

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY
LOS ANGELES 24, CALIFORNIA

25 July 1961

Dr. J. Lederberg, Chairman
Department of Genetics
Stanford Medical School
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I do not know if you ever had time to jot down a few remarks introducing Dr. Muller's collected papers. However, you might be interested in seeing Dr. Pontecorvo's remarks which are enclosed. The last word I heard about the book is that it is being typed on an IBM machine with line-justification and that about five hundred hard-cover copies and fifteen hundred paperback copies will be prepared for the first edition.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "E. A. Carlson", written in dark ink.

E. A. Carlson

EAC:cp

Enclosure

H.J. Muller as a teacher

On those of us who had the extraordinary fortune of being his students, H.J. Muller made a profound impression. His kindness, understanding, tolerance and continuous encouragement in respect of his juniors is matched only by his pugnacious intolerance of imposition, incompetence and pomposity in those in power. The contrast of these two qualities, and the episodes - often amusing - arising from them, are a most endearing feature of life near him. Nor is this contrast confined to activity in academic circles: H.J. Muller can always be found fighting Goliath and championing the underdog whenever the opportunity arises. His outlook on the prospects of mankind - dismissed as utopian by obscurantists - is the result of a powerful mind combined with kindness and a deep sense of justice.

If working near Muller is an unforgettable experience, the intellectual excitement of learning from him is even more so.

The two most striking characteristics of Muller as a teacher are undoubtedly his dexterity in the design of experiments and his imagination. Every student has had repeatedly the enjoyment of seeing Muller work out in a few instants, the details of a complicated series of Drosophila crosses required to test a question just arisen in discussion. Even more enjoyable is the experience of Muller rushing into the student's lab. with his characteristic brisk pace and a twinkle in his eye, expounding a technical solution which he has just found.

But the greatest and most lasting influence on his

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students comes from Muller's enormous imagination, the imagination which found its highest expression in the concept of the gene as the basis of life. It is this imagination which has given to his contributions such a general biological value, in spite of the fact that his experimental work has been almost exclusively with a single species of organisms.

Muller's conversations with his students are something the equal of which few of us have met. Of this experience, and of his kindness and encouragement, all of us carry a vivid and grateful memory through