"...AND IT CAME TO PASS..."

A short narrative of the founding of the Cajal Club on the 3rd of April, 1947 in Room 8102 of the Mount Royal Hotel in Montreal, Canada was related by Dr. George Clark in "The Cajal Club, 1947-1966. The Harman Era" which appeared in Volume I of these Proceedings, pp 1-4. Pinky, and others of the founding group, are now gone from us. Others have "disappeared" or retired, but it is happy to note that there has been little dilution of the old spirit that has guided the Cajal Club for so many years.

As one way to preserve some of the feeling and the tradition that has been our strength, I asked several surviving members of the Nucleus - elsewhere they might be called Founders or Charter Members, but of course not in the Cajal Club - to write down their own recollections of that day. Without editing, they appear on the next several pages.

Following these reminiscences is an effort to record the present whereabouts of each of the Nucleus, and a bit of historical trivia. It recalls the one short period when Wendell J.S. Krieg filled in as the Apical Dendrite after the death of Dr. Harman, and before the election of Howard A. Matzke to this illustrious office which Howard has now filled so admirably for a decade.
Axone E. Horne Craige

(After suggesting that he had) ... nothing of value to offer..., (the Axone commented that he) ... could not even have recalled the date or the number of Dr. Krieg's room in the Mount Royal Hotel.

Dr. Krieg was so kind as to invite me to a small cocktail party in his room. The list of those present you have. There he outlined his idea of forming a small group of people with related interests who would meet socially at the time of the Anatomists' meeting each year, essentially as set down in the "Covenant of the Cajal Club as amended and approved at the Providence (1952) meeting, and amended at the Columbus (1953) and Galveston (1954) meetings". I understood that it was intended that the membership should not become much more extensive than the number originally present and not that there should be formal presentation of papers. Dr. Krieg had the whimsical idea of designating officers as parts of the neuron, the whole group present being obviously the nucleus. I was called axon (sic: Axone) for no reason other than my having been a "discipulo" of Ramón y Cajal personally.

My time with Cajal was several months in 1927, during which I talked with him almost every working day. The contact was entirely in the laboratory. Neither with him nor with anyone else who worked there was there the slightest outside contact. The only Spaniards who made any such gesture were the Secretary of University Extension (I forget his correct title), Mr. Serís and his wife (a Mexican), with whom we kept up correspondence for years afterwards.


While friendly to a would-be neurohistologist, Don Santiago was distinctly of an unapproachable character. He would have nothing of random visitors. However, we kept up a desultory correspondence until his death, centering, of course, on my translation of his "Recuerdos". He really wanted me to omit the first part of the Recuerdos entirely and only to translate the scientific part. He also longed to revise his great "Histologie du Système Nerveux" and have it published in English. Though he could read English, I never knew him to attempt even on sentence in that language.

In 1965 we called upon Doña Paz, don Santiago's daughter still living in the house he built after receiving the Nobel Prize. Here are the notes I made that evening. "A little, white-haired old-lady opened the door and ushered us in. She chatted with us about her father and told us that his home laboratory was on the floor above but had not been preserved, and that in his time the patio contained a beautiful garden, though it was now 'muy fea' (very ugly)." The rooms that we saw seemed surprisingly small for a house with such a large and handsome exterior and, as so often in Spanish houses, rather bare, with shabby, faded, common-place old furniture. A small bookcase contained what seemed to be the original Recuerdos in two volumes, paper-covered, along with other books, at which we had no chance to look.

EHC
R. Frederick Becker, Member of the Nucleus

I recall well the honor of the invitation to attend Wendell Krieg's soiree in that Bridal Chamber of the Mount Royal Hotel. When I arrived, the joint was jumping and jampacked with people, mostly those with allied neuroanatomical or neural science interests. There may have been a few irregulars who were mainly freeloading on the sumptuous repast laid out immaculately on a long table. Already the booze supply was being guzzled at a rapid rate. The din was terrific when I arrived -- everyone talking in groups about anything and everything at once. At that stage there had been no real announcement of underlying purpose.

I remember the care with which each delicacy was labeled in neuroanatomical terms. There were large "inferior olives" which were superior in size (and taste) to another dish of small "superior olives". There was a chocolate layer cake with white frosting striations cut on the bias and labeled "corpus striatum". There were delicate mounded cup-cakes topped with a cherry -- morphologically appropriate as "mamillary bodies". Every item of the buffet was so labeled.

I got there around 7:00 P.M. It was not until after 11:00 that the bulk of incoming and outgoing traffic began to dwindle. By then, the hangers-on, pretty much well-oiled, got down to the serious discussion of the establishment of an informal get-together of neuroanatomical colleagues at some point of time during the annual meetings of the American Anatomical Association. This was to be for the purpose: 1. Presenting and discussing research in progress in more detail than the usual 12-min. presentations allowed by the Association. 2. To test out new research hypotheses and open them to friendly constructive criticism. 3. To discuss problems in teaching neuroanatomy, or problems in laboratory techniques. 4. To pay homage to the historical contributions of the past which had brought us all to our present stage in the profession. (Such a serious, contemplative concept started us all in search of an appropriate name for such a proposed union of colleagues. It was very easy to pay homage at once to our founding father Ramon Santiago Cajal, and to announce the formal founding of the Cajal Club in his honored memory. I'm sure we found time to propose another convivial toast in his name at that moment.) 5. Finally, this evening to get-together in comradship, feasting and conviviality should also be perpetrated in some form annually -- but not at the expense of Krieg's bankroll. It would be a pay-as-you-go affair at some fancy restaurant where discussions could be held informally, drinks in hand, when the groaning board had been cleared of viands.

This last became a ritual for several years before meetings were organized in scheduled rooms one day prior to association sessions. Even then, the serious business ended around a festive banquet in one of the choice eating places in town. For a long time, we eschewed "hotel-arranged" banquet affairs.

The night at Mount Royal was capped by the election of a slate of officers. The fanciful titles with which they were endowed remain in effect to this day. A glance at the letter sheet of Mount Royal stationery indicates how few remained to the finish -- 13 staunch drinkers -- to sign their names as charter members of the infant Cajal Club.
Talmage L. Peele, Member of the Nucleus

I am afraid I have only a meager remembrance of the Cajal Club founding. During the day of April 3, 1947, Wendell Krieg asked Duncan Hetherington and me to come to room 8102 early that evening for a drink. Fourteen assembled persons sat around in a circle. As I recall, E. Horne Craig sat in a club chair in the corner and was an advisory leader in the discussion relative to the organization of the club to be known by Cajal's name. Of course, Wendell Krieg was a chief mobilizer also. With a great deal of camaraderie a piece of Mount Royal Hotel stationery went around the circle after the proposal for a club had been made and all of us signed as prospective members of this new club whose membership was to be limited to a relatively few male neuroanatomists. (The 1952 banquet picture made in Providence shows only males, and I can't recall when females were admitted to membership.) Officers were elected, with Krieg as nucleolus, Craig as axone, Harman as apical dendrite and Fox as Nissl body. The axone promised to send all of us a photograph of our idol, Ramon, and this he did.

After the joyous meeting most of us, as I recall, went out to dinner together, but I remember nothing about that. I have a vague memory also that several persons, besides the Charter 14, were in room 8102 early on but left before the principal business matter was brought up. I have no memory as to who they were. TLP

Anthony A. Pearson, Member of the Nucleus

I recall being invited together with a fairly large group for a cocktail party in Wendell's Suite in the Hotel in Montreal. Each item of food and drink had been given an appropriate neuroanatomical designation. Some that I still recall are

A Punch called Cerebrospinal Fluid
    Cherries labeled Red Nuclei
A "smelly cheese" (Camembert ?) called the Substantia Gelatinosa
    Another cheese (Roquefort ?) entitled the Gray Matter
    Caviar labeled the Substantia Nigra

We were a "bunch of dirty old men" standing about drinking and telling stories. But a handful of us stayed on to sign our names to a sheet of Hotel Stationary as the Nucleus of the Cajal Club. I am most amazed at the clarity and legibility of all of the signatures. (By GVR from notes by AAP in the Bar at LA, 1975.)