Introduction to “Those Were the Days”

A New Feature

Have you ever been with a group of blood bankers and someone in the group said, “I wonder how the Duffy blood group system got its name?” Maybe one of them said, “When I took the SBB exam, I had to test real blood samples AND take a written exam. It took months to correct the exam and get the answers back.” Or, “Let me tell you how we did the first test for hepatitis antigen on donors.”

There are many blood bankers who have retired from the field, or who will retire in the not-too-distant future, who have some wonderful memories that should not be lost or forgotten. The editors of Immunohematology have asked some of these distinguished individuals to take us back to the “good old days” or the “not so good old days,” depending upon the type of struggle that was being waged. These memories will be published in each issue in a new column called “Those Were the Days.”

If you have a “good or not so good old days” story that you would like to share with the readers, send your memory to Mary McGinniss or Delores Mallory (see addresses and phone and fax numbers below). You don’t have to be retired or about to be retired to have good memories to share; all that is required is a good memory.

Our first “Those Were the Days” is from Dr. Byron Myhre. Our sincere thanks go to Dr. Myhre and the other contributors who will share their stories with our readers.

“Those Were the Days”

I’m certain many “old-timers” will have a story about Alexander Wiener, and I would like to add mine to the list.

At a meeting one time, somewhere, someone (I don’t remember who) stated that you had not arrived scientifically in blood banking until you had received one pound of correspondence from Dr. Wiener. As soon as you wrote a paper, if you did not use the correct Rh nomenclature (his), or if you ignored it completely (much worse), you immediately received a letter of admonition signed “Sincerely” or “your friend, Al” usually accompanied by a series of his reprints allowing you to see the magnitude of your errors. This letter was typed by him on his old manual typewriter, the small “o” of which was always filled with ink debris. These letters were often hand-corrected as well, and came from 64 Rutland Road, Brooklyn. When you received one of these packages, you knew you were in trouble.

In one case I remember I “committed” an error...