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Dear Matthew,

It is a long time since I had any contact with you, but I am now stimulated by a long phone talk with Rod Barton. He is still concerned about Yellow Rain and mentioned he had spoken to you recently. I thought the issue was dead. Almost from the beginning there seemed to be two US positions; the official one that the mycotoxins were used offensively, and the unofficial, near-universal view among professionals that our theories were correct. Rod has problems with this, and cited an article by David Franz (commander of USAMRIID) supporting the official line. I replied that I had recently seen an article by colleagues of Franz (G.W. Christopher et al., J Am Med Assoc vol 278, pp412-417, 1997) which implied doubt on the trichothecene hypothesis. The wording is delightfully ambiguous: "...the US allegationsare widely regarded as erroneous." You will be familiar with the articles on BW in this issue of JAMA. No doubt a public official has a dual responsibility, to his office and to his profession. Do you think there will be any new developments or shifts in opinions on the Yellow Rain matter?

I retired in September 1997 and tried to become an author. A draft book "Mixed Signals: Chemical Messengers in the New Age" got nowhere after being sent to many publishers. I tried a chatty style, less serious than "Chemicals and Society". The main problem here is the limited local market for scientific topics, serious or not. The enclosed articles started life as chapters in the book, slightly revised to suit an independent situation.

Shirley Freeman has been in hospital for a short time for a knee replacement, and is now recovering at home. She is in good health apart from the arthritis and has become a good potter. Her mind is as alert as ever.

I still read the "CBW Conventions Bulletin" with interest, although I have had virtually no direct contact with CBW matters since retirement; I think of it more as a new career in authorship rather than retirement.

If you are ever in this part of the world, let me know, you will be welcome to stay here.

Yours sincerely,



(Hugh Crone)

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