San Antonio is experiencing its most serious epidemic of poliomyelitis. In San Antonio and the surrounding areas there have been 85 cases with 11 deaths. Beginning early in May, cases began to appear with disturbing frequency in the northern sections of the city. A good part of the cases early in the epidemic were between 14 and 20 years old and the mortality was rather alarming. Of the first several cases about one-half of them died. Of the total 85 cases, 71 are Anglo-Americans and 14 are Latin-Americans. So far no case has occurred among negroes.

On May 11 the Board of Health held a special meeting and imposed rather drastic restrictions. These forbade attendance of individuals under 21 years of age at any public gatherings such as churches, schools, theatres, and other places where they would normally congregate. The age limit was subsequently dropped to 18 and then to 15 where it now stands.

In addition, widespread use of DDT was begun. The first step consisted of dusting the involved areas of the city from the air. Also the creeks, of which we have many, were dusted. As soon as it could be obtained a fogger, manufactured by the Todd Shipbuilding Company, was put into operation. This is a very economical and a very effectual method of DDT spraying. A pressure spray was placed at each of the garbage dumps. These dumps comprised one of San Antonio's greatest health hazards. They were poorly controlled and flies were present in tremendous numbers. Several crews with hand pressure sprays were utilized to spray in the neighborhood of each case of the disease. As a consequence of these combined efforts, there are practically no flies or other insects in San Antonio. Even at the garbage dumps it is unusual to see more than a few flies and these are probably brought in on the garbage trucks.

The third phase of the campaign had to do with a general cleanup of San Antonio and its adjacent suburbs. The Street Department was particularly active in taking care of alleys, vacant lots, and such areas. The Park Department was cooperative in cleaning up unsightly and unsanitary spots in our many parks. Each householder, by radio, through the newspapers, and by a special pamplet, was instructed as to the best methods of using DDT on his premises. He was urged to use DDT in his
home and particularly in and around his garbage cans. He was urged to clean out trash, tin cans, and other places which might encourage breeding of flies, mosquitoes, or rodents. In this general cleanup campaign Mr. C. J. Crampton, manager of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, gave up his routine duties and devoted his entire time to co-ordinating the cleanup activities of the several city departments and of the individual householders.

Special attention has been given to hazards involved in sewage disposal. The sewer system of San Antonio is wholly inadequate and has been for many years. Worse than this, large areas are unsewered. Here cesspools and surface toilets are used. Of the latter, there are several thousand. When necessary, these toilets were repaired and free use of kerosene resorted to. Special illustrated pamphlets, printed in English and Spanish, were of much value in this direction.

Early in May an epidemiological committee was created. This was composed of Col. H. R. Livesay, Col. Charles F. Craig, Dr. W. M. Dorbandt, and several others. This committee has held daily meetings in which each case with all obtainable data was discussed. Tables were compiled. The Chamber of Commerce loaned to this committee its statistician and every possible epidemiological angle has been surveyed.

The Board of Health and the Poliomyelitis Committee of the Bexar County Medical Society have attempted to assemble most of the cases at the Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital, the City-County Hospital. Here two wards are maintained by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, to which organization too much credit cannot be given. Here expert medical attention and careful nursing are provided. Special nursing care and iron lungs are available when necessary.

As to the results obtained so far, no dogmatic statement can be made. Restrictions were imposed on May 11 and it was at least a week later before the use of DDT was widespread and before cleaning of individual premises was begun. The week following May 11, there were 13 cases; the next week there were 13 cases; the third week, 10 cases; the fourth week, 8 cases; the fifth week, 8 cases; the sixth week, 4 cases; the seventh week, 8 cases; the eighth week, 4 cases. It is very unusual to
see a fly or mosquito in San Antonio. The streets, alleys, and back yards of the city have had more than a face-washing; they have had a good general scrubbing. We feel that our efforts have been rewarded directly in the control of this epidemic. In addition, there are certain public health by-products which at present cannot be measured, but we hope that with the passing of time they will prove of immeasurable value. Already the infant diarrhoea death rate is markedly less than last year. It is much to be hoped that our high tuberculosis death rate will diminish and that other infectious diseases, even the common cold, may be less prevalent.

It is believed that much eventual good will come to San Antonio out of this unhappy experience, although the sacrifice of life and limb has been high. San Antonio, as have most cities of Texas, has grown careless in matters of public health. This situation is a part of the postwar let-down, but more largely it is based on the apathy and indifference of the past which have permitted poor sanitary conditions to continue and inadequate disposal of sewage and garbage to go uncorrected. San Antonio realizes the gravity of the present epidemic and has accepted her responsibility seriously. If in truth a clean city is a healthy city, then San Antonio will have no epidemic of poliomyelitis in 1947.