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May 31, 1960

I. E. Wallen, Aquatic Biologist, Environmental
Sciences Branch, Division of Biology & Medicine

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RADIOACTIVITY IN SALMON

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Dr. Yoshio Miyama of the University of Tokyo and the Japan Atomic Energy authority called and asked if I could meet him downtown to discuss a problem he did not wish to write about or talk about over the telephone.

I went down on Memorial Bay and he told me that they had a Japan-wide program for collection of various food samples for radioactivity. One such sample was 12 salmon taken from a commercial fishing vessel in the Japan sea. Although the stated place of collection was off of South Korea, Dr. Miyama said that their fishing vessels sometimes fished in the area which was restricted by the Russians and north of the stated location.

The twelve salmon were measured by their gross beta counter and found to contain "much" more radioactivity than any other food item he had ever measured, including the tuna following "Mike" shot in 1954. The species of salmon is one that spends a relatively short time at sea and its migration pattern is well known from tagging. He believes that the specimens must have come down a Russian river and become contaminated by excessive radioactivity from some unknown Russian source. The activity was mainly from short lived isotopes and as yet they were unidentified. His chemists are analyzing the asked samples for specific isotopes at present.

He was very concerned that no official or published information be given out since it might result in tremendous loss of business by salmon industries similar to the tuna scare in 1954. The actual levels of radioactivity were not directly dangerous when averaged out as a "population" dose.

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I suggested that I talk to Dr. Lauren Donaldson on June 9, when I plan to be in Seattle, and that Dr. Donaldson request samples of fishes. Dr. Miyama was sure that without such a letter the Japanese press would be too inquisitive as to why he might be collecting additional salmon samples. He will send samples to Dr. Donaldson on an informal basis, as a University exchange, for duplicate analyses.

cc: Dr. Dunham
Mr. Starwood
Dr. Wolfe

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