April 26, 1993

Dear Deborah,

It was a thrilling moment when I opened your recent Federal Express mail packet and found therein the transcribed transcripts of Nicola-Zeissler correspondence, together with your covering letter. It seems almost a miracle that their messages should have come to light after more than half a century and you are to be commended for perseverance in discovering them where about of the collection. It is also gratifying to me that my memory of Miss Rosanna's comment (on one of those days in the long ago when I happened to be in the Departmental library at Harvard) — that she was transcribing the correspondence — has proven accurate. Having been dedicated to the welfare of 'Bacteriology/Immunology' and Dr. Zeissler throughout the entire time of his chairmanship, I could not believe that she would have allowed the collection to disappear after his death.

I have read the transcripts with great interest and without difficulty in translating them into English, except occasionally when there are individual words missing (I presume Miss Rosanna may have had difficulty or inability to decipher the original handwritten French), the style is clean and straightforward. The letters shed light on the work and thought of these authors concerning features of the typhoid story, as well as their mutual esteem even when they disagreed on their views of places where they had visited, separately or together. The works or personalities of colleagues, etc. I naturally consider this material confidential, as you and the Countway Library have requested.
The transcripts you sent cover the period from end of 1930 through end of 1935, shortly before Nicolle's death—and this may be all that is available—but I think it would be very worthwhile to see whether any of earlier data can be found, particularly the period 1928-30 when H.2. went to Tunisia to work at the Pasteur Institute there and subsequently went off on a trip in Normandy with Nicolle. This would round out the picture of their relationship as it developed when H.2. renewed his laboratory and field studies in the typhus area.

Re-reading To I Remember Him, it is clear what H.2. (and Nicolle) thought about the role of the head louse as a susceptible typhus vector. In his early work at Tunisia, H.2. worked with lice from "bearded Arabs"; had it been felt that only body lice would "do", Nicolle would undoubtedly have secured for him donors of the latter. Similarly, when Castaneda came to Boston and was looking for lice to work with in the lab, he snipped nit-infested hair from the head of an old man; head lice, he had been considered indispensable, they could have been obtained readily from sources in the "Hub" of New York.

Thanks for bringing to my attention Elmer Bendixen's article on H.2. in the Aug. 15, 1992 issue of Hospital Practice. It is illustrated with some nice photographs and the text provides information, previously unknown to me, concerning H.2.'s relationships with immediate family. I have the impression of a close bond between To I Remember Him and some details which suggest E. B. was not thoroughly familiar with Nicolle's professional career. I'm glad the journal's editor published the essay and so brought H.2. to the attention of the readers' of their publication!

I'm thinking about getting up to Boston in the fall, but my next trip is scheduled to go directly via Atlanta to Paris—at end of May.