SCIENCE HISTORY INSTITUTE

ROBERT CARPENTER

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Mark Jones and Cassandra Stokes

at

San Francisco, California and Boston, Massachusetts

on

10 January and 3 April 2012 and 29 January 2013

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Center for Oral History
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(Signature) _____
Robert Carpenter

(Date) August 24, 2017

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ROBERT CARPENTER

1945 Born in San Diego, California on 14 March

Education

1967 BS, United States Military Academy at West Point, Computer Science
1969 MS, Stanford University, Computer Science
1975 MBA, Harvard University

Professional Experience

Baxter International
1975-1976 Assistant to President
1976-1978 Director of Product Planning
1978-1981 President, Fenwal Division

Integrated Genetics
1981-1989 President and Chief Executive Officer

Genzyme
1989-1991 Executive Vice President
1994-2001 Director

IG Laboratories
1989-1991 Chief Executive Officer

GelTex
1992-1993 Chief Executive Officer

Hydra Biosciences
1991-2000 Chief Executive Officer

VacTex, Incorporated
1995-1998 Chief Executive Officer

ABSTRACT

Robert Carpenter was born in San Diego, California, in 1945. He moved to South Bend, Indiana, where his father started a family bakery when he was an infant. When Carpenter was in elementary school, the family moved to Washington, DC, when his father started working for Fannie May Candy Company. He grew up in Arlington, Virginia, attending school with his younger brother, who was in the same grade as Carpenter, because the former skipped a grade. As a high schooler, Carpenter decided he wanted to attend West Point and worked to secure an appointment from his local congressman, which he did.

At West Point, Carpenter participated in the Glee Club because it allowed him to travel off-campus his first year and did well academically. Although selected as the battalion commander of his peers around the holidays during his first year, he tired of the military aspect and planned to get out of the Army as soon as his service requirement was up. Upon graduation from West Point, Carpenter chose to attend a master's program at Stanford University for two years instead of going directly to Vietnam, an option given to graduates from West Point in the top part of the class. He was sent to Vietnam after he acquired his degree and managed the data processing operation in Da Nang and later the inventory control center in Long Binh. He returned stateside and served several years in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and Washington, DC, before finishing his service requirement.

Carpenter then attended Harvard Business School and joined Baxter International Incorporated upon graduation. Beginning in his first summer at Baxter, he worked on the documentation and quality control team to meet the FDA's new restrictions on good manufacturing practices. Later, he began worked with Fenwal, a division of Baxter which made blood bags, as director of product planning. Carpenter rose up in the ranks and was eventually made president of Fenwal when he was in his thirties. During his work as president, he focused on improving products in the biotech industry. Although invited to continue in the company as vice president of international, Carpenter decided to accept an offer to become president of a new company called Integrated Genetics (IG), which focused on recombinant DNA.

While at Integrated Genetics, he oversaw work on fertility hormones, Factor VIII cloning, and modified tPA. He assisted in finding an M&A partner for IG and negotiated a merger with Genzyme. Remaining on for several months after the merger, Carpenter left IG to found GelTex, a company developed around the idea of using polymers as a drug. When GelTex was bought out by Genzyme, he established Boston Medical Investors with other businessmen to invest in up-and-coming biotech companies. They financed a number of companies, including VacTex. Throughout the discussion, Carpenter returns to the themes of the great work of scientists at the companies with which he was involved and developments in the biotech field.

INTERVIEWERS

Mark Jones holds a PhD in history, philosophy, and social studies of science from the University of California, San Diego. He is the former director of research at the Life Sciences Foundation and executive editor of LSF Magazine. He has served in numerous academic posts and is completing the definitive account of the origins of the biotechnology industry, entitled *Translating Life*, for Harvard University Press.

Cassandra Stokes assisted in conducting this oral history interview, but no additional information about her career history is on file.

ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPT

Staff of the Life Sciences Foundation conducted this interview, which became a part of our collections upon the merger of the Chemical Heritage Foundation and the Life Sciences Foundation into the Science History Institute in 2018. The Center for Oral History at the Science History Institute edited and formatted this transcript to match our style guide, but, as noted, Science History Institute staff members did not conduct the interview.

The Center for Oral History, Science History Institute, is committed both to preserving the recording of each oral history interview in our collection and to enhancing research use of the interviews by preparing carefully edited transcripts of those recordings. The preparation of interview transcripts begins with the creation of a verbatim typescript of the recording and proceeds through review and editing by staff of the Center; interviewees also review the typescript and can request additions, deletions, or that sections be sealed for specified periods of time. We have established guidelines to help us maintain fidelity to the language and meaning of each recorded interview while making minor editorial adjustments for clarity and readability. Wherever possible, we supply the full names of people, organizations, or geographical locations mentioned during the interview. We add footnotes to the transcript to provide full citations for any publications that are discussed, to point to extant oral history interviews, and to clear up misstatements or provide context for ambiguous references in the transcript. We use brackets to indicate the addition of material that was not in the audio, and bracketed ellipses to indicate the deletion of recorded material. The transcript also includes time stamps at five-minute intervals. We omit without noting most instances of verbal crutches and all instances of nonlexical utterances. We also make small grammatical corrections where necessary to communicate interview participants' meaning. Finally, staff of the Center create the abstract, chronology, and table of contents. With the availability of online full-text searching of our transcripts, the Center for Oral History opted to discontinue the practice of preparing a back-of-the-book index for each oral history transcript in 2020. **The Science History Institute is committed to the responsible presentation of the history of science by addressing evidence of inequality and oppression as well as the subsequent silences in our collections. To that end, we recognize there may be language in our oral history collection, though not necessarily this oral history, that is outdated, offensive, or harmful, such as, but not limited to, the following: racist, sexist, Eurocentric, ableist, and/or homophobic language or depictions.**

Due to legal or privacy concerns, some material has been redacted from both transcript and audio. Textual redactions are indicated in the transcript and the redacted audio segments have been replaced with silence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS