CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

MARTIN D. SNIDER

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Robert Kohler and Naomi Morrissette

at

Coral Gables, Florida

on

8 March 1990

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This oral history is part of a series supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts based on the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences. This collection is an important resource for the history of biomedicine, recording the life and careers of young, distinguished biomedical scientists and of Pew Biomedical Scholar Advisory Committee members.

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Martin Snider

(Date) 8/2/90

(Revised 24 February 1988)

MARTIN D. SNIDER

1952 Born in Chicago, Illinois on November 10

Education

1973 BS, Biology, Brown University
1978 PhD, Medical Sciences/Biological Chemistry, Harvard University

Professional Experience

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
1978-1982 Post-Doctorate, Biology & Center for Cancer Research

Carnegie Institute of Washington, Baltimore, MD
1982-1986 Staff Associate, Department of Embryology

Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH
1986-present Assistant Professor, Department of Biochemistry

Honors

1973-1976 National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship
1978-1981 National Institutes of Health Postdoctoral Fellowship
1986 Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences Award

ABSTRACT

Martin Snider grew up mostly on the south side of Chicago, Illinois, later moving to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and then to Newton, Massachusetts. His father was an academic physician, and Snider and his two siblings all ended up in academics too. A National Science Foundation summer program at Brown University convinced him to matriculate there.

At Brown, Snider worked with Joseph Steim, a biophysical chemist interested in the functionality of membranes. Snider feels that Brown, with its emphasis on undergraduates, gave him an excellent education. Encouraged by Joan Lusk, Snider entered Eugene Kennedy's lab at Harvard University. Working with membrane proteins, as well as Kennedy, was difficult but he became Snider's most important influence. Because his wife was at Harvard Medical School, Snider chose to do postdoctoral work at MIT. There he began his research into glycoprotein synthesis in the lab of Phillips Robbins. Snider was glad to leave the high-stress competition to accept a staff associate position at Carnegie Institution for Science, which he says was the nicest place he has ever worked. Funding and lack of distractions allowed Snider to concentrate on new research into vesicular traffic, and he was very productive.

When it was time for Snider and his wife, who is a neuropharmacologist, to establish their own labs, they found job-hunting to be most productive in medical schools in small cities. Ultimately they settled on Case Western Reserve University for both of them. Snider has continued his vesicular traffic work, but he has also returned to glycoprotein synthesis, where he says he has new tools to address old problems. He talks about his colleagues with similar interests; the size and composition of his lab; oral tradition in labs; and his own distinctive lab management. He has the additional responsibilities of grant-writing, reviewing papers, and teaching, leaving him perhaps half time in his lab.

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