April 12, 1955 ... 
An important day in the history of poliomyelitis

On April 12, 1955, Dr. Thomas Francis, Jr., director of the University of Michigan's Poliomyelitis Vaccine Evaluation Center, announced the results of the Salk polio vaccine trials at the Rackham Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Starting at 10:20 a.m., Francis meticulously laid out the scientific evidence gathered from more than 1,829,916 children in 217 areas of 44 states. Francis spoke for an hour and forty minutes before “he made it clear that the Salk vaccine has been proved an effective weapon....”

Exhibit at the Smithsonian 

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History will mark the 50th anniversary of the polio vaccine with a new exhibition – “Whatever Happened to Polio?”

Scheduled to open on April 12, 2005, the year-long display will tell the story of the polio epidemic in the United States, the vaccine development, current world efforts to stop polio transmission and the story of survivors and the influences they have had on American society. The exhibition also will explore some of the changes in American medicine in the 20th century and the impact a disease can have on society as a whole. The show draws upon the themes of community activism, human resilience, the development and use of medical technologies and medical science, and competition and rivalry in science.

The exhibition is designed according to principles of Universal Design, a design aesthetic of seven principles with roots in the disability accessibility movement, and will exceed current federal standards for accessibility.

A companion website will be available in April: http://americanhistory.si.edu/polio

Other commemorations by post-polio organizations

International Rehabilitation Center for Polio at Spaulding Framingham, Massachusetts, is sponsoring Celebrating Life: A Reception for Polio Survivors on April 9, 2005, 2:30-5:30 pm. RSVP to Anna Rubin, agrubin@partners.org or 508-872-2200, ext. 241.

Polio Survivors Association (Richard@polioassociation.org), Downey, California, is working with a shopping center company near Rancho Los Amigos, one of the original respiratory polio wards, to mount an exhibit in several centers during the month of April.

Polio Survivors and Associates (raytaylor@mindspring.com), a fellowship of Rotary International is planning a float in Rotary International’s Centennial Parade to be held in Chicago, June 18, 2005.

Ontario March of Dimes (KDowds@dimes.on.ca) is planning several events on April 12th and a special nationwide commemoration on May 8th. This date is distinctive in Canadian polio history because it is the 50th anniversary of the decision by Paul Martin, Sr. (Minister of Health) to continue the vaccinations in his country after the Cutter incident in the US. The vaccine,
Post-Polio Health International remembers the survivors of polio.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the development of the Salk vaccine, Post-Polio Health International chose to honor those for whom the vaccine was too late. Since its inception in 1958, the organization has focused its resources and efforts on improving the health and independence of polio survivors and ventilator users and is committed to continuing this practice.

Artist Deborah Goodwin and polio survivor Mickie McGraw teamed up to create a visual reminder that millions of polio survivors are citizens of the world community who are in need of information, advocacy and research.

*The nautilus shell represents an external stillness and static mobility. Contained and protected within is a rich and active life force that radiates outward from the central creation point of its spiral to reach beyond the limits of its boundaries.*

*The butterfly depicts the ephemeral, unique beauty of each life that begins encased within a cocoon and emerges in its time, transformed, to color the world and give wings to the future.*

*Together they celebrate our human potential to transcend limitations. They commemorate the 50th anniversary of the development of the Salk polio vaccine, which forever changed our lives and our future.*

The design, in shades of blue and yellow, and the text have been printed on note cards. To help PHI remind the world of this anniversary and to support our work, order your set of 10 note cards for $13.50 (s&h included). Order online at www.post-polio.org or send $13.50 to PHI, 4207 Lindell Boulevard, #110, Saint Louis, MO 63108-2915.

made at Cutter Laboratories in California, had caused, not prevented, polio, and the US halted all production and immunization on May 7th. The senior Martin is the father of the current Prime Minister of Canada and polio survivor, Paul Martin, Jr.

The Ontario March of Dimes is coordinating “Polio Vaccine: The First 50 Years and Beyond,” a conference of the International Association for Biologicals (www.iabspolio.com) to be held in Toronto, June 5-7, 2005. ★

PHI will post a calendar of commemoration events on www.post-polio.org. Send details to webmaster@post-polio.org.

Watch for news from the following groups planning commemoration activities.

**University of Michigan School of Public Health**, the site of the historic announcement (www.sph.umich.edu/about/polioannouncement.html)

**University of Pittsburgh**, the location of the laboratory of Jonas Salk, MD (www.pitt.edu)

**Salk Institute for Biological Studies**, founded by Jonas Salk, MD, in the 1960s to explore questions about the basic principles of life (www.salk.edu)

**March of Dimes**, the major source of funds for development of the vaccine (www.marchofdimes.com/polio)

**Rotary International**, the worldwide service organization that has committed $600 million dollars and thousands of volunteer hours to make the world polio-free (www.rotary.org)