

“WHAT DOES A HOUSEPLANT DO?”

Grow a house, of course.”

—*Natural State*, a novel by Damon Knight

IN 1953, science fiction author Damon Knight wrote *Natural State*, a futuristic tale in which gene splicing creates a cornucopia of ecologically sustainable benefits—including such wonders as plants that grow houses.

In that same year, Watson and Crick identified the double-helix structure of DNA, planting the seed of modern genetics.

Science fiction and science had thus become intertwined, forming virtually their own double helix.

A pre-teen Gerry Elman picked up the January 1954 issue of *Galaxy* magazine and read *Natural State*. His fertile imagination went into overdrive. A society where living plants would replace machines for making our worldly goods? Fascinating!

Gerry went on to study science and law, to learn the craft of the patent attorney, and then to serve in the Department of Justice.

Suddenly both science and the law were transformed. Stanley Cohen and Herbert Boyer had brought Damon Knight’s science fiction concept of gene splicing into reality by inventing the technique of recombinant DNA. Upon learning of that work, Gerry remembered the tale he’d read long ago, envisioning a brave new world created by such genetic manipulation.

That was Gerry’s *Eureka!* moment. He remembers realizing, “This new field of biotechnology will change history, and attorneys had better be prepared to help give it birth.”



Soon afterwards, Gerry partnered with Mary Ann Liebert to create a first-of-its-kind publication to report on developments affecting genetics and the law. You are holding an issue of that journal, ***Biotechnology Law Report***, now in its 30th year of publication. Gerry and Mary Ann had coined the term “biotechnology law,” defining the discipline in 1982.

Today, Gerry heads Elman Technology Law, P.C., evolved from the law practice he started that same year, following his service

as a government attorney.

Coincidentally, Damon Knight’s vision of a battle between biotechnologists and information technologists is echoed in today’s struggle over “patent reform,” where Elman Technology Law stands at the forefront of the battle to protect the legal rights of innovators.

And when the time comes to grow houses from houseplants, Gerry Elman and Elman Technology Law will be there to midwife the birth of such technologies.

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