

To: <sybot@snip.net>  
From: Louis Sokoloff <LouisSokoloff@mail.nih.gov>  
Subject: Season's greetings  
Cc:  
Bcc:  
Attached:

Dear Stella:

It was good to hear from you and learn that you are still quite active and doing well. It has been almost a year since Betty passed away, and I am adjusting to her loss. Nevertheless, it has necessitated a complete revision of my way of life. Betty relieved me of many household duties and made it possible for me to concentrate on work. This allowed me to do much of my most productive thinking and writing in the evenings and on weekends. This is now impossible because of the many home-related chores that need my time and attention. I now never do any work related to my professional activities in the evenings and weekends. Thus far, I am still living alone with my two Shetland Sheepdogs in the same house with its fenced in one-half acre backyard, which allows me to let the dogs run around the yard. This is very convenient because it relieves me of the need to walk them which would be difficult because of my chronic low-back pain due to "degenerative joint disease of the lower spine" (previously known as osteoarthritis, I presume). Therefore, because I am no longer able to devote as much time and effort to my scientific pursuits as I once did, I have reluctantly decided to take the step of retiring, effective July 1, 2004. There are other reasons too, as, for example:

1) I perceive that I am no longer appreciated and am certainly not so well supported at my institution as I used to be. Furthermore, I can feel the breath on the back of my neck of my younger colleagues who are eager to get their hands on my space and resources.

2) It has become difficult to obtain good American research fellows in physiology and/or biochemistry; those interested in science want to go into molecular biology, and many of those who majored in neuroscience lack the rigorousness of a real scientist, probably because neuroscience, which is truly multidisciplinary has become undisciplined. I have been able to get fellows from China, Japan, and now Russia, but they lack language facility, and I have become exhausted trying to communicate with them.

3) I have become disenchanted by the changes in the culture of biomedical science. When I chose it for my career, it was an academic/scholarly activity in which, for the most part, the desire to learn, understand, and explain was the dominant motivation and success in achieving these was the main source of pleasure. Now, it seems to me, biomedical science has assumed all the evil influences of the commercial/industrial worlds and is dominated by the drive for money, power, and prestige. Once, to accuse a scientist of being an entrepreneur was insulting; now it is a badge of honor. Also, the literature has become boring; it is overwhelmed with phenomenological observations, the significance of which is often obscure. If those are the answer, what are the questions? Many of the papers describe only experiments, not studies that answer important questions.

I am still not sure about what I will do after retirement. There is still quite a backlog of

manuscripts of my own to write and of fellows for me to edit. The latter are important because they are critical to their careers where numbers of papers rather than of discoveries are determinant. perhaps, if and when I catch up, I would like to do some traveling, finally as a tourist and not as a participant in a scientific meeting.

Bob Forster did not attend the National Academy of Sciences annual meeting last Spring. This is unusual. Is he alright? Are you in touch with him? if so, give him my regards and any of others from those old wonderful days if they are still around. You know, of course, that Seymour Kety died in May, 2002, and his wife Josephine passed away a couple of months ago. Dick Wechsler is still around. I occasionally hear from him, and he came to Betty's funeral last February. There are not many of us left.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and for a Happy New Year.

Lou

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