

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

BRUCE A. HAMILTON

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Robin Mejia

at

University of California, San Diego
San Diego, California

on

5-7 October 2005

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



Bruce A. Hamilton

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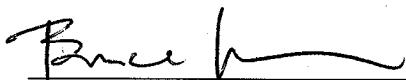
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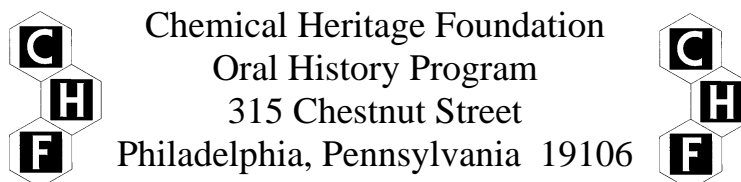
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Education

1986 B. A. in Molecular Biology, University of California, San Diego
1993 Ph.D. in Biology, California Institute of Technology

Professional Experience

1986-1993 California Institute of Technology
Predoctoral Research in the laboratories of Kai Zinn and
Elliot Meyerowitz

1993-1996 Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
Postdoctoral Fellow in the laboratory of Eric Lander
1996-1998 Postdoctoral Associate in the laboratory of Eric Lander

1998-2005 University of California, San Diego
Assistant Professor, Division of Genetics,
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1999-2005 Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of Cellular and
Molecular Medicine
2000-present Participating Member, Cancer Genetics Program, Rebecca
and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center
2005-present Associate Professor, Division of Genetics, Department of
Medicine, and Associate Adjunct Professor, Department of
Cellular and Molecular Medicine

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1999-2001 Basil O'Connor Starter Scholars Award, March of Dimes
1999-2003 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences
2001 Certificate of Appreciation, Office of National Drug Control Policy

Selected Publications

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ABSTRACT

Bruce A. Hamilton was born in Palo Alto, California, where his father was a graduate student in engineering. His mother was at that time a housewife. Having finished his master's degree, the older Hamilton began work in the aerospace industry in Lompoc, California; he then moved to Lockheed Martin and from there to Allied Chemical, where he helped develop airbags. The family moved to Dallas for a year and then to Michigan for two years. When Bruce was about eight they settled in Santa Clarita, where Bruce finished growing up. Bruce's father often brought things home from work, things to set on fire or to explode or otherwise to illustrate science and his own work, so Bruce had a very early exposure to science. His childhood years were otherwise typical of a middle-class family of the time.

In elementary school his class had a two-year project that involved building a city; the pupils had to build it physically from Styrofoam, to organize a government for it, etc.; Hamilton still thinks it was a wonderful way to instill understanding, knowledge, and enthusiasm for learning in children. In high school he had two excellent biology teachers and an excellent chemistry and calculus teacher; from them he increased his propensity to love science. He also found a non-denominational church attractive, and for a while he considered becoming a minister. In his spare time he attended Boys State, built a darkroom for his photography, and took up drums.

Hamilton matriculated at University of California at San Diego, where as a sophomore he discovered that he loved genetics. He did so well in his first genetics class that he was asked to be a teaching assistant the next year. He spent his senior year in Richard Firtel's lab.

With the guidance of Richard Firtel and the two teachers of that first genetics class, he ended up at California Institute of Technology for graduate school. There he began working with flies in Elliot Meyerowitz's lab, eventually leaving for Kai Zinn's lab, where he would concentrate more on neural development. He finished his PhD, married, and moved to Boston, where Hamilton took up his postdoc at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research at Massachusetts of Technology, where he worked in Eric Lander's lab for five years. From there he moved back to San Diego, and accepted a position at the University of California at San Diego. There he continues his research in neurogenetics; writes grant proposals and journal articles; teaches; and attempts to balance his work life with his family life.

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:

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Persons present during interview: Mejia and Hamilton.

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 corresponded with Hamilton by email and talked by phone to obtain background material, including Hamilton's CV, and schedule the interview. Mejia also obtained and read copies of several of Hamilton's published articles and reviewed his descriptions of his work on website.

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.

Hamilton did review the transcript. He verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

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

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