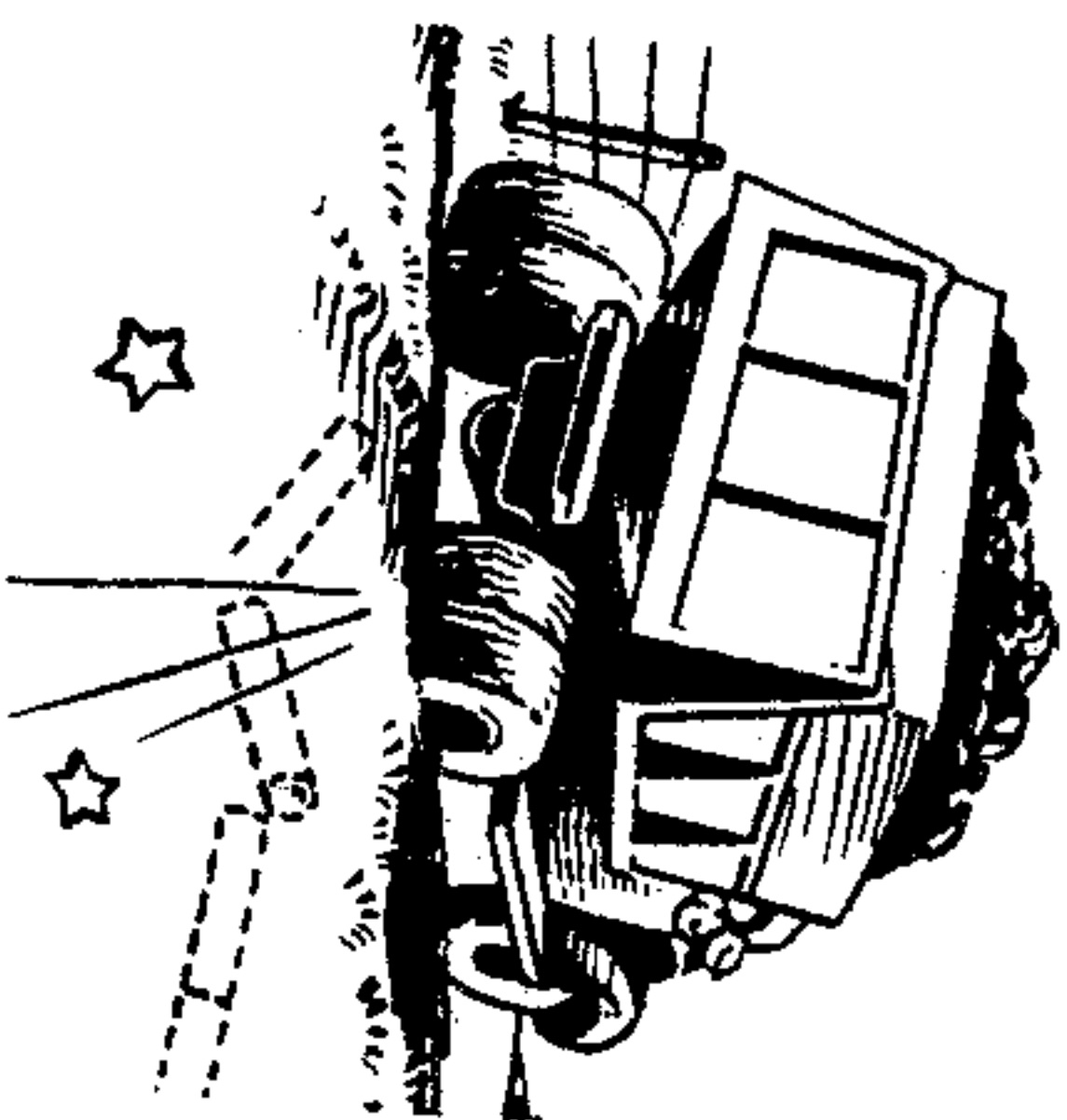


There are no known chemicals, yeasts, bacteria, enzymes or other substances capable of eliminating or reducing the solids and scum in a septic tank so that periodic cleaning is unnecessary. The addition of such products is not necessary for the proper functioning of a septic tank soil absorption system.

To facilitate cleaning and maintenance, the homeowner should have a diagram of his septic tank system, showing the location of the house, the septic tank manholes, the piping, and the soil absorption system. The last page of this leaflet contains space for keeping a tank cleaning record. This information should be kept on the premises, regardless of a change in occupancy.

Septic tanks and soil absorption systems frequently are damaged when heavy trucks or other equipment drive over them. An accurate diagram of the system enables the homeowner to keep heavy vehicles away from the critical area. A line of cast iron pipe instead of tile should be installed under any necessary crossings for heavy vehicles.

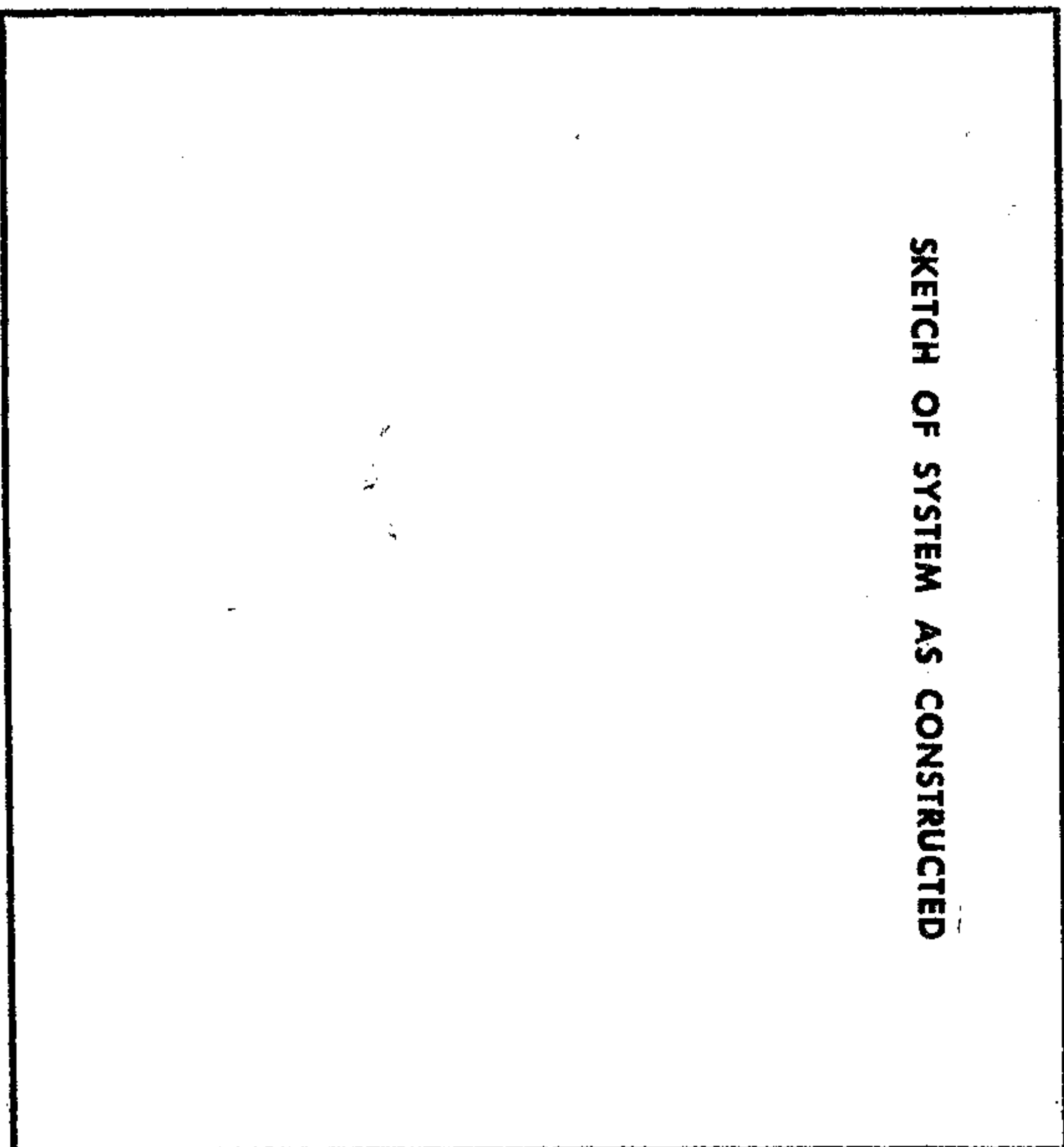


Neglect of the septic tank, however, is the most frequent cause of damage to soil absorption systems. When the tank is not cleaned, solids build up until they are carried into the underground soil absorption system, where they block the flow of the liquid into the soil. When this happens, the soil absorption system must be rebuilt—a costly undertaking. The precautions of periodic inspection and cleaning of the tank prevent this needless expense and work.

This leaflet is a guide for the individual homeowner's care and maintenance of his septic tank-soil absorption system. For more detailed information concerning special conditions in your area, consult your local or State health department. Public Health Service Publication No. 526, "Manual of Septic Tank Practice" may also be helpful in providing additional information, including cleaning procedures for septic tank systems designed in accordance with this manual. It can be secured from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402 at a cost of 40 cents a copy.

*Nothing in this pamphlet should be taken as an implication that either the Public Health Service or the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare recommends or approves specific contractors or servicemen.*

**SKETCH OF SYSTEM AS CONSTRUCTED**



**TANK INSPECTION RECORD**

Date	Cost	Contractor	Description of Work

Public Health Service Publication No. 73  
 (Revised 1963, 1967)  
 Health Information Series No. 96  
 U.S. Department of  
**HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE**  
 Public Health Service

\* U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1967 O-267-556  
 For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 5 cents; \$2.50 per 100

**SEPTIC TANK CARE**

DIV. OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
 CITY/COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
 100 CENTRAL AVE  
 CHEYENNE, WY 82002

# SEPTIC TANK CARE

Most of the water used in our homes only carries off wastes. Drinking, cooking, running the garbage grinder, and washing the family car use less water than doing the dishes, bathing, and flushing the toilet. Wastes carried away by water from kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry rooms should be collected in sewers and carried away to a community sewage treatment plant or central disposal point operated and maintained by trained operators to insure proper control.

Individual septic tank-soil absorption systems are most frequently used in rural areas and in some unsewered suburban residential areas. A septic tank system will serve a home satisfactorily only if it is properly designed, installed, and adequately maintained. Even a good system which does not have proper care and attention may become a nuisance, and a burdensome expense.

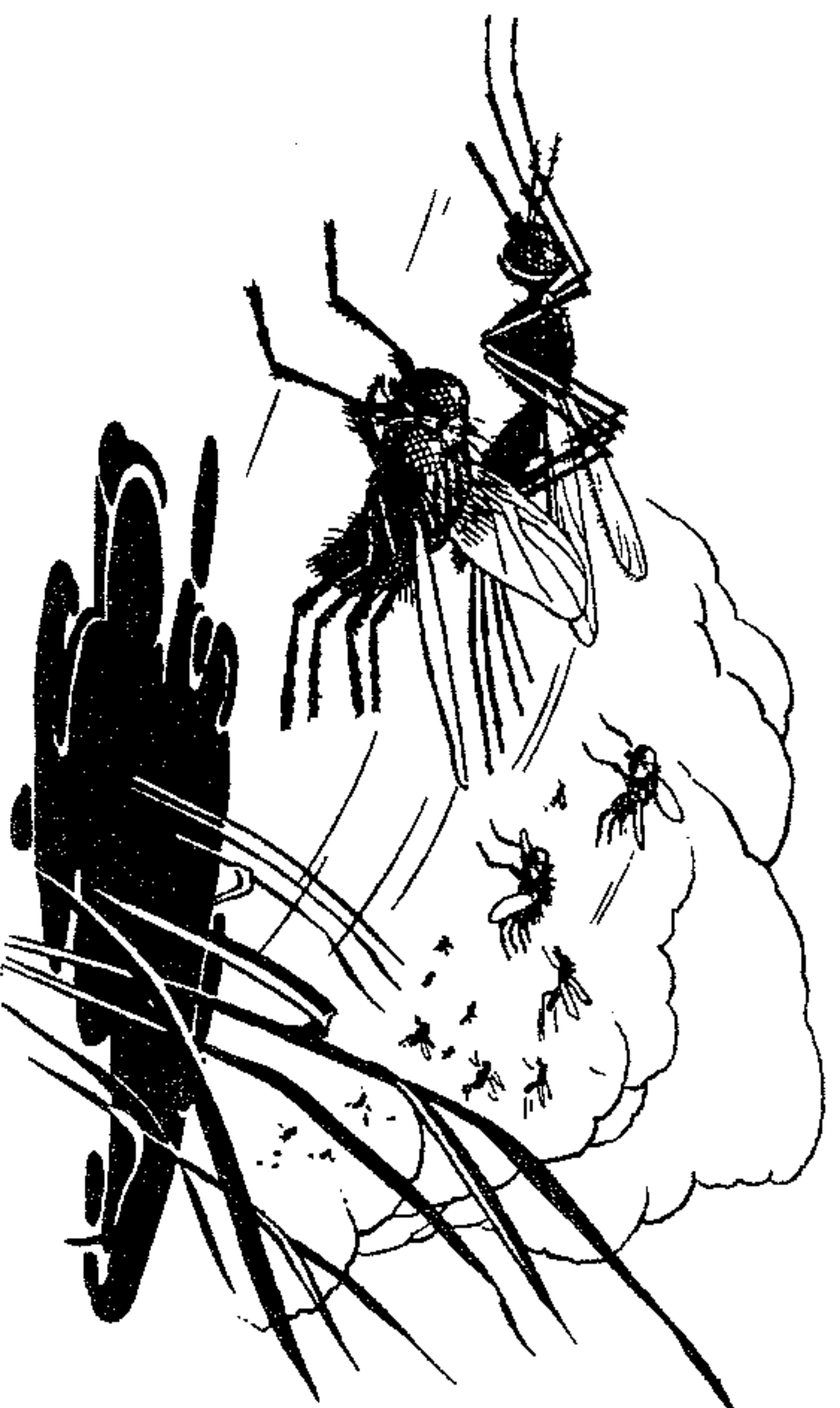
Remember, a septic tank-soil absorption system which does not function properly frequently becomes a neighborhood health hazard. To obtain satisfactory service, the homeowner must know something about the design, operation and maintenance of his own septic tank system.

Where it is impossible to connect to a community sewer, the home buyer should satisfy himself that his septic tank soil absorption system is properly designed and installed to serve the anticipated number of occupants of the house. He should also be sure that the system is located where it is not likely to endanger water supply systems, and that the absorption system is capable of disposing of liquid wastes under year-round weather conditions. This information is usually available at your local health department.

When septic tank systems are improperly designed or maintained, liquid wastes may overflow to the ground surface or the plumbing in the home may often be stopped up. These overflows not only create offensive odors but are also a health hazard. Sewage may contain dysentery, infectious hepatitis, typhoid and para-typhoid or other infectious disease organisms. Pounded sewage creates breeding places for some kinds of mosquitoes and other insects.

The purpose of a septic tank is primarily to condition household wastes, including water from the laundry and the bath, discarded food scraps, and body wastes so that it may be more readily percolated into the subsoil of the ground. The normal use of bleaches, detergents, soaps and drain cleaners does not harm or interfere with the operation of the system.

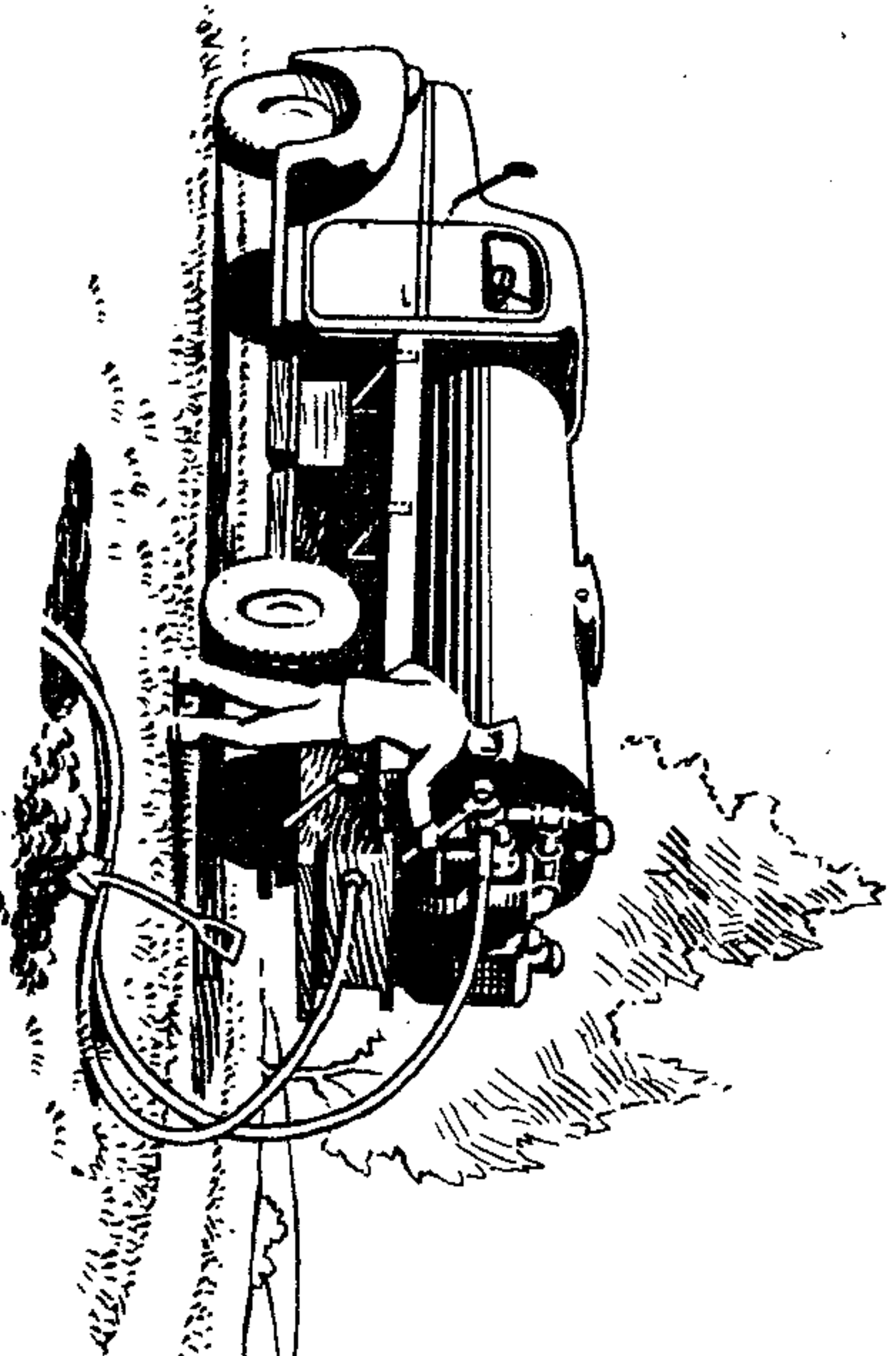
A septic tank is a water tight structure in which organic solids are decomposed by natural bacterial



processes. The flow of sewage is slowed in its passage through the tank so that larger solids settle to the bottom and accumulate as sludge. Grease and lighter particles rise to the surface and form scum.

The partially treated sewage, or effluent, flowing from the tank still contains large numbers of harmful bacteria and organic matter in a finely divided state or in solution. Foul odors, unsightly conditions and health hazards will develop if this effluent is ponded on the surface of the ground or carried away in open ditches. Final disposal of the effluent in a subsurface soil absorption system is necessary to avoid these problems.

The bacteria present in a tank are able to thrive in the absence of oxygen. Such decomposition in the absence of air is called "septic," which led to the naming of the tank. Solids and scum are digested and reduced to a smaller volume by the bacteria in the tank. However, a residue of inert solid material remains which must be stored during the interval between tank cleanings.



The frequency of cleaning depends on the size of the septic tank and the number of people it serves. When a garbage grinder is used, more frequent cleaning will be required. With ordinary use and care, a septic

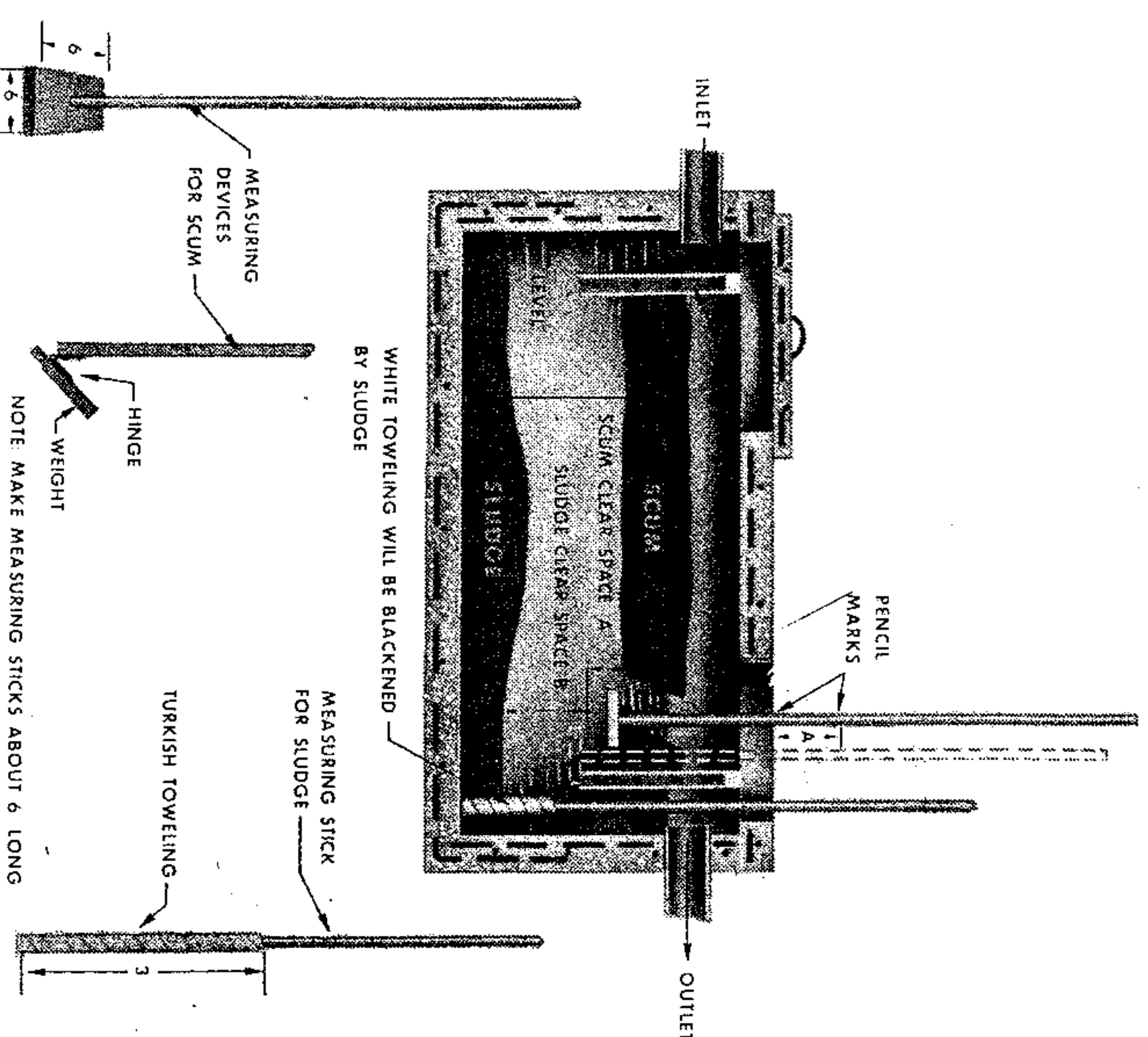
tank usually requires cleaning every 2 or 3 years. However, in many cases septic tanks can be satisfactorily operated even longer. The homeowner can make measurements and decide for himself when his tank needs cleaning. When the bottom of the scum is within 3" of the bottom of the outlet device or the top of the sludge is within the limits of the following table the tank should be cleaned. The accumulated solids are ordinarily pumped out by companies that make a business of cleaning septic tanks. Your neighbors or your local health department usually know which local companies do this work satisfactorily. The solids removed should be disposed of in a manner approved by your local health department to avoid obnoxious odors and health hazards.

## ALLOWABLE SLUDGE ACCUMULATION

Liquid Capacity of Tank, Gallons (a)	Liquid Depth			
	2 1/2 feet	3 feet	4 feet	5 feet
750	5	6	10	13
900	4	4	7	10
1,000	4	4	6	8

(a) Tanks smaller than listed will require more frequent cleaning.

## DEVICES FOR MEASURING SLUDGE AND SCUM



NOTE: CLEAN WHEN A IS 3 OR LESS AND WHEN B IS WITHIN THE LIMITS SPECIFIED