

Concerning Constancy, Friendship, and
Mutual Acceptance; or
"If You Need Me, I'll Be There"

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In American folklore, the log cabin symbolizes the ultimate in humble, Lincolnian origins. Well, ISI® literally started out in a log cabin. The company later expanded by converting a chicken coop into a print-shop.

Our log cabin was located in an isolated, wooded area called Thorofare, in rural New Jersey. It is amazing that now, 20 years later, it is still essentially the same--as a recent visit confirmed.

Soon after moving in, a neighboring farmer named Charles Dehart stopped in to greet me. We didn't have much in common, so we talked briefly about the weather and other mundane concerns. His parting words were, "If you ever need me, I'll be there."

A few years went by and not a word passed between us. In the winter of 1958, just a few weeks after my daughter Laurie was born, a blizzard struck the East Coast, leaving our cabin without power, heat, or water. Our car was buried under the snow, so we were truly isolated from the outside world. We became gravely concerned about Laurie's health. But somehow Mr. Dehart turned up, cleared a one-half-mile path with his tractor, and helped us get Laurie back to the hospital. Incidentally, *Current Contents*® still came out on time that week--as it has ever since.

After a week the snow melted and we returned home. Three more years passed (without emergencies) before we left that corner of the world. Occasionally we would wave to each other across the cornfields, but we never spoke to Mr. Dehart again, except to say goodbye.

What has this bit of personal nostalgia to do with you and CC® ?

I've spent a major part of my life traveling around the world, meeting and talking to scientists, librarians, and information freaks of all kinds. From 1955 to 1963, the critical years when CC was in its infancy and ISI had not yet been named as such, I trotted the globe trying to convince scientists to use CC. And in the last decade I've again traveled extensively, lecturing on the *Science Citation Index*® and other aspects of information science. In the process, I've made thousands of acquaintances and friends.

A bit of arithmetic makes it clear that I could never hope to see all those people again. The realization is extremely frustrating. But I like to think that almost all of them--like Mr. Dehart--will be there if I ever need them. I also hope that the feeling is mutual (and I include my colleagues at ISI in this): if you ever need us, we will be there. We often are. No mat-

ter how smoothly things may run, problems do arise. If you have a problem that ISI can help solve, we will do our best.

Unfortunately, one's relationships with scientific colleagues are not *always* as idyllic as we would like to believe they are. On occasion--and I think that many readers will have shared this feeling--I have felt the magnificent elation you experience from having a stranger from a distant part of the world take great interest in your work. Then you correspond and exchange ideas, often for years. But when the occasion finally arises when you meet that person in the flesh, what a difference! The reality does not quite live up to the fantasy.

Correspondence and reprint exchange are essential to the individual researcher, but the reality of actual contact with a human being is as often anticlimactic as it is stimulating.

(These candid comments may raise questions in the minds of some individuals I have met, but I have no one specific in mind; they are merely intended as philosophical generalizations. I suspect that those who I found disappointing were also disappointed in me. Anyway, anticlimactic experiences are generally as interesting and instructive as stimulating ones. They are often equally rewarding.)

Among the thousands of people I have met are a few who, perhaps out of business or academic competitiveness, have shown us some animosity. This is unfortunate. Or perhaps, in fact, they had good reasons. I'm aware that at times I have been an

irascible, irritating critic. But just because I criticize a colleague's work doesn't mean I don't respect him. It's difficult for some people to tell the difference, and it greatly disturbs me that some people find it impossible to separate their personal from their professional feelings. (To explore this properly would require much more time and space.)

Over the years, we at ISI have had an enormous amount of correspondence with friends and colleagues throughout the world. Recently, I have been systematically reviewing those files. I've been able to weed out much obsolete material, some of it 20 years old. In addition, by sifting through the correspondence I have found treasures that a finite memory could not have recalled. I am amazed by the number of useful ideas CC readers have suggested.

Also, I have come across reprints which I could not index under any logical headings related to my interests. (If I'd had the foresight, I might have filed them under "Possibly Interesting Future Reading.") Some of these are now extremely valuable to me, especially for teaching purposes. Three were so impressive that they have been included as the first items in this week's *ISI Press Digest*.

Now that ISI has grown into an organization of more than 350 people, I often yearn for that log cabin. Indeed, I've promised to build myself one as a weekend retreat. I'll still be there if you need me. I hope you'll be there if I need you.