



Let's Get Something Straight

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Career Opportunities for Me?

Each year, usually in early October, a few of us in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology at Colorado State University organize a meeting of what we call the "Rocky Mountain Virology Club." The intent of this meeting is to bring together graduate students and faculty, simply to get together on an informal basis, present 10-minute summaries of our current work, and have one or many more beers and some pretzels. The meeting is held at Colorado State University's mountain campus, which is in a beautiful place, with moose, bear, deer, rodents of all sorts, wild flowers, trees, and plenty of food. The weather usually is beautiful at that time of year and the aspen trees are turning a golden shade. Couldn't be better. We arrive on a Friday afternoon and leave by Sunday noon, having had enough socializing by then. Besides, fall is football season here and there are games to be watched. This meeting has be-

come so popular that we have had to limit the number of attendees, who come from university microbiology departments and federal laboratories from throughout this area of the western United States. Sometimes we are honored to have as additional entertainment a musician (we can always find a microbiologist who plays piano, violin, or other instrument) and the beer makes it all the better. If anyone wears a necktie, we carry them into the woods, in the dark, and leave them there.

At the 2005 meeting, Dr Kathryn Holmes, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, asked me whether I had seen the recently published paper by Lau et al in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) regarding the detection of a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus-like virus in Chinese horseshoe bats (1). I had, and we began to discuss this seminal finding. Dr Holmes is an expert molecular virologist, working

mostly with coronaviruses, so naturally she was fascinated with this discovery. She asked me what viruses had been isolated from bats and I mentioned the 20 or so that I knew. Then she asked whether I had seen a review paper on bat viruses; I had not. She then suggested we write such a review, involving Dr Tony Schountz in our efforts; Tony, an immunologist at the University of Northern Colorado, also was at the meeting. We agreed that we were the best people to do this because we did not have any biases. The problem was we also did not have any information. One tends to view such deficits as small problems, however, when one has had a few beers. I volunteered to draft a manuscript and we subsequently invited Dr Hume Field, Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, Queensland, an Australian veterinarian with extensive field and laboratory experience with recently emerged bat viruses Nipah, Hendra, and others. Dr

James Childs, a population biologist and bat rabies expert, and a long-time friend from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, now at Yale University, joined us in this adventure.

With each of us taking responsibility for certain sections of the manuscript, and through the kindness of many people around the world who provided both unpublished information and suggestions (most were decent ones), we put together a paper which has been extremely popular (2). It apparently also has been useful, stimulating research by many groups now working on bats viruses.

Encouraged by this success in being an author of a paper on a subject about which I knew nothing, it seems to me that I should branch out and take on other areas about which I know nothing. I here outline some ideas, which I ask the readers of the CMJ to comment on, perhaps providing further ideas or criticisms. For those with helpful ideas, write to me at *calisher@cybersafe.net*. For those who have criticisms, write to me at *don'tbother@forgetit.nista.nil*.

1. *Psychologist*. Psychology intrigues me. My wife is a psychologist, which is why I am so well-adapted to the vagaries of life. Among other burdens, she has helped me, day-by-day, survive, without screaming very often, eight years of George Bush, which is no small accomplishment. Nonetheless, while she is

an expert, and quite knowledgeable about all sorts of bizarre responses of people, I try to ignore her when her ideas conflict with my preconceived notions.

Were I to practice psychology, I would limit that practice to simple family problems. Using "**Don't do that anymore.**" as my principal (and only) suggestion, I am sure I could get people back to work and to happy marriages, and smiling all the while. I have observed that people do really stupid things, such as cheating on their spouses, spending far more money than they can afford to spend, and keeping a cat as a pet. I would simply tell them to not do that anymore and, if they would listen to my sage advice, they would be fine thereafter. I do not understand what is so difficult about not doing stupid things. I expect my clients will see it my way after a time – and after having received a large bill from me for my valuable time.

2. *Fashion advisor, men only*. Anyone who has seen me knows that there are few people who appear more suave in cheap clothes than I do. I see no reason to spend a great deal of money on ridiculous looking clothes designed by Yves St. Laurent, Christian Dior, Calvin Klein, or ShakeYourBooty. I would not be caught dead wearing shiny materials, diaphanous sleeved blouses, Humphrey Bogart hats, see-through pants, or shoes that look like those Doro-

thy wore while in Oz. A pair of jeans, a shirt of some kind, even with a button missing, with a pocket for my cigarettes, and a sweater (wear it when it is cold, take it off when it is not cold) should be enough for anyone. If my clothes have a button missing or a few small tears from having done some work, that's okay with me, and if it also has a bit of dirt on it, so what? This cleanliness fetish in modern society only leads to asthma anyway. Given that there are at least hundreds of people in the world who have no clothes at all, if I have a couple of pairs of pants and a couple of shirts I feel rich. If all men would feel as I do, they could get on with more important things than looking in a mirror (or mirrors). If women are looking for a man who dresses nicely, they can go to a gay bar.

3. *Nutritionist*. When I was a graduate student, I studied gnotobiology, the nature of germ-free animals. Founded by Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch (3) (separately, of course), gnotobiology studies the effects of the absence of microorganisms on the vertebrate host. Nowadays, we are concerned about *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, salmonella, shigella, and other pathogens. Those bacteria had not been invented when Louis and Bob were working, so they only concerned themselves with what they called "normal flora." Their rudimentary contrap-

tions worked for a day or a few days but then that was that, the experimental vertebrates either died or became “conventionalized.” James A. Reyniers, working at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana (THE Notre Dame) resurrected this field of study, building stainless steel isolators with which longer-term studies could be done. Reyniers family was in the stainless steel business and by the time he left the University the conversion to plastic isolators already was under way. By the time I got there, most of the techniques had been developed (I did not help with the ones that hadn’t), and the only problems I had were when I accidentally burned holes in the plastic shells of the isolators with my cigarettes. Sterilization was done using peracetic acid, which has an odor like that of acetic acid, which is the main and most offending ingredient in vinegar. Combine an aversion to that odor, which developed and increased the longer I worked with peracetic acid, with my allergy to uncooked tomatoes and you know why I do not eat salads. Also, I studied mycology, so mushrooms are out of the question. Now that may sound unnatural to you but I am guessing that early humans did not eat lettuce and certainly did not eat broccoli, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts. In other words, we humans did not fight our way to the top of the food chain to eat something contain-

ing 100 calories and which take 125 calories to chew, swallow, and digest. Anyway, eating a salad is like drinking one of those bar drinks with a paper umbrella in it. [Samuel Johnson: “A cucumber should be well-sliced, dressed with pepper and vinegar, and then thrown out.”]

When I go for my annual physical, my physician tells me I must be eating a more balanced diet because I am as “healthy as a horse,” whatever that means. Keep in mind that, just since I arrived in Fort Collins in 1973, I have been through four physicians, each one telling me I ought to eat better. I have no intention of taking guidance from pale, gaunt guys who look like they could use a hearty meal.

So, were I to put a plaque over my door indicating “Nutritionist”, I would probably be flooded with patients who eat horribly (salads, no alcohol, low carbohydrates, and other low fat foods) and who exercise pathologically. When I die I want to be sick. No matter their complaints, I would tell them to eat better: meats, starchy foods, plenty of junk food, more alcohol, ice cream, no bottled water, absolutely no “health foods,” and nothing their doctor tells them to eat. That stuff will kill you. Everyone I know who has died ate green vegetables – I know a correlation when I see one. I expect to be very successful.

4. *Chef.* This will be simple. Without having to bother about

salads and all those trivia, it gets down to meat, potatoes, corn (American sweet, not the type fed to cattle and foreigners), and chocolate ice cream, double-chocolate if it is available. That’s it. I like things simple.

Recipe A. GERMAN CHOCOLATE ICEBOX CAKE

1 package sweet chocolate (melted), 1½ tablespoons water, 1 egg yolk, unbeaten, 1 egg white, stiffly beaten, 1 tablespoon confectioner’s sugar, ½ cup whipping cream, 12 “ladyfinger” halves or pieces of angel food cake

Directions: Blend the melted chocolate with water. Add egg yolk and beat until smooth. Mix in sugar. Whip whipping cream and fold into chocolate. Fold in egg whites. Layer wafers or cake crumbs with chocolate mixture. Chill overnight.

Alternative: Just eat the entire package of chocolate and ignore the rest of the recipe.

Recipe B: HILLARY CLINTON’S CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

1½ cups unsifted all-purpose flour, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 cup solid vegetable shortening, 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar, ½ cup granulated sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 2 eggs (chicken), 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats, 1 × 340 g of semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions: Preheat oven to 177°C. Grease baking sheets (vegetable oil). Combine flour, salt, and baking soda on waxed paper. Beat together shortening, sugars, and vanilla in large bowl with an electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs, beat until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in flour mixture and rolled oats. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop batter by well-rounded teaspoonfuls onto baking sheets. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until golden brown. Cool cookies on sheets for 2 minutes. Remove to a wire rack to cool completely. Yield: 7½ dozen cookies

Nutritional analysis per cookie: 67 calories, 4 g fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 35 mg sodium, 1 g protein, 9 g carbohydrate.

Alternative: Just eat the entire package of chocolate and ignore the rest of the recipe.

As for other guidance in regard to meals, I would suggest to my “patients,” or “clients,” that they open their refrigerator, take out anything that is not green, and eat it. If it is green it is probably is not worth eating anyway and it might be the beginning of a fungal culture. If they have doubts, they can test it on their cats first.

5. *Diplomacy*. Here is where I might shine! Will Rogers said, “Diplomacy is the art of saying ‘Nice doggie!’ until you can find a rock.” I am a believer. The word “diplomacy” itself is from the Greek “*diploma*”, which means “folded in two.” That is because

the nonsense that government representatives offer in opening negotiations is so funny that people “fold in two” laughing. The word in French is “*diplomatie*”, principally because the French are not good at spelling.

I would train all would-be diplomats in the art of using tact to gain strategic advantage, including “phrasing of statements in a non-confrontational or polite manner”. There’s the rub – “to gain strategic advantage”. In other words, you are not going to pay any attention to what anyone else wants, you are just going to keep talking until the other person collapses, walks away, or smiles and agrees with you. There is no point to all this talking if both sides think they are about to be talked into something, so just tell the opposite side what you want, give them your telephone number, and go home until they call. If they do not call, then you know where you stand and you have to start a war. This is not to be avoided; it has been done before. You are not inventing anything, just carrying on a grand human tradition. Anyway, most people are only alive because it is illegal to shoot them.

6. *Energy guru*. Lack of energy is not a modern problem. From the days of people living in caves, humans have had to find something to burn, in those days mostly wood, sometimes dinner. Now that we have sucked large amounts of hydrocarbon

from the ground and turned it into carbon dioxide and other toxins, we must find other ways to keep the lights on. Wind is a likely source, as is solar power; a combination of the two would be even better. Nevertheless, that will take a while because the oil companies and automobile manufacturers are not thrilled about losing all their cachet or income, so they will fight progress as long as they can. While we await the appearance of the next Thomas Edison or Nikola Tesla, there are certain acts we can perform to reduce our use of energy and at least postpone the day when the lights go dim.

A. First priority is to make it illegal to plug in an electric guitar, an electric accordion, or electric bagpipes. They do not make music anyway, so why have them plugged in?

B. Given that so many people in Mexico want to move to the US, the latter should open the border and let them all in. Then, all those already here should move to Mexico. Because it is warm in Mexico in the winter, we would not need artificial heating and therefore could save fuel. Also, the cost of illegal drugs would be reduced because of lowered transportation costs, given that most of the customers already would be nearby.

C. To buy time until wind and solar energies are economical, the US should swallow up a country with large oil and natural gas reserves. It may be

that “the meek shall inherit the earth” (4) but they won’t get the mineral rights. Making such a place the 51st state has multiple advantages: (a) It would require the US military to move out of harm’s way in Iraq, which never was the enemy anyway; (b) Most of those places are right next door to Iraq, just a short walk away, and most have Coca-Cola; (c) In at least one of those countries there are only 17 people who are in charge; the rest of the population comprising either relatives who live in London or employees from southeast Asia and Africa; (d) Baseball could be introduced to the Middle East, which would give those people something useful to learn and do; (e) The King, His Royal Highness, His Morganatic Majesty (5), or whatever his title is, could go to the US, where the shopping is better and cheaper (although that likely is not a factor) and most everything is made in China, so he would not exactly be supporting the enemy.

7. *Administrator*. For starters I would see to it that whoever arrived at work first would get whatever parking place is available. Most of the parking places now reserved for the highest level people in an organization usually are empty anyway, so it is unlikely that anyone would notice. Next: I would establish a Department of Epiadministration, which I would head, one which would keep an eye on people who administrate and (a) see to it that they make no more rules, (b)

make certain that the number of rules in existence is reduced by 5% each year until I retire, and (c) certify that the number of administrators is reduced by 10% each year until I retire. The Department of Epiadministration would have a limited lifetime and I would fire myself after 10 years, fewer if an annual vote of the employees indicates so.

According to my dictionary, the word “administer” originated some time between 1325 and 1375, coming from the Latin *administrāre*, meaning “to assist, carry out, or manage the affairs of” and an administrator is “one who administers.” Thus, from the beginning, it was unclear exactly what these people do. However, synonyms for “administer” are defined as to “1. conduct, control, execute; direct, superintend, supervise, oversee” and “2. distribute, supply, furnish.” That must be it. They supply and furnish, but only secondarily. Their prime directive, as Captain Kirk would say, is to conduct, control, and execute. Now we can see what they are up to, whether they admit it or not. I can understand the need to conduct but when it comes to control I beg to differ, and I take exception to being executed or to have any of my coworkers executed. What I would do, if appointed overseer (Chief Epiadministrator) of administration and administrators is to declare in no uncertain terms that my underlings are to either start helping or get the hell out. As

Angelo Bartlett Giamatti (once Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University, then President of Yale University, then Commissioner of Major League Baseball, now deceased) said, “To the Members of the University Community: In order to repair what Milton called the ruin of our grand parents, I wish to announce that henceforth, as a matter of University policy, evil is abolished and paradise restored. I trust all of you will do whatever possible to achieve this policy objective.”

If being in none of these new areas is successful for me, perhaps I will turn to religion, where the real money is.

Acknowledgment

Alexander Valley Winegrowers, Sonoma County, California

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