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Dear Gene:

Welcome home! I understand you had a grand sabbatical in Deutschland and I'm looking forward to hearing about it in detail. Did you ever get to see Emily during that time?

I had a piercingly cold but very enjoyable 5 days at Brookhaven earlier in February trying to help out with the Marshallese program and a 25-year report that Bob is compiling. He will be here Sunday and Monday on his way back to the islands, so we will have an opportunity to get into it further. I expect to be back to the lab at least once or twice more before the summer passes for the same purposes and look forward to renewing acquaintances with the rest of my family. Keep my room ready and we'll get to work on some of the innumerable projects that must have accumulated around the house while you were away.

My plans to come back to the lab for an extended period this year to work on erythroid culture techniques have never really materialized, largely because events in my lab have dictated other pursuits taking precedence. We have a number of interesting things going on, and one cannot help but be impressed with the feast-or-famine phenomenon. I didn't expect to be working this much harder during my sabbatical but I also didn't expect to be enjoying it this much either. With the additional commitments to the Marshalls program here, I'm afraid I may spread myself too thin to be effective if I try to crowd in the culture project as well.

I appreciated your note about the NASA influence on the integrity of my bones and body and also appreciate the time you took to perjure yourself once again on my behalf. I confess I am totally baffled by NASA. Last summer, they inquired of me whether I would be interested in being considered for the shuttle program - it was a form inquiry that I presumed was addressed by computer, retrieving anyone who had ever been previously associated. They followed this with an application packet that eventually

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I half-heartedly completed and returned, knowing full well that I needn't fill out anything beyond the date of birth to be summarily eliminated. Incredibly, I didn't hear anything for almost two months when they telephoned from Houston asking for additional references. I figured they still hadn't gotten around to reading the application very carefully - either that, or they're looking for a token geriatric type to appease the senior citizen faction, now that they have a sufficient selection of black, female and assorted other minority group astronauts. Last month, they sent a packet of PSQ's, so it would appear that I made another cut and that they are indeed serious, yet I remain very skeptical.

One thing, I will assure you (in case you're worried about me dumping everything and running off in pursuit of wild dreams) is that if it ever got to a point of decision, they would have to work very hard to convince me that I could make a more significant and serious contribution to their program as it is currently conceived and projected than I could in what I am doing now. One of the ^{many} things I was blessed and priveleged to learn from you early on was that contribution is the name of the game, it being immaterial whether you've paid for it or acknowledged for it or receive credit for it. It's a yardstick that has served me well, and I will continue to apply it.

A decade ago, there wasn't the slightest question in my mind that I could have made my most valuable contribution as a scientist.. flying the post-Apollo and extended Sky-Lab missions. But those programs don't exist, ^{anymore,} and I'm very doubtful that any of comparable importance are even on the boards for the foreseeable future. I am curious, though, and the longer they keep me under consideration, the more opportunity I will have to find out what indeed they are planning on doing that would make them even consider aging professors. I have no illusions about this and I certainly have no intentions of leaving UCLA just to ride along as a semipassenger to feed someone else's chimp.

The photograph is a small welcome home present for you and Betty. You may recognize it as the end of our last flounder fishing expedition in Conscience Bay. It came out pretty well, considering it's printed from a slide rather than a color negative, and I like it because it reflects some of that warm glow that I've always associated with the people and places.

Really look forward to seeing you soon again, Gene, if for no other reason than to get the answer to your NASA-putting-a-cat-in-space riddle. The only one I can come up with is too crude to put down. (Mirna would refuse to type it anyway.) *

Warmest regards and love to Betty,


Donald E. Paglia, M.D.
Professor

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