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Department of Medical Genetics
School of Medicine

April 11, 1957

Dr. C. B. Van Niel
Hopkins Marine Station
Pacific Grove, California

Dear Kees:

I hope you will forgive me for not answering sooner your letter of January 26. There was little that I could reply to your kindness before we had decided about Stanford, and we were thoroughly involved in our preparations to go to Europe after then. I need hardly say how much we enjoyed seeing you at P.G. and Carmel and that we hope there will be many similar occasions in the future.

As to Stanford, I assume that the information has diffused as to our decision. It is a hard thing to even appear to rebuff the interest and favor of people that one likes and respects. As to yourself, at least, one of the attractions of an eventual move to the West Coast would be the chance of a closer interaction with you and your students. Happily, this could hardly be much less feasible from Berkeley than from Palo Alto.

Perhaps it will interest you (if you were not already aware of it from earlier connections) that Harvard had also recently made me a bid, comparable to the others. From this I have also just withdrawn.

As to Berkeley, you are well aware of the depth of our interest. However, it might be as long as two years before it would be possible for them to accomodate us, on account of various organisational and constructional changes in Genetics. This is so long a time, during which anything might intervene, that we have not pressed the authorities there for a more rapid deliberation on various issues connected with the appointment (e.g.'nepotism'), though this is expected in the due course of time. Our formal position is, therefore, that we have not yet had a binding offer, and have therefore not made a binding commitment, while negotiations are still proceeding, interlocked with a number of side issues. Meanwhile, I have a job to do here; in addition to my research (q.v.i.) there is this medical-genetics program to organize. (My appointment in the medical school has been confirmed some time ago). In the last analysis, we have been careful that our decisions on other universities have been weighed against our position in Madison, not the hypothetical alternatives elsewhere.

In the lab. we have recently isolated a few 'stable L-forms', appearing under certain conditions in the course of growth in penicillin-agar. At least two of these have proved to be new mutants requiring diaminopimelic acid, which is of course absent in ordinary media. We are examining others to see if they can be related to other specific components of bacterial walls (e.g. D-alanine; carboxyethyl glucosamine...).

with best regards