

October 9, 1972

Dr. L.L. Waters
Director
Jane Coffin Childs Fund
333 Cedar Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510

Dear Dr. Waters,

As you know the Fund played an instrumental role in supporting my first research efforts with Ed Tatum in 1946, which culminated in the discovery of genetic recombination in bacteria.

I have been glad to respond to several requests from you over the years to help keep your files up to date about my activities. Now I have a favor to ask of you that involves the use of such information.

A number of things have provoked me to try to assemble better documentation of the intellectual status of the field of genetics at the time of this work and to make a reliable historical record of the context in which it was pursued. Although I have been fairly careful about keeping correspondence and other records since 1947, I have been able to find only sketchy material for the interval before I took my first regular position at a university and could have the stability and secretarial support to maintain reasonable files.

I am writing you now, therefore, to ask whether you have retained what might be some useful information dating back to the Fall of 1945. You should have received some kind of application from me and some related material by way of reference from Professor Tatum and probably from some other referees. I would be most grateful if you could check your files about the availability of such material and let me have copies of what I might have submitted and what you might have received from my then teacher, the late Professor Ryan. If there is anything useful from others now living, I would urge at minimum that it be preserved and perhaps that you request permission from the writers to send me copies of those texts or portions that might appropriately be transmitted. I have written to most of the other principals, whom I could think of, and have been chagrined to find that very few people have kept their personal correspondence files for this long a period.

My own particular interest is in bacterial recombination rather than Avery's work, but if you can suggest other possible historiographical resources dealing with either of those questions, I would appreciate your suggestions about them.

Sincerely yours,

JL/rr
Enclosure

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics