

Christmas, 1974

Dear Friends,

Spurred on by your reinforcement after last year's Christmas letter, I have decided to do it again, I hope this finds you enjoying a happy and productive life.

Let me begin with some personals, before talking science (can they be totally separated?). I was invited to two lab weddings last year. I could only make it to one: that of Jane Witten to George Surgeon in June at Wesleyan's Taylor Estate, and it was a most pleasant occasion. Unfortunately I couldn't get to the other: that of Steve Lum to Gwyned Gail San Hoy which took place in Honolulu. And next year is already a promising one. Michael Edwards and Pam Johnson are planning to get married probably in early summer. Congratulations, everyone? Michael is applying to various Ph.D. programs in neurosciences for next fall, so he and Pam may become your neighbors again in another city.' Steve, as you recall, is at the Hawaii Med School. Jane and George are living in Chicago, and Jane is a research technician for a project in the neurosurgery department at Billings Hospital (Univ. of Chicago).

As of June, George Baker had been admitted to Boston University Law School, but was hoping to get into University of Virginia's Law School. John Zook has been doing well in Graduate Psychology at Duke, but plans to apply to medical schools next year towards a combined Ph.D.-M.D. He was back for a nice visit last summer, and recently told me that he had run into Danny Simons at the Neuroscience Meetings in St. Louis. Rich Ladd has completed his training in New York and is now at a branch bank in Liverpool, New York. Walt and Kate Severini have returned from a year on the West Coast, and Walt is now getting an M.A. at Wesleyan as my graduate assistant under the new NIH grant (more of that anon). Kate is developing her skills as a dancer and looking forward to graduate work in dance.

Our lab broke into the mainstream of scientific progress this year with papers published in Physiology and Behavior (Mike Edwards and me on central gray lesions) and Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology (John Zook and me on competitive fighting - January 1975 issue). Another paper is due to be published next year by Behaviour.

The long awaited NIH grant was finally funded in June, and I promptly hired Walter and a post-doctoral fellow, Fred Pond. Fred was a classmate of Harry Sinnamon's at Rochester and worked for a number of years as a post-doc in Flynn's lab in New Haven where I had worked before Wesleyan. Fred, Harry, and I are collaborating on an ambitious project recording from single cells in the midbrain during shock-induced defensive boxing. Harry also has a number of other projects, students, etc. including Mike Edwards, and is thriving. It is very nice to have him as a colleague. Walter's work complements this project, since he is also working on shock-induced fighting.

Andy Eichenfield has completed testing on his undergraduate thesis work. He has done the backcross generation of the behavior genetics study which was begun by Sara Laden and myself (parental generation) and continued by Jane Witten (F1 hybrids). A new graduate student, Ann Odmark, will probably continue the project into a second backcross generation. We are hoping to pin down some specific genetic factors involved in the various kinds of aggressive behavior. The first paper from the project has been submitted to Behavior Genetics for review.

Remember those elaborate ethograms we always recorded, and how we said we would someday get around to analyzing them? Well, Michael Lehman is doing it this year. He is taking a course in computer programming, a course in mathematical psychology, and doing an honors thesis project by

statistically analyzing on the computer the various sequences we observe. An abstract of his results has already been submitted for presentation at the Eastern Psychological Meetings next spring.

After many years of frustration at the Psych 202 results, we finally 'hit the jackpot' last spring. I switched the topic from isolation-induced fighting to competitive fighting, and we obtained very nice data showing how drive level increases the probability of fighting. This year's 202 class will attempt to replicate last year's data,, and if replicated the data will be published.

Next month will be an important one for me. My tenure case will be presented and voted on. I am especially grateful to several of you from whom I requested letters of reference. Of course, I don't get to read the letters, but I am confident that you aided my case. Also in February I should hear from the Academy of Science about funding for a sabbatical period of research in the Soviet Union in 1976. The sabbatical has already been approved by Wesleyan. June will be an important time for Nina when she takes her exams for the R.N. She will finish :her degree in May from Southern Connecticut.

Psychology 211-212 continues to develop slowly towards an ultimate form as a textbook. This year I entered a series of 100 figures into the syllabus - figures which will ultimately be used for the text – concerning the evolution of motor systems. The rest of the course, the brain drawings, literature searches, essays, and original source readings, remains about the same. Class size and quality is as always, about 30 including several students who are outstanding. Sometimes I do get nostalgic for some of my former students, however!!

Helen and Ona from the office put in a telephone call to Billy Dee recently and found him cheerful and sharp. The last time I called, he told me he didn't enjoy talking on the telephone, however. It would be nice to see him again one of these days. The lab is in good hands now, however, with Pam Johnson in charge. We're going to miss her when she and Mike move on next year0 .

I'll quit gabbing now and let you get on to shorter Christmas cards. I would enjoy very much hearing from you, and will pass on your news to others from the lab tradition.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

- David