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Date: Thu, 09 Mar 2000 18:03:12 -0600  
To: Louis Sokoloff <louis@shiloh.nimh.nih.gov>  
From: "Amir H. Assadi" <ahassadi@facstaff.wisc.edu>  
Subject: Re: Response to your proposal  
Cc: ahassadi@facstaff.wisc.edu

Dear Lou,  
it is wonderful to hear from you, and your strategy for getting work done is one that I use occasionally myself, so no problem there!

I also would like to thank you for the comments and the wonderfully open remarks.

I think working with biologists have had some interesting effect on me, so that in my previous e-mail, instead of having a fairly general and abstract discussion of what my scientific plans for the future would be, I jumped on a concrete idea. I think I should have approached from my good old general abstract way! Then, I would have started with my general passion, that is learning about the brain, and I would have left the "how" to a dynamic evolution of ideas and circumstances.

I am quite sure what I have learned in the brief discussion that we had, and what I learn in general from discussions with you, will be more valuable and intellectually far more stimulating than many other scientific experiences. Therefore, I would just put aside the question of grant writing, so it would not come in the way of my real goal, understanding more about the brain and trying to answer some modest questions....

My hope is that you and Kathy will still come to visit me in Madison, and continue to offer your valuable time from occasion to occasion, as you did generously last time.

The problem of getting financial support, much to my regret, is at this point a practical problem that I have to solve because my sanity and scientific pride has been badly hurt by some opportunists in my Department. From a position of constantly being abused, both from my time and energy to other resources that should be available for my research and progress and it is always blocked, I have come to conclusion that my civilized "wait and see until it gets better" has been interpreted as my weakness. But this should not come in the way of my learning some true scientific insights, and have a mentor like you, even for brief periods of visits and such. I am positive that my practical problems will be solved, and I just have to be a bit better informed of the options.

This long introduction is only to support my statement, that my approach to brain research via imaging, is only because I found it easier, and can do

some things that because of mathematics and computation, many others cannot as easily, something that should help me stay away from competition and stresses of that type. On the other hand, I have done also some data analysis for multi-electrode recording, and felt quite good about the results.

My hope is to learn some cellular and molecular neurobiology, as the opportunity hopefully would arise, to get to the real nuts and bolts.

Regarding Toga, I agree with you that he is a superb researcher, and have had the good fortune of hearing his talk twice and chatting with him. The difficulty is that the National Research Council (NRC) is the program, like the one Cohen had in your lab, only for certain Federal Government Labs. This excludes many excellent places like Toga's lab. Also, NRC has a fairly strong requirement about residence in the lab etc, and I feel if I look into an alternative lab via NRC, it as to be one that I could at least get away from time to time to talk to you and hopefully John Hopfield, who is another scientific hero of mine. I may try to write a KO1 "mentored research scientist" grant to work with Hopfield, while I learn "free style" other things on my own, like metabolism and biochemistry of the brain, from you, possibly in occasions that would not overly impose on your time and other valuable resources.

What I learned in my university studies was that I must prefer company of great thinker over the ordinary technicians, and the subject of interest of excellent researchers has a lot to learn from versus a glamorous topic that I would select by myself. In my entire studies, that has been continuing, travels, visits to other institutions etc, I have applied this motto whenever I could, and with the marvelous consequence that those rare occasions have been the emorable parts of my life, that has remained with me, all others could be always substituted with something of equal or more value!!

Dear Lou,  
how about your visit in May? I hope you will still keep that promise! In the mean time, I will try to come to Washington, but have to do it after my courses and exams are over, because it is really tough to get away except for emergencies. The poor kids in my classes, and the young and enthusiastic novice researchers in my group should get a decent education from me regardless of unkind overload of work assigned to me by the math department.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon, regarding visit by you and Kathy.  
With warmest regards,

Amir