CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

ALISON E. M. ADAMS

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview Conducted by

Steven J. Novak

at

University of Arizona Tucson, Arizona

on

12-14 February, 1996

From the Original Collection of the University of California, Los Angeles

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REFORMATTING:

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If to Interviewee:

Alison E.M. Adams
Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology
University of Arizona
Life Sciences South
Tucson, Arizona 85721

University and Interviewee have executed this Agreement on the date first written above.

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(Signature)

Alison E.M. Adams (Typed Name)

University of Arizona (Address) THE RECENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (Signature)

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ALISON E. M. ADAMS

1955	Born in Penang, Malaysia on 19 November
	Education
1978	B.A., University of Dublin, Trinity College
1984	Ph.D., University of Michigan
	Professional Experience
	University of Edinburgh
1985	Postdoctoral Fellow
1986-1989	Massachusetts Institute of Technology Postdoctoral Fellow
1990-1996	University of Arizona, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology Assistant Professor
1996-present	Associate Professor
	Honors
1980-1984	Literature, Science, and Arts Award, University of Michigan
1982-1983	Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies Predoctoral Fellowship, University of Michigan
1982-1983	Edwin H. Edwards Award, University of Michigan
1983-1984	Cancer Research Institute Predoctoral Fellowship, University of Michigan
1986-1989	Life Sciences Research Foundation Award

1991 Junior Career Recognition Award, Women in Cell Biology

1991-1995 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

Selected Publications

Sloat, B.F. et al., 1981. Roles of the *CDC24* gene product in cellular morphogenesis during the *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cell cycle. *Journal of Cell Biology*, 89:395-405.
Adams, A.E.M. and J.R. Pringle, 1984. Relationship of actin and tubulin distribution to bud growth in wild-type and morphogenetic-mutant *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. *Journal of*

Cell Biology, 98:934-45.

Kilmartin, J.V. and A.E.M. Adams, 1984. Structural rearrangements of tubulin and actin during the cell cycle of the yeast *Saccharomyces. Journal of Cell Biology*, 98: 922-33.

- Jacobs, C.W. et al., 1988. Functions of microtubules in the *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cell cycle. *Journal of Cell Biology*, 107:1409-26.
- Adams, A.E.M. and D. Botstein, 1989. Dominant suppressors of yeast actin mutations that are reciprocally suppressed. *Genetics*, 121:675-83.
- Adams, A.E.M. et al., 1989. A yeast actin-binding protein is encoded by *SAC6*, a gene found by suppression of an actin mutation. *Science*, 243:231-33.
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- Haarer, B.K. et al., 1990. Purification of profilin from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and analysis of profilin-deficient cells. *Journal of Cell Biology*, 110:105-14.
- Pringle, J.R. et al., 1991. Immunofluorescence methods for yeast. *Methods in Enzymology*, 194:565-601.
- Adams, A.E.M. and J.R. Pringle, 1991. Staining of actin with fluorochrome-conjugated phalloidin. *Methods in Enzymology*, 194:729-31.
- Adams, A.E.M. et al., 1991. Requirement of yeast fimbrin for actin organization and morphogenesis *in vivo*. *Nature*, 354:404-8.
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- Honts, J.E. et al., 1994. Actin mutations that show suppression with fimbrin mutations identify a likely fimbrin-binding site on actin. *Journal of Cell Biology*, 126:413-22.
- Adams, A.E.M. et al., 1995. Isoform-specific complementation of the yeast *sac6* null mutation by human fimbrin. *Molecular and Cellular Biology*, 15:69-75.
- Brower, S.M. et al., 1995. Genetic analysis of the fimbrin-actin binding interaction in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Genetics*, 140:91-101.

ABSTRACT

Alison E. M. Adams was born in Penang, Malaysia, the third of six children. Her parents were British citizens: Her father, a British citizen, had worked for the British government for many years; her mother, also a British citizen, went from England to Malaysia after World War II; there she met and married Bill Adams. When Alison was four, the family moved to a small town, Sherborne, in England; they continued to move among small towns around the area. Although she went to smallish schools that in retrospect she thinks were not very good, Alison liked school, especially the sciences. She played field hockey, continuing into her college years. She also played other sports and took violin and piano lessons.

Her family took several trips to Ireland, which Adams loved so much she decided she wanted to attend college there. She matriculated into Trinity College, Dublin, where she began in chemistry but soon switched to genetics. She spent an undergraduate semester in John Pringle's lab at the University of Michigan. After finishing at Trinity she came back to the United States, where she again went to Pringle's lab at the University of Michigan, researching Saccharomyces cerevisiae. After finishing her PhD she went to the University of Edinburgh to do a postdoc, but it did not work out, and she arranged for a postdoc position in David Botstein's lab at Massachusetts Institutes of Technology; from there she went to Genentech with Botstein. While working in Botstein's lab, Adams identified the protein Sac6 by means of genetic techniques versus biochemical methods, and discovered that fimbrim isoforms can compensate for Sac 6. Adams's work on the protein Sac6 would be the basis for future research at the University of Arizona, where she established her own lab. While she was teaching at the University of Arizona, Adams's work shifted toward biochemistry through her collaboration with William R. Montfort on the crystal structure of Sac6 and her interest in applying yeast studies to human beings. Adams plans soon to take a sabbatical to pursue research for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and possibly to teach in India. Adams concludes the interview by illuminating her thoughts about her role in science, her perspective on the future of mankind, and her desire for cooperation among scientists.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Steven J. Novak, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., History, University of Colorado; Ph.D., History, University of California, Berkeley; M.B.A., UCLA Graduate School of Management.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Adams's office, University of Arizona.

Dates, length of sessions: February 12, 1996 (89 minutes); February 13, 1996 (99); February 14, 1996 (48).

Total number of recorded hours: 3.95

Persons present during interview: Adams and Novak.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one in a series with Pew scholars in the biomedical sciences conducted by the UCLA Oral History Program in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts' Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences Oral History and Archives Project. The Project has been designed to document the backgrounds, education, and research of biomedical scientists awarded four-year Pew scholarships since 1988.

To provide an overall framework for Project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Novak held a telephone preinterview conversation with Adams to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and to agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed prior Pew scholars' interviews and the documentation in Adams's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including her proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members.

For technical background, Novak consulted J.D. Watson et al., *Molecular Biology of the Gene*. 4th ed. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1987 and Bruce Alberts et al., *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. 3d ed. New York: Garland, 1994.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Adams's childhood in England and continuing through her education at University of Dublin and University of Michigan, her postdoc with David Botstein, and the establishment of her laboratory at the University of Arizona. Major topics discussed include Adams's innovations in immunofluorescence techniques, identification of Sac6 and its use in fimbrin studies, the future directions of actin research, managing a career as an investigator, and problems facing the biomedical research community.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Gregory M. Beyrer, editorial assistant, edited the interview. He checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Adams reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Kristian London, editor, prepared the table of contents. Beyrer assembled the biographical summary and interview history. Novak compiled the index.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Early Years	1
Birth in Malaysia. Family background. School. Growing up in small towns. Decision to attend the University of Dublin.	
College Years Starting in chemistry; switching to genetics. College life. Semester at the University of Michigan in John Pringle's lab. Differences between Irish and U.S. labs.	16
Graduate School Years Returning to the University of Michigan. Living abroad. Working with John Pringle. Value in researching <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i> . Absence of recombinant DNA metholodology in research. Yeast geneticists' collaborative ethos. Research in the Pringle lab. Developing immunofluorescence techniques for visualizing cytoskeletal elements in yeast. Collaborating with Barbara Sloat and John V. Kilmartin.	24
Postgraduate Years Research at University of Edinburgh. Attempt to work in John Kilmartin's lab. Arranging second postdoc with David Botstein. Uncovering scientific fraud.	39
Move to the United States Moving to David Botstein's lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Botstein's move to Genentech. Receiving the Life Sciences Research Foundation Award. Living in Boston. Discovery of Sac6. Collaborating with David Drubin. Fimbrin's similarities to Sac6.	47
Adams's Lab at the University of Arizona Reasons for choosing the University of Arizona. Sharing a lab with Roy Parker and Ted Weinert. Teaching experiences. Life in Tucson. Shift toward biochemistry in the lab. Working on the crystal structure of of Sac6 with William Montfort. Applying yeast studies to humans. Investigating functional redundancy in proteins. The problem of working with nonisogenetic strains. Identification of the crystal structure of actin.	56
Being A Scientist Adams' evolving interests. Funding. Thoughts on science education. Working for industry. Journal reviews. Attending conferences. The value of molecular biology. Lab and research safety. Women in science.	78

INDEX

[

[phosphorus] 32P, 91

A

A364a [strain], 70 actin, 32, 33, 34, 39, 43, 49, 50, 51, 66, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75 Adams, David (brother), 6 Adams, Dorothea Christina Margaret Duggan (mother), 2, 4 Adams, Jeremy (brother), 5, 40 Adams, Nicholas (brother), 6, 40 Adams, Rosemary (sister), 6, 40 Adams, Stanley Vernon "Bill" (father), 1, 4 Adams, Timothy (brother), 6 Ann Arbor, Michigan, 21 antiactin antibodies, 35 Arizona, 23, 55 AT. See ataxia telangiectasia ataxia telangiectasia, 27 ATM, 27

B

Beggs, Jean, 38, 44 Belgium, 17 biology, 10, 12, 15, 19, 25, 28 biophysics, 35 Blackford, England, 8 Blyton, Enid, 11 Boston, Massachusetts, 47, 48 Botstein, David, 29, 38, 45, 46, 49, 50, 54, 55, 64, 66, 73, 78, 81, 85, 86, 87, 88, 97 Brower, Sharon M., 58, 97 Brown, Donald D., 47 Burroughs Wellcome Fund Fellow, 47

С

Carey, Edwin, 18 cell biology, 43, 64, 74, 75, 84, 89 chemistry, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19 Cheslyn Hay, England, 2 Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, 62, 63, 73, 89 Colorado, 38 cytoskeleton, 32, 42, 49, 68, 71, 74, 75

D

Dalhousie University, 21 Darwin, Charles R., 102 Delbruck, Max, 30 *Dictyostelium*, 68 Dieckmann, Carol L., 57 DNA, 15, 28, 29, 30, 73, 92 DNA repair, 75 Dorset, England, 1 *Drosophila*, 30, 71 Drubin, David G., 50, 51, 54 Dublin, Ireland, 14, 16, 18, 21 Duggan, Bertie (maternal grandfather), 4 Duggan, Dora (maternal grandmother), 4

E

Edinburgh, Scotland, 38, 45 electron microscopy, 43, 92 endocytosis, 74 England, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 22, 23, 34, 37, 38, 41, 42 ethidium bromide, 92 Euclid of Alexandria, 102

F

field hockey, 10, 17, 31 fimbrin, 49, 52, 67, 69 Fink, Gerald R., 29, 30 funding, 37, 42, 82, 83, 84

G

Genentech, 46, 55, 85, 86 genetics, 15, 19, 20, 28, 31, 49, 50, 51, 69, 90 Genetics Society of America, 89 George Town, Malaysia, 2 Goldman, Robert D., 34 Gottschling, Daniel E., 63 gymnastics, 10

Η

Hartwell, Leland H., 24, 78 Harvard Univeristy, 24 Hershey, Alfred, 30 Hewlett, Martinez J., 54 high school, 9, 12, 15 Hindhead, England, 3, 8 Honts, Jerry E., 66, 67 Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 82

Ι

immunofluorescence, 32, 34, 35, 39, 43, 90 India, 44, 60 Ireland, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 32, 60 Irish American Foundation, 20

K

Kabsch, Wolfgang, 73 Kaiser, Chris A., 63 Keystone Symposia, 38 Kilmartin, John V., 33, 34, 35, 37, 38 Kirschner, Marc W., 51, 78

L

Langmore, John, 35 Leavitt, John, 52 Levi, Primo M., 65 Levy, Eugene H., 83 Life Sciences Research Foundation Award, 47 London Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 60 London, England, 3, 6 Lord Digby's School, 10 Luria, Salvador, 30

Μ

Maddox, Sir John R., 90 Malaysia, 1, 2, 3, 11 Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods

Hole, 34 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 46, 47, 48, 53, 63, 86, 94 Matsudaira, Paul. 52, 67 McConnell, David, 20 McGill University, 55 Michaelis, Susan, 63 Michigan, 20, 34 microscopy, 28, 33, 34, 43, 72 MIT. See Massachusetts Institute of Technology Mitchell, Aaron P., 63 mitotic spindle, 34 molecular biology, 29, 31, 60, 90, 91 Montfort, William R., 66 Montreal, Québec, Canada, 56 Morgan, Thomas H., 30 morphogenesis, 33 Music, 11

Ν

National Institutes of Health, 55, 73, 82, 84 NBD (nitrobenzoxadiazol) phallicidin, 35 Newell House School, 9 Newton, Sir Isaac, 102 NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health Nobel Prize, 31, 61, 78 North Cambridge, Massachusetts, 48 Nurse, Paul M., 32, 60, 78

0

Open University, 40 Oxford University, 16

Р

Parker, Roy R., 56 Payne, Gregory S., 46, 47, 51, 95 Penang, Malaysia, 1 Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences, 11, 22, 48, 63, 67, 68, 75, 77, 84, 87, 92 phalloidin, 35, 43 phallotoxin, 34 phenylene diamine, 35 physical education, 10, 13 physics, 12, 13, 19 piano, 11 Pringle, John R., 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 31, 33, 34, 37, 45, 54, 61, 81, 97 Puerto Rico, 60, 63, 64, 92

R

Ramaswami, Mani, 60
Research Institute, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 52
restriction fragment length polymorphisms, 78
RFLP, 78, *See* restriction fragment length polymorphisms
rhodamine, 35
ribonucleic acid, 45
Riezman, Howard, 74
Rifkin, Jeremy, 92
RNA. *See* ribonucleic acid
Rockefeller University, 84

S

S288C [strain], 70 Sac6, 49, 50, 51, 52, 66, 67, 69, 81 Saccharomyces cerevisiae, 27, 70 San Juan, Puerto Rico, 64 Sandrock, Tanya M., 66, 98 Schizosaccharomyces pombe, 32 Schweitzer, Albert, 41 Scotland, 38 Seattle, Washington, 24 Selectide Corporation, 87 Shen, Wenyan, 68 Sherborne County Primary School, 9 Sherborne, England, 1, 8 Singapore, 13 SK1, 70 Sloat, Barbara F., 33, 37 Somerville, Massachusetts, 48 spindle pole, 37 sporulation, 70, 74, 75 Stanford University, 86, 90 Stockholm, Sweden, 78 Struhl, Kevin, 28 Surrey, England, 3

Switzerland, 24

Т

Tennis, 10 Trinity College, 16 tubulin, 33, 34, 39, 43 Tucson, Arizona, 64, 87

U

UCLA. See University of California at Los Angeles UCSF. See University of California at San Francisco United States of America, 9, 19, 21, 44 University of Arizona, 16, 20, 55, 56, 58, 64.83.99 University of Bath, 40 University of California at Berkeley, 51 University of California at Los Angeles, 46 University of California at San Francisco, 51 University of Cambridge, 16 University of Chicago, 63 University of Dublin, 16, 38, 41 University of Dublin Trinity College, 13, 14.28 University of Edinburgh, 38, 40, 44 University of Michigan, 19, 21, 23, 24, 35, 38 University of Puerto Rico-Cayey University College, 64 University of Washington, 24

V

violin, 11

W

Weinert, Ted, 27, 56, 78
Wertman, Kenneth F., 73, 87
Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, 52
Wieland, Hermann Theodor Felix, 35
Woods Hole, Massachusetts, 34, 35
World War II, 3, 13 **Y** yeast, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 49, 52, 61, 62, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 74, 76, 77, 78, 90, 102, 103