

Christmas, 1973

Dear Friends,

Rather than a Christmas card, I thought you might enjoy a Christmas note from the rat-lab. I've received so many notes from all of you that it seems like I ought to pass on some of the gossip.

The hardest worker of us all., Billy Dee, was finally forced into retirement last year. The house painter he had hired refused to paint higher than one story on Billy's house, so Billy went up the ladder to do it himself and suffered a stroke. I called him the other day over at the Nursing Care Center of Bristol, and talked with him for a while, giving him best wishes from all his friends at Wesleyan. He sounded good., though he'd much rather be working than sitting around.

Billy's replacement is Pam Johnson., whom most of you know since she and Mike Edwards have been a couple for several years now. Pam works half time at the lab and is going to school at Middlesex to get a degree at the same time.

Physiological psych has expanded with the addition of a new faculty member, Harry Sinnamon, Harry also works with the rat, though he is more into electrophysiology (electrical stimulation^ single unit recording, and drug studies) - a good supplement to our behavior, lesion and genetics studies.

Did you know that Jules Holzberg died of a heart attack last year? We were quite upset by the event, but things have calmed down now, Karl Soheibe is the new chairman and is doing a great .job; the whole department is rejuvenated.

We received a long letter from George Baker earlier this year, along with newspaper clippings on lamprey behavior and Calhoun's latest rat colonies - seems like you all have a special place for lampreys. George is presently working for internal revenue service in Washington, though he talks of going back to business or law graduate school. He is married and his wife also works for the government now.

Dan Simons is in psychology as a graduate student at Washington University in St. Louis, and according to a long letter he wrote me last Christmas, doing very well. John Zook almost went out to join him in St. Louis., but ended up with a better offer at Duke and going there to the Psychology graduate department. John's come back to visit us a couple of times this fall with great stories about the Zoology department at Duke (Klopfer, etc.). Last year, Dan said that his social life wasn't so good., and John was coming back to Wesleyan for his social acquaintance (s),, but maybe by now things are picking up for both of them.

I received a Christmas card last year from Al Petrocelli who is in Upstate Medical Center at Syracuse. Al and Dan, we're still plugging away on lesions and, shock-induced fighting. You'll be happy to learn that we finally got some good results and Mike Edwards and I have sent off a manuscript to Physiology and Behavior on central gray lesions. Keep your fingers crossed. . . Smitty also writes every so often. He took a year in Boston to do medical research and then got into UConn med school in Hartford where he is now.

Last year we had a large group of seniors in the lab, including four with successful honors theses (Severini, Edwards, Zook, and Ladd), two of which have been written up for publication, the one by Edwards I mentioned above^and the one by John Zook on competitive fighting.

John and I have sent our paper to the Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology. Two other seniors, John Robb and Steve Lum, did fine" studies which could have been honors theses if

they had started them earlier. Also, Sara Laden (Trinity College) and I worked on a study of the genetics of aggression in five inbred strains, the data of which I am still struggling to analyze and write up. Everyone is scattered to the winds now, John at Duke, Steve Lum at University of Hawaii med school, Rich Ladd learning the banking trade in New York, John Robb at grad school at Indiana U, and Sara Laden working at the Rockefeller University as a lab tech. I am hoping to see Rich this Christmas when I'm in New York. I received a card from Steve (who invites us to visit him in Hawaii - I'd love to!) and a letter from Sara (who says she lives near Rich in New York and often bumps into him at a midnight coffee Joint). Regarding Walt Severini and Kate (they got married last year), I hear of them through David Zita who says they both have jobs and are trying to save money for more schooling. And Mike Edwards has stayed here as a graduate student in the department working with Harry Sinnamon, so I get to see him often.

Some of you may know the people in the lab this year. Jane Witten and Bob Gershen are working on honors theses, Jane on behavior genetics of aggression and Bob on burrowing behavior of inbred strains. Don Middleton has decided not to do an honors thesis, and has already gotten into at least one med school (Vermont), Jane and Bob haven't set their plans for next year, though Jane talks about going to Africa to work with animals and Bob talks about working himself around the world on freighters. This seems to be the year of the wanderers. One of our new students, Cindy Allen, was in Germany last year for her sophomore year, and I spent much of the summer on a very exciting trip to the Soviet Union. The other new students in the lab at this time are Andy Eichenfield and Michael Lehman.

Yes, the rats are all fine, all 300 of them, although you only knew their grandparents and great grandparents. But what's the difference, they're all inbred!

If you like this idea of a Christmas letter, drop me a line and tell me. I work well on reinforcement. But best of all, come back for a visit sometime. Nina sends her regards.

Sincerely, David

O.S. Just to show you I'm open-minded, I collaborated on a study of human sexual behavior last year (which, hopefully, will be published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior) but the data were so hard to interpret that I've gone back to the certainty of rats,

P.P.S. After years of talk, I've finally started work on the textbook based on Psych 211-212. Our house is like a university library these days since Nina has gone back to school to study nursing.