

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PETER S. KIM

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Steven J. Novak

at

The Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
Cambridge, Massachusetts

on

23, 24, and 26 May 1995

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

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INTERVIEWEE

PLSVL
(Signature)

Peter S. Kim
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48 Baskin Road
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Date

March 3, 1997

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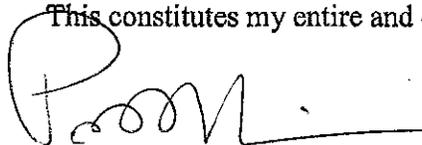
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PETER S. KIM

1958 Born in Atlanta, Georgia on 27 April

Education

1979 B.A., Cornell University
1985 Ph.D., Stanford University

Research Appointments

Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, 1985-88
1985-1988 Fellow Associate
1988-1992 Associate Member
1992-present Member

Professional Experience

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
1988-1992 Assistant Professor
1992-1995 Associate Professor
1995-present Professor

Howard Hughes Medical Institute
1990-1993 Assistant Investigator
1993-present Associate Investigator

Honors

1987-1988 Leonard Skeggs Chair for Whitehead Fellows
1989 Excellence in Chemistry Award, ICI Pharmaceuticals
1989 Walter J. Johnson Prize in Molecular Biology, *Journal of Molecular Biology*
1990-1992 Rita Allen Foundation Scholar
1990-1994 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences
1993 NAS Award in Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences USA
1994 Eli Lilly Award in Biological Chemistry, American Chemical Society
1994 Dupont Merck Young Investigator Award, Protein Society
1994 Ilchun Award, Seoul National University

1995 Pfizer Animal Health Award, University of Nebraska
1995 Mack Award, Ohio State University

Selected Publications

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- of native intermediates. *Science*, 253:1386-93.
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ABSTRACT

Peter S. Kim was born in Atlanta, Georgia, to parents who had emigrated from Korea after the Korean War and were studying at Georgia Institute of Technology. His father was a chemical engineer, his mother a biochemist. He had a sister who was several years younger. While he was still a child, his family moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, where his father was a professor at the University of Massachusetts; from there they moved to Brooklyn, where Peter attended school for a few years; then they moved to Ridgewood, New Jersey, so that his father could work in New York City. Peter's mother became a high school science teacher. For a while Peter and his family attended a Korean church, but then they switched to an American Presbyterian church; here Peter discovered a love of music and began to sing. He entered Cornell University, where his chemical engineering major lasted just one semester before he switched to chemistry. He met his wife-to-be when he was a freshman. From Cornell Peter was accepted into the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) at Stanford University to complete a joint MD/PhD degree. After two years of medical school Peter decided he wanted to do only research so he dropped the M.D. In Robert "Buzz" Baldwin's lab Peter worked on nuclear magnetic resonance to develop pulse-labeling in protein folding. Another interest he developed was in catalytic antibodies. Having decided not to finish medical school, Peter knew he had to obtain a postdoctoral position. He won the third Whitehead [Institute for Biomedical Research] fellowship granted. In his lab at the Whitehead he developed a peptide model of a protein-folding intermediate and worked on Leucine zippers and coiled coils with his postdocs and assistants. At the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research he was promoted first to assistant and then to associate member; Peter also became first an assistant and then associate professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an associate investigator at the Howard Hughes; he remains in all three positions today.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Steven J. Novak, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., History, University of Colorado; Ph.D., History, University of California, Berkeley; M.B.A., UCLA Graduate School of Management.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Kim's office, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dates, length of sessions: May 23, 1995 (137 minutes); May 24, 1995 (113); May 26, 1995 (108).

Total number of recorded hours: 6

Persons present during interview: Kim and Novak.

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 since 1988. To provide an overall framework for Project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Novak held a preinterview telephone conversation with Kim to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and to agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed prior Pew scholars' interviews and the documentation in Kim'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 technical background, Novak consulted J.D. Watson et al., *Molecular Biology of the Gene*. 4th ed. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1987 and Bruce Alberts et al., *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. 3d ed. New York: Garland, 1994.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Kim's childhood and continuing through his education at Cornell University, his graduate studies at Stanford University, and the establishment of his lab at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. Major topics discussed include protein folding, catalytic antibodies, the therapeutic potential of peptides, Kim's lab's funding, his mentors, and the need for scientists to communicate with laypeople.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Kristian London, editor, edited the interview. He 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.

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

London prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history. Gregory M. Beyrer, editorial assistant, compiled the index.

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