

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**LYNN COOLEY**

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

Marcia L. Meldrum

at

Yale School of Medicine  
New Haven, Connecticut

on

4-5, 7 March 1996

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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**REFORMATTING:**

Hilary Domush, Program Assistant, Biomedical Sciences and Technologies, Chemical Heritage Foundation. B.S. Chemistry, Bates College, M.S. Chemistry, University of Wisconsin, M.A. History of Science, University of Wisconsin.

David J. Caruso, Program Manager, Biomedical Sciences and Technologies, 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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(Address)

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## LYNN COOLEY

1955 Born in Middletown, Connecticut on 18 July

### Education

1976 B.A., Connecticut College  
1979 M.A., University of Texas at Austin  
1984 Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin

### Professional Experience

1984-1988 Carnegie Institution of Washington  
Postdoctoral Fellow

1989-1994 Yale University School of Medicine  
Assistant Professor  
1994-present Associate Professor

### Honors

1976 E. Frances Botsford Prize in Zoology  
1984-1986 Runyon-Winchell Fellow, Cancer Research Fund of the Damon  
Runyon-Walter Winchell Foundation  
1989-1990 Hull Cancer Research Award, Yale Cancer Center  
1991-1995 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

### Selected Publications

- Cooley, L. et al., 1988. Insertional mutagenesis of the *Drosophila* genome with single P elements. *Science* 239:1121-28.
- Cooley, L. et al., 1992. *Chickadee* encodes a profilin required for intercellular cytoplasm transport during *Drosophila* oogenesis. *Cell* 69:173-84.
- Xue, F. and L. Cooley, 1993. *Kelch* encodes a component of intercellular bridges in *Drosophila* egg chambers. *Cell* 72:681-93.
- Verheyen, E. and L. Cooley, 1994. Profilin mutations disrupt multiple actin-dependent processes during *Drosophila* development. *Development* 120:717-28. Cant, K. et al., 1994. *Drosophila singed*, a fascin homolog, is required for actin bundle formation during oogenesis and bristle extension. *Journal of Cell Biology* 125:369-80.
- Robinson, D.N. and K. Cant, 1994. Morphogenesis of *Drosophila* ovarian ring canals.

*Development* 120:2015-25.

Mahajan-Miklos, S. and L. Cooley, 1994. The villin-like protein encoded by the *Drosophila* *quail* gene is required for actin bundle assembly during oogenesis. *Cell* 78:291-301.

Cant, K. and L. Cooley, 1996. Single amino acid mutations in *Drosophila* fascin disrupt actin bundling function *in vivo*. *Genetics* 143:249-58.

Panzer, S. and L. Cooley, 1997. The use of explicitly defined relationships for WWW based navigation and searching of a biological database. *CABIOS* 13:281-90.

Robinson, D.N. and L. Cooley, 1997. *Drosophila kelch* is an oligomeric ring canal actin organizer. *Journal of Cell Biology*, in press.



## ABSTRACT

**Lynn Cooley** grew up in Portland, Connecticut, the middle child of five. Her father was in aeronautical engineering and her mother in physics, so she had a very early introduction, if not a genetic predisposition, to science. In high school she liked chemistry and mathematics courses best and finished all of those available by the end of her junior year. In consultation with her guidance counselor, she decided to graduate in only three years and to start college. Cooley matriculated into Connecticut College, where she majored in zoology. In college she discovered modern dance. She also took a semester off to take a course at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, which led to her participation on a research cruise.

During a later summer course at Woods Hole Cooley discovered biochemistry and immediately decided that was what she wanted to do. She applied to graduate schools, entering the University of Texas, where she persuaded Kwan Wang to take her into his lab to work on cytoskeletal proteins. She continued her dancing as well, using it often as a release from growing tension in Wang's lab. Eventually she decided to leave the university after completing her master's degree, at which point she worked as a lab technician for Joanne Ravel and performed with a modern dance company. Wanting to return to the East Coast, she transferred to Dieter Söll's lab at Yale University, where he later suggested she complete her Ph.D. at the University of Texas while conducting research in his lab.

Cooley then accepted a postdoc appointment in Allan Spradling's lab at the Carnegie Institution of Washington in Baltimore, Maryland, where she began researching the regulation of expression in follicle cells. She also developed a focus on the *kelch* and *chickadee* genes. This research continued when Cooley started her own lab at the Yale School of Medicine, in conjunction with students Feiyu Xue and Esther Verheyen. The lab's research divided into two components: genes related to the function of ring canals and genes related to the regulation of actin in nurse cells. In the meantime, Cooley earned a pilot's license and married her husband, Ted Killiam, with whom she has a daughter. Cooley discusses the scientific and academic issues she finds critical, including cutbacks in science funding, the impact of molecular techniques on developmental biology, the need to improve the public's understanding of basic research, and shifting trends in funding. She concludes the interview by expressing her satisfaction with her career.

## UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWER:

Marcia L. Meldrum, postdoctoral fellow, UCLA Department of History. B.A., History, University of Minnesota; M.B.A., Boston University; M.A. and Ph.D., History of Science and Medicine, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

**Place:** Cooley's office, Yale School of Medicine.

**Dates, length of sessions:** March 4, 1996 (86 minutes); March 5, 1996 (82) ; March 7, 1996 (25).

**Total number of recorded hours:** 3.2

**Persons present during interview:** Cooley and Meldrum.

### 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 Archive 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 faculty consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Meldrum held a telephone preinterview conversation with Cooley to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. Meldrum further reviewed the documentation in Cooley's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including her proposal application, progress reports, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members. For technical background, Meldrum consulted recent issues of *Cell*, *Nature*, and *Science*, and attended two lectures by Dr. Evelyn Fox Keller, who has done extensive research on the history of biology.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Cooley's childhood in Connecticut and continuing through her graduate work at the University of Texas at Austin and Yale University, postdoctoral work at the Carnegie Institution in Baltimore, and the establishment of her own laboratory at Yale.

Major topics discussed include the process of cytoplasm transport and the development of the cytoskeleton in oocyte development, the interactive functions of specific *Drosophila* genes, and current funding priorities in science.

### ORIGINAL EDITING:

Jackie Tran, editorial assistant, edited the interview. She 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.

Cooley reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Jane Collings, editor, prepared the table of contents. Jeffrey Chow, editorial assistant, compiled the biographical summary. Meldrum composed the interview history. Gregory M.D. Beyrer, editorial assistant, assembled the index.

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