

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY AND CHEMICAL BIOLOGY
12 Oxford Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA



July 12, 2005

Mimi H. Ward
Arts & Sciences Advancement Director
University of Kentucky
231 Patterson Office Tower
Lexington, KY 40506

Dear Mimi:

I was surprised and sad to learn from your email that the UK observatory no longer exists, and I very much hope that it can be reestablished. In 1933 when I was 13 years old, I visited the UK observatory many times then and later when it was open one evening a week to the public. Professor H. H. Downing (head of both astronomy and mathematics) and I had many conversations together after the visitors left. When I was 14, he gave me the college text "Astronomy" by Baker, which I read many times. Puzzled by the intense light from the sun and other stars, I found the statement, "the sun is too hot to burn." Possible solar energy from nuclear reactions was just beginning to be appreciated. The answer eventually came from Hans Bethe (who died last year). He won the 1967 Nobel Prize in Physics for the nuclear reactions that in the sun convert hydrogen to helium. For me, in 1934, my interest in physics and chemistry were greatly stimulated. I completed majors in both subjects at UK 1937-1941, and began graduate studies at Caltech first in physics, and then switched to chemistry to study with Linus Pauling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Lipscomb".

William N. Lipscomb