## CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

# **CHARLES S. ZUKER**

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview Conducted by

Neil D. Hathaway

at

University of California, San Diego San Diego, California

on

20 December 1992, 30 January and 22 April 1993, and 29 and 30 January 1994

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

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#### **REFORMATTING:**

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Interviewe agrees to participate in a series of University-conducted tape-recorded interviews, commencing on or about December 18, 1992, and tentatively entitled "Interview with Charles S. Zuker". This Agreement relates to any and all materials originating from the interviews, namely the tape recordings of the interviews and a written manuscript prepared from the tapes, hereinafter collectively called "the Work."

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University and Interviewee have executed this Agreement on the date first written above.

INTERVIEWEE

÷....

(Signature)

Charles S. Zuker (Typed Name)

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Date Lyle PZ

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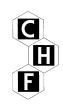
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# **CHARLES S. ZUKER**

1957	Born in Arica, Chile, on 27 June			
Education				
1977	B.Sc., Cell Biology, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile			
1983	Ph.D., Molecular Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology			
	Professional Experience			
	University of California, Berkeley			
1983-1986	Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Biochemistry			
	University of California, San Diego			
1986-1989	Assistant Professor, Department of Biology			
1989-1992	Associate Professor, Department of Biology and Department of			
	Neurosciences, School of Medicine			
1989-present	Associate Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute			
1993-present	Professor, Department of Biology and Department of			
-	Neurosciences, School of Medicine			
1993-present	Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute			
	Honors			
1979-1980	Whitaker Health Sciences Fund fellow, Massachusetts Institute of Technology			
1981-1982	Whitaker Health Sciences Fund fellow, Massachusetts Institute of Technology			
1983	European Molecular Biology Organization fellow			
1984	Sigma Xi			
1984-1986	Jane Coffin Childs Memorial Fund for Medical Research fellow			
1988-1991	McKnight Foundation Fund for Neuroscience Award			
1988-1992	Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences			
1988-1990	Alfred P. Sloan Award in Neurosciences			
1989-1991	March of Dimes Basil O'Connor Award			

#### Selected Publications

- Zuker, C.S. and H.F. Lodish, 1981. Repetitive sequences transcribed with developmentally regulated *Dictyosteium discoideum* mRNAs. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, 78:5386-90.
- Zuker, C.S., et al., 1983. A repetitive *Dictyostelium* gene family that is induced during differentation and by heat shock. *Cell*, 34:998-1005.
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- Zuker, C.S., et al., 1985. Isolation and structure of a rhodopsin gene from *D. melanogaster*. *Cell*, 40:851-58.
- Zuker, C.S., et al., 1987. A rhodopsin gene expressed in photoreceptor cell R7 of the *Drosophila* eye: Homologies with other signal transducing molecules. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 7:1550-57.
- Zuker, C.S., et al., 1988. Ectopic expression of a minor *Drosophila* opsin in the major photoreceptor cell class. *Cell*, 55:475-82.
- Stamnes, M.A. and C.S. Zuker, 1990. Peptidyl-prolyl *cis-trans* isomerases, Cyclophilin, FK506 binding protein, and *ninaA*: Four of a kind. *Current Opinion in Cell Biology*, 2:1104-7.
- Zuker, C.S., 1992. Phototransduction in *Drosophila:* A paradigm for the genetic dissection of sensory transduction cascades. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 2:622-27.
- Zuker, C.S., 1994. On the evolution of eyes: Would you like it simple or compound? *Science*, 265:742-43.
- Rutherford, S. and C.S. Zuker, 1994. Protein folding and the regulation of signaling pathways. *Cell*, 79:1129-32.
- Kernan, M. and C.S. Zuker, 1995. Genetic approaches to mechanosensory transduction. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* (in press).

#### ABSTRACT

**Charles S. Zuker** was born and raised in Arica, Chile, on the border of Peru and Boliviathough the family moved to Santiago when Zuker was in the third year of his high school. His father was a prominent businessman, his mother a homemaker; Zuker was the second oldest of four siblings. He had a normal childhood playing with friends, though, from an early age, he was interested in biology and medicine but not in becoming a doctor. Although Jewish, he attended Jesuit schools since, from his parents' perspective, they provided the best education in Chile. The reign of Salvador Allende Gossens caused some perturbation within Chile and for Zuker's family but did not have much of an impact on Zuker's education; the prominence of electrophysiological work on the giant squid, a native of Chile, provided some access to well-trained scientists.

He was tracked, from an early age, to study biology and so he entered the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso for his degree, knowing all the while that he wanted to pursue a doctoral degree in the United States. He worked as a teaching assistant as an undergraduate, learned about scientific research from a doctoral student at the university, and became handy at building his own equipment with little funds. He applied to and was accepted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for his graduate studies, during which time he had to develop rapidly his knowledge of the English language. After rotating through several labs, Zuker settled in to work with Harvey F. Lodish using slime molds as a system for studying development and trying to characterize the genes turned on as the molds developed spores. He moved on to a postdoctoral position at the University of California, Berkeley with Gerald M. Rubin, focusing more on neurobiological questions and, ultimately, research on photoreceptor cell function. Zuker used an RNA probe to isolate the rhodopsin gene in *Drosophila*; findings from this work published in *Cell* were done so simultaneously with competitors Joseph E. O'Tousa and William L. Pak. He then accepted a faculty position at the University of California, San Diego, and set up his research on *Drosophila* signaling pathways.

Throughout the interview he talks about his role and reputation at San Diego, as well as the joint graduate program with the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, basic research in underdeveloped countries, and the standards of graduate education. The interview concludes with Zuker's thoughts on the value of competition in science; his graduate students; balancing time in the lab with time with his family; the significance of the *ninaA* gene in explaining why cyclosporinA suppresses immune reactions; the development of electrophysiology techniques; the inability to do targeted mutagenesis on *Drosophila*; using the presence or absence of a protein as an assay to determine whether a gene is active or not; the process of breeding genetic stock in the laboratory; knocking out fly genes and attempting to rescue the function; and the utility of mutants in exploring the signaling pathway. He ends the interview with a discussion of how technology dominates modern biological research but cannot substitute for imagination and intuition; evolutionary conservation; learning the cause of retinitis pigmentosa; the quality of National Institutes of Health study sections; and his intense devotion to science.

#### 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: Zuker's office, University of California, San Diego

**Dates, length of sessions:** December 20, 1992 (85 minutes); January 30, 1993 (99); April 22, 1993 (75); January 29, 1994 (75); January 30, 1994 (79).

#### Total number of recorded hours: 6.9

Persons present during interview: Zuker 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 personal preinterview conversation with Zuker to obtain extensive written background information (curriculumvitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on a research and interviewing timetable.

Hathaway further reviewed the documentation in Zuker's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including his proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Programmational 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 Zuker's childhood in Chilehis education at Universidad Católica de Valparaiso, graduate work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, postdoc at University of California, Berkeley, and setup of his own lab at University of California, San Diego. Major topics discussed include slime mold and *Drosophila* as genetic systems, recombinant DNA technology, neurobiology, *Drosophila* eye development, genetic mutations, lab management, the funding and training of scientists, and science in developing countries.

#### **ORIGINAL EDITING:**

Steven J. Novak, senior 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.

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

Novak prepared the table of contents. Vimala Jayanti, editor, compiled the biographical summary. Kristian London, assistant editor, assembled the interview history and index.

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# Early Years Grandparents immigrate to South America to escape anti-Semitism. Childhood in AricaChileSiblings. Jewish community in Arica. Social turmoil during the Salvador Allendepresidency. Father's business career. Attends a Jesuit school. Decides to become a scientist. Childhood games. Meets with wife, Patricia Gioconda Ramolfo Zuker. Lack of guidance counseling in Chilean schools.

#### College

Chilean system of higher education. Academic performance. Enters the Universidad CatOlica de Valparaiso. Teaching undergraduates at University of California, San Diego (UCSD). High school course work. Teaching approach. Valparaisocurriculum. Influential professors. Undergraduate lab research. Learns to do research without expensive equipment. Plans to attend graduate school in the United States. ChileError! Reference source not found.'s development as a center for

electrophysiology. Jerard Hurwitz's promotion of Chilean scientists.

#### Thoughts on Graduate Education and Teaching

Preference for doing tasks at the last minute. Decides not to return to Chile after his graduate training. Difficulty of justifying basic research in underdeveloped countries. Teaching. Reforming graduate education. Criteria for admitting graduate students into the UCSD Department of Biology. Joint graduate program of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and the University of California, San Diego. Attends Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Value of competition in science. Preference for hard-driving students and postdocs.

#### Postdoctoral Years

Postdoc in the Gerald M. Rubin lab at the University of California, Berkeley. New transgenic technology. Decision in Rubin's lab to switch to neurobiological questions. Selecting a gene to study in *Drosophila*. RNA probe and the *white* gene. Using an RNA probe to isolate the rhodopsin gene. Decides to pursue research on photoreceptor cell function. Atmosphere in the Rubin lab. Rubin's management style. Importance of working on significant areas of research. Unpublished findings on the *white* gene. Searching the neurobiology literature. Goal of identifying every molecule involved in *Drosophila* eye function. Dividing the territory with Rubin. Publishing findings on the rhodopsin gene simultaneously with competitors Joseph E. O'Tousa and William L. Pak. Advantages of *Drosophila* as a system. Homologies in molecular biology Research. What homologies mean from an evolutionary standpoint.

1

26

46

99

#### Faculty Years

Accepts a faculty position at University of California, San Diego. Setting up research on *Drosophila* signaling pathways. Emphasis on publishing a few major papers rather than a number of less significant ones. First students. Lab's reputation for being hard-driving. First postdocs. How principal investigators lack time to do bench research themselves. Evolving managerial style. Undergraduates in the lab. Significance of the *ninaA* gene in explaining why cyclosporin A suppresses immune reactions. Current postdocs' research. Developing electrophysiology techniques. Awarded tenure. Funding for lab.

#### Research and Thoughts about Science

Fostering self-sufficiency in the lab. Inability to do targeted mutagenesis on *Drosophila*. Using presence or absence of a protein as an assay to determine whether a gene is active or not. Process of breeding genetic stock in the laboratory. Knocking out fly genes and attempting to rescue the function. Utility of mutants in exploring the signaling pathway. Question of what level of resolution a scientist wants on a problem. How the study of flies is relevant to the study of human genetics. How technology dominates modern biological research but cannot substitute for imagination and intuition. Evolutionary conservation. Value of basic science. Learning the cause of retinitis pigmentosa. Reasons for being a scientist. Allowing postdocs to take projects with them when they leave the lab. Quality of National Institutes of Health study sections. Serving on study sections. Scientific journals. Intense devotion to science and the changes in his attitude over the past year.

Index

172

## INDEX

## Α

Abarzua, Patrigo, 41 actin, 41, 44 Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 44, 46, 47 Aldrich, Richard W., 99 Alfred P. Sloan Award in Neurosciences, 171 Allende, Salvador, 9, 12 Alzheimer's disease, 198 American Society for Cell Biology, 212 Applebury, Meredithe L., 129, 134 Arica, Chile, 3, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 20 arrestin, 177, 182, 190

#### B

Baja California, 4 Baker, Bruce, 162 Baldwin, Robert L., 162 Baltimore, David, 81, 211 Baltimore, Maryland, 103, 112, 196 Basel, Switzerland, 104, 105 Benovic, Jeffrey L., 182 Benzer, Seymour, 123, 198 Blumberg, Daphne, 84 Bolivia, 1, 3 Borges, Jorge Luis, 34 Boston University, 44 Boston, Massachusetts, 39, 44, 142, 143 Bourne, Henry R., 41 Brandeis University, 38, 39, 123 Brenner, Sydney, 199, 200 Britt, Steven G., 182 Britten, Roy J., 89, 92 Brown, Michael S., 204 Buck, Linda, 161

## С

C. elegans, 205

California Institute of Technology, 66 Caltech. See California Institute of Technology capability and proficiency evaluation, 37, 38 CAPE. See capability and proficiency evaluation Capecchi, Mario, 188 Carnegie Institute, 103 Caskey, C. Thomas, 199 Catholic (Roman), 14, 15 Jesuit, 14, 15, 24, 25, 31, 32, 43 Chicago, Illinois, 196 Chile, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 20, 26, 27, 29, 31, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 64, 88, 142, 211 Chuman, Lorraine, 51 Chung, Steve, 85, 89 collaboration, 124, 135, 173, 174 Columbia University, 59, 156 competition, 67, 94, 95, 98, 101, 103 Cowman, Alan F., 133 Crete, 54 Crick, Francis, 16 cyclophilin, 158, 159, 160, 162, 206 cyclosporin, 158

# D

Damon Runyon Postdoctoral Fellowship, 99 Davidson, Eric H., 89, 92 Delbriick, Max, 198 *Dictyostelium*, 83, 88, 90, 92, 205 Dinsfertig, Chana (maternal grandmother), 1 Dinsfertig-Silberberg, Celia Zuker (mother), 49 DNA, 30, 37, 44, 46, 60, 63, 89, 92, 103, 108, 109, 110, 131, 132, 135, 151 Dolph, Patrick J., 177 *Drosophila*, 54, 83, 103, 104, 105, 111, 124, 129, 139, 140, 141, 144, 185, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194

## Ε

electrophysiology/electrophysiologist, 45, 99, 163, 164, 178 Elledge, Stephen J., 196, 197 EMBL. *See* European Molecular Biology Laboratory Europe, 1, 7, 11, 24, 53, 55, 129 European Molecular Biology Laboratory, 55

# F

Feiler, Reinhard, 174, 182 *Fiddler on the Roof*, 7, 10 Firtel, Richard A., 83, 90 foldase, 158, 159 Fox, Maurice S., 79 Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, 71

## G

G protein, 143, 144, 146, 161, 177, 181, 182, 184, 189, 192, 194 Ganetzky, Barry, 162 Garcia Marquez, Gabriel, 34 Garcia, Pablo, 41 Gefter, Malcolm, 44, 46, 77, 79 Gehring, Walter J., 104 Geneva, Switzerland, 53 Genome of Drosophila Melanogaster, The, 106, 186 Germany, 1, 10, 11, 174, 175, 182 Goldstein, Joseph L., 204 Gonzalez, Roberto, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 52 Gordon Conference, 53 Gorman, Monica, 161, 162 grants/funding, 40, 44, 51, 64, 65, 97, 101, 122, 146, 168, 169, 170, 172, 173, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212 Greider, Carol W., 152

#### Η

Hafen, Ernst, 104, 106, 116, 128 Hall, Jeffrey, 123 Hardy, Robert, 187 Harris, Gregory L., 164, 165, 173 Harris, William A., 175 Harvard University, 39, 54, 66, 78, 99, 156 Hawaii, 140 Heidelberg, Germany, 55 Hirsh, Jay, 131 Horvat, Alejandro, 43 Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 73, 74, 168, 171, 172, 173, 207 Human Genome Project, 95, 199 Hurwitz, Jerard, 44, 46, 47

# Ι

Israel, 7

# J

Jaenisch, Rudolf, 53 Jew/Jewish/Judaism, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 38 bar mitzvah, 8, 16 Conservative, 7 Orthodox, 7 Reform, 7 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur fellowships, 122 John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Sciences, 39 Johns Hopkins University, 66, 107, 196 Jones, Kevin, 107 Julius, David J., 178

# K

Kadonaga, James T., 58 Kafatos, Fotis, 54 Kernan, Maurice, 160, 162, 180 Khorana, Har Gobind, 192 King, Mary Clare, 205 Kirschfeld, Kuno, 174, 175, 176, 182, 183 Kirschner, Mark W., 115 Kunkel, Doug, 124

## L

Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, 20 Levine, Michael S., 104, 116, 128, 197 Levis, Robert W., 118 Lindsley, Dan L., 106, 186 Lodish, Harvey F., 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 89, 90, 142, 205 Lucille P. Markey Charitable Trust Programs in Biomedical Sciences, 99 Luria, Salvador Edward, 198

## Μ

MacKinnon, Roderick, 99 Maddox, John, 214 Maniatis, Tom, 197 Manning, P.A., 107 March of Dimes Basil O'Connor Award, 171 Marshall, Sergio, 38, 39, 52 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 66, 72, 73, 74, 81, 84, 87, 93, 94, 99, 103, 142, 152, 154, 177, 192 Max-Planck- Institut für biologische Kybernetik, 174 McGinnis, William, 104 McKnight Foundation for Neuroscience Award, 171 mechanoreceptors, 160, 161, 162, 163, 167, 180, 206 membrane biology, 75, 79, 82, 89 Mendel, Gregor, 96, 211 microspectrophotometry, 175, 182 MIT. See Massachusetts Institute of Technology Moby Dick, 49 Molecular Cloning, 197 Montell, Craig, 107, 125, 126, 128 Mount, Stephen M., 117

# Ν

Nathans, Jeremy, 134, 135 National Eye Institute, 171 National Institutes of Health, 147, 170, 171, 172, 173, 207, 210, 212 Nazis, 1 Neruda, Pablo, 34 neurobiology, 45, 62, 63, 64, 99, 104, 105, 108, 122, 124, 143, 212 New York City, New York, 6, 20 New York University, 95 NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health *nina*, 157 *ninaA*, 157, 158, 159, 163, 173, 180, 184 *ninaE*, 129, 130, 133 Nobel Prize, 39, 188 Nüsslein-Volhard, Christiane, 192

# 0

O'Tousa, Joseph E., 129, 132, 134 Oberlin College, 69, 73 Oppenheimer, J. Robert, 204 opsin, 129, 130, 134, 135, 141 bovine opsin, 110, 134, 135, 136, 141

# P

p53, 196, 197, 203 Pak, William L., 107, 122, 129, 130, 131, 134, 135 Palade, George E., 182 Parada, Camilo, 41 Pardue, Mary Lou, 75 peer review, 96, 207, 210 Peru. 3 Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences, 51, 56, 74, 95, 170, 196, 199, 211 photoreceptor cells, 158, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164 R7, 106, 110 R8, 110 phototransduction, 144, 145 Pinochet (Ugarte), Augusto, 11 Poland, 10 Princeton University, 67, 106 Purdue University, 107

## R

Ranganathan, Rama, 99, 147, 163, 165, 166, 167, 173, 175, 176, 180 Ras. 197 Red Book, 106, 186 Reinberg, Danny, 40, 47 retinitis pigmentosa, 203 rhodopsin, 7, 110, 111, 129, 130, 131, 141, 144, 158, 159, 160, 177, 192, 194, 203 Rio, Donald C., 108, 109, 113, 116 RNA, 60, 89, 90, 108, 109, 110, 135, 151 Roche Institute for Molecular Biology, 71 Roche Laboratories, 41 Rockefeller University, 41, 44 Roeder, Robert G., 41 Rothman, James E., 99 Rubin, Gerald M., 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 131, 145, 176, 188, 189, 200 Russia, 1, 10 Rutgers University, 61

# S

Sabbatini, David, 54 Salk Institute for Biological Studies, 70, 71, 72, 73, 103, 152, 165, 167, 180 Salk, Jonas, 72 San Diego, California, 1 Santiago, Chile, 3, 4, 26, 29, 41, 43, 46, 142 Schekman, Randy, 201 Schultz, David, 160, 162 Scott, Kristin, 149 Scripps Research Institute, 67, 71, 73 sevenless gene, 106, 118 Shieh, Bih-Hwa, 157, 168, 191 Signer, Ethan R., 80 Silberberg, Samuel (maternal grandfather), Silberberg-Dinsfertig, Celia Zuker (mother), 1 simian virus40, 55 Simon, Michael A., 188 slime molds, 81, 82, 83, 86, 88, 89, 90, 122

Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, 46, 99
Smith, Dean P., 99, 147
South America, 1, 2, 7, 21, 27
Spitzer, Nicholas C., 165
Spradling, Allan C., 103
Stamnes, Mark A., 99, 147
Stanford University, 66, 99, 162, 200
Steller, Hermann, 116
Stevens, Charles F., 165, 166, 175, 176, 180

# Т

tenure, 97, 101, 168, 169, 171 Thierry-Mieg, Danielle, 121 Tjian, Robert T., 40 Tomlinson, Andrew, 106 Trener, Dora (paternal grandmother), 1

# U

U.S. Congress, 84 UCSD. See University of California, San Diego UCSF. See University of California, San Francisco United States of America, 11, 29, 38, 43, 52 Universidad Católica de Valparaiso, 4 University of California, 46, 59 University of California, Berkeley, 44, 66, 72, 74, 81, 103, 104, 108, 112, 122, 142, 143, 145, 152 University of California, Los Angeles, 23, 185 University of California, San Diego, 23, 29, 60, 66, 70, 71, 72, 73, 103, 104, 117, 142, 148, 152, 182, 197 University of California, San Francisco, 40, 41, 59, 66, 72, 73, 115, 143, 156 University of Iowa, 73, 95 University of Maryland, 61 University of Oregon, 59 University of Wisconsin, 162 University of Wyoming, 72 Uruguay, 1, 13

# V

Valparaiso, Chile, 3, 4, 5, 6, 29, 33, 45, 52 Varmus, Harold E., 210 Villa del Mar, Chile, 142 virology, 75, 79, 80, 81 Vogelstein, Bert, 196, 197, 204

## W

Watson, James D., 16
Weischaus, Eric F., 192 *white* gene, 16, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108, 109, 119, 120, 121, 166
Wichita, Kansas, 154
Williams, Lewis T., 40
Woods Hole, Massachusetts, 45
World War I, 11

# Х

Xenopus, 42

# Y

Yale University, 124

Yiddish, 21 Yudelevich, Alejandro, 45, 46 Yugoslavia, 43

# Z

*zeste* gene, 120, 121
Zimm, G.G., 186
Zipursky, Larry S., 185, 186
Zuker, Felipe (paternal grandfather), 1
Zuker, Murielle (daughter), 51
Zuker, Patricia Gioconda Ramolfo (wife), 6, 56, 101, 142, 200
Zuker-Silberberg, Dorita (Dora) Dalia (sister), 6
Zuker-Silberberg, Estrella Marta (sister), 6
Zuker-Silberberg, Saul Marcos (brother), 4, 5
Zuker-Trener, Mauricio (father), 1, 20, 49
Zurich, Switzerland, 129

# B

β-amyloid, 198