March 8, 1951

Dr. W. H. Ewing,
Enteric Bacteriology Laboratory,
Communicable Disease Center, P.H.S.,
Box 185, Chamblee, Georgia.

Dear Dr. Ewing:

Dr. Edwards mentioned that you had been preparing sera for typing O antigens of E. coli, and that you might also be developing K and H sera. I have lately been looking for new isolates of E. coli which show genetic recombination with the original K-12 strain of Tatum and myself. From about 350 isolates from various sources, about a dozen have been gleaned which probably recombine. We have been developing materials for serological studies on these strains, and Dr. Kauffmann has been kind enough to send representatives of the 25 numbered O types. However, our facilities for this kind of work are rather limited, and we cannot hope to prepare all of the necessary sera required for direct typing in the comprehensive scheme.

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to type some of the isolates which seem to be amenable to recombination analysis. This information would be very helpful in planning which strains would be most worthwhile to emphasize for further immunogenetic work with our facilities.

In hopes of your favorable consideration of this request, I am sending under separate cover a group of ten (or so) cultures with designating labels WG-1, WG-2... -10 . All are of human (feces or urine) origin, except WG-2 which was isolated from chicken feces. I realize that some of these cultures may be difficult to type owing to spontaneous agglutinability, especially after boiling, but hope this will not be an insuperable difficulty. WG-1, which exhibits this difficulty, is the original K-12. We have a fairly comprehensive picture of the cultural and biochemical character of these strains, and will be glad to forward this if it would be of any use to you.

If, for any reason, you cannot undertake this favor at the present time, please feel free to dispose of the cultures, and I will await your later word when I might send them again.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,
Associate Professor of Genetics