November 17, 1986

Professor Carlos Chagas
Pontifical Academy of Sciences
Casina Pio IV
Vatican City
ROME

Dear Carlos:

It is difficult to find a way to say thank you in a way that will properly express my reactions to the wonderful stay in Rome and the Vatican. I am of course deeply grateful for the honor that you and the Pope and the other members of the Academy gave to me. But more than that, you made membership in the Academy of much more significance than the honor itself. Your leadership, which is unique in many aspects, makes the Academy an extraordinary body, one that uses its privileges to exemplify the ways that scientists can contribute positively to the world and its peoples. You have also made the Academy a scientifically stimulating experience. The selection of lecturers assured that all of us would receive the kind of broad scientific information that we almost never encounter in other forums. I came away understanding more about what is going on in astronomy, chemistry, earth sciences and ecology, for example, than I have understood in a long time. Your leadership also assured that all of the substantive discussions would proceed in an atmosphere of cordiality and friendship. This achievement was especially remarkable given the extraordinary diversity of the members with regard to country, religion, age and scientific interests.

I promised to write down what I had tried to say during the final discussion of the meeting. The result of that attempt is attached to this letter. If you think it inaccurate, or would like to have it revised, please let me know.

Finally, there are personal thanks for the hospitality of the Academy to my family. My father, especially, had a remarkable time, one of the most memorable times of his life. Knowing you, I know that you can appreciate what the experience meant to him. He grew up as the eldest of nine children of immigrants to the United States. His parents spoke little English, and his father worked as a tailor, as did so many Jewish immigrants to the United States in the early years of the 20th century. They were very poor and as the eldest, my father was the one responsible for seeing that his brothers and sisters were educated and trained. I don't suppose he ever imagined that he would be present to see the Pope honor his daughter, and at a magnificent audience, in one of the most beautiful rooms in the world. The only thing that I have to worry about now is that his friends will grow impatient with hearing constantly about his trip to the Vatican.

With very warmest regards to you and to Anna.

Sincerely yours,

Maxine Singer