

August 15, 1959

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Dear Bob and Mari:

We were delighted to hear from you and especially of the news of Siri's successful operation. Bravo! I'm sure this must have been a trying time for you.

I was also very pleased to hear of the negotiations you have been making with Otto Frankel. I'm sure you have known all along what my feelings on this were. I know that you will get a lot of stimulation from your genetical colleagues in the division; it is also plain that they would profit just as much by your being there.

I must say I am really very sympathetic with the episome picture of the respiratory variants. I haven't thought through the details -- what you call the fine structure of the hypothesis -- but it always has seemed rather fishy that one should get segregational mutants so frequently and that these in turn should so often give vegetative deficientes as well.

I don't think I can add very much about Rhizobium. Wolfram really did not get very far and the most one could really say of his work is that he did have some 'preliminary indications of genetic recombination'. He has had quite a tough time of it since his return home, including a couple of bouts of illness and I don't think he can add very much. Why don't you write him? The other genetic work on Rhizobium does consist of the papers by Balassa. As you may remember, she did not show up at the Congress in Stockholm though I believe she was on the program. The most recent paper I have is in the Acta Microbiologica of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Volume 4 page 85, 1957. The account of her work that I got from Gyorffy, one of her countrymen who seems to know his genetics, was at least moderately convincing. Why don't you write her -- I've copied her address below. You've heard more from Allen than we have -- he seems to have vanished into the void when he was called up. Ann is still working very busily on the Lac mutants. She is spending the summer taking van Niel's course which is just as well since we are not yet quite organized in our new labs. We should be moving the first of next week into our proper laboratories in the Medical Center.

You asked about terminology for the states of episomes -- perhaps Lindgren's terms of chromogenes and cytogenes actually cover the case. You might be amused to look at an old paper by Thompson, GENETICS, 16:267, 1931, which I imagine represents the first use of the term episome and is certainly an early anticipation of the idea.

Lots of luck to all of you.

As ever,

Joshua Lederberg

R. Balassa  
Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Genetikai Intésete

Budapest, 11.5 Herman Ottó - u. 15