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## DR. PAUL MUELLER AND DDT — A SCIENTIFIC SUCCESS STORY.

Basle.—If you visit the research laboratories of the J. R. Geigy chemical plant in this frontier city in Switzerland any time between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. — chances are you will find the 1948 Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine hard at work.

Dr. Paul Mueller, a slight man of 48, has a warm smile that puts you at ease right away. Soft spoken, modest, he still can't get over the fact that he was named for the \$44,000 prize by the Caroline Institute in Stockholm for his discovery of DDT, the insect-killer that has saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

"Surprised," Dr. Mueller laughs. "No one was more surprised than I was. Imagine, a chemist receiving the Nobel prize in medicine."

Dr. Mueller leans over backwards to point out that like so many other great scientific "success stories," his research with DDT had a surprise twist. It was aimed first for agricultural use, to kill crop-destroying insects. That it would save countless human beings from death and disease was discovered many months after it was initially used in Switzerland in '39.

DDT — short for the tongue twisting name dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane — was synthesized by a student Othmar Zeidler way back in 1874. But it was never put to any practical use. Then, 1935, Dr. Mueller took over the task of discovering an efficient pest exterminator to fight insects, particularly the Colorado beetle which at that time was raising havoc with Swiss potato crops.

From his first efforts a product called Mitin was developed. Dr. Mueller found that it contained a substance called diphenyl-trichloroethane that poisoned certain insects by mere contact. Its action was particularly marked on flies.

But the overall efficiency of the product was far from satisfactory. Dr. Mueller and his staff at the Geigy plant went to work. They conducted one experiment after another, both chemical and biological, over a period of several years. Dr. Mueller smiles as he tells you now: "We experimented with so many droves of insects and flies in the laboratory that my friends used to call me the fly miller."

Along with his other headaches, Dr. Mueller had to convince many reputable experts that his line of investigation was the right one. The basic substance he worked with killed rather slowly. But it had the enormous advantage of remaining active for longer than any which had preceded it. "Yes, Dr. Mueller says,

"stubbornness helped, too. I stuck to my original plan of action."

Finally, he developed the most active variant of the original compound: DDT. In accordance with Swiss law, extensive tests were conducted at the agricultural research stations at Oerlikon and Wädenswil for one year. They were a thumping success.

In May, 1940, the first Swiss patent was applied for. Two years later DDT appeared commercially in Switzerland under the trade name "Gerasol" and in a related plant disinfectant and insecticide called Neocid."

United States and British scientists, as well as the military, joined with the Swiss in finding the many other uses of DDT — the uses that won it the Nobel Prize for being of "inestimable value for the benefit of humanity."

Under licence from the Geigy Company, the United States manufactured DDT in vast quantities. And just in time.

In 1943, a threatening epidemic of spotted fever in Naples was halted when the United States Army dusted the clothes of 1,500,000 civilians with DDT. It was similarly effective in Greece and Egypt. Refugees flooding over frontiers as they fled from the Nazis were "deloused with DDT, eliminating the awful threat of typhus. In malarial areas, especially in the South Pacific, thousands of casualties were prevented through DDT's effectiveness against the anopheles mosquito.

Dr. Mueller was born in Olten, an industrial town in the rolling hill country between Basle and Lucerne. After taking his Doctor's Degree at the University of Basle in 1925, he joined the Geigy firm, and at 25 was assistant manager in charge of research on synthetic tanning substances. After making several important discoveries in this field, he turned to the study of disinfectants.

To-day Dr. Mueller lives in a pleasant suburban home in Basle with his wife and three children, Heinrich, 20; Niklaus, 16; and Greti, 14. Like most Swiss, Dr. Mueller enjoys spending as much time as he can with his family. But according to Mrs. Mueller, he is likely at any moment to leave a chess game with one of the boys and disappear in his own home laboratory where assorted experiments are always under way.

In 1945, Dr. Mueller visited the United States on a scientific study trip for two months. When he returned to Switzerland and crossed the frontier at Basle the Border control authorities greeted him warmly — and sprayed his clothes with DDT.

*Amerikanische Schweizer Zeitung.*

## PIANO — RECITAL.

We have much pleasure to direct the attention of our readers to a Piano-Recital by our compatriot, Albert Ferber, which will take place on Thursday, January 20th, 1949, at Wigmore Hall (See Advert.)

Albert Ferber enjoys a great reputation in the musical world of this country, and his recitals in the past have been greatly enjoyed.

He has, on numerous occasions, put his services at the disposal of the Swiss Colony at various functions, and by attending his recital our countrymen have a splendid opportunity to show him their appreciation for his always ready help.

We sincerely hope, that Albert Ferber will have a "full house" on the 20th inst.

