

Copy of a letter to Ron Oppenheim, April 28, 1993 concerning a
publication of Salome Wessels in "Development, 1993, Supplement."

"As I suspected, it is a talk she gave in 1986 at an International
Embryology Meeting in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. She had sent
me a Xerox copy at that time, and we had a correspondence about
it. I don't have a copy of my letter, but I have her answer, which
contains comments on some critical points I had made.

On the whole, I agree with her critical comments on Spemann;
he was strongly nationalistic, and, like most academics, had no
sympathy for the Weimar Republic (he may have harbored some
antisemitic feelings, again, like many colleagues, but he made
exceptions (myself; his Ph.D. student A. Marx). He had several
fine graduate students; I remember Hilde Proscholdt and

Els Wessel (later Mrs. H. Boutsman).
And Salome does emphasize his strong scientific mentorship,
and dedication to all students and guests. I also share her
surprise at the fact that he, a student and friend of Boveri's,
had no interest in the role of genes in development. I have
commented on this in my talks at the Ernst Mayr Symposium

Now ~~that~~, what puzzles me no end, in rereading the papers,
and is completely incomprehensible, is her complete omission
of my experiments of species hybridization of *I. vitatus* ten-
atus and *crisatus*, which was the basis of her Ph.D. thesis and
the reason for her stage series [of the 2 species]. She makes the in-
credible statement on p. 2, left bottom, that I worked on the role

the r.s. in limb development. That experiment of ⁽²⁾
peered in print in 1928, the year of her arrival in Freiburg.
She states that her Ph.D. thesis was dictated by the need
of Spemann's favorite student and her close friend, Ekhard
Rohmann, who did heteroplastic transplantations on limb
buds. That is true, but only part of the story. For in-
stance, he did not need the stage series (of *D. taeniatas* and
cristatus), but I did. - Why did she forget completely,
that Spemann assigned her to me, to assist me, ^{her} in a pro-
ject of developmental genetics, which interested and intro-
duced her to the field that became her life-long vocation?
For several years we had daily contacts, and we must have
talked about genes in development endlessly. And during
one summer she took care of my species hybrid larvae.
And yet, not a word on these experiments in her talk.
I can account for this only in Freudian terms. Roh-
mann was her bosom friend, and I kind of a father
figure! It also teaches a lesson to historians concerning
selective memories of autobiographers. Again, ~~was~~ in the
case of Rita, the male mentor gets short shrift, or rather,
a taste of female hybrid

All my best ✓