University of Victoria

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Personal.

19 May/04.

Dear Josh,

Bill Kaufmann was just on the 'phone and asks me to salute you on his behalf. He wants to know when my "Old Endeavour" will be out! So I told him I was only now on Letter "R" and today am writing longer than usual accounts of Ramón y Cajal, Nobel Prize in Medicine 1906, and Rio-Hortega with whom I worked in Madrid, later at Oxford after General Franco and his Nazi & Italian airforces drove out the democrats in that country. Poor Spain!

Now I have been delving into the Fred Griffith DNA mystery, but am not sure I have cleared up the mystery yet. I have literally chasing up references.

By chance, yesterday, I came on a slim book of 156 pages, written for ignoramuses like me — "DNA Pioneers and their Legacy", by Ulf Lagerkvist, Yale University Press, 1998.

On page 111 the author begins on Griffith and on Fred Neufeld in Germany. On page 113 the author writes: "Griffith was killed during a 1941 London air raid while serving as a volunteer fire fighter."

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As I recall, the Head of the Public Health Laboratory (whatever the correct name) was listed as dead, in the same obit. section of Lancet or British Med. Journal — I am not sure which.

I have other enquiries in the air but my colleagues in Oxford & London are long priceheads, such as Howard Florey. (He told me it was all very well to graduate with a D. Phil. in 1937 but I must remain another year in Oxford. Why? He said in his Australian drawl: "We can give a year of clinics, pharmacology and pathology, right here in Oxford if we have eight students. I have seven, and you are No. 8"!

Canadians sniggly wait behind that of the Rockefeller triumvirate on DNA two were Canadians! Avery had trouble, it seems, in donning a U.S. uniform in W.W. II until he acquired U.S. citizenship.

Now can you tell me if you were the youngest researcher ever to win the Nobel Prize? I believe you were a year younger than Watson. But of recent Nobelists I'm not sure. If I am right I want to stress that, being a Yale man too — though only as a visiting lecturer in John Fulton's Dept. of History of Medicine & Science: I was fortunate enough to live with students in a big residence next door to 333 Cedar Street. I had to prepare + give 10 lectures in 10 weeks, starting from scratch. My lecture on Ross Harrison was a "full house".

Warmest, Bill