

DATE: November 18, 1976

TO : File

FROM : Joshua Lederberg

SUBJECT: Avram Goldstein concerning E.L. Tatum

Avram returned my phone call with a keen interest in the general situation and lively commentary. But he said he has almost certainly destroyed most of the relevant correspondence because he was the central figure in a very unpleasant situation which was hard to talk about.

(I do not know why it should be so difficult now, but I am sure he is still reliving a very difficult time).

Evidently the question of a biochemistry department was the central issue in a conflict that eventuated in Cutting's resignation. (I should have some recall about that myself since my first visit to Stanford I talked to Cutting and got such a discouraging reply that it was part of my lack of interest in the school at that time. Perhaps I should send Avram a copy of his correspondence with me which had much to do with my coming to Stanford). Evidently it was Avram and Henry Kaplan who put on all the pressure to build a major department and Ed Tatum was a major supporter of that initiative. The best that Avram recalls now, Sterling asked Ed Tatum to chair a committee to define the role of biochemistry and Ed was on their side. Avram then recalled that he was also perhaps the chairman of the department, and I asked him whether Tatum himself was inclined to be the long-term designee for its major growth. The alternative, according to Cutting's view, would have fashioned a very small department from existing resources, namely Tatum, Loring and Luck.

His present recollection is that Ed was named the chairman of the new department in a purely caretaker role and did not intend to hold that as a permanent position. (However, it is just possible that there is some conflation of that with the later history after Ed left Stanford).

Avram will look through his papers more carefully and will let me know shortly if he can find anything else. He recommended that I talk to Henry Kaplan who might be more likely to have kept the records of those circumstances.