CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

# KARIN M. REINISCH

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Hilary Domush

at

Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

on

10 and 11 November 2008

(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 Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences Advisory Committee members.

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**KARIN M. REINISCH**

1966 Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 2 June

## Education

1989 B.A., Harvard University, Chemistry
1995 Ph.D., Harvard University, Chemistry

## Professional Experience

Harvard University
1995-2001 Post-Doctorate, Molecular and Cellular Biology, under Stephen C. Harrison

Yale University School of Medicine
2001-2007 Assistant Professor, Cell Biology
2007-present Associate Professor, Cell Biology

## Honors

2002-2006 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

## ABSTRACT

**Karin M. Reinisch** grew up in Massachusetts, one of two daughters. Her father was a physicist, a professor at University of Massachusetts; her mother was a housewife. Her parents were immigrants from Germany, and Reinisch spoke only German until she began school. She had always liked science and languages; she learned Spanish in high school and went on exchange trips to Mexico and Spain. When deciding on a career she considered medicine but chose science instead.

Reinisch attended Harvard University, where she majored in chemistry, liking to solve problems, but not liking labs. She had Maitland Jones and George Whitesides as professors, both of whom she considered quite good; she worked in the Whitesides lab, where she became interested in structural biology. She stayed at Harvard for graduate school; there she worked on methyltransferase in William Lipscomb's lab. Reinisch's thesis research became a paper for *Cell*. Another important event at graduate school was meeting and marrying her future husband, a teaching assistant in one of her classes. After completing her PhD Reinisch accepted a postdoc in Stephen Harrison's lab, where she worked on her reovirus project and published a paper in *Nature*. From there she accepted a position in Yale University's cell biology department.

At the end of the interview she describes developing her own lab, recruiting postdocs, and her current projects. She also discusses her use of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences grant money; the Mathers Foundation grant; and National Institutes of Health grants. Reinisch continues with an explanation of membrane trafficking; peptide-loading complex; and the importance of getting crystals with high diffraction resolution. She talks about the necessity for confidentiality regarding the lab's work (prior to publication); the Protein Data Bank; and her responsibilities to the scientific community, including attending seminars and conferences; grant-writing; reviewing papers; and teaching. She talks about ethics classes, cultural differences, the future of membrane trafficking, women in science, and science education. She concludes with a description of her husband's job and balancing work life and family life.

## INTERVIEWER

**Hilary Domush** earned a B.S. in chemistry from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine in 2003. Since then she has completed a M.S. in chemistry and a M.A. in history of science both from the University of Wisconsin. Her graduate work in the history of science focused on early nineteenth-century chemistry in the city of Edinburgh, while her work in the chemistry was in a total synthesis laboratory. Hilary is currently Program Associate for Oral History at CHF, where she combines these two divergent academic paths. Her current work focuses on the Pew Biomedical Scholars and Women in Chemistry oral history projects. She also contributes to the podcast *Distillations* and the magazine *Chemical Heritage*.

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