

Rosalind Franklin's Contribution

I enjoyed Francis Crick's breezy article on "How to Live with a Golden Helix" [September 1979]. However, it reveals that the years have not served to remove the thorn in his side. He still feels the need to justify his condescension toward Rosalind Franklin.

methinks the gentleman doth protest too much. Why did he select her as the only member of the motley crew of characters for a sly personal assault? Was it that he found it disturbing to have "the Liberated Woman" cast as one of the stars? That Rosalind Franklin did not choose to collaborate with him, as is implied, was her prerogative. It is irrelevant to the fact that she made fundamental contributions to the solution of the structure of DNA. Most scientists are familiar with "difficulties and failures" encountered in the course of their studies. Coping with them is part of the game. Crick does acknowledge that "the experimental data from King's College, when we finally saw them, were a great encouragement," but this time no names are mentioned. Incidentally, "when we finally saw them" is a phrase of special significance, for, as is well known from the description of this incident in Watson's *The Double Helix*, access was first gained to Franklin's data without her knowledge.

The reader is referred to the articles by Franklin's colleague, Dr. Aaron Klug (*Nature* 219: 808-810, 843-844, 1968, and *Nature* 248: 787-788, 1974) for the scientific rather than the anecdotal account of her accomplishments.

CHARLOTTE FRIEND

The Mount Sinai Medical Center
New York City