

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

1, 2, and 3 November 2005

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

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## 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

1992 Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceutical Research Institute  
Visiting Scientist for Postdoctoral Internship, Department of  
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1992-1995 Yale University  
Postdoctoral Fellow with Dr. Sidney Altman, Department of  
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1996-2001 University of California at Berkeley  
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health  
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### Honors

1986 University Fellowship, Chicago Medical School  
1987 University of Chicago Fellowship, University of Chicago  
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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

Selected Publications

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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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