

SCIENCE HISTORY INSTITUTE

**JOSEPH PANETTA**

Life Science Foundation

Transcript of a Research Interview  
Conducted by

Mark Jones

in

La Jolla, California

on

1 September 2015

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

The Life Sciences Foundation and San Diego Technology Archive  
Oral History Interview Release Form

The Life Sciences Foundation (LSF) is a nonprofit organization created to capture the history, preserve the heritage, and share the stories of biotechnology. The Foundation, whose headquarter is located in San Francisco, collects and organizes historical information to educate and inspire future innovators, to engage the general public, and to provide lay audiences with a robust understanding of life sciences and biotechnology.

The San Diego Technology Archive (SDTA) is an initiative of the UC San Diego Library created to document the history, formation, and evolution of the companies that formed the San Diego region's high-tech cluster, beginning in 1965. Through the collection of oral history interviews, SDTA capture the vision, strategic thinking, and recollections of key technology and business founders, entrepreneurs, academics, venture capitalists, early employees, and service providers, many of whom figured prominently in the development of San Diego's dynamic technology cluster. As these individuals articulate and comment on their contributions, innovations, contributions, and entrepreneurial trajectories, a rich living history emerges about the extraordinarily synergistic academic and commercial collaborations that distinguish the San Diego technology community.

I agree to be interviewed by Dr. Mark Jones, representing the Life Sciences Foundation and the San Diego Technology Archive (SDTA), on September 1, 2015. I understand that my oral history interview will be made part of the LSF and SDTA collections and will be made available in accordance with standard Oral History Association procedures. I also understand that this document is intended to inform me fully of what I am being asked to do and of my rights as an interviewee.

#### The Oral History Interview

This interview will be recorded within the period of time previously agreed upon by me and Dr. Mark Jones. Should Dr. Mark Jones feel that more time is needed to complete the interview, arrangements can be made to extend the interview at my convenience. Once my interview is complete, it will be transcribed and edited for readability in accordance with standard Oral History Association guidelines and policies. I will be given an opportunity to review the transcript for correction of transcription errors or other factual inaccuracies before the final transcript is completed. No one outside of the Life Sciences Foundation, the San Diego Technology Archive, its affiliates, and Dr. Mark Jones will be able to access my interview until the final transcript is finished.

#### My Rights

I understand that I have the right not to answer any of the questions asked of me during the interview should I consider them uncomfortable or inappropriate. If I need to take a break from the interview or if I have a question or point for clarification during the interview, I can ask that the recorder be turned off temporarily. My participation in this interview is completely voluntary and I am free to withdraw consent and cease all participation in this interview at any time prior to finalization of the transcript without any consequences whatsoever.

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Risks, Benefits, and Costs

The Life Sciences Foundation and the San Diego Technology Archive knows of no risks or negative consequences associated with participation in this interview, and I may not receive any direct benefit from my participation, but I am fully aware that others may benefit from the knowledge I provide in this interview for the Life Sciences Foundation and the San Diego Technology Archive's oral history collection. I understand that there is no cost to participate in this interview and I will not be paid for my time; I will, however, receive a copy of my interview.

My Obligations

Once the Life Sciences Foundation and San Diego Technology Archive has sent me a copy of my oral history transcript, I agree that (a) I will return the transcript with my edits to the interviewer within three months of its receipt by me and that (b) should I not return the edited transcript within that time, I agree that the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library may complete the processing of the transcript and make it available in accordance with the Life Sciences Foundation and the San Diego Technology Archive's normal practices. I also agree that if I should die or become incapacitated before I have reviewed and returned the transcript, all rights and title to and interest in the recordings, transcript, photographs, and memorabilia, including the literary rights and copyright, shall be transferred to the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library, who pledge to maintain the recording and transcript and make them available in accordance with general policies for research and other scholarly purposes.

Questions or Concerns

Should I have any questions or concerns about participating in the creation of this oral history before or during the recording of the interview, or about the processing of the transcript, I can contact the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Life Sciences Foundation or Director of the UC San Diego Library:

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Agreement

I have read the information contained within this release form, and Dr. Mark Jones offered to answer any questions or concerns I had about this document or the interview.

This document contains my understanding and agreement with the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library with respect to my participation in the audio and/or video-recorded interview conducted by Dr. Mark Jones on September 1, 2015.

1. The recordings, transcripts, photographs, research materials, and memorabilia (collectively called the "Work") will be maintained by the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library and made available in accordance with general policies for research and other scholarly purposes.
2. I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library all right, title, and interest in the Work, including the literary rights and the copyright, except that I shall retain the right to copy, use, and publish the Work in part or in full until my death.
3. The manuscript may be read and the recording(s) heard/viewed by patrons of the Life Sciences Foundation and the UC San Diego Library and the general public via any medium now known or hereinafter created unless otherwise agreed in writing and attached to this Release Form.
4. I understand that I will receive no compensation for my participation in the interview.

This constitutes my entire and complete understanding.

Signed release form is on file at  
the Science History Institute

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Mark Jones

Signed release form is on file at  
the Science History Institute

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Panetta

Date 9/14/2015

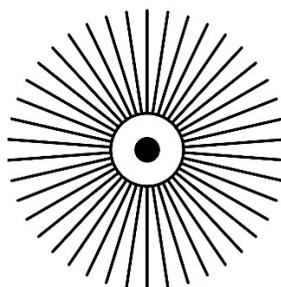
Date 9-22-15

This research interview is designated **Free Access**.

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Joseph Panetta, interview by Mark Jones in La Jolla, California, 1 September 2015 (Philadelphia: Science History Institute, Research Interview Transcript # 0041).

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The Science History Institute collects and shares the stories of innovators and of discoveries that shape our lives. We preserve and interpret the history of chemistry, chemical engineering, and the life sciences. Headquartered in Philadelphia, with offices in California and Europe, the Institute houses an archive and a library for historians and researchers, a fellowship program for visiting scholars from around the globe, a community of researchers who examine historical and contemporary issues, and an acclaimed museum that is free and open to the public. For more information visit [sciencehistory.org](http://sciencehistory.org).

## INTERVIEWEE

**Joseph Panetta** was raised in Syracuse, New York, where he attended Le Moyne College for his undergraduate degree. While he originally wanted to attend medical school, he opted to join the work force instead and began working at Byrne Dairy in its quality control lab. In the latter half of the seventies, Panetta took an interest in environmental science and attended the University of Pittsburgh for his PhD in public health with a concentration in environmental and industrial health science. He aspired to work for the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] and after traveling to Washington, DC in 1979, began working for them in their pesticides and toxic substances group. At the EPA, Panetta ran teams of toxicologists, environmental scientists, economists, and industrial hygienists to determine the health risks of pesticides. Enjoying the policy aspects of the job, Panetta moved to the EPA's policy office, where he worked as a senior policy analyst for two years. Panetta then decided he wanted to gain experience in industry and left his job at the EPA to become the manager of regulatory affairs at the Pennwalt Corporation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While at Pennwalt, Panetta was enlisted to encourage the company's CEO and president to approve the production of bacteria in a fermenter for recombinant proteins.

When Pennwalt's plans for producing recombinant proteins was turned down, Panetta was recruited by Mycogen in San Diego, California, which wanted to produce the first genetically engineered pesticide. He joined the company in a regulatory position, and the pesticide was approved in 1991 with the help of Panetta who worked with the EPA to get approval. After getting approval for their pesticide, Mycogen began working with seed companies, looking to commercialize genetically modified seeds with the anti-pest properties of their pesticide. The seeds were approved in 1995, after which Mycogen was purchased by Dow AgroSciences. With Dow AgroSciences, Panetta accepted a position as a global leader of government affairs, but a year later left for Biocom. At Biocom, Panetta promoted San Diego as a biotech hub, visiting venture capitalists to help raise money for biotech investments and creating a training program for executives. Biocom also helps to purchase supplies and services to its members at a discount.

## INTERVIEWER

**Mark Jones** holds a PhD in history, philosophy, and social studies of science from the University of California, San Diego. He is the former director of research at the Life Sciences Foundation and executive editor of LSF Magazine. He has served in numerous academic posts, and is completing the definitive account of the origins of the biotechnology industry, entitled *Translating Life*, for Harvard University Press.

## ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPT

Staff of the Life Sciences Foundation conducted this interview, which became a part of our collections upon the merger of the Chemical Heritage Foundation and the Life Sciences Foundation into the Science History Institute in 2018. The Center for Oral History at the

Science History Institute edited and formatted this transcript to match our style guide, but as noted, Science History Institute staff members did not conduct the interview.

The Center for Oral History, Science History Institute, is committed both to preserving the recording of each oral history interview in our collection and to enhancing research use of the interviews by preparing carefully edited transcripts of those recordings. The preparation of interview transcripts begins with the creation of a verbatim typescript of the recording and proceeds through review and editing by staff of the Center; interviewees also review the typescript and can request additions, deletions, or that sections be sealed for specified periods of time. The Center keeps track of all changes that staff, interviewers, and interviewees make to the original typescript. Please contact us if you would like additional information about these materials. We have established guidelines to help us maintain fidelity to the language and meaning of each recorded interview while making minor editorial adjustments for clarity and readability. Wherever possible, we supply the full names of people, organizations, or geographical locations mentioned during the interview. We add footnotes to the transcript to provide full citations for any publications that are discussed, to point to extant oral history interviews, and to clear up misstatements or provide context for ambiguous references in the transcript. We use brackets to indicate the addition of material that was not in the audio, and bracketed ellipses to indicate the deletion of recorded material. The transcript also includes time stamps at one-minute intervals. We omit without noting most instances of verbal crutches and all instances of nonlexical utterances. We also make small grammatical corrections where necessary to communicate interview participants' meaning. Finally, staff of the Center create the abstract, chronology, and table of contents. With the availability of online full-text searching of our transcripts, the Center for Oral History opted to discontinue the practice of preparing a back-of-the-book index for each oral history transcript in 2020. **The Science History Institute is committed to the responsible presentation of the history of science by addressing evidence of inequality and oppression as well as the subsequent silences in our collections. To that end, we recognize there may be language in our oral history collection that is outdated, offensive, or harmful, such as, but not limited to, the following: racist, sexist, Eurocentric, ableist, and/or homophobic language or depictions.**