Preface to Volume 1

Before the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation series of books began to appear in 1979, the scientific autobiography was a largely unfamiliar genre. One recalls Cajal's extraordinary *Recollections of My Life*, translated into English in 1937, and the little gem of autobiography written by Charles Darwin for his grandchildren in 1876. One supposes that this form of scientific writing is scarce because busy scientists would rather continue to work on scientific problems than to indulge in a retrospective exercise using a writing style that is usually outside their scope of experience. Yet, regardless of the nature of one's own investigative work, the scientific enterprise describes a community of activity and thought in which all scientists share. Indeed, an understanding of the scientific enterprise should in the end be accessible to anyone, because it is essentially a human endeavor, full of intensity, purpose, and drama that are universal to human experience.

While writing a full autobiographical text is a formidable undertaking, preparing an autobiographical chapter, which could appear with others in a volume, is perhaps less daunting work and is a project that senior scientists might even find tempting. Indeed, a venture of this kind within the discipline of psychology began in 1930 and is now in eight volumes (*A History of Psychology in Autobiography*). So it was that during my term as President of the Society for Neuroscience in 1993 to 1994, I developed the idea of collecting autobiographies from senior neuroscientists, who at this period in the history of our discipline are in fact pioneers of neuroscience. Neuroscience is quintessentially interdisciplinary, and careers in neuroscience come from several different cultures including biology, psychology, and medicine. Accounts of scientific lives in neuroscience hold the promise of being informative and interesting, and they could be a source of inspiration to students. Moreover, personal narratives provide for scientists and non-scientists alike an insight into the nature of scientific work that is simply not available in ordinary scientific writing.

This volume does have a forerunner in neuroscience. In 1975, MIT Press published *The Neurosciences: Paths of Discovery*, a collection of 30 chapters in commemoration of F. O. Schmitt's 70th birthday edited by F. Worden, J. Swazey, and G. Adelman. The contributing neuroscientists, all leaders of their discipline, described the paths of discovery that they had followed in carrying on their work. While writing in the style of the conventional review article, some authors did include a good amount of anecdote, opinion, and

personal reflection. A second, similar volume, *The Neurosciences: Paths of Discovery II*, edited by F. Samson and G. Adelman, appeared in 1992.

In any case, neuroscience writing that is deliberately and primarily autobiographical has not been collected before. This project, *The History of Neuroscience in Autobiography*, is the first major publishing venture of the Society for Neuroscience after *The Journal of Neuroscience*. The book project was prepared with the active cooperation of the Committee on the History of Neuroscience, which serves as an editorial board for the project. The first chairperson of the committee was Edward (Ted) Jones; its members were Albert Aguayo, Ted Melnechuk, Gordon Shepherd, and Ken Tyler. This group compiled the names and carried out the deliberations that led to the first round of invitations. In 1995 Larry Swanson succeeded Ted Jones as chair of the committee, and as we go to press with Volume 1 the committee members are Albert Aguayo, Bernice Grafstein, Ted Melnechuk, Dale Purves, and Gordon Shepherd.

In the inaugural volume of the series, we are delighted to be able to present together 17 personal narratives by some of the true pioneers of modern neuroscience. The group includes four Nobel Laureates and 11 members or foreign associates of the National Academy of Sciences, USA. The contributors did their scientific work in the United States, Canada, England, Australia, France, and Sweden. It is difficult to imagine a finer group of scientists with which to inaugurate our autobiographical series. The autobiographical chapters that appear here are printed essentially as submitted by the authors, with only light technical editing. Accordingly, the chapters are the personal perspectives and viewpoints of the authors and do not reflect material or opinion from the Society for Neuroscience.

Preparation of this volume depended critically on the staff of the book's publisher, the Society for Neuroscience. The correspondence, technical editing, cover design, printing, and marketing have all been coordinated by the Society's Central Office, under the superb direction of Diane M. Sullenberger. I thank her and her assistants, Stacie M. Lemick (publishing manager) and Danielle L. Gulp (desktop publisher), for their dedicated and skillful work on this project, which was carried out in the midst of the demands brought by the first in-house years of the Society's *Journal of Neuroscience*. I also thank my dear friend Nancy Beang (executive director of the Society for Neuroscience), who from the beginning gave her full enthusiasm to this project.

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