

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

STEWART H. SHUMAN

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Neil D. Hathaway

at

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
New York, New York

on

13, 20, 27 September, 4 October 1993 and 26 March, 25, 28 June 1994

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

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INTERVIEWEE

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STEWART H. SHUMAN

1955 Born in New York City, New York on 10 December

Education

1976 B.A., Summa cum Laude, Wesleyan University
1983 Ph.D., M.D., Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University

Professional Experience

1983-1986 Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts
Medical House Officer, Medical Services

1986-1988 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes
of Health, Bethesda, Maryland
Medical Staff Fellow, Laboratory of Viral Diseases

1988-1992 Sloan-Kettering Institute
Assistant Member, Molecular Biology Program

1988-1992 Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City, New York
Assistant Member
1992-1995 Associate Member
1995-present Member

Honors

1975 Phi Beta Kappa
1982 Alpha Omega Alpha
1989 American Cancer Society Junior Faculty Research Award
1990-1994 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences
1994 American Cancer Society Faculty Research Award

Selected Publications

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ABSTRACT

Stewart H. Shuman was born in Queens, New York; his only sibling is a brother, who is ten years older. His family loosely observed religious strictures, including keeping kosher, because his maternal grandmother insisted upon it, but when Shuman's grandmother died the practices died away. When Shuman began Hebrew School in preparation for his Bar Mitzvah, he became briefly entranced by the Talmud, but he soon lost interest in religion. His mother attempted to inculcate cultural values by taking him to the library, to museums, and to the opera. He still loves to read but is only just learning to appreciate opera. He has loved both math and science from an early age. He attended a high school that offered to select students a very intensive, advanced program in the sciences; there he was in a very exciting biology class, taught by an excellent teacher whom he still remembers. He also took a college-level class while still in high school. During summers he attended a National Science Foundation program that he eventually was invited to teach as well. He was graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Wesleyan University and completed his MD/PhD degree at Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. He began his career at Massachusetts General Hospital; then he moved to the Laboratory of Viral Diseases at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). From there he joined Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, where he remains today. He has won awards from the American Cancer Society as well as the Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences grant. He has published many articles about his work with capping enzyme in vaccinia virus and covalent catalysis.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Neil D. Hathaway, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., English and History, Georgetown University; M.A. and C.Phil., History, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Shuman's office, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City.

Dates, length of sessions: September 13, 1993 (88 minutes); September 20, 1993 (86); September 27, 1993 (82); October 4, 1993 (82) ; March 26, 1994 (147) ; June 25, 1994 (159) ; June 28, 1994 (134).

Total number of recorded hours: 13

Persons present during interview: Shuman and Hathaway.

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's 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, from 1988 through 1992. In preparing for this interview, Hathaway, in consultation with the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty project consultants, developed a topic outline to provide an overall interview framework. Hathaway then held a telephone preinterview conversation with Shuman to obtain extensive written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on a research and interviewing timetable. Hathaway further reviewed the documentation in Shuman's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including his proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members. For general background on the recent history of the biological sciences, Hathaway consulted such works as: J.D. Watson et al., *The Molecular Biology of the Gene*. 4th ed. 2 vols. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1987; Lubert Stryer, *Biochemistry*. 3d ed. New York: W.H. Freeman, 1988; *The Journal of the History of Biology*; H.F. Judson, *The Eighth Day of Creation: Makers of the Revolution in Biology*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979; and recent issues of *Science*, *Nature*, and *Cell*.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Shuman's childhood in New York and continuing through his education at Wesleyan University and Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University and his work at the National Institutes of Health and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Major topics discussed include the training of an M.D./Ph.D., research on RNA kinase and RNA transcription, the characterization of capping enzyme, vaccinia as a system, the marginal status of virology in the scientific community, and Shuman's style of lab management.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Vimala Jayanti, editor, 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.

Shuman reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made minor corrections.

Kristian London, assistant editor, prepared the table of contents, interview history, and index.

Jayanti compiled the biographical summary.

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