

March 20, 1982

Dear Arline and Walter: .

My warmest thanks for your gift of "The Eighth Day of Creation". I have read every word of it, even the appendices and footnotes. This has been one of the most enjoyable reading experiences of my life. Throughout the book wander a host of persons whom I knew personally or through their works; and as they each appear my recollection of them is a vivid accompaniment of the authors narrative. Maurice Wilkins, for example, appeared to me as the scrawny Englishman who rode with me and the Vendrelys as I made a trip into the White Mountains on a vacant afternoon from a Gordon Conference on Nucleic Acids. Maurice never once would look up even to "The Old Man of the Mountain"; instead he kept boring us with a persistent monologue about his X-ray diffraction patterns from nucleic acids (this was many years before the famous DNA model). Of course Erwin Chargaff reappeared with his similar obsession with the base ratios. This book makes clear the point I indignantly made in a note to Erwin at the time of the Nobel award, that they never could have made the model without his underlying abundant proof that DNA was not the monotonous polymer postulated by P.A. Levene's tetranucleotide hypothesis. When Avery's name appeared early in the narrative I recalled the quiet little man who was at the luncheon table with Mirsky Hotchkiss, Rous and others on the days I worked at Rockefeller with Alfred - so quiet was Avery that I had to see his picture in the "Creation" book to remember what he looked like. Of course, I was pleased to note that Mirsky was mentioned only as the diehard opponent of the view that DNA could be the gene; "it had to be a protein". In an aside, note that the source of A.E.M.'s stand on this point was merely Rockefeller politics; both he and Avery were struggling to attain the permanent status of Member of the staff - hence Alfred must belittle Avery's contribution. Even in the less enthralling section on hemaglobin there are many people whom I met or heard lecture. It would take a small notebook to enumerate my reactions to this marvellous volume. Do you know anything about the Author? He is indeed a most remarkable Science writer - the only one I ever read who seems to have been able to get inside the skin and brain of the scientific personality.

If all goes well, we will be back in Pennsylvania (311 Broad St., Harleyville, PA. 19438 - Tel. 215-256-9466 [or son Jim, -6498] and would welcome a visit.

Thanks again and warm regards,

Arthur Pollister

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A. Deitch
transcribed by her.