

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Sent to:
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DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

JUN 29 1977

Dear Tami -

I am trying to finish this up now; the main loose end right now is the course mentioned below.

Do there anything further you can fill in for me?

(Dave Regnery recalls seeing you "walking back I from Chemistry with Ed and George" discussing various organisms that might be usable.)

Sincerely, Josh.

In connection with the preparation of a biographical memoir on Edward L. Tatum, I am trying to collect whatever documentary and reminiscence evidence can still be retrieved about the discovery of Neurospora for biochemical genetics. I have had many third-hand accounts about this, only dim recollections of what Tatum told me himself, and considerable correspondence with G. W. Beadle which taken together, permit the construction of a fair but not altogether completely satisfactory picture. In order to avoid inaccurate myths at the hands of future historians, I am trying to locate people who were near the actual scene to get their own accounts for an archival record. I hope you can trust me to be quite discreet, in any use that will be made of the information that you can give me, that it will not be permitted to do anyone any harm or embarrassment.

1940 is the critical year, and I am trying as far as possible to pin down general impressions to more concrete statements with dates and whatever documentary material can be obtained. I regret that records of the Department of Biology are nonexistent for this period; and I believe that I have consulted all of Tatum's faculty colleagues and associates on the Stanford Campus.

I am writing to ask you if you can furnish your own reminiscences of the events of 1940-41 as they might pertain to this discovery, and you will not be far wrong if you assume that there is little or no other information of an historical kind available about that. So please don't hesitate to be loquacious!

I am particularly interested in any factual detail about the informal course on Comparative Biochemistry mentioned in the attached material. Besides Beadle's statement, David Regnery vaguely recalls that there was such a course, but when I asked such questions as:

"Exactly when was it given?",

Fall? Winter? (40-41)

"Who attended it?",

"Is any reading list available?",

no one has been able to enlighten me.

One version of the genesis of Neurospora (for these experimental purposes) is that Beadle and Tatum argued their plans for a successor to Drosophila in their discussions after each of Tatum's lectures. You can see why one would

Hungate and
Carol Woerdyske
have been most helpful.