

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

CHENG-MING CHIANG

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Andrea R. Maestrejuan

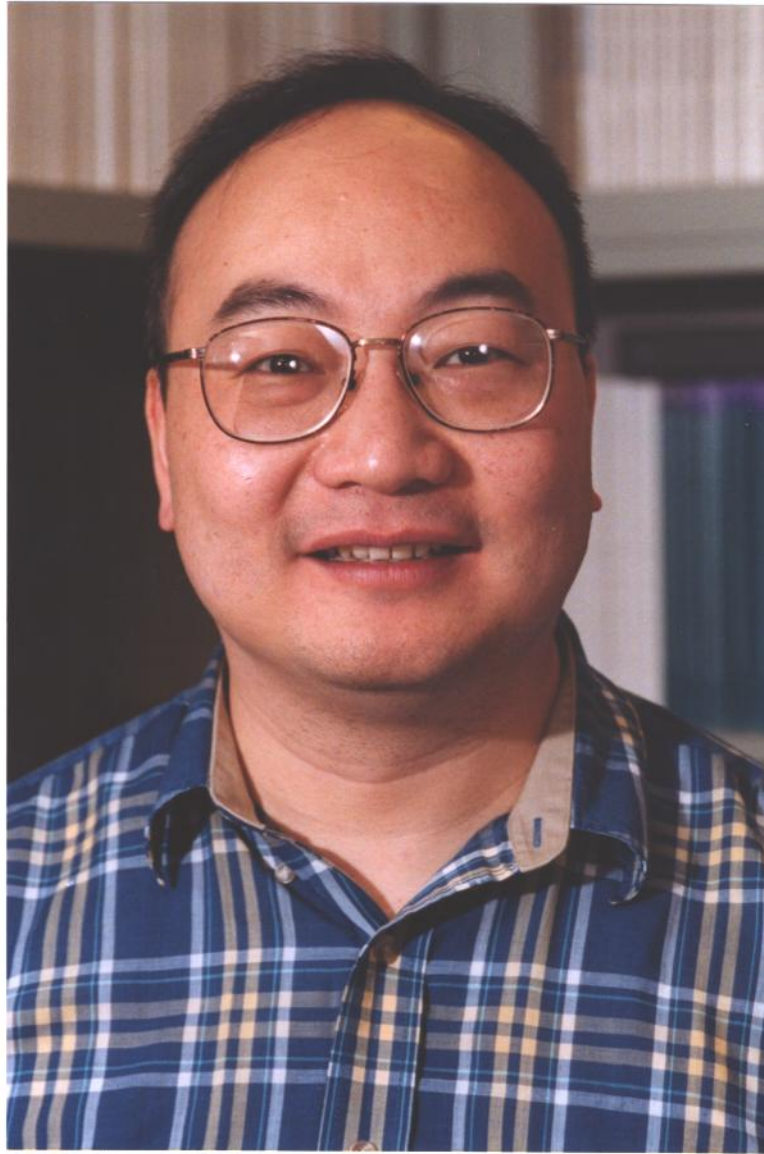
at

Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio

on

1, 2, and 3 April 2003

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Cheng-Ming Chiang

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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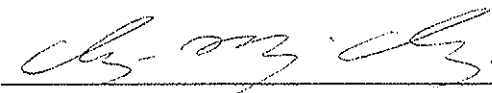
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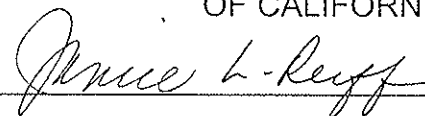
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University and Interviewee have executed this Agreement on the date first written above.

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Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences
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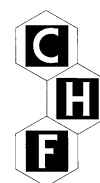
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CHENG-MING CHIANG

1961 Born in Taipei, Taiwan, on 2 September

Education

1984 B.S., Department of Agricultural Chemistry, National Taiwan University

1991 Ph.D., Department of Biochemistry, University of Rochester

Professional Experience

1991-1992 University of Rochester
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Biochemistry

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1995-2000 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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2000-present Associate Professor, Department of Biochemistry

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1991 Wallace O. Fenn Award, University of Rochester

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1993-1995 Aaron Diamond Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow

1996-2000 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

1997-1999 Basil O'Conner Starter Award from the March of Dimes Birth Defect Foundation

2000-2004 Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation Scholar

Selected Publications

Rotenberg, M.O., C.-M. Chiang, M.L. Ho, T.R. Broker, and L.T. Chow. 1989. Characterization of cDNAs of spliced HPV- 11 E2 mRNA and other HPV mRNAs recovered via retrovirus-mediated gene transfer. *Virology* 172: 468-477.

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ABSTRACT

Cheng-Ming Chiang was born and raised in Taipei, Taiwan, the second youngest of four siblings, and the first to attend college. Chiang was raised by his mother who worked as a taxi driver in Taiwan for over twenty years. With two older siblings in high school and a full-time, working mother, Chiang devoted his time at home to his studies and minding his younger brother. He went through the Taiwanese educational system without much consideration for his future career, though with an interest in science. He decided he wanted to go to college and took entrance exams with the intention of attending National Taiwan University.

Uninterested in re-taking exams in order to enter a doctorate of medicine program, and considering his burgeoning interest in science, Chiang decided to become a student in what he considered to be the best department at National Taiwan University, the Department of Agricultural Chemistry. While an undergraduate he had the opportunity to learn biochemical and cell biological techniques in labs, including column chromatography, sodium dodecyl sulphate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE), and mammalian cell culture; Chiang decided he wanted to become a scientist. Upon graduating Chiang began his two years of military service, during which time he started to prepare for a graduate education in the United States. After his stint in the military, and while applying to doctoral programs, he spent one year as a lab technician at National Taiwan University studying human papillomavirus. He matriculated at the University of Rochester in New York and continued research on human papillomavirus with Thomas R. Broker and Louise T. Chow, specifically performing molecular biology mapping through RNA splicing of variants by retrovirus-mediated gene transfer in human papillomavirus type 11, all the while adjusting to American culture. He finished his degree in just over three years, and his thesis not only won the best thesis award in the department of biochemistry, but also the best thesis award for the entire medical school. From Rochester Chiang went on to Rockefeller University for a postdoctoral fellowship with Robert G. Roeder to study protein biochemistry: purifying human transcription factor IID using retrovirus-mediated gene transfer and the FLAG-epitope tag; he and his wife were expecting the birth of their daughter shortly after the start of Chiang's position. After his fellowship he accepted a position at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and then moved on to Case Western Reserve University, researching the biochemical aspects of human papillomavirus gene regulation.

Throughout the interview Chiang compares his time and education in the United States to his time in Taiwan, also providing some historical perspectives on Taiwanese history as he lived it. The interview ends with a discussion of a wide variety of topics that include his laboratory and mentoring; racial discrimination in science; his wife's career and balancing family and career; training students in basic science; politics in publishing scientific papers; and the role of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences in helping him establish his lab during its early years when funding was critical.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Andrea R. Maestrejuan, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.S., Biological Sciences, University of California, Irvine; M.A., History, University of California, Riverside; C.Phil., History, University of California, Los Angeles.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Chiang's office, Case Western Reserve University.

Dates, length of sessions: April 1, 2003; April 2, 2003; April 3, 2003

Total number of recorded hours: 6.0

Persons present during interview: Chiang and Maestrejuan.

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, Maestrejuan held a telephone preinterview conversation with Cheng-Ming Chiang to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. She also reviewed prior Pew Scholars interviews and the documentation in Cheng-Ming Chiang's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including the proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Carol L. Squires edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of that 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.

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

Squires prepared the table of contents. Victoria Simmons assembled the interview history. TechniType Transcriptions compiled the guide to proper names.

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