

November 9, 1959

Dear Kim:

Norm Kretchmer told me he had received the kind of assurances he needed from Dean Alway to warrant his writing you more formally what you had discussed at Princeton. I may have stayed in the background during this, but I would not want you to think for a moment that I was disinterested. Far from it. I think this is a terrific opportunity for all of us, and just the kind of organizational set up I would have planned myself, if such matters went according to plans. Your appointment in Pediatrics will give you a clear field for full development of an independent program, probably ampler than anything we could have devised in the Genetics department alone. And we will still have all the advantages of close physical and intellectual proximity. Needless to say I will be very happy if we can dignify you (and ourselves) with an additional title in Genetics; though it will save much red tape if your formal responsibilities, salary, etc. stay with Norm and the Pediatrics Department.

From your own point of view, I think Pediatrics would be your best possible home base, especially if you mean to keep any contact at all with clinical medicine. This is the logical department to follow up in the teaching of genetics during the clinical years (which should not bar you at all from helping us out in the basic science genetics course if you have a mind to). And your base in a clinical department will certainly be invaluable for the collection of experimental material as may become increasingly important to you in the ramification of your program. The main difficulty that I can see is attached to your qualification in Pediatrics will be the problem you will have in fighting off offers of chairs in this field!

Norm has proven to be a splendid colleague, and I think his own drive and perception and constructive outlook represent one of the important attributes here. He is also a very practical minded and direct sort of person who tells you just what is on his mind, and makes no bones about it. You would be fortunate in having him do the chores of running the department.

Genetics, as I've told you, is moving rather cautiously; particularly if you do come I am not keen for us to expand too far. We do have a potential opening for someone comparable to Willys Silvers or Avron Mitchison; I want to be quite sure that neither of them is available (as it now looks) before widening the search. We now have Len Herzenberg, as an assistant professor, working on tissue culture of mouse cells (just arrived out of Eagle's lab.) and Gus Nossal working on antibody formation. Henry Kaplan does a very impressive line of research in leukemogenesis in radiology. Biology has Yanofsky and Perskins in Genetics, and Grobstein in experimental embryology. Chemistry is getting a terrific boost with Carl Djerassi and Bill Johnson in steroid chemistry. There is an excellent crew here in experimental physics; happily I don't think the 2-mile accelerator planned here to start next year will spoil the atmosphere or the terrain of the campus too much. And of course I don't have to say much to you about Biochemistry. (Kornberg, Mel Cohn, Paul Berg, Dave Hogness, Dale Kaiser,...) An important point is that Stanford is not too big a place, and particularly around the medical school there is some meaning to having these people close by.

I think it's important too that there is keen interest in genetics; people in the clinical areas who don't understand it too well regret this, and there is certainly none of the hostility and old fogeyism that you see in some larger and older schools. The general spirit of the faculty here, particularly in the medical school, is very good -- the rest of the university has sometimes tended to be a bit sleepy, but there are many exceptions to this, and we are helping to wake ~~them~~ them up. Happily there isn't any of the dogfighting you tend to see around Berkeley -- another virtue of avoiding gigantism. The administration tends to leave us all alone, to do our work, and to use our own initiative -- we don't have a strong president in the sense Hutchens was.

Living out here is, of course, unbeatable. And you can take your choice of settling in the campus community on university land (there is a large new development of 1/3-1/2 acre lots where we are just starting to build ourselves), or in the foothills 10-20 minutes away by car if you're keen on views and privacy. We get into San Francisco for dinner or a play or shopping about once a week, and to the ocean beach or the redwood forests about as often.

Also Berkeley is near enough to be meaningful, though it does take just 75 minutes by throughway. We have found ourselves up there a couple of times a month for seminars genetics clubs, etc.-- and that's a ~~splendid~~ splendid crowd there too! Frankly I think I'm very lucky to have not ended up at Berkeley but nearby, to eat the cake and have it too.

Palo Alto itself is another suburban community, now essentially continuous with the other towns that string down the ~~the~~ peninsula. It's pleasant enough, but apart from the university not very exciting.

On the whole, and in most of the parts, Stanford comes out as being just about the ideal university community. You wouldn't believe me if I pretended there were no fault perhaps the worst is just the chronic and universal shortage of really large sums of money for ~~xxxx~~ instantaneous implementation of every good idea. But Stanford is well implanted in the California scene, and there is no possibility of any trouble on this account; just as in most places we have to build up our own financing to a large extent through outside grants, which is just what these are for. We have a splendid group of people here, but never so many we aren't eager to have you join us.

You and Barbee are going to have enough common sense to know when the irresistible is worth accepting; if I can be of any kind of help, hasten.

My phone number is DA-1-1200, Ext 5052; home: (715 Partridge Ave., Menlo Park) DA 2 0686.

As ever,

Joshua Lederberg

*no answer -
called 12/22 - probably not*