

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH—1989, 1990

In early December of 1987, I was invited to visit Arnold and Hanni Brossi in Bethesda, Maryland. It was my first trip outside Urbana since I had recovered from the cancer surgery in Boston in September, followed by recuperation at the Blouts in Cambridge and with Marcia and Tom Carlson in Maplewood, New Jersey, during October and into November. Aside from the social visit, Arnold, together with Bernhard Witkop, wanted to acquaint me further with the National Institutes of Health, and I was given the grand tour. There was a complementary purpose to the visit because I was introduced to the administrators in charge of the visiting scholars program. A renewed invitational letter that arrived in 1988 stated that I had been appointed a Fogarty Scholar-in-Residence of the N.I.H. for twelve months (stipend, \$50,000), with the timing arranged for mutual convenience: February-June, 1989; October-December, 1989; and February-May, 1990. I was assigned an apartment on the N.I.H. campus during the first two periods, and I rented a house during the third period.

The three stays were long enough for me to become thoroughly acquainted with Bethesda and D.C. Office accommodation was provided in the Stone House on the N.I.H. campus, where the hospitality of Dr. Jack R. Schmidt and Ms. Rita Singer and their staff guaranteed the most efficient and profitable use of my time. The Brossis and the Witkops made me feel at home and included me in all events social and professional. In turn, I entertained many visitors—family and friends—who were happy to find that they had a host so close to Washington. I was able to reconnect with old friends who lived in the Washington area, which added to the pleasure of my residence there.

One of the most obvious benefits of residence at the National Institutes of Health was the opportunity of attendance at the numerous seminars and symposia that were scheduled. In my own experience, overzealous attendance in the initial weeks gave way to more discriminating selection among the many excellent possibilities. With this modification came a more measured pace of absorption of the information provided. I was still

guided by the purpose, stated in my scholarship acceptance letter, to reach out to learn and help solve problems encountered in medicine at the molecular level. The weekly meetings of the Fogarty Scholars were especially useful in this regard because of the diversity of biophysical, biochemical, and medical subjects covered. The seminar at one of the regular Friday meetings that I presented in June, 1989, was on the subject "Attempts at Selective Inhibition of DNA Synthesis and Proliferation."

Interaction with the N.I.H. scientists was another great benefit of a reasonable term of residence as a Scholar. For me, this meant talking with old friends and being brought up to date on their current research and their future goals. I accumulated and studied their selected publications via reprints generously provided. During an extended absence of Dr. Brossi, I served as a research consultant for his junior colleagues, visiting their laboratories two or three times per week, and I was more than generously thanked in the resulting publications (8).

The most valuable experience offered by the Fogarty Scholarship was the provision of quiet, uninterrupted time periods for thinking, reading, and writing. I have never before enjoyed such a luxurious gift of time and facilities, not even during the usual academic sabbatical leaves. Some of the writing involved the completion of previous commitments; nevertheless, my efficiency of composition rose to a new level in Bethesda. The communication systems provided by the N.I.H. allowed frequent contact with my postdoctoral research group at the University of Illinois in Urbana and active collaboration with colleagues at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle; M.I.T.; the Salk Institute; and the Medical Biology Institute in La Jolla, California. Access to the National Library of Medicine was especially useful. Seven published articles were written during my time spent at the N.I.H., and two review articles resulted from a separate 12-day immersion in the National Medical Library which was provided to bring the total days of scholarship up to 365.



Arnold Brossi

During the N.I.H. appointment of twelve months and during the other months of the years 1989-1990, I fulfilled my obligations in various

organizations, national and international, attended meetings, gave lectures here and there, and was an occasional after-dinner speaker at retirements or advanced birthdays. Being an after-dinner speaker seems to go along with ripening old age! One such occasion, in the early spring of 1989, was a Symposium on "Frontiers in Organic Chemistry" at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, in honor of Jack Roberts. At the reception before the dinner, I was introduced to Peggy Phelps. Edith Roberts had described the wonders of this lady before the day of our meeting. Edith had also persuaded Peggy to return to Pasadena a day early from an Aspen skiing vacation in order to meet this old Chemistry Professor from Urbana, Illinois. Each of us eyed the other rather skeptically. The advance build-up by Edith had robbed us of the first simple questions to ask each other upon meeting. I suggested that we go into the dining room together, where we discovered that we had adjacent place cards at the table. Edith was not leaving anything to chance. Peggy made a game try at understanding what chemists were like. She was surrounded by them. I tried to live up to my advanced billing, whatever that might have been. Peggy and I became new friends, but not quite connected.



John D. Roberts



Edith Roberts

I learned that Peggy would be in Aspen at Christmas, so I asked her well in advance whether I might take her to dinner on December 28, 1989. It blew her mind that someone would ask for a "date" months ahead. It also surprised her that, when we stopped at my house in Snowmass Village on the way to dinner, I asked Marcia and Tom to come along. What was this—a "family date"? When I was invited to neighbors Jim and

MORE THAN A MEMOIR

Ann Watson for a New Year's Eve party, I asked rather boldly whether they would consider asking Peggy to come. She was an old friend of theirs and could obtain a ride from Aspen with the Chandlers, who had been invited. I confessed to Ann that I was really interested in Peggy.

The party brought us together a little closer, so that 1990 was ushered in on an optimistic note. Only slightly disturbing was that sometime friends present at the party referred to me as "Mason," the name of Peggy's former husband. I sent Ann Watson flowers to acknowledge her help.



Peggy Phelps