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

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Kim Phan, Program Intern, Oral History, Chemical Heritage Foundation. B.A. expected 2011, Anthropology, Cornell University.

David J. Caruso, Program Manager, Oral History, Chemical Heritage Foundation. B.A., History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Johns Hopkins University; PhD., Science and Technology Studies, Cornell University.

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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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Charles S.	Zuk	er		
Department	of	Biology		
University	of	California,	San	Diego
9500 Gilmar	ı Dr	rive		
San Diego,	CA.	92093-0649		

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

INTERVIEWEE

÷....

(Signature)

Charles S. Zuker (Typed Name)

Department of Biology

University of California, San Diego

9500 Gilman Drive _____ (Address)

San Diego, CA 92093-0649

Date Lyle PZ

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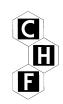
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CHARLES S. ZUKER

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.
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- 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.
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- Rutherford, S. and C.S. Zuker, 1994. Protein folding and the regulation of signaling pathways. *Cell*, 79:1129-32.
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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.

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