

ILLINOIS YEARS—1946-1947

U pon my return from Europe in February, 1946, I found that life in Illinois had not changed very much. However, I had changed because I had seen the devastation caused by the war in Europe. I had come to realize the dimension of human loss and to understand the trauma experienced by those who had survived. Central to my own being, by contrast, was the new-found optimism that resulted from seeing Nell again after six years apart. The optimism was put to work in stages to achieve her coming to the United States. At first, there was no direct postal service between the U.S. and the Netherlands. However, service was maintained to Sweden and Switzerland, and we could communicate through friends in those countries. Nell's parents were undergoing a separation. Therefore, she was not comfortable remaining in 's Graveland, and she moved about, staying with friends where she could be of use in family rehabilitation. Finally, postal service to the Netherlands was restored, which made possible the sending of letters and CARE packages of limited weight, one per month. I became a shopper and packer: shoes, nylon stockings, blouses, skirt and dress material, sweaters, even undergarments. In some cases, I was an embarrassed shopper, but I did receive an education in women's clothing. My mother sent CARE packages of food. Most of the packages arrived at their intended destination and were greatly appreciated because the Dutch had little clothing left and only minimal food available in 1946. Soap was a precious article.

The months went by. It was necessary to fill in forms to arrange for a visitor visa for Nell, and I had to find a married couple—friends—who would sponsor her visit. As a single man, I could not do so myself. Sponsorship meant placing \$2,000 in an escrow account for Nell so that she would not become "a ward of the state" and would have sufficient funds to return, after her visit, to her country of origin. When the U.S. side of process had been put in order, Dutch papers had to be obtained re: birth, schooling, family, police record, etc., etc. Imagine trying to assemble all the notarized data when everything had been disrupted and all personal records were in a jumble in Holland. I began to doubt that we would succeed in our plan, and in one of my letters to Nell I must have sounded

forlorn. Encouragement came in the form of a visiting lecturer to the University of Illinois. It was Piet Heertjes, a Professor of Chemical Engineering at the University of Delft and a mutual friend. He had been hired as a visiting professor at Purdue University, came to Illinois for a lecture, and brought me a message from Nell, delivered in person: "Nell wants me to reassure you that she is really going to come to America. The formalities just take time." She said it was "Honest to Piet!" The next thing to do was to arrange passage. That could be on the S.S. Stockholm, but Nell would have to get herself to Sweden from Holland. No money was available in Holland; however, I could buy all the necessary tickets in dollars and send her additional dollars for incidental expenses.

That summarizes what was going on in my personal life from February, 1946 to February, 1947. Music has been covered in that chapter. What about chemistry? I had a heavy teaching load. Classes were full because the G.I. Bill was providing college education for returning veterans depending upon their years of military service. I resumed my role as Investigator on the Antimalarial Program under the Committee on Medical Research of the OSRD, which was winding down its activities but was still investing in the synthesis of successor antimalarials to Chloroquine. Because of my status as a member of the Graduate College Faculty, I was able to accept graduate students who were suddenly available in large numbers. After thirteen had started to work with me, Professor Adams indicated that the number seemed excessive. I believe I answered rather naively that I had several more exciting research ideas to offer to graduate students. He then pointed out the difficulties of starting such a large number at one time, of directing their work from day to day, of substituting new research ideas for those problems that would falter, of supporting so many, and of finishing off their Ph.D. degrees, including reading and correcting their theses and conducting their final exams. Additionally, Adams suggested that a more rational number of graduate students to accept in one year could be obtained by dividing the number of organic chemists entering graduate school by the number of faculty members who could direct their research. All of that advice made good sense, and I have given it to junior colleagues whenever it seemed appropriate.

The new graduate students were closer to my age, and they were serious about their work since their student lives had been interrupted by the war. We accomplished some worthy research together. We also enjoyed our spare time together. Within a softball league, we had a mixed team of students and faculty members on which I played first base. My defensive play was better than my batting. Baseball was a leavening element in our chemistry lives. Three of my senior research students progressed far

enough in their single year of work that publications could be written and further research could be planned based upon what they had accomplished. I was and would remain an Assistant Professor of Chemistry through this period and when Nell would arrive in 1947. There was no thinking about the process of achieving tenure in those years. There was as yet no formal process in place. That came later. I had no interest in a teaching position elsewhere because I was enjoying my work, together with the colleagues and friends that I had at Illinois. An invitation to lecture at Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis brought me a contract as a Consultant, which status continued until I retired. Travel between Urbana and Indianapolis was initially convenient on the Big Four branch of the New York Central Railroad and, after 1949, by car. At Lilly, I was able to follow along and occasionally assist in their great chemistry, I developed lasting friendships and I appreciated the additional stipend for enjoyable work.

Writing

How do scientists tell of their research findings? Usually, by means of the scientific papers they write and publish in refereed journals. There are additional means at present, including the Internet, preprint distribution, and talks at meetings, but the main method, at least when I was starting my teaching/research career, was via published papers. How does one write a scientific paper? It is an evolving process that grows out of writing research reports, theses at the B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. levels, and first drafts of papers under a Ph.D. mentor professor. When I was on my own as a beginning staff member at the University of Illinois, I sought advice from senior staff members to supplement my initial writing efforts. I remember well three bits of advice that I took to heart.

Harold Snyder, upon reading one of my early efforts, questioned a statement I had made: "Johnson opined that . . ." etc., etc. He said he knew Jack Johnson very well and doubted that he ever "opined" anything. Thus ended my attempt to incorporate unusual words in that paper or in other papers that followed. The message received was to state things simply, understandably, and in everyday language. Carl (Speed) Marvel read another of my early papers in manuscript and concluded that I was trying to prove two major points. His message was that I should compose the results in two separate papers because readers seldom remembered more than one conclusion from a single paper.

R.C. Fuson offered to criticize a review paper I had written. When I returned to his office to obtain his recommendations, I was very

disappointed because he offered no substantive revisions at all, yet I knew my first attempt at reviewing all known information about a particular series of compounds could not have been that perfect. I was about to leave when I told him that I was disappointed because I had really come to him for instructive, serious criticism. "Oh, in that case . . .," he said as he opened his desk drawer and withdrew two sheets of handwriting. Fuson indicated that my writing was like a collection of reference cards. Improvements were suggested to omit the dates (years) of publication, as well as the locations and names of the authors, with which I had started each paragraph. Instead, the subject matter was supposed to guide the ending of one paragraph and the beginning of the next, so that the article "flowed." Terminal references would disclose all the details of origin. In the rewrite, the pedantic, unimaginative collation of data was converted to a critical, adhering discussion. Fuson sometimes wrote verse under the name Robert Fox. The surname could be applied in this case of requested and reluctantly supplied advice. I followed that advice in all my later writings in which I was recounting prior scientific history.

By the time I had absorbed these writing lessons, I had the temerity to rewrite a joint paper that my senior colleague Charlie Price had presented to me in first draft and on which I was supposed to be a co-author. Chemists are well advised to follow a book by Louis Fieser that deals with proper phraseology on the basis of both chemistry and grammatical English. The book by Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*, is a requisite for anyone attempting good writing. It is of but incidental interest that E.B. White (*Charlotte's Web*, etc.) went to the same high school that I attended in Mount Vernon, New York.