

March 24, 1956

Dr. Leslie Hedrick  
Biology Department  
Illinois Institute of Technology  
Chicago 16, Illinois

Dear Dr. Hedrick:

I am very happy to comment on Dr. Boris Rotman's qualifications.

He is an outstanding research worker, with unusual facility both in experimental design and execution in a variety of fields. He has already made an outstanding contribution in his studies, with Professor Spiegelman, on the source of the amino acid constituents of newly synthesized bacterial enzymes-- I am sure that Dr. Spiegelman would be prepared to admit the principal role that Rotman played in the carrying out of those elegant experiments. To put it in a nutshell, Rotman is just about the most resourceful lab man that I know, and his experimental skill is matched by a high order of independent imagination and intelligence in the recognition of problems and in their solution. He also has an unusually high standard of scientific integrity, which has repeatedly motivated him to do that "next experiment" which proves to be one too many, that is for the simple understanding that one might have been deluded into believing. This is the main reason that Rotman has not achieved a wider reputation, beyond the circle of those who know his work well.

On the negative side (and there is one for any candidate, whether it is emphasized or not), Rotman probably would not be a very effective teacher in a program that necessitated his giving frequent lectures. He has a definite speech impediment which is aggravated under strain. However, I do not believe this would diminish his usefulness as an occasional lecturer on special topics, or as an instructor in a laboratory course: his really unusual abilities there would make him particularly valuable in a graduate program. It would please me very much if a permanent position were available for Dr. Rotman on this campus; failing that, I hope that he can find himself a place for the realization of his special talents.

Dr. Rotman was born in Argentina, but was raised in Chile and considered himself a Chilean National prior to his naturalization as a U.S. citizen recently. He has, however, been attracted by the possibility of accepting a position on a university faculty in Chile: this might be an attractive opportunity in some respects, though he may face considerable obstacles in pursuing his research program. I mention this to you primarily to indicate that you should communicate with him before too long if you are interested in him.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg, Professor of Genetics