

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

GLEN A. EVANS

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Arnold Thackray

at

Salk Institute for Biological Studies
San Diego, California

on

20 November 1989

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This oral history is part of a series supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts based on the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences. This collection is an important resource for the history of biomedicine, recording the life and careers of young, distinguished biomedical scientists and of Pew Biomedical Scholar Advisory Committee members.



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GLEN A. EVANS

1952 Born in San Diego, California on November 14

Education

1973 B.A., Biology, University of California, San Diego
1979 M.D., University of California, San Diego
1979 Ph.D., Chemistry, University of California, San Diego

Professional Experience

1979-1980 Stanford University Medical Center, Stanford, California
Intern in Internal Medicine

1980-1983 National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland
Research Associate

1983-present The Salk Institute, La Jolla, California
Assistant Professor

Honors

1973 B.A. in Biology with Highest Honors
1974-1979 University of California Regents Scholarship, UCSD School of Medicine
1974 California State Graduate Fellowship
1975 California Foundation for Biochemical Research Fellowship
1976 Mead Johnson Excellence of Research Award
1976 Roche Laboratories Award in Neurosciences
1977 American Cancer Society Award
1975-1979 NIH Pre-doctoral Trainee, NIGMS
1985 Pew Scholars Award

ABSTRACT

Glen A. Evans grew up in San Diego, California, the oldest of three children. His father was an illustrator and later an engineer working on airplanes, his mother a housewife. Both were of Welsh descent. All three of their children obtained degrees from University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and live in the area.

Evans first decided on a science career when he was in high school. An arrangement with UCSD allowed him to take courses at the University even while in high school, and during the summer before he matriculated at UCSD he worked in Renato Dulbecco's lab. As a result he was able to graduate in just three years, with a major in biology and enough credits for another major in chemistry, and with two published papers. Medical school beckoned, as did research, so Evans decided to combine the two in the Medical Scientist Training Program offered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), choosing UCSD. There he was able to continue in Michael G. Rosenfeld's lab, where he had worked as an undergraduate on activation of hormone genes in the pituitary gland. He finished his MD and his PhD degrees together in just six years, with an internship at Stanford University and a thesis on the regulation of prolactin by TRF.

Evans' first job was in Philip Leder's lab at the NIH's Public Health Service, funded by the U.S. Navy. Finding the lab too large, Evans moved to Jonathan Seidman's lab to work on histocompatibility antigens. When Leder and Seidman left NIH for Harvard University, taking most of the lab with them, Evans decided to finish his third year and then move to the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. Though he has to fund his own work at the Salk he finds it intellectually free, smaller, and more efficient. He has little difficulty getting grants, except for expensive equipment, like a confocal microscope, so he attempts to share whenever possible. He keeps his lab small, preferring graduate students to postdocs, as he finds them are more curious, willing to stay longer, easier to teach, and willing to experiment. These days Evans is not working at the bench, as his lab is mostly involved with the Human Genome Project, and his time is better spent in administration, but he hopes to get back soon.

Evans' wife has degrees in both mathematics and music and is now a professional musician. The couple has two children, with another on the way. Evans' interests include skiing; playing piano, organ, and synthesizer; and building furniture.

To finish the interview Evans discusses his documentation, a typical day at work, his rolling contract, and his ideal lab environment.

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| <p>Born in San Diego, California. Family background. Two siblings. Parents' education and employment. Religion. Developing interest in science in high school. Program for high school students at University of California, San Diego. Worked at Salk Institute for Biological Studies during summer before college.</p> | |
| College Years | 5 |
| <p>University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Interested in molecular biology. Majored in biology; had enough credits for major in chemistry; was graduated in three years. Renato Dulbecco's lab; then in biochemistry lab. Two papers as undergraduate. Arthur Robinson's influence and teaching.</p> | |
| Medical and Graduate School Years | 8 |
| <p>Deciding between medical school and PhD. Wanted medical perspective for research. Influence of Philip Leder. Medical Scientist Training Program from National Institutes of Health (NIH). Choosing UCSD. Michael Rosenfeld's lab. Activation of hormone genes in pituitary gland. Finished thesis and clinical rotations at same time. Thesis on regulation of prolactin by TRF. Internship in internal medicine at Stanford University. Confirmed decision to do research.</p> | |
| First Job | 14 |
| <p>Accepted job at NIH's Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, working in Philip Leder's lab. Antibody diversity problems had too many people so went to Jonathan Seidman's lab to work on histocompatibility antigens. Small lab now outdated; science big and equipment driven, but large labs unwieldy for funding. Leder and Seidman went to Harvard; Evans finished third year at NIH, working in lab of about four. Less exciting.</p> | |
| Salk Institute for Biological Studies | 21 |
| <p>Assistant professorship. Family nearby. Salk much smaller, more efficient, intellectually free. Funding required. Structure of Salk. Works with Ursula Bellugi on William syndrome, Terrence Sejnowski on cogitational neurobiology. Agreement with Seidman about taking project with him. More about funding: grants from National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, W.M. Keck Foundation; Pew Charitable Trusts. Expensiveness of equipment. Department of Energy grant for Human Genome Project (HGP); on advisory committees for HGP. Politics and potential benefits of HGP. Competition vs. collaboration. Lab composition and size. Likes graduate students for curiosity and willingness and freedom to experiment; likes to teach. Using other group's confocal microscope. Other groups also working on HGP.</p> | |
| More Thoughts | 30 |
| <p>Wife's background, her degrees in math and music. Wife is professional musician; sings, teaches; directs two groups she founded. Two children, third on way. Evans loves to ski; also</p> | |

plays piano, organ, synthesizer. Manual labor; built furniture. Typical day at work. HGP keeps him out of lab, but he wants to get back. Discusses documentation; using other job offers as pressure; three-year rolling contract. Ideal workplace would be intellectually focused but still growing, e.g. Santa Fe Institute or universities in Boston, Massachusetts, area.

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