

For David Shugar

To his 80th Birthday

Warszawa, 3 September 1995

Eighty years ago was born a boy,
in a little town of Poland's East.
Life was not always joy,
World War I spared Poland least.
It was not easy life at all
the father got a distant call.
"Let' all go to Canada!"

In Canada the boy grew up.
In school he was always top.
To help his father in his work
delivered eggs - he was no jerk -
so that the family could strive
for a more decent life.
That was life in Canada.

The boy grew up and was smart
- everybody new this from the start.
To college he could go and study,
there he met many a buddy.
Physics was his greatest passion.
His Ph.D. was a sensation!
He also met a wonderful wife,
with Grace he has wandered his life.
That was life in Canada.

But Biology caught his fancy
and he started out with frenzy
to build an ultracentrifuge,
a monster, it was huge!
At the hospital of McGill.
In Montreal, is it running still?
That was life in Canada.

In France he worked in Pasteur's Institute
with Rothschild's grant he was not destitute.
But his ideas were not so common,
in Science and in Politics.
The police did fast him summon:
"We don't like your dirty tricks!
You are a subversive element!
Despite your angelic temperament."
That was not life in Canada.

They were kicked out and went to Brussels.
Maurice Errera had known their hassles.
He gave them plenty good advice
and a lab bench and a room.

David was not used to playing dice.
A jolly fellow was in his platoon:
With Jack Fox they measured spectra
of common nucleosides, and some extra.
That was quite new, it was not brief
to record spectra point by point
an awful job, you don't believe!
That was life in Belgium.

Even Belgium he had to leave,
the stay in Brussels was so brief.
McCarthyism in Europe had a stand
to his homeland he therefore went.
They thought it would be wise
to go to workers' paradise.
Poland accepted him with open arm.
Nobody would do him any harm.
So started life in Polish land.

In Warsaw an Institute he started,
but the first efforts had been thwarted.
There was no money, empty walls,
David all his buddies calls.
Around the world he had many friends
they kept him with the trends.
Enzymes and compounds he collected,
a solid reputation he thus erected:
on his many trips to the West
he always picked up the very best.
With his Canadian passport, he was smart,
to travel around the globe was not so hard.
That was life in Polish land.

There came the structure of Watson-Crick.
The bases had a certain trick:
they were all right, but could
tautomerize, not as they should.
That's were David started out to think,
that tautomers may be the thing:
bases could shift around their protons.
Since they also absorbed UV light,
they could also catch the photons.
That was life in Polish land.

Many projects he has begun,
enzymes were his greatest fun.
RNases, kinases, pyrophosphatase,
glycosylase and thymidylate synthetase,

from coli, subtilis, potato shoots,
from fibroblasts and carrot roots.
That was life in Polish land.

Methylation, ethylation
on the sugar was a revelation.
And the bases were mistreated,
pieces added and deleted.
Mutagenic were some bases
were not liked by some -ases.
Methyl-methane-sulfonate, hydroxyl-amine,
UV irradiation, bromo-deoxyuridine
mutagenize DNA, but not alike.
Many other subjects he did strike.
That was life in Polish land.

The Belgians did virus infection,
the Polish, bacterial transformation.
A crystal structure of a new compound?
In Canada an ally he had found.
Syn-anti equilibria, coupling constants,
rotamers in gauche and trans.
Conformation his fancy caught.
to Warsaw NMR he brought,
That was life in Polish land.

Many students David taught,
the Science-bug from him they caught.
Many are professors now.
One asks: "He did it, but how?"
It always was a constant fight.
To get the grants, even light,
to run the lab, to get the stuff.
Times were not easy, they were rough.
That was life in Polish land.

His life's work nearly was in rubble,
not long ago, he was in trouble.
Again, they wanted to get rid of him.
But this time the danger, it was dim.
Friends around the globe,
they started writing,
with the serious hope,
to stop the fighting.
That was life in Polish land.

Many a regime he did survive.
That's why we wish him now a quiet life.
Friends and colleagues all they bid
"Long life to King David!"

Willi Guschlbauer

**Saclay and Warszawa,
3 September 1995**