

October 24 1987

LEON HEPPEL.

I am grateful to you for training, for inspiration, for criticism and for support. But I must admit that these indisputably good things must be balanced against the time you have cost me in trivia. Quizzes for one thing. If you had patented and marketed those quizzes ^{when they first began.} you could have been as rich as the person who eventually dreamt up "Trivial Pursuits". For another, the time I spent this past week going over 32 years of correspondence looking for funny things to say at your birthday symposium.

The very first letter I ever received from you is dated October 27, 1955. It is on the top of a hefty pile, containing an assortment of marvelous anecdotes, chides for not writing, critiques of art shows, and of course, quizzes. That first letter is quite formal, addressed to Mrs. Singer in the Department of Biochemistry at Yale, and telling of your willingness to consider her application to be a post-doctoral fellow in your lab. You didn't even wince at the fact that I had declared, in my letter to you, that my coming to NIH depended on my husband securing his job in Washington. Although I was too naive to know it, your reaction was quite remarkable for those times and even for these presumably enlightened times. So before going on to more the more light-hearted recollections appropriate for this evening, I'd like to say one serious thing.

Thanks to the luck of having you as a post-doctoral mentor, and Joseph Fruton as a Ph.D. professor, I never knew personally the distrust and discrimination that were the normal experience of most female scientists in that period. To this day, I do not know why you were so different from your

colleagues, surely it was not your Mormon upbringing. Perhaps it was the quiet but strong influence of Adelaide. Whatever the reason, I want, on this public occasion to acknowledge the profound gift to me implicit in your behavior, and to thank you for it.

Your fair treatment of female scientists did of course come at some price. It is impossible to forget the day that Nancy Nossal arrived to begin her post-doctoral work, only about 8 years after I did. You came bounding into my lab. Dr. Nossal has arrived you reported. Its wonderful, she is so young and fresh and energetic; she reminds me of you when you first arrived.

Leon, one of your peskier habits, and there are many, is the failure to mark the year when you date letters. One, dated only November 15, must have been written very soon after you arrived at Cornell. You start out by admitting that you had taken a sample of pA-5 which you had agreed to leave in Bethesda. And you go on with a shopping list of additional items to be sent to you saying "After all, I've been severely handicapped during these first few months because I was too nice to raid the section as Kornberg and Horecker etc did before me.

By 1969 you seem to have found a way to supply your laboratory on your own. Your letters are full of other problems, The themes are all summarized in ONE letter, written on a small card, 3x4 inches. Old age and associated loss of faculties. Seven people in the lab beside yourself, having to relearn such dull biochemical oddities as ox-phos and lipids in order to coach David. Being kept up nights by a new grand-daughter. Collosal expenses (your adjective, not mine). Losing your old age retirement problem. The latter came up several times that winter. I quote from one letter. "Maxine, you are a stinker. Didn't I make it perfectly clear that the transnucleotidation problem is

something I intended to go back to? Now you spoil everything by jumping in."

February, 1973 (the year ^{being calculated from data in the text} ~~follows from the text~~). "You young folks need to be inspired now and then, in order to keep your spirits up. Therefore I've enclosed xerox pages out of a new book on the electrogenic sodium pump. Note that 2 paragraphs in the book and 2 references, refer to my work done while attending medical school 34 years ago. This would be equivalent to having something that you publish today be worth referring to in the year 2006." And a P.S., one of the first quizzes: Who wrote "Requiem for Mignon", a very lovely work for chamber orchestra and small chorus and soloists?" Leon, can you answer this question almost 15 years later?

Courage, ~ 1 month into my post-doc
 October, 1973. "Gobind is here for two weeks to learn membrane techniques. Its fun having him around. But what a distracting character. Tell me, since he worked at your bench for several weeks years ago: You said you couldn't stand having me work alongside yourself at the lab bench because I made you nervous. Didn't Gobind make you nervous also?"

Finally, I note that tonight you are not scribbling away during the talks. You don't seem to have indulged this less than admirable habit during the afternoon session either. Your sitting in the back of a meeting, gaining the reputation of good citizenship but actually doing calculations, writing letters and so forth, is a skill I tried but failed to learn from you. It always seemed worthwhile to try because it brings you simultaneous high marks for the same activity from several different quarters. The chairman is impressed by having such a distinguished colleague in attendance. ^{and taking notes} Your colleagues are impressed because you manage to make an otherwise unbearable and wasted hour fruitful. The people

in the lab are impressed because you get protocols written and calculations done in spite of other apparent obligations. And of course those of us who get the letters are the happiest and most impressed of all. In future though, I think you should refrain from reporting what meeting it is you are writing through. Some day, some historian, going through your letters, will have nasty things to say about a professor who writes letters through thesis examinations, practice talks for symposia and the like.