

DDT: Miracle or Boomerang?

by Granville F. Knight, M.D.

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Have you suffered from nausea, vomiting, stomach ache, diarrhea and an "all gone" feeling lately? Have you been so tired that you could scarcely move even if the house were on fire? Or have you been disabled by headaches, dizziness, muscular aches, neuralgic pains and severe nervousness sometimes lasting for weeks?

If so, chances are you have had a virus infection—or you may have come in contact with one of the new insecticides. The symptoms are almost identical. If this sounds alarming, your reaction is normal, for most of us don't like to be poisoned.

Not long ago a mother, aged 38, to whom the term "ill health" was a stranger, complained of fatigue, headaches, dizzy spells, pains in the back and arms, loss of appetite and weight, together with the "blues." Meeting of the day's work was now an almost insurmountable chore instead of a pleasure and a challenge. What could be wrong? Physical examination was essentially negative, but laboratory tests showed evidence of moderate liver damage. DDT poisoning was suspected. Persistent questioning finally revealed that a DDT aerosol bomb had been used frequently in her bedroom over the previous six months for the control of fleas.

Avoidance of DDT and similar compounds, together with treatment, resulted

in recovery after an idleness of four weeks. Three months later the whole picture recurred and the patient admitted using the spray again. She could not believe that DDT was responsible.

Another woman from Sparks, Nev., who had suffered from similar symptoms for several years, finally suspected DDT poisoning. She noted increased trouble each time the city streets were fogged with a DDT aerosol for the control of mosquitoes. During the summer this was done once weekly so that band concerts might be enjoyed without the annoyance of insect pests. Her fat sample contained 83 parts per million (p.p.m.) of organic chlorides which is equivalent to about 250 p.p.m. of DDT. Her husband's fat contained none. This is an example of idiosyncrasy or difference in susceptibility which is common in medicine. It helps to explain why authorities disagree over the possible toxic effects of chlorinated hydrocarbons. This woman is still incapacitated in spite of treatment.

Exposure to the new insecticides is now universal. Fruits, vegetables and grains, if not sprayed during the growing period, have almost certainly encountered insecticides during storage. Routine spot analyses of vegetables bought in the Los Angeles wholesale market in 1952 revealed some residual DDT on more than half the samples. Although the tolerance limits are seldom exceeded, the chemical was frequently present. Food animals and fowl, if not sprayed directly, have absorbed chemicals from their barns or from the feed supplied to them. Hens eating contaminated feed concentrate DDT in their eggs. Cows exposed to DDT in their food, or from its use in

DDT-tainted foods seized by FDA

Washington, D. C.—Food seizures, by the Food and Drug Administration here, recently removed more than 50 tons of merchandise from the market because of potential hazard to health. A large proportion consisted of vegetables containing excess pesticidal residues. Approximately 80,000 ten-ounce packages of frozen spinach contained DDT in excess of permitted tolerances. Over 50,000 pounds of black-eyed peas contaminated by a fluorine rat poison were also seized.

barns, concentrate and excrete it in their milk. The same is true of humans. At first, DDT was thought to be insoluble and was advised as a spray and dusting powder for fly control in dairy barns. When it was found in milk, such use was no longer advocated.

The presence of DDT, chlordane, lindane and methoxychlor in most household and garden sprays and aerosols for insect control is a potent hazard. Motel and hotel rooms, restaurants, airplanes, trains, boats and other public places are frequently treated. Clothing materials, rugs and even wall paper may contain DDT. Vaporizing devices for producing a constant mist of lindane or DDT are widely advertised for use in homes and restaurants. Heavy spraying adds another hazard to the use of tobacco.

DDT, which is known to the chemical fraternity by the tongue-twisting title of dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane (more accurately, chlorophenothane) is representative of many of the chlorinated hydrocarbons. Others commonly in use today include chlordane (very toxic and widely used for ant control), methoxychlor, BHC (benzene hexachloride), lindane, and DDE. Aldrin and Dieldrin are related to the chlorinated naphthalenes and are very active, long lasting poisons. . . . The organic phosphates of another group of insecticides is so powerful that one drop of concentrated solution in the eye has been known to cause death. Because of this extreme, immediate toxicity their use is limited mostly to professional pesticide applications. Fortunately most of these, such as TEPP

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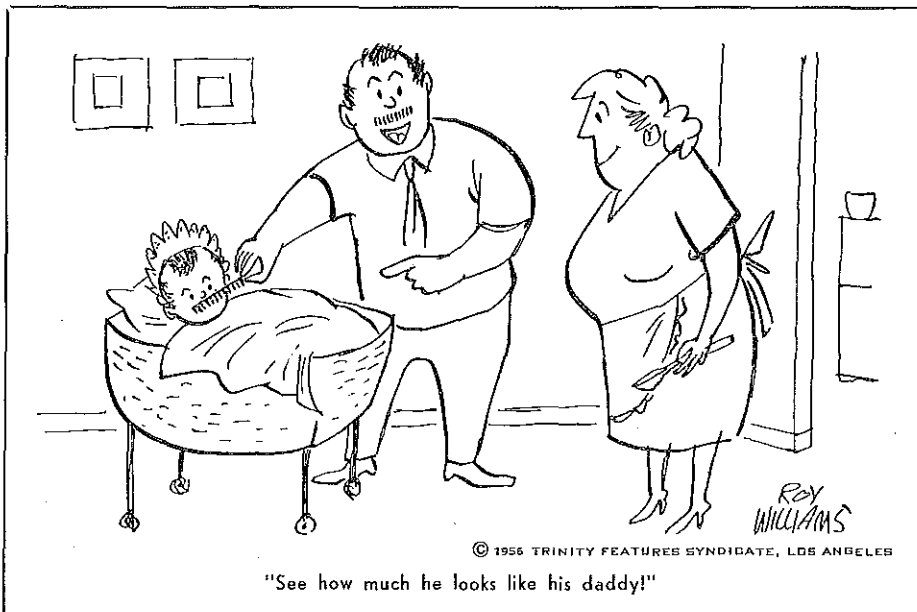
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and HETP, break down rapidly. However, PARATHION lasts longer and presents a distinct residue hazard. A new member of the family, Malathion, is less dangerous to animal life.

DDT is a unique compound. It is a nerve poison — lethal in sufficient quantity to animal and insect alike. DDT is the least water soluble chemical known, but dissolves easily in fats. This properly accounts for part of its effectiveness as an insect poison. It penetrates the hard, waxy, water-repellant covering of insects as though there were no barrier present. DDT is very slowly broken down. A test plot of ground treated eight years ago still retains 40% of the original application. Repeated dusting or spraying therefore results in marked accumulation of this compound in the soil. Most of our farm land is now contaminated with this and other compounds and will so remain for years even though the use of DDT were to be discontinued tomorrow. What is more, DDT residues become incorporated in the leaves of vegetables and the skin of fruits. *They can not be removed by washing.*

(Continued in October)

The fringes of soil fertility are also the fringes of nutrition. — William A. Albrecht

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"Let Us Spray!" (?)

(With Apologies to Leonard Wickenden)

by **Herbert Clarence White, A.B.**

Organiculturist

I am a confirmed and enthusiastic ORGANICULTURIST. During the past 13 years NO commercial fertilizer and NO poison dusts or sprays of any description have been used in my garden and orchard. "Build up the soil to a state of optimal



fertility — then *let nature take her course*," has been my motto since 1943. Of course, we all recognize that the above is a bit "idealistic," and in the case of most commercial crops, is quite "impractical" if not downright "hazardous" — especially to the pocket-book!

What shall we do?

During recent months there has been a lively discussion among some of the leading organic farmers, out here on the West Coast, regarding the place of insecticides in the Organic Program. The question boils down to this: In cases of emergency, when valuable crops are threatened by mildew; blight, or the ever-present aphid, etc., shall an effort be made to "save the crop," or shall the organic farmer fold his hands and let the "pests" take over? That is the problem these hard working men out on the land have to face. Often it means financial ruin if the crop is destroyed.

Divergence of opinion

There is so much "confusion" regarding this important subject that it seems appropriate to devote a little time to a "down-to-earth" discussion of the problem. To make our "lesson" practical, let's get down to actual "case histories."

For nearly six years now, I have lived in San Marcos, California, a suburb of Escondido — recognized as the center of Organic Farming in the West. Phil Arena and George Takagi, two leading producers of organic fruits and vegetables, are my friends and neighbors. I have visited their farms scores of times. I

have taken hundreds of photographs in black-and-white and in color of their growing crops, and have observed their cultural practices. They, like other growers, have their problems. I have watched these men closely as they have endeavored to solve their individual problems, each in his own way, and still remain within the "organic fold."

Solves mildew problem

When Arena's grapes are threatened with mildew, I have observed that Phil comes quickly to the rescue with a liberal application of an effective "control" in the form of *sulphur* dust. Without this dusting, Phil's beautiful crop of white Muscats would soon be hanging black and worthless on the vines. So, year after year, rather than see his valuable crop ruined, this practical and successful farmer saves his crop by DUSTING.

The aphid problem

On the nearby farm of George Takagi, who specializes in "truck crops," I have observed that when his broccoli or cauliflower, or other row crops are threatened by aphid, George comes quickly to the rescue with a dust called rotenone (a nicotinal dust of vegetable origin). The aphid disappear, the crop is harvested 30 days later, and George, like our friend Arena, has saved his "shirt" as well as his crop!

The \$64,000 question

What about Phil and George? Are these good men, both of whom are well-known ORGANICULTURISTS, violating the rules of organic agriculture by *dusting* their imperiled crops? Or are they safe within the "fold," even though they *do* use some "controls" in times of extreme emergency? That is the \$64,000 question; and we must call on leading

MALABAR TOMATOES

... In this tantalizing, mouth-watering photo we see firsthand what Louis Bromfield meant when he said: "Nothing but the BEST is put on sale at the stand." Notice how the luscious, ripening tomatoes rest on a deep mulch of hay, thus protecting them from the damp soil and consequent spoilage. The writer has never tasted more delicious, soul-satisfying tomatoes in all his life.



HERBERT CLARENCE WHITE

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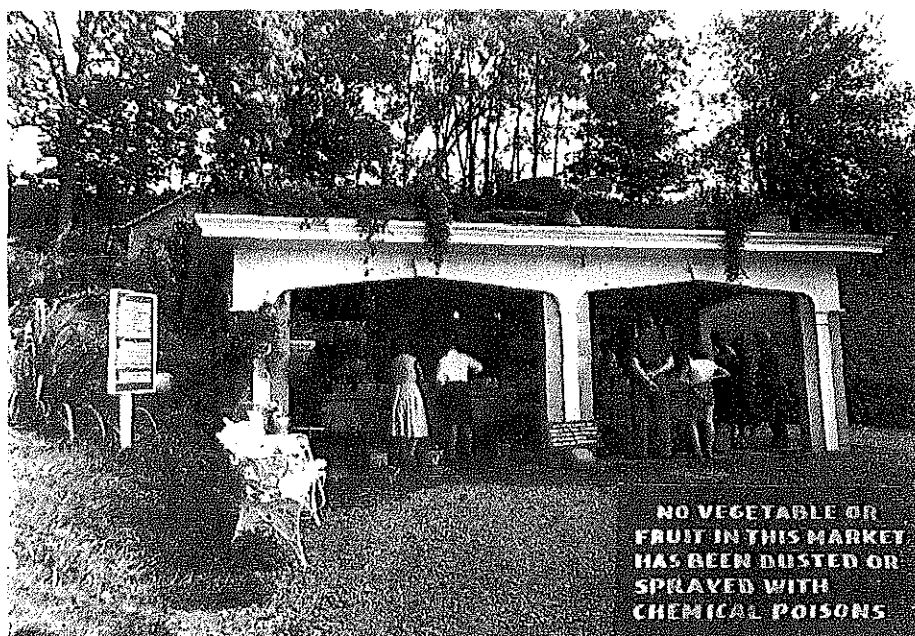
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HERBERT CLARENCE WHITE

MALABAR ROADSIDE MARKET . . . Here we see the attractive roadside market, showing the sign about dusts and sprays on the center pillar. Our insert shows a close-up of this same sign bearing the legend: "No vegetable or fruit in this market has been dusted or sprayed with chemical poisons."

agronomists and soil scientists to help solve our problem.

Two types of poison

First, we must all recognize that there are two distinct types of dusts and sprays used in the garden, and on the farm, to control various types of infestation. On the one hand, we have the extremely toxic *chemical* sprays such as parathion, chlordane, lindane, and D.D.T. and, on the other hand, there are available to gardeners and farmers the mild dusts and sprays of *vegetable* origin, such as rotenone, pyrethrum, and nicotine alkaloid, etc. As one scientific authority, in discussing the problem, has stated: "To put all poisons into the *same class* is to consider an air rifle as dangerous as a machine gun!"

No place in organic program

Of course, all are agreed that there is no place in the ORGANIC program for the hazardous, inorganic, synthetic poisons that are used so freely today in orthodox agriculture, and there still remains a question in some of the less informed minds about the use of the mild organic dusts and sprays, of which *rotenone* is a typical example.

Listen to the experts

I can think of no better authority on this delicate subject of *sprays* than my friend, the late Louis Bromfield, famous author and farmer of Mansfield, Ohio.

Malabar is perhaps the most famous farm in America today. For years, thousands of eager students of Agronomy and farmers from all over the world have flocked to this agricultural "Mecca"—to sit at the feet and absorb the profound learning of this pioneer soilbuilder. In chapter 14 of his monumental work, *From My Experience*, Bromfield tells about "The Roadside Market to End All Roadside Markets." In describing this new feature of the Malabar farm program, our noted "friend of the land" makes this comment:

"In addition to the attraction offered to many a vegetable buyer and gourmet by the *reduction in the use of dusts and sprays* and in the cases of many vegetables by their elimination altogether, the market stand has a strict rule that *noth-*

(Turn to page 30)

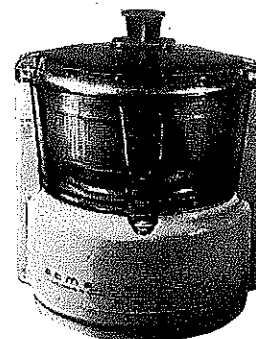
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Reviews and Comments

by Eugene Schiff, R.Ph.

DEATH RATE AND VITAMIN INTAKE — A four-year follow-up study was made of 577 conventionally "healthy" people over 50 years of age. By the fourth year, 49 had died and others were lost to the study for various reasons; 306 completed the full schedule of final examination. Among other considerations on mortality, the report stated:

There seemed to be relationships between mortality and the intake of vitamin A, niacin, and vitamin C. The death rate was greater among subjects with a low in-



take of these vitamin factors than it was among subjects with a higher intake.

In subjects with low intake of vitamin A (less than 5000 International Units) the incidence of nervous system, circulatory system, and respiratory diseases was high and the incidence of digestive and musculoskeletal diseases was low. Those with greater vitamin intake had a low incidence of nervous system disease and circulatory disease, had the group average of respiratory and digestive system disease, but a high incidence of musculoskeletal system illness. Low vitamin B intake (less than the M.D.R. a day) seemed to be associated with nervous system disease and circulatory disease.

Disease of the circulatory system and the digestive system were associated with low intake of vitamin C (less than 50 mg. per day). Among persons with a high intake of ascorbic acid (110 mg. and over) there was a low incidence of nervous system and circulatory system disease.

Chope, H. S.: Relation of nutrition to health in aging persons. A four-year follow-up of a study in San Mateo County, California. Med. 81:335-338, November, 1954.

Schiff comment: No conclusions should be drawn from these stated relationships except that there is urgent need to carry on further intensive research into the effect of nutrition on the health status of persons over 50. The reason we hasten to come to a final conclusion here is due to the fact that not too many articles of like nature have been published. Our own feeling is that the intake of extra vitamins can be helpful in preventing deficiencies in more persons than generally realized; and thus, by evading clinical and sub-clinical deficiency diseases, a regime of extra vitamins—or foods rich in protective vitamins—may be influencing better health and longer life.

★ ★ ★

THE COMMON COLD, FIGHTING IT WITH VITAMINS—The author reports his observations on vitamin therapy for the common cold. A combination of vitamin B-Complex tablets (three times a day) and vitamin C (200 mg. every four hours) consistently seem to abort the common cold in 24 to 48 hours. Smaller doses can be taken prophylactically.

"I gave a small series of cases a course of the two vitamins, and a series of controls were given dummy tablets. Day-to-day records were made, and nose and throat swabs were taken as a routine at the first inspection. In all cases no pathogenic organisms were demonstrated. Of the 12 re-

corded cases given genuine tablets, 11 were fit on the third day, one case went home and was not seen for two weeks.

"Of the 10 cases given dummy tablets, five were considerably worse on the sixth day, one was fit on the fourth day, and one was fit on the second day. The other three did not attend again.

"Other cases have been treated but not recorded, and the impression is favorable when compared with other forms of treatment. Although I can only offer my own observations as proof, the results have been so dramatic that I feel others should be given a chance to try it."

Woolstone, A. S.: Treatment of the Common Cold, Brit. M. J. 2: 1290, Nov. 27, 1954.

Schiff comment: My comment here is that subsequent to the report of the British investigators in 1954, the Citrus Growers Exchange of California found that the addition of bioflavonoids, as found in the pulp portion of citrus fruits, in conjunction with vitamin C, was more helpful than vitamin C alone. The bioflavonoids seemed to increase the permeability of the blood vessels and thus increased resistance.

"Let Us Spray!" (?)

(From page 29)

ing but the BEST is put on sale at the stand. The best is not necessarily the biggest fruit or the biggest vegetable as those who know and like to eat have long since understood. It is the flavor, the tenderness, and for the nutritionist, the vitamin and mineral content which in turn go with good flavor and good nutritive qualities."

At the close of the chapter, the author, thinking of the possibilities of expansion of the roadside market says: "It is possible we shall end up with a good-sized mail-order business on our hands, but the roadside market—with the big spring flowing through it—will always be the show-case and the trade-mark, and the aim will always be QUALITY for those happy people who like food and know how to eat!"

A glimpse of the man

In the foregoing paragraphs we catch a little glimpse of the honesty, the sincerity, and the forthrightness of "Mr. B," as he was affectionately called by his associates on the farm. He was not the type of man to "fudge" or "cheat" or "deceive" in his dealings with others.

One year ago it was my high privilege to visit Malabar, and to become personally acquainted with Louis Bromfield and other members of the farm family.

(Turn to page 43)

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"Let Us Spray!" (?)

(From page 30)

It is an experience I shall always treasure. As "Mr. B" proudly showed me the new roadside market, with its splendid display of succulent spring vegetables, I was greeted by a large, attractively-painted sign bearing this legend: "NO VEGETABLE OR FRUIT IN THIS MARKET HAS BEEN DUSTED OR SPRAYED WITH CHEMICAL POISONS." (See accompanying photo.)

No inorganic dusts, sprays

On inquiry I found that an effort was being made at Malabar to eliminate as far as possible ALL dusts and sprays, and "when visitors asked questions they found that no inorganic dusts and sprays, and no arsenicals were ever used." But that did not mean that NO CONTROLS were ever used in cases of emergency.

"One of our constant struggles at Malabar," commented my host, "is to avoid becoming kidnapped by extremists and cranks. We are not now and never have been extremists or cranks! If we find that it is necessary to use an insecticide or a fungicide, we use them, although we will always choose the ORGANIC FORMS of rotenone, nicotine and pyrethrum — all of which are comparatively harmless to animals and humans."

Problems solved

In speaking of their problems at Malabar in connection with growing melons, cantaloupe, cucumbers and squash, Bromfield writes as follows on page 227 of his fascinating book: "This general family of plants is one that is especially susceptible to bacterial wilt, which is one of the most difficult diseases to control and which, apparently, is distributed by the beetle during its first attack on the seedling. For this reason, a rotenone dust is sometimes used almost immediately to check any beetle attack and consequently a spreading of the disease. "At this point it might be observed

that at Malabar we are inclined to be reluctant and to hold back in the use of any dust or spray until absolutely necessary, even in the case of such mild vegetable poisons as rotenone, nicotine and pyrethrum. These may be virtually harmless to humans and to animals, but they are known to have a strong toxic effect upon insects and, in the case of rotenone, even upon fish.

"Likewise at Malabar we do not claim that we can protect, through the soil, plants which are attacked by the larval form of certain butterflies and moths — such as those larvae which attack cabbage, tomato and tobacco plants. These larvae are born of eggs deposited by butterflies and moths which themselves never attack or eat the foliage of these plants. The larvae are left willy-nilly where the eggs are deposited to feed upon what is at hand and the most suited to their tastes. It is apparent that the parent butterfly or moth is attracted by some means, perhaps by a sense of smell, to deposit her eggs on or near the plants which are particularly suited to the tastes and needs of the larvae. However, we have found that these do not exist in vast numbers in the Malabar plots, and that a single light dust of rotenone is likely to prove completely effective in exterminating them!"

Phil and George exonerated?

As one of America's most successful farmers, Louis Bromfield served for many years as vice-president of and spokesman for FRIENDS OF THE LAND, a national organization fostering soil and water conservation here in these United States. He was widely regarded as an authority on things agricultural. Could his farm policy in using rotenone and

other harmless dusts and sprays in cases of emergency set an example for organic farmers elsewhere?

In the light of the above, where do our Escondido friends, George Takagi and Phil Arena stand? Are they guilty of a "breach" of organic etiquette? Or are they within the organic fold, even though they come quickly to the rescue of ailing crops with rotenone and sulphur dust in times of trouble and emergency? In Louis Bromfield, do these friends of mine have a shining example of what to do; or are they being led into dangerous and forbidden "by-paths"?

Next month we shall present the testimony of three outstanding scientists — each a leader in one of the four national organizations dedicated to the basic principles of Organic Culture as taught by the late Sir Albert Howard. They will "pass judgment" on Phil and George, and incidentally on the spray program of our departed hero, Louis Bromfield — something I would never dare to do!

(Continued next month)

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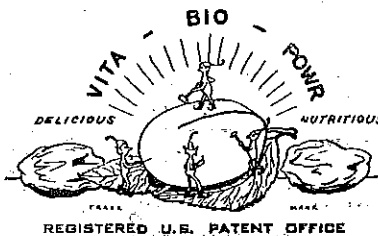
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