



Letter from Georg Bredig to Max Bredig, October 8, 1938

Bredig, Georg. "Letter from Georg Bredig to Max Bredig, October 8, 1938," October 8, 1938. Papers of Georg and Max Bredig, Box 7, Folder 14. Science History Institute. Philadelphia. <https://digital.sciencehistory.org/works/t0xt4ls>.

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Translated by Jocelyn R. McDaniel

English Translation

Image 1

No Mx. 72

Enclosed: 1 postal slip

Karlsruhe in Baden, October 8, 1938

Dr. Max A. Bredig

c/o Professor Dr. K. Fajans

220 S. Thayer in Ann Arbor (Michigan)

U.S.A.

Dear Son,

Thank you very much for your dear birthday letter from Montague on September 17th and your congratulatory telegram to Victor. The latter falsely suggests a decent income. You still haven't become thrifty. Neither have I. I would like to live up to your good wishes, even if it is difficult for me. We celebrated my birthday very quietly by spending it with Aunt Vally in Baden-Baden, where she is staying for a brief time for the rest she needs. However, I am

afraid she will not find it because of her illness and lack of care. We are all doing quite well here health-wise, although we must add "unbidden" to that. Given the shocking news in the newspapers, I can probably understand that you were worried about us. All of Europe has indeed experienced an anxious few weeks. Fortunately, common sense prevailed. What you kindly write about the inner satisfaction that I should feel in view of my past life, I probably owe to my parents, your mother, my old Uncle Hollstein, my teachers Ostwald, van't Hoff, Arrhenius and others, my co-workers, many good people and colleagues, and last but not least, my children. However, when I consider my belongings, I see how I should have done things. You don't have to be fooled by the occasional kind things that well-meaning and polite colleagues tell you "about the Bredig". Of course, I may have achieved some things that surpass mediocrity, but I have no great illusions about it. To give you some account of it, I have given you a few copies of my little essay:

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"G. Bredig: A Memento to his Friends." I don't have any more copies at the moment. Dr. Weissberger incidentally misrepresented the story of me returning home from secondary school oral exams and my mother slapping me in the face. My mother slapped me a lot, but at the time she cried out of surprise and emotion. She wasn't violent or angry. You see how a legend becomes one and is mostly not in the interests of those involved.

We read your letter from September 17th to me and your letter from September 26th to Marianne with great interest. I fear that to appease me, you are describing your situation as rosier than it is. I only hope that it improves, even if everyone is very kind to you, they certainly have very good intentions towards you, and you still have modest funds for at least a year. You should still save some of this, just in case. I do hope that your recent trips have yielded some opportunities, and you will hopefully be successful in finding a position soon. As I just heard from my former student and friend El., who recently wrote you a postcard from Washington, a wonderful, large research institute has recently been built in Pittsburgh, which was once the dynamic Mellon Institute. It will award numerous research assistantships and fellowships for research in the field of applied physical chemistry. The funds should be the same as your previous fellowship (approximately \$2,000). Even if these aren't permanent positions, he believes that they are a good springboard for the transition to industry. El. knows the Director of the Mellon Institute, Dr. Weidlein, as well as the Assistant Director, Dr. Bass. He expressly gives his permission for you to use him as a reference.

Coincidentally, my old friend E.C. from Utrecht wrote and said that Dr. Edward R. Weidlein, the Director of the Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., is his friend. (I had asked E.C. for the address of a buyer for my large collection of offprints (handset – approximately 1, 1000 publications)). Regardless of the handset, I am now going to write and ask

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my friend if he would allow you to include him as a reference for Director Weidlein.

Regarding the shipment of special publications needed for your profession, I still have not received notification from the responsible authorities. If I receive an affirmative answer, please let me know at once whether you still have enough space to store them or can create it, especially since this is no longer a possibility in Petrolia, and you are changing your current apartment. Otherwise, this process would probably be more of a burden than a help and I would then have to possibly arrange the shipment. What should I do with future supplements to Gmelin's Handbook (New Edition)? What is your advice? The same goes for the "Reports of the Chemical Society" and the "Central Journal." If I'm a member, I can still send you my issues of the Journal of Electrochemistry as printed matter. Or do you not need it? I think it is very important that you always expressly emphasize your training as a general chemist in your applications, because there has always been a harmful tendency for physical chemists to be dismissed as specialists. Unfortunately, your X-ray work will probably be evaluated in a similar way. Also, in the last letter from Professor Fajans, which I told you about in my letter Mx 71 on September 21st, the term "specialist" occurs, as you can see in the one passage. Hence, try to avoid or downplay this characterization as much as possible, because as a graduate of our university and a student of Haber, Fajans, Stefan Goldschmidt and your other teachers, you will be able to prove yourself in all areas. Professor Goldschmidt (address: Oss, Holland, Princess Beatrix Singel) will certainly be happy to give you a reference at any time, possibly also for organic chemistry. You should do well with employment in the petroleum, rubber, synthetic resin, organic synthesis, pharmaceuticals, iron and metals, phosphate, carbide, silicate,

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or photochemical industries.

Although we kept my birthday a secret as much as possible and I wish I wasn't born at all, I received quite a lot of well-wishes, more than on my 70th birthday. Of course, under the present circumstances, neither the German Chemical Society nor the Bunsen Society took notice of it. The latter fortunately also didn't publish a personal note in the journal, so that many didn't know about it. In any case, several old friends have remained loyal to me and have kindly written and sent telegrams to me. I'll just give you a few names: Donnan, E. Cohen, Kruyt, Jaeger-Groningen, Fajans, Reinders-Delft, Biemann, Bjerrum, Brönsted, Winther from Copenhagen, Willstätter. This made me happy. Mrs. Marx and her sons also sent very nice letters. Strangely, Lore only sent a brief note. We are somewhat surprised that Mrs. Marx does not write anything about her new daughter-in-law and Erich does not write anything about her or his mother. We are very pleased that the climate and egg treatment are beneficial for you. In comparison to many others, we are doing well for the time being. Of course, nobody is without worries. Luckily, Werner still has his small pension, but they are unhappy. Aunt Ida will probably move in with them. We don't know anything about Aunt Rosa, but her two children are certainly negatively affected. My move, which was very difficult for me for 6 weeks and which I could not have managed without Marianne's enthusiastic help, now seems to have gone very well. Moreover, the apartment is much too nice for me. However, I had no other choice. Hopefully, I can now find peace and still be able to make myself useful in some way, even if my ability and chances to do so are approaching zero.

Take care of your health, don't despair, be happy, and say hello to all our friends. (I will soon respond to a particularly nice letter from Professor Fajans and his wife). Give us an honest update on your health and well-being. Warm regards from all of us.

Love,
Father