

Langmuir

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Dear Ira,

I have on my desk by my new "self-correcting" electric typewriter yours and Ineva's charming, newsy, optimistic Xmas greeting. There is no date on it. One doesn't usually date Xmas cards. I suspect it has been on my desk a full two months or longer. I must have set it aside to read at my leisure and I may say pleasure!

Reading it now was a bit of a nostalgic binge. It brought up the beginning of my association with the BW program. I remember it well. It was February 1947. You were the chairman of the BW Committee of the Joint Research and Development Board of the then National Military Establishment. My boss at Hopkins, Kenneth F. Maxcy was made a member of your committee and I was designated as his alternate. It was my first exposure to TOP SECRET. In fact the whole security program was so primitive that we had a blanket clearance. "Real" clearance, if you would call it that, didn't come for six months or longer. The really significant part of that experience was the review panel on Anti-human BW agents. Maxcy headed that one with John Enders, John Dingle, Walt Nungester, and general Callender as members. We worked hard and produced what I felt, and still feel, was a most creditable report. It never, to my knowledge, saw the light of day although I argued many times over the next two decades that it be released and published.

As you well know after August 1949 when I took my job at CDC I became ever more deeply involved in BW through DOD and directly on the Chemical Corps Advisory Committee. Tony McAuliffe and Bill Creasy were impressive generals with whom it was rewarding to work.

One of the important contributions to knowledge that stemmed from my association with the BW program was the work on Anthrax, carried out largely by Phil Brachman under my close and, I may say strong, leadership. He studied the cases of cutaneous Anthrax in goat hair mills. He tested the Fort Detrick anthrax vaccine, he investigated the extraordinary epidemic in Manchester, NH, in the fall of 1957. Will Albrink did the brilliant pathological studies of those cases of inhalation anthrax that clarified so classically the pathogenesis of that form of the disease. We never could persuade the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board or the Surgeon General's Office of the significance of that epidemic.

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In 1970 I retired from the CDC and withdrew from my 23 years of exceedingly close association with the BW program. Then about a year and a half ago the Sverdlovsk epidemic came into focus for me. The charges from Washington seemed exotic in the extreme and the arguments from the Russians seemed sufficiently credible to warrant trying to clarify them. I learned about Matthew Meselson's efforts to this end for the past ten years. I offered my help and he accepted. Last winter and spring due to Matt's extraordinary perception and perseverance a meeting was arranged with a group of three Russian doctors who had participated in the investigation and management of the epidemic. Perhaps you know all about this, but in case you don't I enclose a well written and wholly authoritative account written by Matt and published in the Public Interest Report of the Federation of American Scientists. I am rather surprised not to find your name as a sponsor of this organization. Even my wife Leona Baumgartner, we married in 1970, is one. Hence I send the article on to you. You were there as a progenitor at least. But for you I doubt that I would have been there.

I would love to hear from you with any comments or reminiscences you may have. As you see I am sending a copy of this letter to Matt Meselson.

Cordially,



Alex Langmuir

cc Matthew S. Meselson

My regards to Ineva, I remember her well from the one meeting we had in the 1950's in Madison with supper at your home.