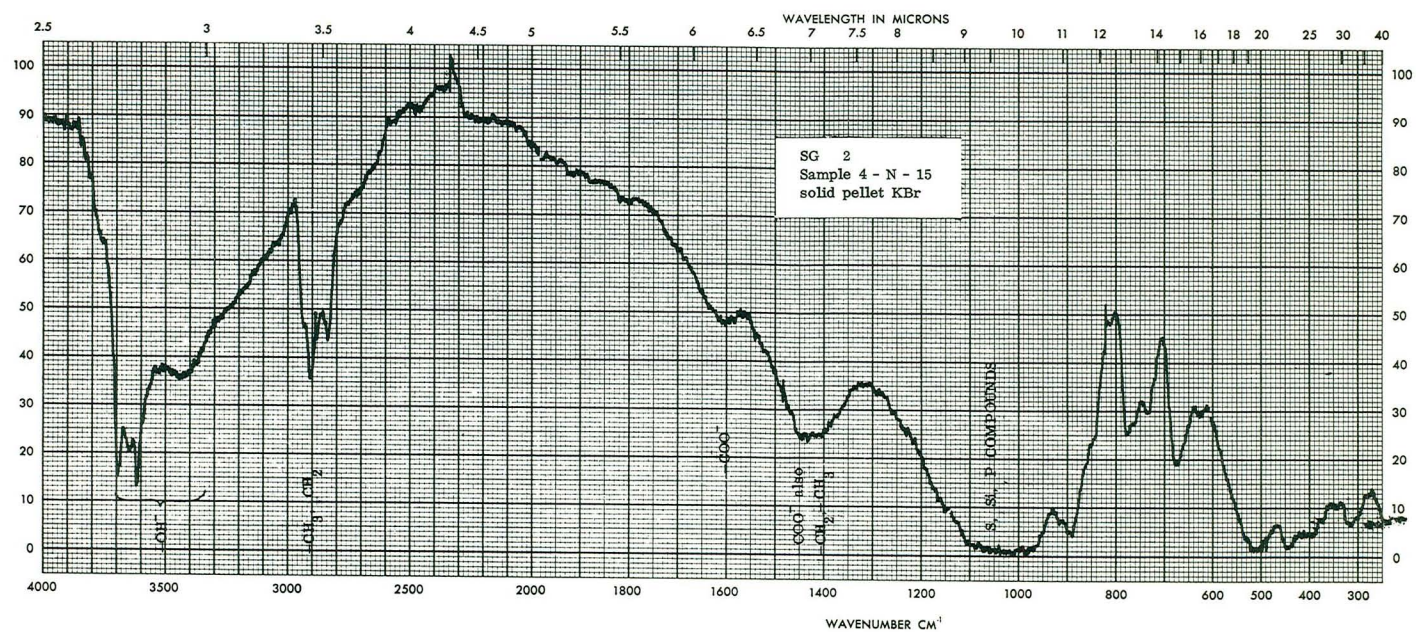
Time (minutes)



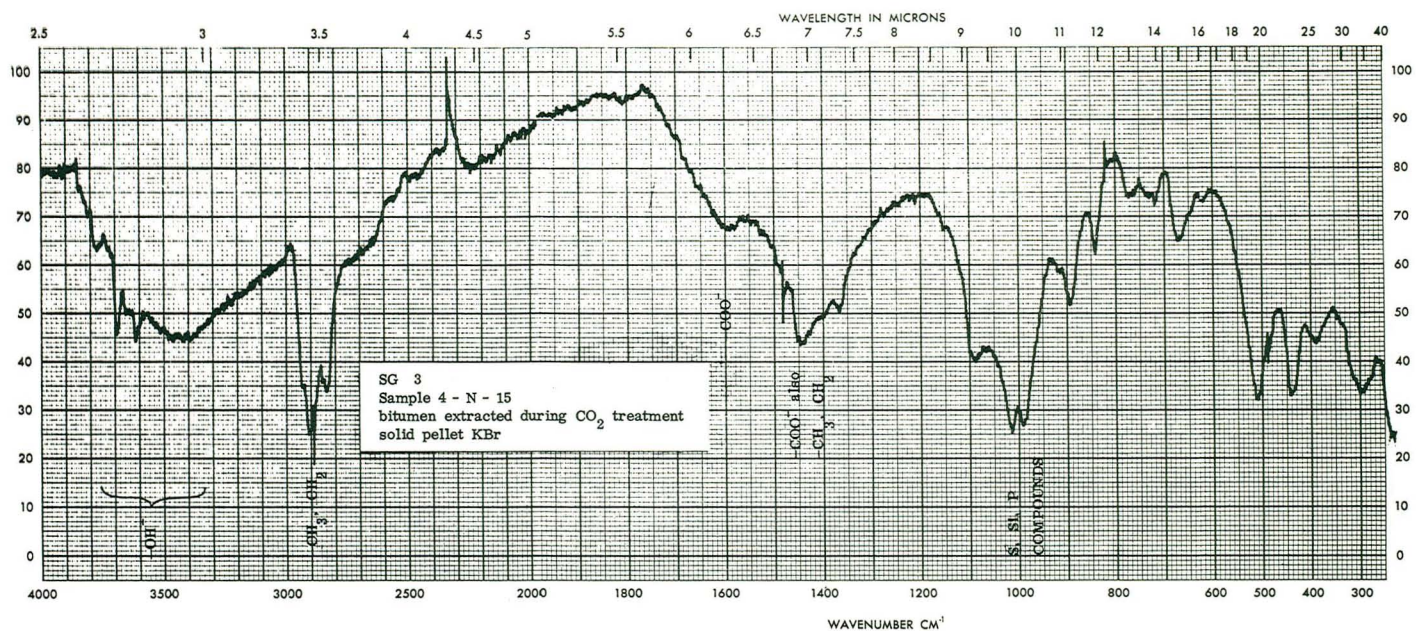


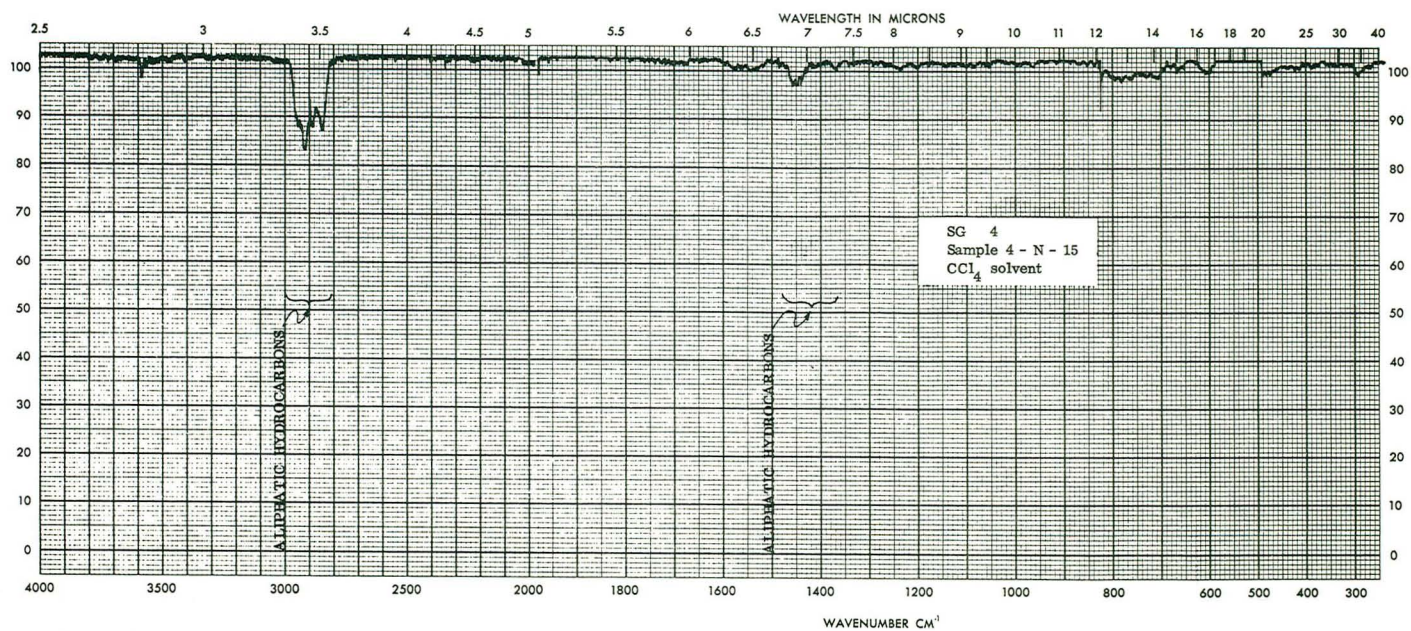




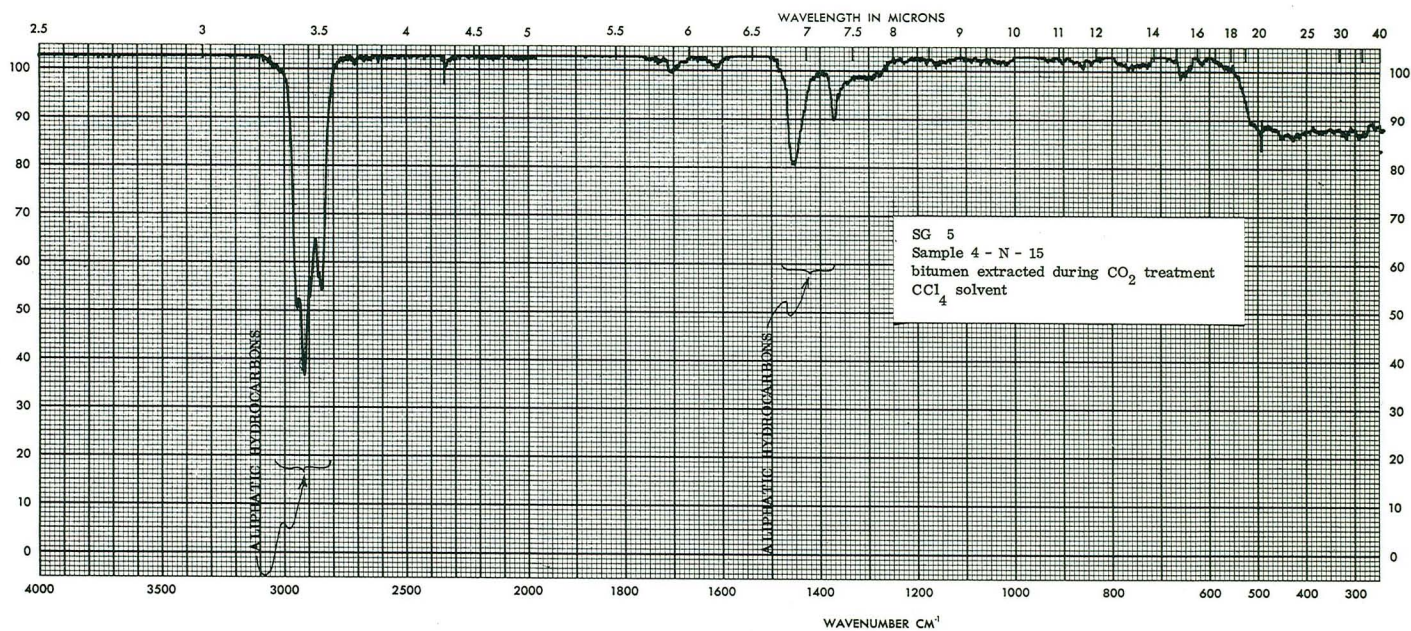


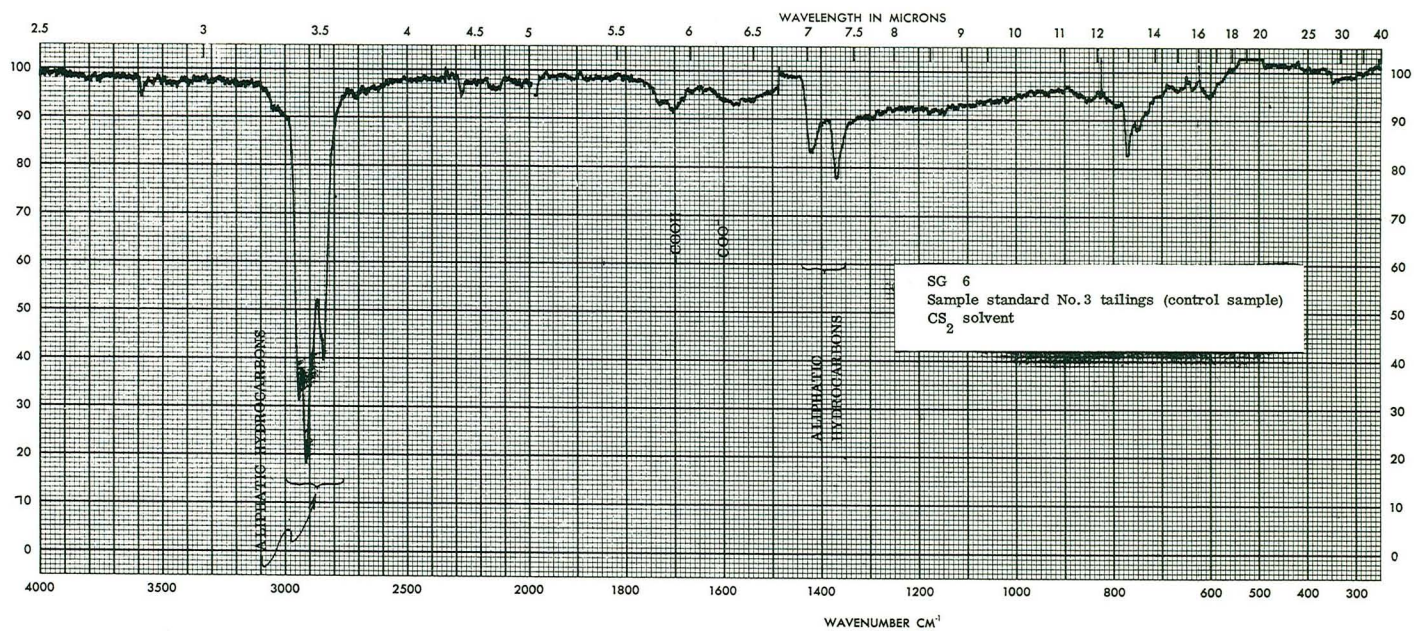




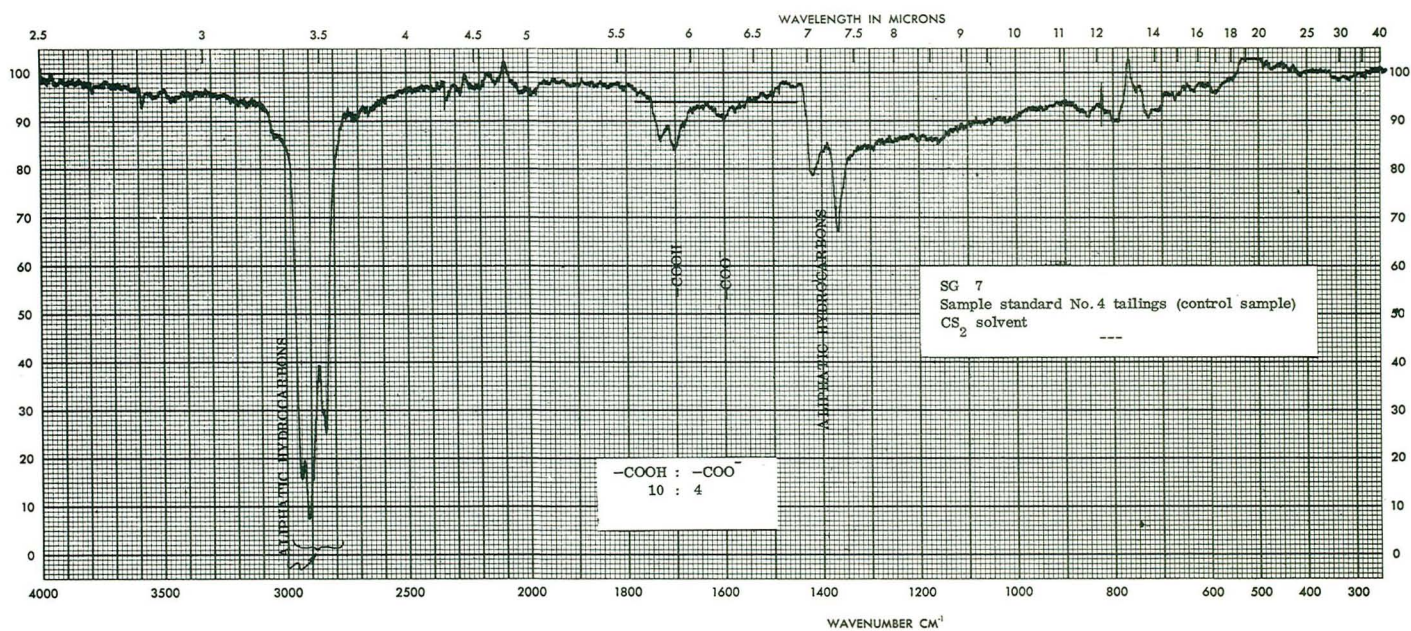


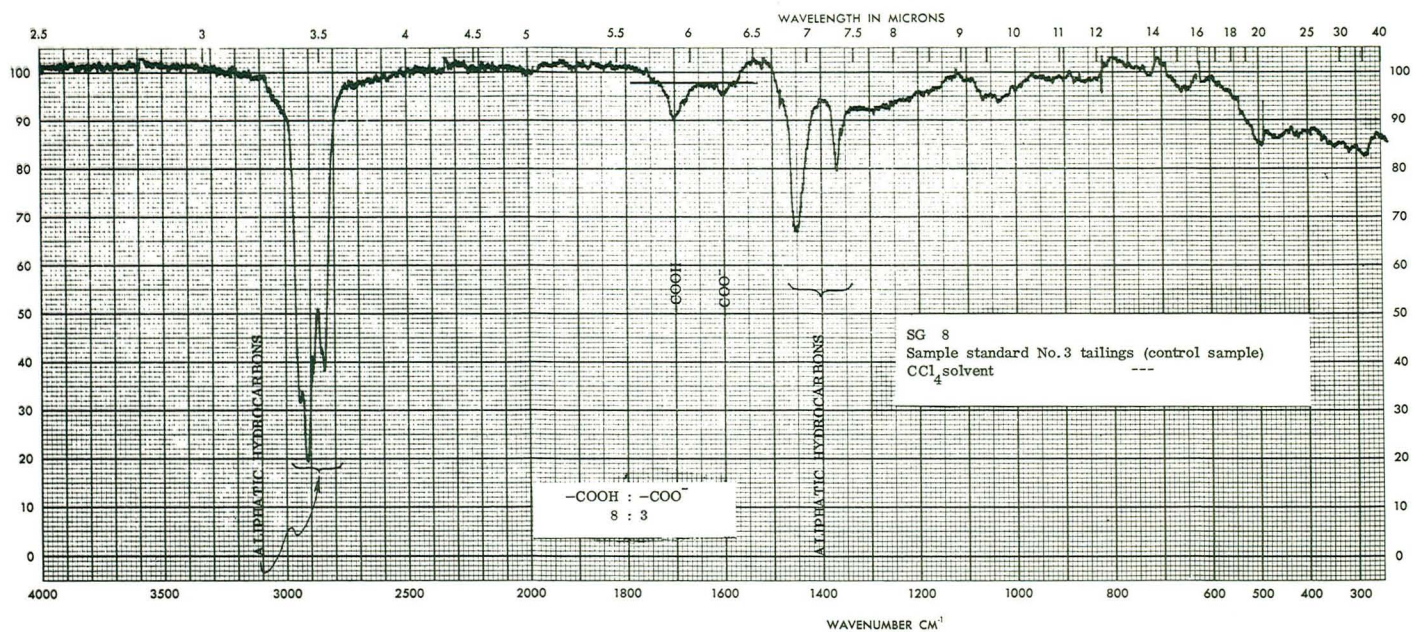




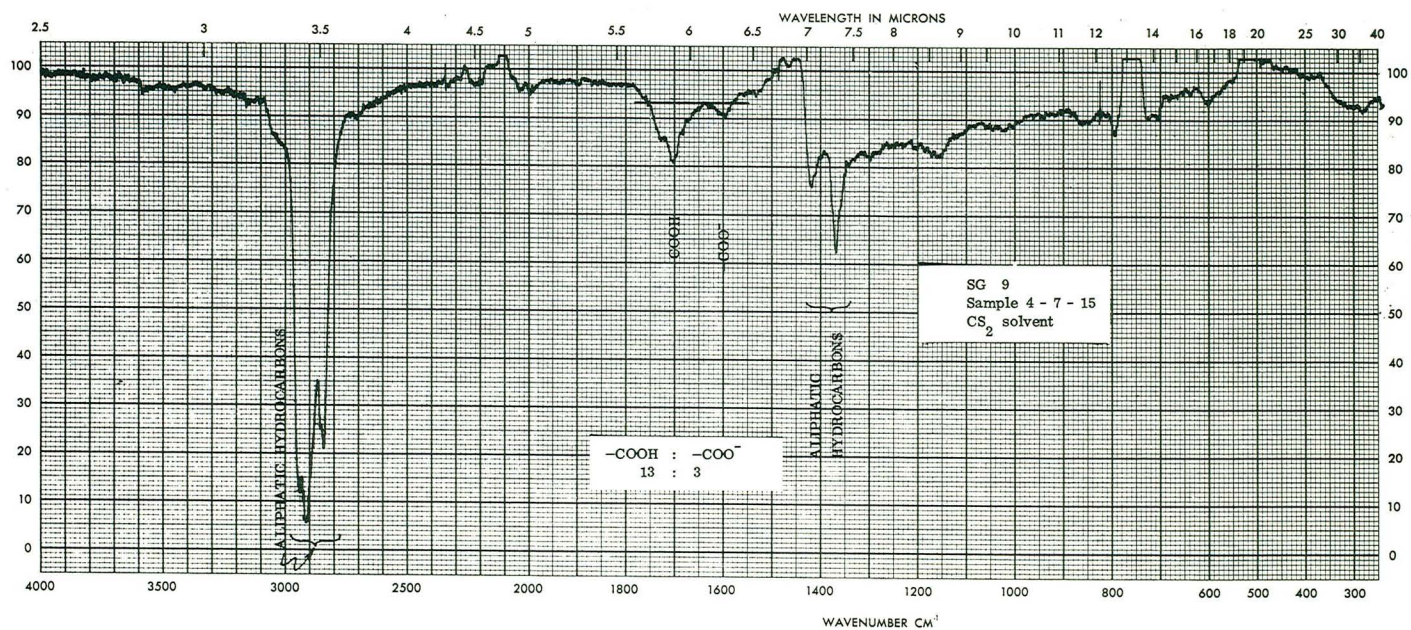


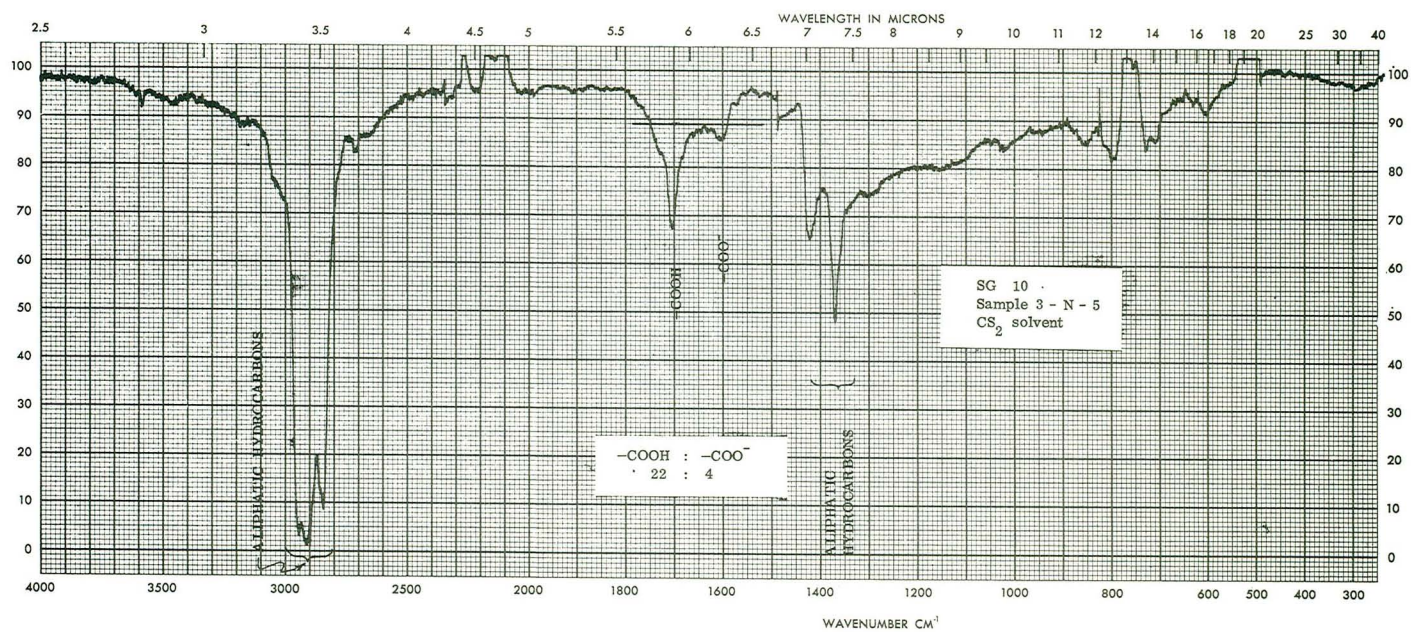




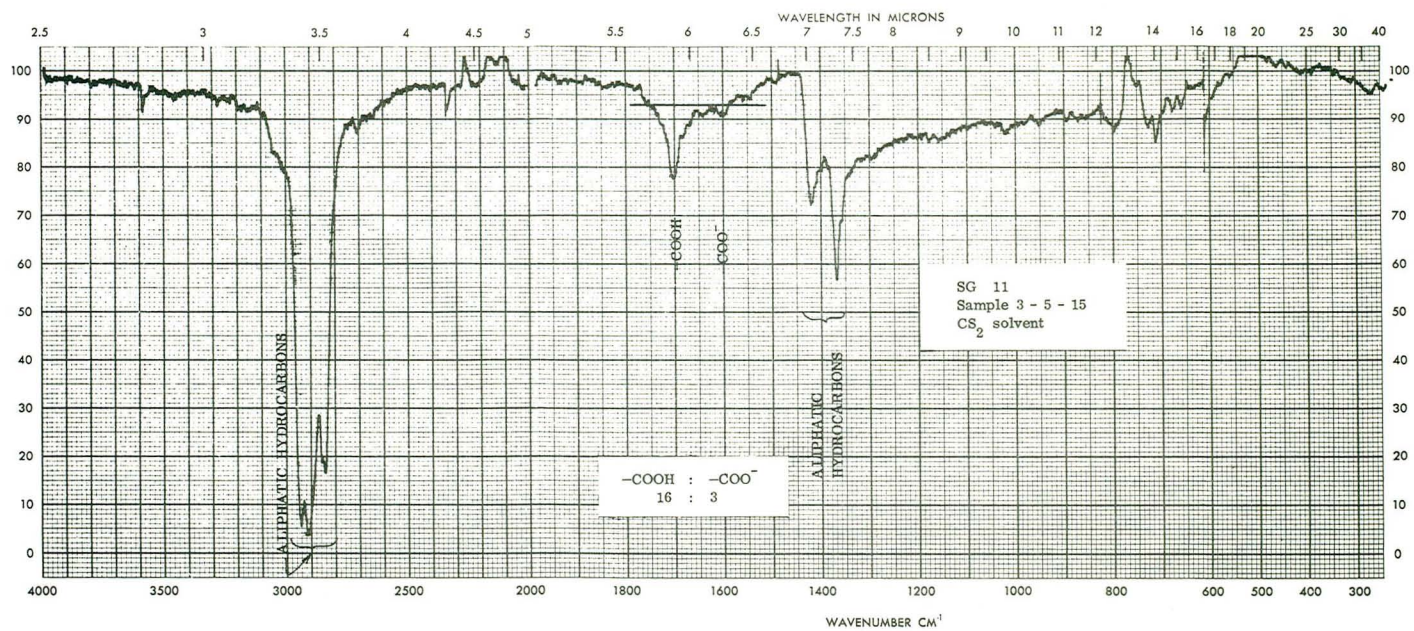


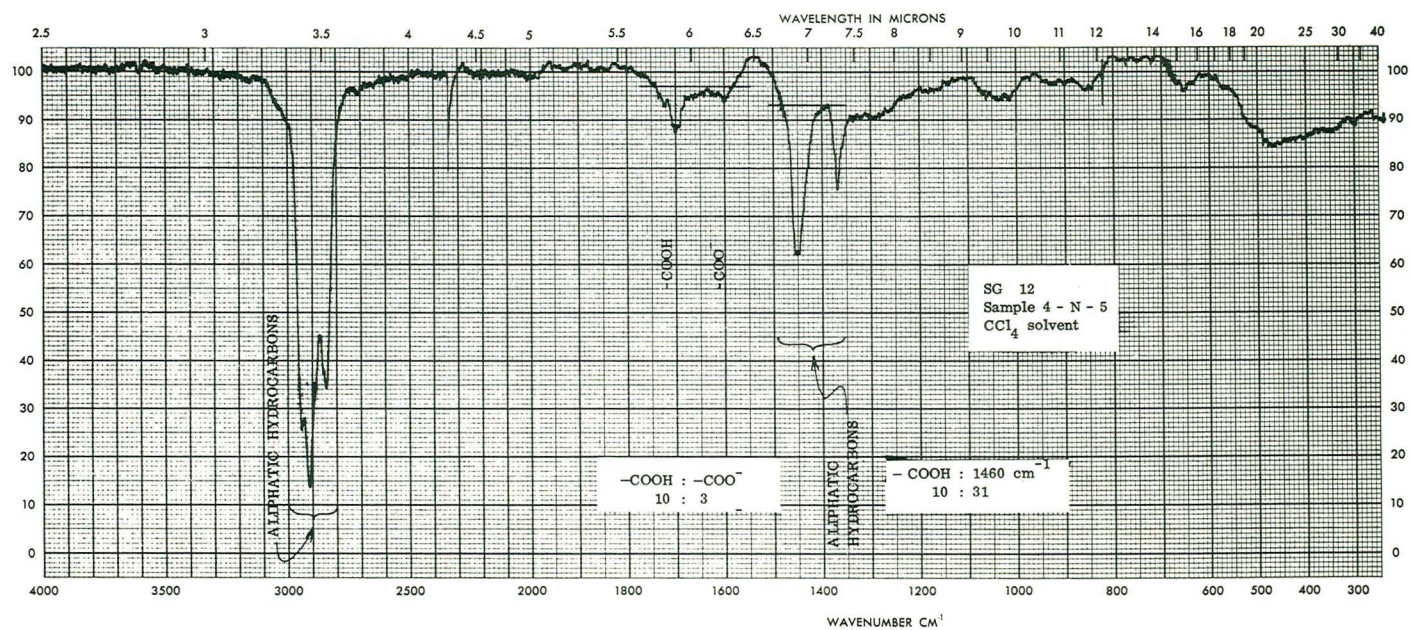




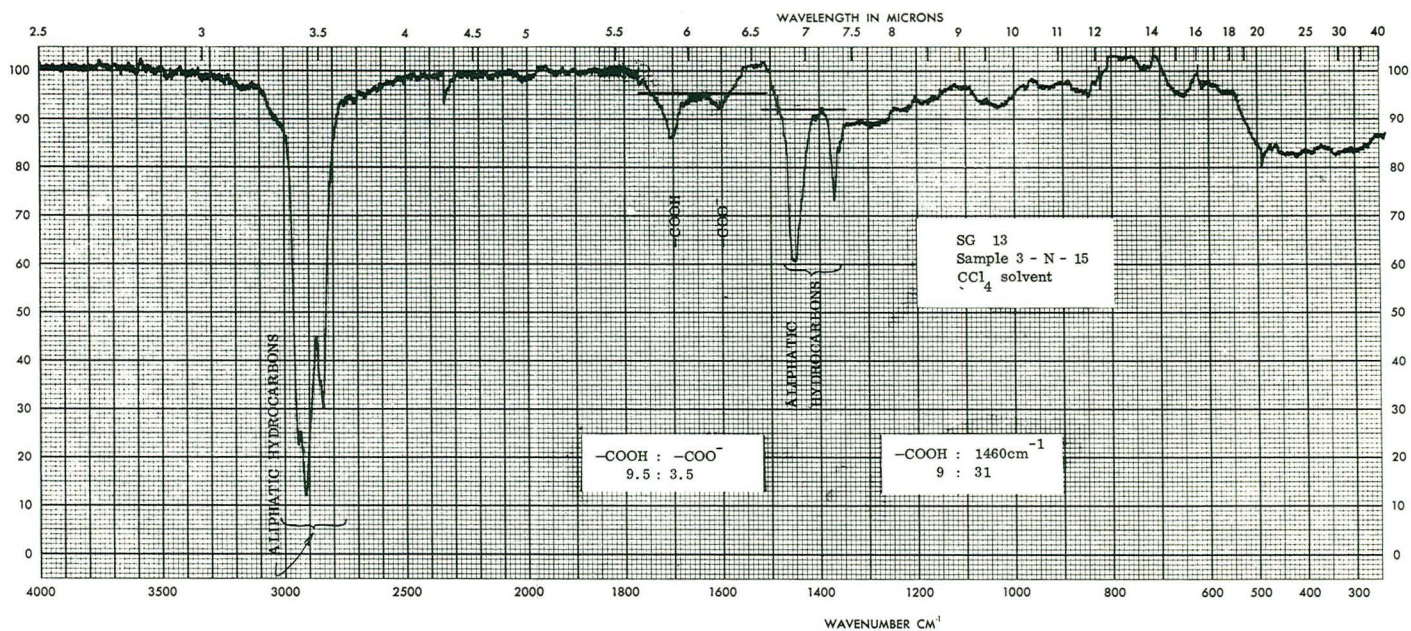




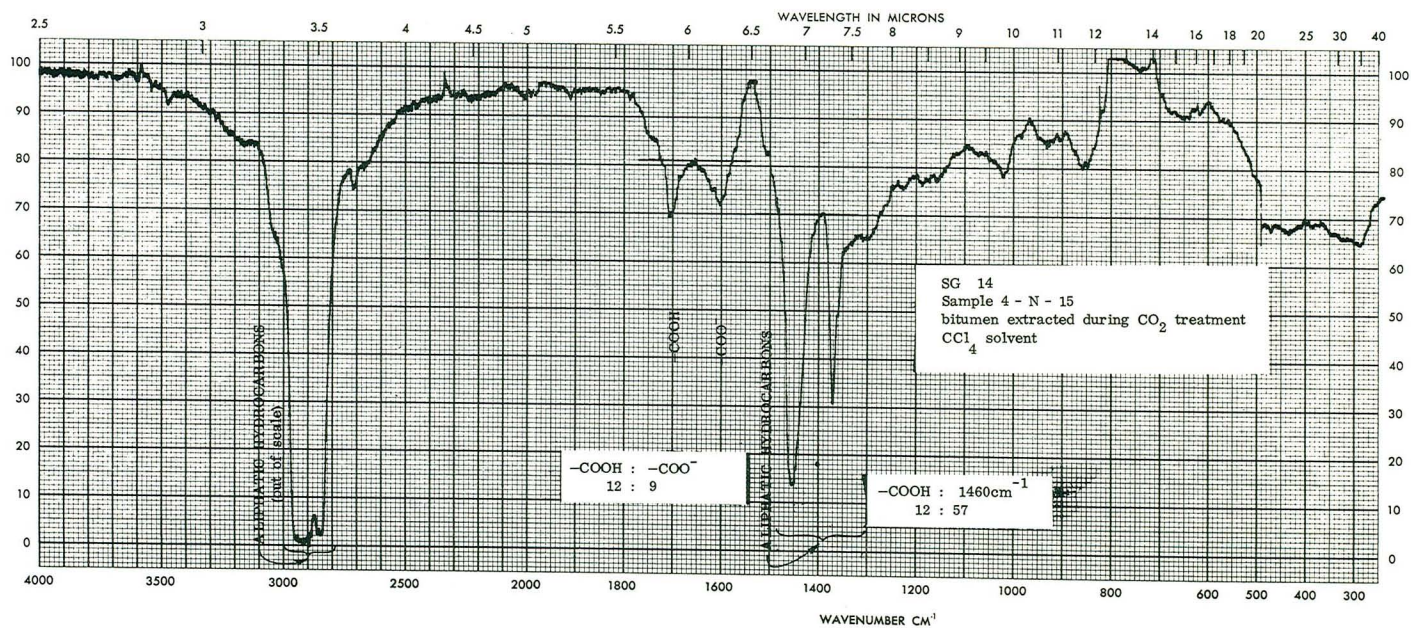












## 7. LITERATURE

- 1 M. V. BAPTISTA, C. W. BOWMAN : " The Flotation Mechanism Of Solids From The Athabasca Oil Sands" presented at the 19th Canadian Chemical Engineering Conference, October 19 - 22, 1969 .
- 2 J. LEJA : "Interactions At Interfaces In Relation To Froth Flotation" Proc. Second International Congress Of Surface Activity, Butterworth, London, Vol.3, pp 273 - 295, 1957 .
- 3 F. A. COTTON and G. WILKINSON : " Advanced Inorganic Chemistry ", second edition, pp 220 and 308 .
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- 5 A. R. OLSON, P. V. YOULE : " The Strength Of Carbonic Acid. The Rate Of Reaction Of Carbon Dioxide With Water And Hydroxyl Ion ", J. Am. Chem. Soc. 62, 1027 ( 1940 ) .

APPENDIX I

CALCULATION OF OPTIMUM pH FOR CO<sub>2</sub> TREATMENT

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES



## CALCULATION OF OPTIMUM pH FOR CO<sub>2</sub> TREATMENT

Solutions of equation

$$(15) \quad \frac{R}{a b K} = \frac{K_1 [\bar{H}^+]}{(K_1 + [\bar{H}^+]) (K_2 + [\bar{H}^+])}$$

are shown in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5. Tables 2 and 3 are for a dissociation constant of carbonic acid,  $K_2$ , in the vicinity of  $10^{-4}$ . Table 2 is for a dissociation constant of naphthenic acid,  $K_1$ , of  $10^{-6}$  and Table 3 is for a  $K_1$  of  $10^{-4}$ . Tables 4 and 5 are for a  $K_2$  of  $10^{-7}$ . Table 4 is for a  $K_1$  of  $10^{-4}$  and Table 5 for a  $K_1$  of  $10^{-6}$ .

The tabulated results are plotted on Graphs 6, 7, 8 and 9. On all the graphs the maxima occur in the pH range 4 to 6.5, which agrees with the experimental results (i.e. the fastest reaction rate was in the sample whose initial pH was adjusted to 5). Graph 10 shows the relationship between optimum pH and the dissociation constant of naphthenic acid,  $K_1$ , (specific values:  $10^{-4}$ ,  $10^{-5}$  and  $10^{-6}$ ) at values for the dissociation constant of carbonic acid,  $K_2$ , of  $10^{-7}$  and  $10^{-4}$ .

TABLE 2

$$\frac{R}{a \ b \ K} \quad \text{for } K_1 = 10^{-6}, \ K_2 = 10^{-4}$$

---

$10^{-1}$	$9.9899100 \times 10^{-6}$
$10^{-2}$	$9.9000000 \times 10^{-5}$
$10^{-3}$	$9.0818271 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-4}$	$4.9504950 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-5}$	$8.2644627 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-6}$	$4.9504950 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-7}$	$9.0818271 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-8}$	$9.9000000 \times 10^{-5}$
$10^{-9}$	$9.9899100 \times 10^{-6}$
$10^{-10}$	$9.9989900 \times 10^{-7}$



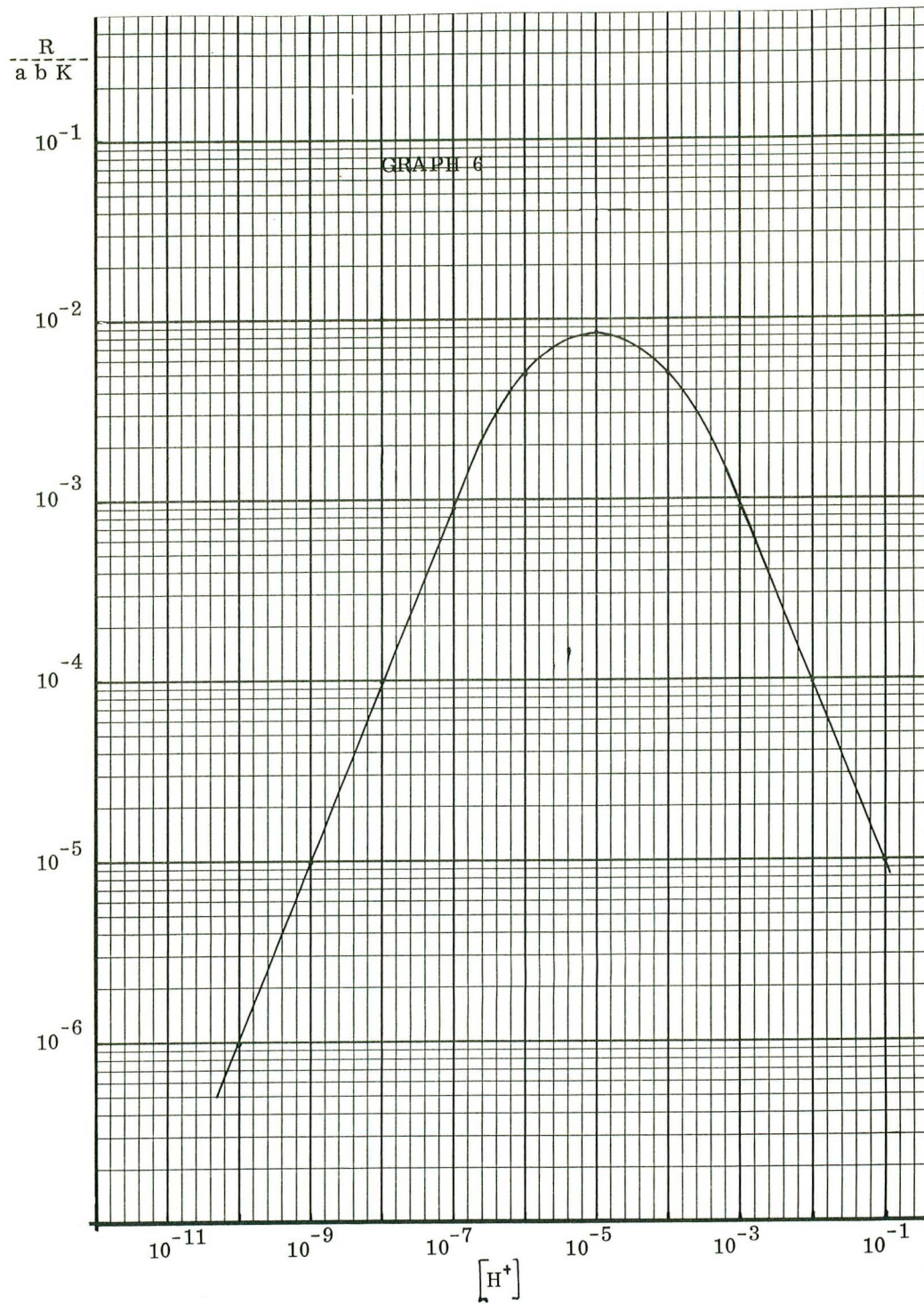


TABLE 3

$$\frac{R}{a \ b \ K} \quad \text{for} \quad K_1 = K_2 = 10^{-4}$$

---

$10^{-1}$	$9.9800298 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-2}$	$9.8029603 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-3}$	$8.2644627 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-4}$	$2.5000000 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-5}$	$8.2644627 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-6}$	$9.8029603 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-7}$	$9.9800298 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-8}$	$9.9980001 \times 10^{-5}$
$10^{-9}$	$9.9998000 \times 10^{-6}$
$10^{-10}$	$9.9999800 \times 10^{-7}$
$10^{-11}$	$9.9999980 \times 10^{-8}$



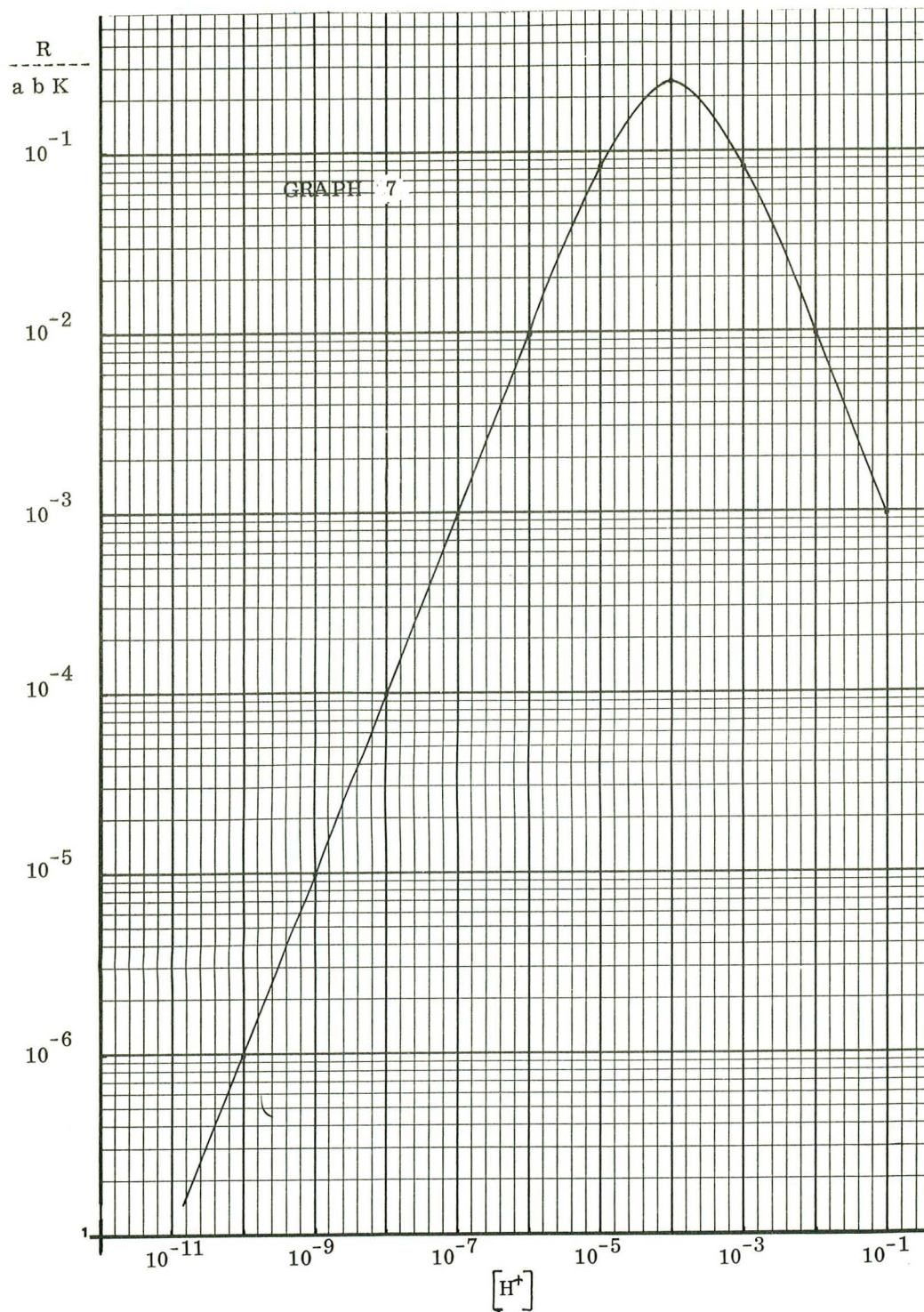


TABLE 4

$[H^+]$	$\frac{R}{a b K}$ for $K_1 = 10^{-4}$ , $K_2 = 10^{-7}$
$10^{-1}$	$9.9899999 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-2}$	$9.9008909 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-3}$	$9.0900000 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-4}$	$4.9950049 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-5}$	$9.0009000 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-5.5}$	$9.3963281 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-6}$	$9.0009000 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-7}$	$4.9950049 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-8}$	$9.0900000 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-9}$	$9.9008909 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-10}$	$9.9899999 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-11}$	$9.9989991 \times 10^{-5}$



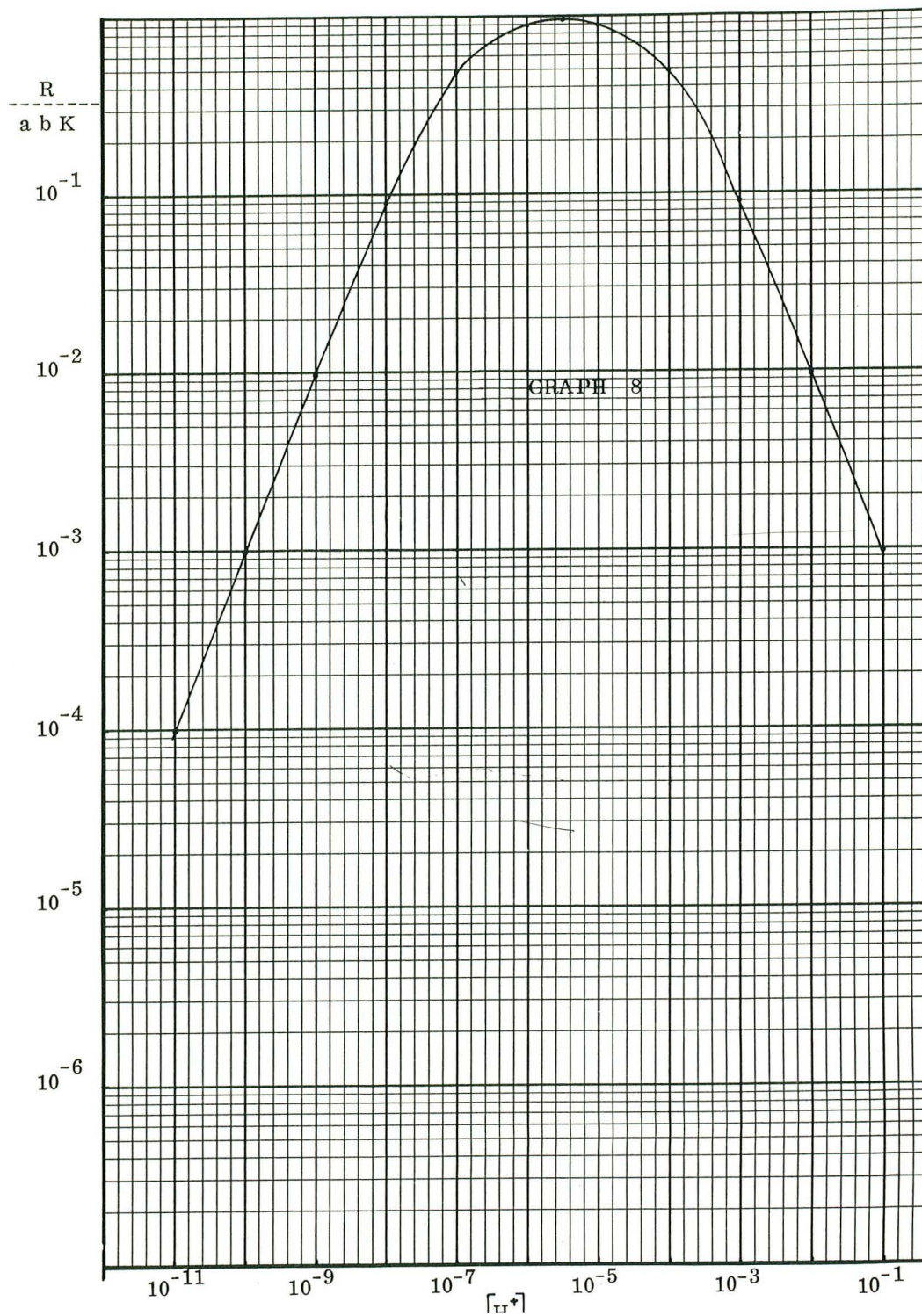
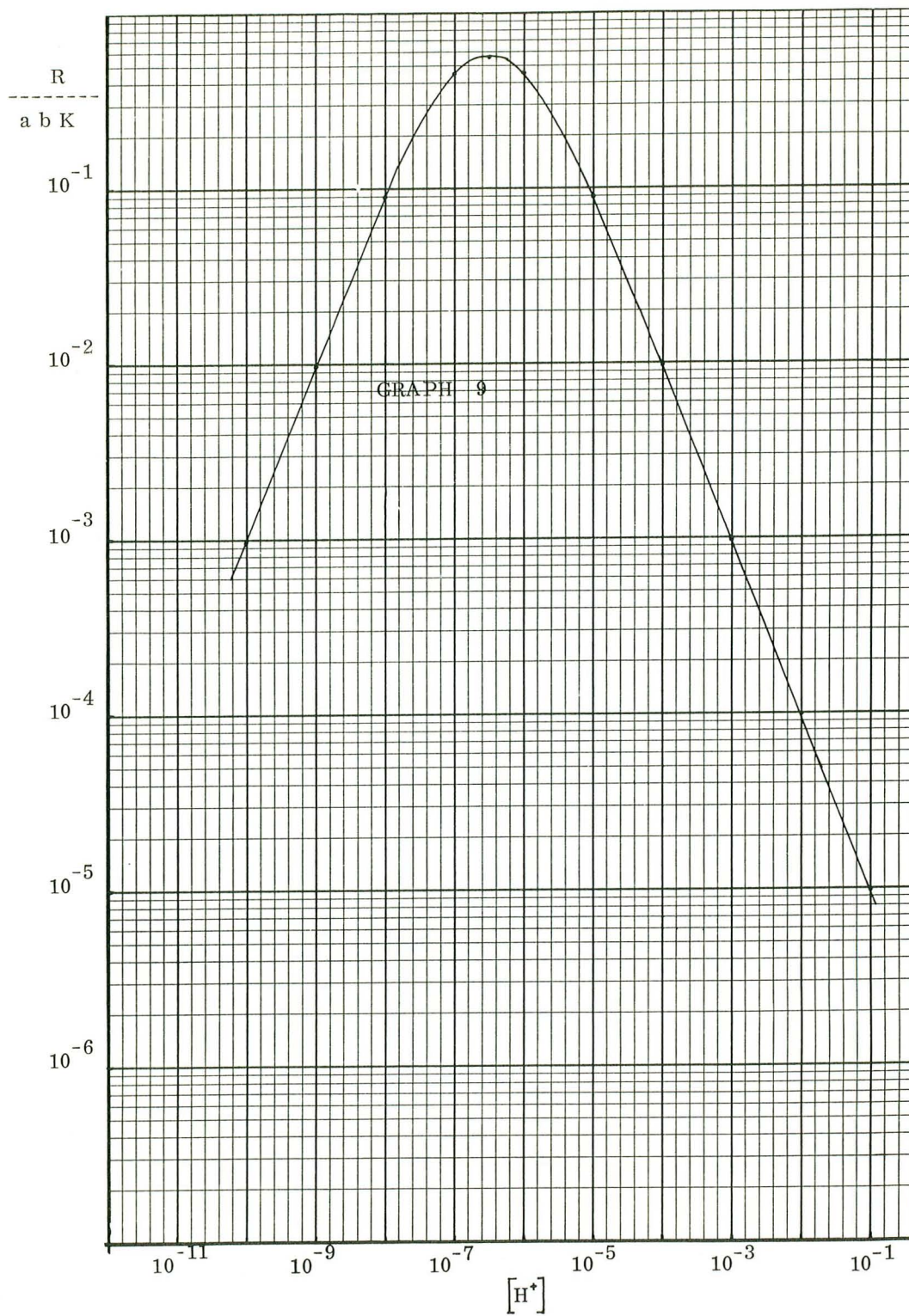


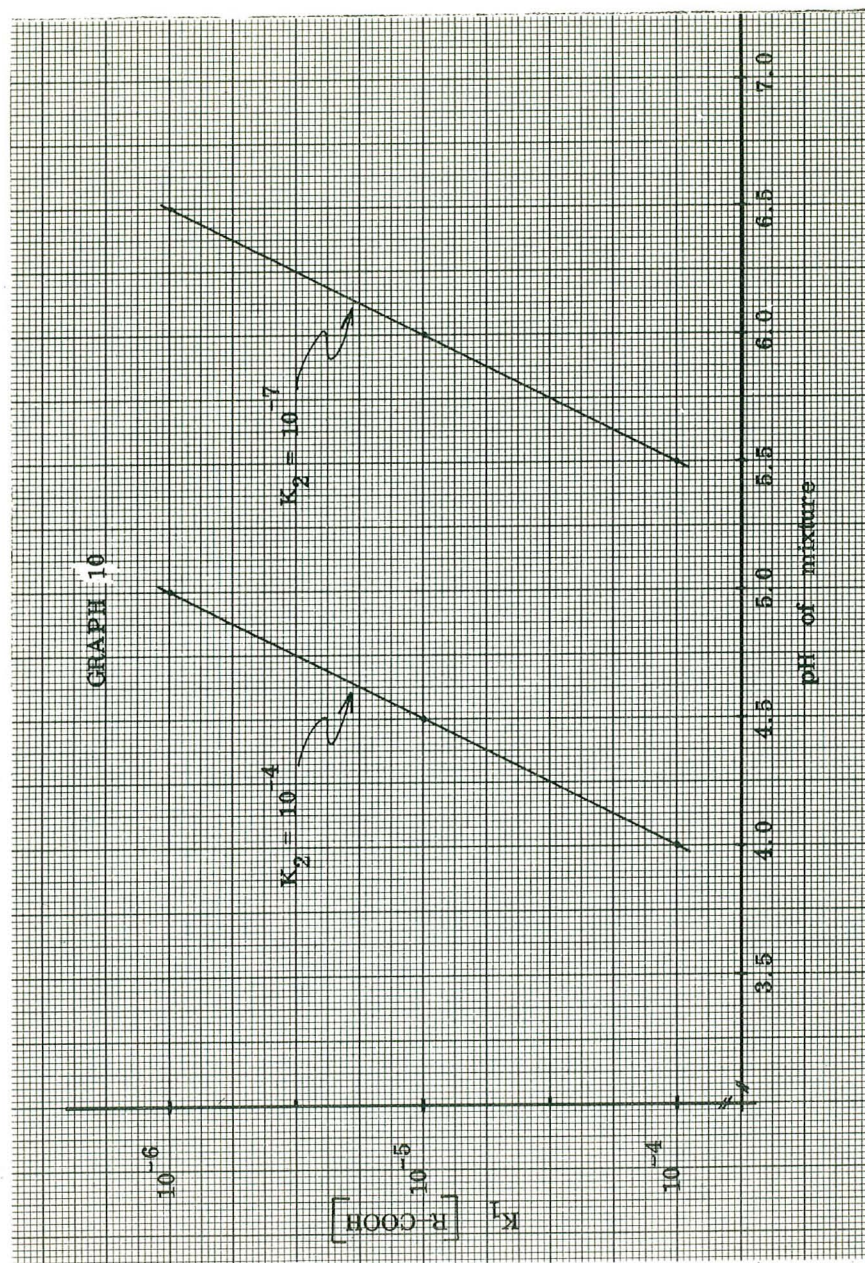
TABLE 5

$[H^+]$	$\frac{R}{a b K}$ for $K_1 = 10^{-6}$ , $K_2 = 10^{-7}$
$10^{-1}$	$9.9998900 \times 10^{-6}$
$10^{-2}$	$9.9980000 \times 10^{-5}$
$10^{-3}$	$9.9890109 \times 10^{-4}$
$10^{-4}$	$9.8910989 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-5}$	$9.0009000 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-6}$	$4.5454545 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-6.5}$	$5.7721541 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-7}$	$4.5454545 \times 10^{-1}$
$10^{-8}$	$9.0009000 \times 10^{-2}$
$10^{-9}$	$9.8910989 \times 10^{-3}$
$10^{-10}$	$9.9890109 \times 10^{-4}$











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