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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Dear Josh:

To find Sinnott's files — much less go through them — would be a task beyond my mortal capabilities. I think we'll have to make do with some collective memories.

According to Pete Treffers, Ed's main reason for leaving Yale to return to Stanford was that he had reached an impasse in his attempts to gain some autonomy for the microbiology graduate program here. His graduate students, for example (including me, and what about you?) had to take a qualifying examination that included a lot of botany. Ed had tried — and failed — to get a straight microbiology examination instituted, and this ^{was} a matter of great concern to him. (In fact, I recall his assuring us that we would be examined only in microbiology, but apparently the Botany faculty over-ruled any tentative approval that Sinnott might have given.)

Ed's dissatisfaction with the status of the microbiology program was compounded by the resistance he was getting from the botanists to his continued expansion in terms of space and students. Thus, when he received an offer from Stanford, he was in a very receptive mood. The fact that June was unhappy in New Haven and wanted to return to California must have added another strong pressure. Before Ed left, Sinnott arranged for a Yale Microbiology Ph.D. program to be administered jointly by Botany, Zoology and Bacteriology (where Treffers was located). But it was too late — or perhaps inadequate — to cause Ed to change his mind.

Regarding your other specific questions:

(1) Ed's reasons for leaving Stanford to come to Yale: surely George Beadle will be able to answer that one.

(2) Documents — I have none, and I really couldn't take on the herculean labor of searching the Yale archives.

(3) Early career — again, I can't be of any help.

Now for my personal recollections. My outstanding impression of Ed during the time that I was associated with him at Yale (and at Stanford in

1948-49) was his lack of pretentiousness. As you recall, it seemed perfectly natural for all his students to call him "Ed". This quality carried over into the laboratory: I remember vividly that Ed worked at the bench himself, and when he needed a piece of apparatus he made it himself if it was at all possible. He could blow glass, and would make his own thermoregulators and manometers — as I then learned to do. For non-sterile work, Ed had a rack on his bench with one pipette of each size, which he'd rinse and put back after each use. He even pitched in with the rest of us in making test-tube racks and baskets.

This style, which I much admired, had its origins in the shortage of money for research that Ed grew up with — what was so wonderful about it was Ed's ability to do so much with so little. His simple approach was evident also in his experiments — I believe it was you who first pointed out to me how Ed could derive such important results from such simple experiments.

Ed was a very kind and gentle man, in all of my experience. Perhaps too much so, since in my view he tended to tolerate mediocrity in certain of his students and assistants out of kindness; at least, that is my explanation why he never developed a truly strong group around himself. He was very loyal to everyone in his group, and went out of his way to help them.

That's about all I feel I can tell you. Ray Barratt (now at Arcada, California) was very close to Ed while at Yale, so I hope you'll write to him. And don't forget Norman Giles.

Sincerely,



Edward A. Adelberg
Professor of Human Genetics

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