

ARTICLES

DDT HAS A NAMESAKE IN DUTCH GUIANA (AN APPLICATION OF DDT TO COGNOMINATION)

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The Djoeka negro boy you see pictured here bears a name his family had never heard a year ago. He was born December 2, 1946, in Petro Ondro, a Djoeka village 120 miles by jungle from Paramaribo, Suriname (Dutch Guiana), and on that day was named DDT. I wrote the name down that way for his father, but the father didn't think three letters were enough for such an important name. So to please him I spelled it Daydaytay, which more nearly fits the Djoeka pronunciation of the name of the great insecticide.

Here is how it happened.

During the past year, by arrangement of an American mining company we have been testing DDT sprays in the vicinity of Moengo, Suriname. We have been trying to find how DDT will work as a means of killing mosquitoes and thus controlling malaria. To get rough estimates of how many mosquitoes were living in the vicinity before and after we applied the sprays, we used a light trap and a stable trap. The light trap is a cylinder of metal enclosing an electric lamp and a fan. Mosquitoes attracted by the lighted lamp enter it and then are forced by the fan into a bottle of cyanide. The stable trap encloses a living animal to which mosquitoes are attracted. After tanking up on the animal's blood they rest on the inside of the screen and cannot find their way out. The local boys making the tests also collected mosquitoes on their persons for 30 minutes at a time. (No, they did

not get malaria because they watched the attackers and picked each one off before it bit.)

Between my first visit to Moengo, in March 1946, and my second, in January 1947, this work was handled by Bill Asgerali, a British-Indian boy. Each month Bill traveled up through the jungle from Moengo to Petro Ondro, carrying a light trap and a battery to operate it and leading a calf to bait the stable trap.

Just before dark on the evening of December 2, Bill arrived in the village of Petro Ondro to hear considerable noise. There was much excitement around one of the thatched-covered huts. He learned that a Djoeka woman had been in labor for two days in the hut. Evil spirits were preventing the baby from being born. The father, relatives, and friends had finally decided upon a dance as a means of frightening away these spirits. As Bill approached, they immediately hit upon the idea of enlisting the calf to assist them. The calf was the first one ever seen in the village. A strange animal, such as a calf, should prove very effective against the local evil ones, they thought. So Bill and the calf joined in the dance and procession around the hut. After a short time Bill had to leave to set up the traps. When he returned later to the ceremonies, he was told by the father that now all was well. The evil spirits had been chased away by the calf. A boy had been born. The father and relatives were greatly pleased and announced that the



FIG. 1. Daydaytay



FIG. 2. Daydaytay's birthplace in Petro Ondro, Suriname, South America.

baby would be called Asgerali in honor of the aid Bill had given.

Now Bill is not so dumb. After some quick thinking, he decided it might not be advantageous in after years for a Djoeka boy named Asgerali to be seen around Moengo. After all, he had been spending two nights each month for many months in this village. He quickly said, "No, don't name baby Asgerali. Name boy after work I do. Name boy DDT." What could be more appropriate?

When I visited Petro Ondro two months later I learned the story from Bill and Bachraman, DDT's father. So far as I was able to determine, DDT is the only individual in the village whose birthdate is known. I took these pictures of DDT and his parents and the hut where he was born, and was duly appointed DDT's godfather.



FIG. 3. Daydayay's family. From left to right: his sister, Sajhi; his mother, Belieka; his brother, Bangaulie; and his father, Bachraman.