

March 17, 1955
Thursday PM

Dear Syd:

Since my most recent (2d) bulletin to you on Bob, I have received your letter. You can be sure we all shared your sense of shock.

More to the point, Bob has taken a dramatic turn for the better, completely overturning the dismal prospects we were envisaging last week. Since Sunday afternoon, he has been completely conscious, well-oriented and alert. He speaks with decreasing effort, and with full fluency. For the last couple of days, I have spent considerable time with him discussing various seminars and other scientific details, including plans for the adjustments he may need to make to come back to the lab. We need have no fears of the scores of his intellectual capacity or emotional stability.

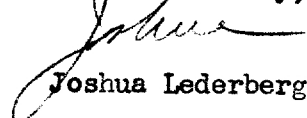
Still more surprising, his motor functions are returning to a remarkable degree in relation to the observed lesion. His left leg is becoming strong enough that he will certainly walk normally; he has started some in his shoulder. We had certainly despaired of his left hand, but he showed for the first time tonight a definite flicker there too! Bob amazed everyone by pulling through at all; he is doing it again by his determination to get back everything that would be humanly possible, and by what this is accomplishing. I could not be more impressed by his attitudes; what any man can manage, Bob is going to do, and I should say we ought not to abandon hope too soon for a substantial motor recovery even of his left arm and hand. As far as can be seen, these are the only residuals. He is demanding as heavy a program of physical therapy as they will allow, and it seems to be getting somewhere. At worst I am still optimistic that his promising career is not going to be seriously impeded, as he will still have the ingenuity to make his right hand do for both. At best, he may well get over the physical obstacle itself. Of course ~~they may~~ there may always be possibilities of other troubles later on, but I see no point anticipating them needlessly, and they would not be likely to be seriously disabling. At any rate, if there is anything we can do here to help Bob's recovery and adaptation, we are going to do it, and I am sure you would share the same sentiment. But it looks as if Bob is going to take on the burden of that task himself.

Ernest Kuhn, one of the men your letter mentioned, evidently came out of his experience just as well, and has been back to work for some time, with no overt marks of it.

We are already thinking of when Bob will be able to go back home and to some light work or study, and this should be in a ~~matter~~ matter of some weeks. Fortunately, he and Mari live quite close to the hospital and lab., making the arrangement most convenient.

Bob will probably write you himself in due course.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg