

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
and
THE JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE
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Dr. Louis K. Diamond
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Dear Lou,

I am embarrassed that I have not gotten back to you in response to your letter an unconscionably long time ago.

The Bar Harbor Course was first given, as you doubtless know, in 1960, and Virginia was in the first group to attend it. It cannot be said that she was involved in setting it up but certain it is that her enthusiastic support and frequent participation was very important in ongoing commitment of the March of Dimes to its support -- a support that continues to this day.

The course was conceived at Testa's Restaurant on a warm July noon in 1959 when Anne and I visited the Jackson Laboratory. I made the suggestion to John Fuller, who at that time was Assistant Director for Training, and to Earl Green, who of course was the Director: That there should be a course in medical genetics at Bar Harbor taking advantage of the expertise of the Jax staff and a group of up and coming young medical geneticists and human geneticists from other institutions, particularly of course Johns Hopkins! I was impressed with the fact that the Jax people do in the mouse the same sort of things that we do in man, pretty much. That is, they identify new mutations, i.e. new mutant forms, and attempt to determine in the first instance whether it truly is genetic and in the second instance how it is inherited and what the nature of the basic gene determined defect is.

The objective of the course was to upgrade teaching of genetics in medical schools and related professional schools but, of course, fostering research in this area was a leading objective too.

I am not certain that I can recall any specific anecdotes about Virginia. Of course, her energy was legendary and her enthusiasm truly infectious. Her dedication to the Bar Harbor Course meant that the importance of genetics in the Birth Defects Program that the National

Foundation for Infantile Paralysis was developing was kept in central attention. This was certainly important. I recall that she steered many persons around the country to the course and I am sure that the course in turn had a tremendous impact on the teaching and clinical work of those individuals.

I have, each year in recent times, given an illustrated history of the Bar Harbor Course. The parade of individuals who have attended as "students" or as staff is phenomenally impressive. It is fair to say that virtually no one working in the field has not been to the course and perinatology has certainly been very heavily represented.

Although I am not good at coming up with any anecdotes for you, I am sending you herewith a copy of some of my slides that I use in my history of the Bar Harbor Course.

Incidentally, as you know, beginning in 1967 on alternate years it was a course in mammalian genetics, i.e. mouse genetics, predominantly. Beginning in 1979 the course has become a Short Course in Medical and Experimental Mammalian Genetics and will be a combined course from now on. It is interesting to see how mouse genetics and man genetics have converged in terms both of methodology and of fund of knowledge.

All the best to Mrs. Diamond and to you.

Sincerely,



Victor A. McKusick, M.D.
William Osler Professor of Medicine

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Enclosures

P.S. You will see Charlie Scriver in a picture of 1961 as a student and then in a later picture as a member of the faculty.

The staff and student body for the first course in 1960 is given on certain of the slides and I believe that Virginia was in the first group. I think you will enjoy the nice pictures of the Oakes Center. You will see a number of our distinguished pediatricians in the group such as your protege, Park Gerald, Bob Cook, Richard Day, John Littlefield and a good many others. I have enclosed some slides of other people like the Earl Green's and George Snell that will be of interest to you. You may keep these slides.