

DATE: December 1, 1976

To : File

FROM : Joshua Lederberg

SUBJECT: Interview with Tane Bell, 12/1/76

Dr. Bell had volunteered to visit me from Watsonville at his convenience and we had arranged from 4 to 5 PM this afternoon.

He was really not able to add very much new about the scientific milieu. It is amusing that he also had talked to June Tatum and there must be quite a trip on her about having so many requests that in the end came from me. However, I will be seeing her myself tomorrow.

He started out saying something about himself: namely that he was the son of the eminent mathematician at Cal Tech, thus coming from a background where he knew something about academic competition. He had met T.H. Morgan, he knew the Cal Tech environment where brains were the only commodity. His father was quite sensitive to where the excitement was in biology and Tane wanted to go into a different field and accepted his father's advice about working with Beadle. He was apparently at Stanford between approximately '39 and '43. Even through that time there was not that much *personal* communication between Beadle and Tatum. They were very much spread out in catacombs and Beadle was at one end. Tane does not actually recall ever seeing the two of them talking together.

Tane describes Beadle as a highly competitive, aggressive personality who had to be number one whatever he did (including poker), he was a hard worker, articulate, concise, got up early, had to get there first; to the students his attitude was you got to do it on your own. So, Tane found Tatum a much more congenial personality to work with and evidently expresses some bitterness about Beadle's competitiveness.

Bell, Regnery and Srb were very close together and he recommended contacting Srb. Blinks could also give a picture of the department. C.V. Taylor was really not in the picture. Wittaker was already there and was the dynamic personality who ran things.

Ed came to feel that there really was not that much room for him at Stanford and Bell himself encouraged Ed to go to meetings and let it be known that he would be available and to look for a more effective opportunity elsewhere. There was not very much money, it was Beadle's world.

When they did get to New Haven, June was not too happy about the city environment or the cold weather particularly on account of the children. Their relationships were already somewhat problematical even then.

Bell was quite relieved and gratified when I told him what a warm person was and he seemed to feel that Ed very much deserved this. He was a family man, did not often work nights, loved to be with his children.

He was not able to say very much about how Ed was recruited - apparently June had told him that it was "through a Dutchman" (could that be van Wagendonk?)

Ed never talked very much about his past, lived in the present. As to the atmosphere of the laboratory, he suggested that Carroll, Mrs. Perry Moerdyke, was Beadle's assistant but one who was able to see the whole operation with some detachment.

Bell knew nothing about the penicillin work, probably having started medical school by then, but perhaps Mrs. Moerdyke would be the one to ask.

The only other close friends that Bell recalled was a couple who worked at Moffett Field. He does not recall their names.

The catacombs were cubicles with thin *slat* walls, many of them worked under the sidewalk -(I recall the glass disk lighting overhead.) But they had no trouble with contamination. There were not many airmovements.

Bell recalls that his father had an autobiography in some dictionary or encyclopedia: White's? He will try to check the name and thinks Ed might have made a contribution, too. What about dictionary of American or of scientific biography?

Check further on van Wagtendonk and on Marion Beadle.