CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

FENYONG LIU

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Robin Mejia

at

University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

on

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REFORMATTING:

Kim Phan, Program Intern, Oral History, Chemical Heritage Foundation. B.A. expected 2011, Anthropology, Cornell University.

David J. Caruso, Program Manager, Oral History, Chemical Heritage Foundation. B.A., History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Johns Hopkins University; PhD., Science and Technology Studies, Cornell University.

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Interviewee (Signature)

Fenyong Liu
(Typed Name)

140 Earl Warren Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720
(Address)

(510) 643-2436
(Phone Number)

liu_fy@uclink4.berkeley.edu
(E-mail Address)

November 3, 2005
(Date)

Signed on behalf of the Regents of the University of California:

Head, UCLA Oral History Program

Teresa Barnett
(Typed Name)

(310) 206-2454
(Phone Number)

tbarnett@library.ucla.edu
(E-mail Address)

11/17/05
(Date)

Chemical Heritage Foundation
Oral History Program
315 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

FENYONG LIU

Born in Guangzhou, China

Education

1986	B.S., Biology, University of Science and Technology of China
1989	M.S., Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Chicago
1992	Ph.D., Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Chicago,

Professional Experience

Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceutical Research Institute

1992	Visiting Scientist for Postdoctoral Internship, Department of Virology

Yale University

1992-1995	Postdoctoral Fellow with Dr. Sidney Altman, Department of Biology

University of California at Berkeley

1996-2001	Assistant Professor, School of Public Health
2001-2005	Associate Professor (with tenure), School of Public Health
2005-present	Professor, School of Public Health
2006-present	Professor and Chair, Program in Comparative Biochemistry

Honors

1986	University Fellowship, Chicago Medical School
1987	University of Chicago Fellowship, University of Chicago
1993	Parke-Davis Postdoctoral Fellowship of Life Sciences Research Foundation
1997	Basil O'Conner Starter Scholar Award, March of Dimes National Birth Defects Foundation
1997	Liu Tianhong Foundation Memorial Visiting Professorship, College of Life Sciences, Hsing Hua University, Beijing, P. R. China
1997	Regent's Junior Faculty Fellowship (University of California)
1998	Hellman Family Faculty Award, University of California at Berkeley
1998-2002	Pew Scholar of Biomedical Sciences
2001	Established Investigator Award, American Heart Association

2001 Scholar of Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America

Selected Publications

Liu, F., and Roizman, B. (1991). The promoter, transcriptional unit, and coding sequence of herpes simplex virus 1 family 35 proteins are contained within and in frame with the UL26 open reading frame. *J. Virol.* 65: 206-212.

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ABSTRACT

Fenyong Liu was born and raised in Guangzhou, China during the Cultural Revolution. Early on in life he knew that he wanted to pursue science as his career, learning English during junior high school and having influential teachers while attending high school in Guangzhou. After passing the university entrance examinations, Liu matriculated at the prestigious University of Science and Technology of China. Initially he decided to pursue physics, but then transferred to the biology program after two years of study.

Encouraged by his professors, Liu decided to attend graduate school in the United States at the University of Chicago, briefly spending time in the Medical School before transferring into the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology program, where he worked with Richard Roller and Bernard Roizman. While his initial research focused on the biochemistry of viral DNA replication, Liu focused in the last years of his doctoral study on the genetics of the herpes virus capsid protein; his research resulted in a patent and created intense interest from the pharmaceutical industry.

He followed up his graduate research with postdoctoral positions at Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceutical Research Institute and Yale University, where he worked with Sidney Altman on the inhibition of antiviral gene expression. Liu discusses his wife (also a scientist) and family as well as balancing family commitments and career, especially during the period when he became a principal investigator at University of California, Berkeley. His current research in molecular biology and virology has focused on cytomegalovirus infection; during the interview he describes his typical workday and both his laboratory management style as well as the multiple roles he plays as a principal investigator. The interview concludes with Liu's reflections on his various scientific mentors and on his wife's career trajectory and the difficulties of being a woman in science. Liu concludes his interview by reflecting on his various scientific mentors.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Robin Mejia, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., Biology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1997.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Liu's office at the University of California, Berkeley.

Date: November 1, 2 and 3, 2005.

Total number of recorded hours: 6.

Persons present during interview: Liu and Mejia.

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 project consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Mejia contacted Liu by telephone and email to obtain Liu's curriculum vitae and agree on an interviewing schedule. Mejia also reviewed Liu's web site and published papers and reviewed the documentation from Liu's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including his proposal application and letters of recommendation.

ORIGINAL EDITING

Carol Squires edited the interview. She 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.

Liu reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

Carol Squires prepared the table of contents. Technitype Transcribing compiled the guide to proper names.

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