CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

TIMOTHY L. MANSER

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Arnold Thackray and M. Susan Lindee

at

Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

on

18 October 1990

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This oral history is part of a series supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts based on the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences. This collection is an important resource for the history of biomedicine, recording the life and careers of young, distinguished biomedical scientists and of Pew Biomedical Scholar Advisory Committee members.

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Tim Manser

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TIMOTHY L. MANSER

1955	Born in New York, New York on August 27

Education

1977	BA, Biology, University of California - San Diego
1982	PhD, Biology, University of Utah

Professional Experience

	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
1982-1985	Post-Doctorate, Biology
	Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
1985-Present	Assistant Professor, Molecular Biology

Honors

1982	Gowar Champion Award Postdoctoral Fellowship, Damon Runyon-Walter Winchell Cancer Fund
1983	American Cancer Society Postdoctoral Fellowship
1985	The Medical Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship
1986	Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences Award

ABSTRACT

Timothy L. Manser grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, one of two children. His father was a lawyer and his mother mostly a housewife. He liked school; though he says the schools were not very good, he did have a good biology teacher in high school. His family vacationed in San Diego, California, where he developed an interest in oceanography.

Manser majored in biology at University of California, San Diego, chosen for its good programs as well as its proximity to the beach and surfing. He worked on *Dictyostelium* in William Loomis' lab. For graduate school he chose University of Utah. He went through a number of rotations, finally settling in Raymond Gesteland's lab. Influenced by Martin Rechsteiner, Manser began work in small nuclear RNAs focusing on the genes that encoded these RNAs in humans. When he had had enough of DNA cloning and sequencing of genes he decided to switch fields to immunology. Relying on Gesteland's recommendation, he took a postdoc at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) with Malcolm Gefter who had been trained as a Biochemist. Manser's first job was at Princeton University, where he has continued his work, begun in Malcolm Gefter's lab at MIT, on B cells.

Manser laments the current state of funding for science: too little, too devoted to applied science, too competitive, too political. He says the need for short-term productivity (i.e. publications) promotes inaccuracy, oversimplification, and even falsification. He found that the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences award often has to be used for lab maintenance rather than for innovation or daring science, unless the recipient already has large funding. He thinks occasionally about changing fields to neurobiology; he is also considering going into administration as a way to encourage young scientists. He discusses balancing home life with life in the lab and his wife's career sacrifices.

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