

I went to work for Dr Sawyer in 1960, two years out of Oxy. My biology major qualified me to work in his research lab at UCLA. He worked at the medical school and taught anatomy as well as having the research lab. He became well known for his research on hormones and the brain which provided some of the information to develop "The Pill".

The first year we worked in an old building at the south edge of the campus- right across the street from Bullocks. It had been some sort of student church building and was taken over for medical research while the BRI (Brain Research Institute) was being constructed. It was casual and messy. There was a walk-in cage at one edge of the room, connected to a console type Electroencephalograph (EEG), where the brain waves of the animals were recorded. The rest of the room was filled with desks, sinks, cupboards and lab benches. The "animal room" was down the hall. It was full of the rabbits we used as well as other animals. The next year the BRI was completed and we moved into three clean new rooms. One had a permanent room for the EEG experiments. There were several new animal rooms.

John Sunston was a graduate student of Dr Sawyers and showed me how everything was done, as Dr Sawyer was often busy teaching. John taught me how to make the electrodes that were placed in the rabbit's brains. Stainless steel tubes were cut to the appropriate length. A wire was soldered to the stainless steel tube. Next a coated wire was inserted into the tube. The final step was to coat it with epoxy so the electronic signals from the brain could be recorded. I assisted him with implanting the electrodes in the rabbits brains for his project.

Dr Sawyer had developed a "stereotactic device" that was used to keep the rabbits immobilized during surgery. Their big front teeth were hung over a bar in the front, while bars were put in their ears and attached to a calibrated frame. (anesthetized of course). Their big ears with visible veins made for easy injections. Dr Sawyer had developed a manual that showed where the various structures of the brain were located. The electrodes were implanted and often attached to the animals skull with dental cement. A plug was placed on the top of their head to plug into the machine. They could live a long time this way and never seemed to notice the attachment. Sometimes the a wire had some estrogen on the tip. The rabbit could be stimulated to record whether or not she would mate and if she would ovulate.(rabbits and cats only ovulate when they are mated- unlike people who ovulate by the calendar.)

Dr Sawyer enjoyed having young post doctoral students come and work in his lab for a year. We had Shigeto Kanematsu from Japan who did his research on pigeons. If anyone wanted squab for dinner they were available on a regular basis. There was Carlos from Mexico who enjoyed being in LA. We had Bela Flerko from Hungary. He told us about living in Pest during WWII. One night he decided not to go to the basement when the shooting began, but lay peacefully in his warm bed. At some point, since it was quiet, he sat up and looked through his window- a bullet immediately whizzed past him. He didn't do that again. John Tindal came from Reading ,England where they had been doing research using goats. His wife Phil, got a job upstairs in the histology lab, making slides of the rabbit's brains after the experiments. Some years later, when I was in London visiting my cousins, I got in touch with John and Phil. They invited me to their home. I took a train and John met me at the station. We went to his lab one day to share tea with the scientists. John took me into the goat barn and made sure I was introduced to the white goat named Enid.(They named them alphabetically) John and I have remained friends all these years.

My job in Dr Sawyers lab had a lot of variety. I helped with the surgery, gave the animals their post surgery antibiotics shots, washed the equipment and ordered supplies. I was also the local voice of authority about California. There were lots of discussions about California, where to go and what to see. When people traveled, they sent me postcards which I taped to the wall by my desk. I had a very colorful variety.