



FAREWELL SPEECH
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Since 2005 Scientist in the Department of Animal Evolutionary Ecology in Tübingen. 2000–05 Research assistant in the Department of Evolutionary Biology in Münster. 1996–99 Ph.D. in the Department of Genetics in Cambridge, UK. 1991–96 Diploma of Biology at the University of Bielefeld. Publications: Schulenburg, H. and J. J. Ewbank. “The genetics of pathogen avoidance in *Caenorhabditis elegans*.” *Mol. Microbiol.* (in press). Schulenburg, H., M. Hoepfner, J. Weiner III and E. Bornberg-Bauer. “Specificity of the innate immune system and diversity of C-type lectin domain (CTLD) proteins in the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans*.” *Immunobiology* (in press). – Address: Lehrstuhl für Evolutionsökologie der Tiere, Zoologisches Institut, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Auf der Morgenstelle 28, 72076 Tübingen.

This is my last evening as a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg. Time for a résumé. I will do it as a typical natural scientist by presenting you a 3-point summary.

The first point is – *table tennis*. During my stay, my table tennis skills were boosted enormously. I went from a performance score of minus 10 up to plus 5. More generally, table tennis symbolizes an important aspect of my Wiko stay: trying out new activities or those that I have not pursued for a long time. I could have called this aspect “exploration” or “extending my horizon”. I very much enjoyed discussing topics with the Wiko Fellows who are very far from my own research field. During my stay, I learned a lot from these conversations. And even though many of them were not directly relevant to my work, my working creativity and performance will clearly benefit from these interactions in the future.

The second point is – *financial disaster*. After six months at the Wiko, I am almost financially ruined because of having been too many times in the opera, in concerts, theatres, or dance performances. However, I do not regret a single moment. Again, I consider the financial disaster a metaphor for another important aspect of my stay: you must take interesting opportunities even if they imply a risk or a cost. A stay at the Wiko may be a risk for a junior scientist, especially in the natural sciences, because you may lose contact with your group and laboratory life. Moreover, having to explain your research to non-biologists requires substantial time and energy. For me, however, the efforts were extremely rewarding. It helped me to step back and look at my project from a distance and to re-evaluate my own research focus. Taken together, I experienced an extremely productive period during the last six months.

The third point is – *excess-length Wagner operas*. My favorite quote on Wagner operas was coined by one of my ancestors, a historian who lived here in Berlin in the 19th century. He said: Wagner operas are outrageously lengthy – but the length has character. For me, this is another important metaphor for my Wiko experience. More than perhaps ever before, I found “patience” and “the ability to listen”, in combination with “modesty” and “the absence of prejudices”, to be extremely important while moving through Wiko life. Patience and modesty are essential if you really want to appreciate what people from other disciplines are working on. However, the same is true for the various research fields within your own discipline. I hope to be able to take this experience back to my research life in Tübingen.

These are my trivial but nonetheless valuable insights from the last six months!

Note added 3 months later, 5th July 2007:

My table tennis skills are down to minus 1. Nevertheless, I still try to extend my horizon by embarking on topics that are beyond my own playground.

My finances are just barely back in order. At the same time, I still benefit from the productive period: Six articles associated with my Wiko stay have now been submitted and/or are already published. Similarly, the two grant applications that I wrote while at the Wiko have both been accepted.

Life back at the university, especially including the many student courses, is continuously challenging my patience!