

Re Heumann

January 24, 1958

Direktor:  
Prof. Dr. H. Nachtsheim  
Max-Planck-Institut  
Ehrenbergstr. 26/28  
Berlin-Dahlem, Germany

Dear Professor Nachtsheim:

I am happy to answer your inquiry about Dr. Heumann. I was very pleased to have him in my laboratory, as he was a pleasant colleague and intelligent and diligent worker. It was plain, however, that he benefitted from contact with more recent approaches to bacterial physiology and genetics.

Unfortunately, Dr. Heumann's trip to the United States was delayed for several months. Consequently the latter part of his year coincided with my own travel to Australia, and I very much regret that I was not in the laboratory for the most critical final two or three months that he was here. For that reason, I have not been able to form a critical judgment about the most important issues, especially whether the star-forms represent a sexual cycle. Heumann made at least very substantial progress towards a genetic test of this proposition, having solved a number of problems of the nutrition of his organism, and the conditions necessary for the star formation. Curiously enough, a relatively simple synthetic medium proved to be more satisfactory than the complex brew he had used earlier. The actual tests for recombination were, however, somewhat ambiguous - at least we would both be skeptical until each of us has had a chance to repeat them.

My feeling is that another six months of undistracted work would have brought this work to a precise conclusion, and we were both very sorry that the circumstances of his position in Braunschweig obliged his departure at that time.

In any event, we are both determined to continue the project as best we can, and I will endeavour to set up my own confirmatory experiments as soon as possible.

I am especially well impressed by Heumann in the light of his critical attitude to his own work. He has been rather severely provoked by Stapp's polemical attacks but has retained a constructive attitude.

NACHTSHEIM, H.

Prof. Dr. H. Nachtsheim  
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While I must record my own opinion on sexuality in his material as "undecided" this is due at least in part to my own preoccupations, and I hope therefore it will not react in his disfavor! Dr. Heumann's chief professional attainment is in general microbiology, but he has had enough of a taste of the genetic approach to be able to attack his problem with vigor from all angles.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Medical Genetics

JL/ew