

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PETER S. KIM

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Steven J. Novak

at

The Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
Cambridge, Massachusetts

on

23, 24, and 26 May 1995

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

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Lexington, MA 02173

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INTERVIEWEE

PLSVL
(Signature)

Peter S. Kim
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48 Baskin Road
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Date

March 3, 1997

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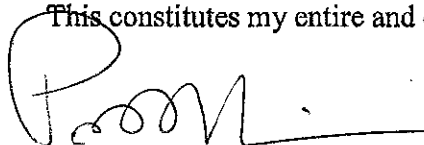
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PETER S. KIM

1958 Born in Atlanta, Georgia on 27 April

Education

1979 B.A., Cornell University
1985 Ph.D., Stanford University

Research Appointments

Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, 1985-88
1985-1988 Fellow Associate
1988-1992 Associate Member
1992-present Member

Professional Experience

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
1988-1992 Assistant Professor
1992-1995 Associate Professor
1995-present Professor

Howard Hughes Medical Institute
1990-1993 Assistant Investigator
1993-present Associate Investigator

Honors

1987-1988 Leonard Skeggs Chair for Whitehead Fellows
1989 Excellence in Chemistry Award, ICI Pharmaceuticals
1989 Walter J. Johnson Prize in Molecular Biology, *Journal of Molecular Biology*
1990-1992 Rita Allen Foundation Scholar
1990-1994 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences
1993 NAS Award in Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences USA
1994 Eli Lilly Award in Biological Chemistry, American Chemical Society
1994 Dupont Merck Young Investigator Award, Protein Society
1994 Ilchun Award, Seoul National University

1995 Pfizer Animal Health Award, University of Nebraska
1995 Mack Award, Ohio State University

Selected Publications

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- of native intermediates. *Science*, 253:1386-93.
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ABSTRACT

Peter S. Kim was born in Atlanta, Georgia, to parents who had emigrated from Korea after the Korean War and were studying at Georgia Institute of Technology. His father was a chemical engineer, his mother a biochemist. He had a sister who was several years younger. While he was still a child, his family moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, where his father was a professor at the University of Massachusetts; from there they moved to Brooklyn, where Peter attended school for a few years; then they moved to Ridgewood, New Jersey, so that his father could work in New York City. Peter's mother became a high school science teacher. For a while Peter and his family attended a Korean church, but then they switched to an American Presbyterian church; here Peter discovered a love of music and began to sing. He entered Cornell University, where his chemical engineering major lasted just one semester before he switched to chemistry. He met his wife-to-be when he was a freshman. From Cornell Peter was accepted into the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) at Stanford University to complete a joint MD/PhD degree. After two years of medical school Peter decided he wanted to do only research so he dropped the M.D. In Robert "Buzz" Baldwin's lab Peter worked on nuclear magnetic resonance to develop pulse-labeling in protein folding. Another interest he developed was in catalytic antibodies. Having decided not to finish medical school, Peter knew he had to obtain a postdoctoral position. He won the third Whitehead [Institute for Biomedical Research] fellowship granted. In his lab at the Whitehead he developed a peptide model of a protein-folding intermediate and worked on Leucine zippers and coiled coils with his postdocs and assistants. At the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research he was promoted first to assistant and then to associate member; Peter also became first an assistant and then associate professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an associate investigator at the Howard Hughes; he remains in all three positions today.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Steven J. Novak, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., History, University of Colorado; Ph.D., History, University of California, Berkeley; M.B.A., UCLA Graduate School of Management.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Kim's office, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dates, length of sessions: May 23, 1995 (137 minutes); May 24, 1995 (113); May 26, 1995 (108).

Total number of recorded hours: 6

Persons present during interview: Kim and Novak.

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 since 1988. To provide an overall framework for Project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Novak held a preinterview telephone conversation with Kim to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and to agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed prior Pew scholars' interviews and the documentation in Kim's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including his proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members. For technical background, Novak consulted J.D. Watson et al., *Molecular Biology of the Gene*. 4th ed. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1987 and Bruce Alberts et al., *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. 3d ed. New York: Garland, 1994.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Kim's childhood and continuing through his education at Cornell University, his graduate studies at Stanford University, and the establishment of his lab at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. Major topics discussed include protein folding, catalytic antibodies, the therapeutic potential of peptides, Kim's lab's funding, his mentors, and the need for scientists to communicate with laypeople.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Kristian London, 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.

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

London prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history. Gregory M. Beyrer, editorial assistant, compiled the index.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Early Years	1
<p>Born in Georgia but moved to Massachusetts and then New York City. Close Korean family with strong male dominance. Father deserts family and mother raises Peter and his sister alone. Discovers love of music in church. Both children play piano, and Peter sings. Skips grade, likes school, thinks his schools good.</p>	
College Years	11
<p>Matriculates at Cornell University. Korean friends in college emphasize heritage. Meets future wife, Kathryn Spitzerwhile he is a freshman. Begins in chemical engineering program but transfers to chemistry. Works as undergraduate research assistant for George P. Hess.</p>	
Graduate Years	16
<p>Applies to MD/PhD programs; accepted at New Jersey College of Medicine and Stanford University; goes to Stanford in Medical Scientist Training Program. Finished his first two years of medical school and decides not to complete the MD, though he found program and students excellent. Begins doing research in Robert "Buzz" Baldwin's lab, working on protein folding. Pulse-labelling intermediates. Becomes involved in private-sector company that fails. Becomes interested in catalytic antibodies.</p>	
Postgraduate Years	41
<p>Kim's post-Ph.D. options. Establishes a lab at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. Edwin C. "Jack" Whitehead and the funding of the Whitehead Institute. Lab personnel. Using antibodies to study protein structure. Foray into developmental biology. Develops a peptide model of a protein folding intermediate with Terrence G. Oas. Congenial relations of scientists in the protein folding field. Kim's work on leucine zippers and coiled coils. Viral fusion proteins. Therapeutic potential of peptides</p>	
Continuing at the Whitehead	71
<p>The lab's funding. Teaching. Admiration for David Baltimore and Arthur Kornberg. Colleagues at the Whitehead. Dissecting proteins efficiently. Developing computational methods to predict protein structures. Effects of computer modeling on structural biology. Importance of being able to visualize biochemical structures. Conditions new pharmaceuticals must meet. Need for new and more sophisticated drugs. Kim's involvement in various biotechnology companies. Use of phage technology to increase the therapeutic potential of peptides.</p>	
Scientific Conflicts and Legal Implications	89
<p>David Baltimore and the investigation of Thereza Imanishi-Kari's alleged fraud. Kim's conflict with Thomas E. Creighton over divergent research results.</p>	
Index	96

INDEX

A

acetylcholine receptors, 14
adenosine triphosphate, 23
Alber, Thomas C., 47, 50, 55, 70, 77
amide, 27, 28, 40
amino acids, 23, 24, 28, 29, 42, 87, 88
amylase, 12, 24
Anfinsen, Christian B., 24
Arris Pharmaceuticals, 84, 85
Aspergillus, 83
Atlanta, Georgia, 1
ATP. *See* adenosine triphosphate
Austin, Texas, 30
autoimmune deficiency syndrome, 33
azidothymidine, 83
azoles, 83
AZT. *See* azidothymidine

B

bacteriophage, 87
Baldwin, Robert L. "Buzz", 18, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 49, 50, 53, 71, 72, 73, 92
Baltimore, David, 33, 43, 45, 49, 60, 71, 72, 89, 90, 91
Baud, Pamela E., 70
Berg, Paul, 41
Berger, Bonnie, 7, 55, 56, 76
Bierzynski, Andrzej, 28, 40
Boston, Massachusetts, 18, 45, 73, 74, 94
bovine pancreatic trypsin inhibitor, 47, 49, 52, 53, 69, 70, 91, 92, 93
Boyer, Herbert W., 37
BPTI. *See* bovine pancreatic trypsin inhibitor
Brandeis University, 8
Brooklyn, New York, 2, 7
Brown, Wayne B., 47

C

Caenorhabditis, 50
Cambridge, England, 42
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 85
Carlson, John R., 37
Carr, Chavela M., 56
catalytic antibodies, 28, 29, 30, 31, 37, 50
CD. *See* circular dichroism
CD4, 59
Cech, Thomas R., 42
Cerami, Anthony, 17, 18
chaperone proteins, 69, 70
chemotaxis, 55
chirality, 87
circular dichroism, 44, 54
Clayton, David A., 21
Cohen, Stanley, 37
coiled coil, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 76, 77
Columbia University, 6, 77, 78
Cook, Kem H., 22
Cornell University, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 35, 71
Cornell University Medical College, 17
Costa Rica, 68
Cozumel, Mexico, 82
Creighton, Thomas E., 22, 42, 52, 53, 69, 70, 90, 91, 92, 93
Crick, Francis H.C., 55, 77
cytogenetics, 51

D

D amino acid, 87, 88
D enantiomer, 86
D phage, 87, 88
deuterium, 27
dimerization, 55
DNA, 23, 37, 38, 50, 51, 54, 56, 79, 80, 85
DNA clamp, 79, 80
Doka, Susan, 70
Drosophila, 50
Duke University, 45, 59

E

Ebola, 82
Einstein, Albert, 28
Englander, S. Walter, 27
Epstein, Nava, 14, 15

F

Fayetteville, New York, 8
Fisher Scientific Corporation, 14
Fos, 55

G

GCN4, 57
Georgia Institute of Technology, 1, 2
Georgia Tech. *See* Georgia Institute of
Technology
gp120, 59
Graf, Michael, 12, 36
Green, Michael R., 85
Gulf Oil Corporation, 4

H

Haas, Elisha, 47
Hahn, Kurt, 8
Hall, Stephen S., 77, 79, 80
halmoni (grandmother), 10
Harbury, Pehr B., 76
Hartman, Charles M., 84
Harvard University, 20, 47, 53, 57, 83, 84,
91
hemagglutinin, 57, 58
Hendrickson, Wayne A., 77
Hertzenberg, Lenore, 91
Hertzenberg, Leonard, 91
Hess, George P., 14, 15, 21, 35, 71, 72
high-pressure liquid chromatography, 44
HIV. *See* human immunodeficiency virus
Hochstrasser, Robin M., 30
Hoffman-LaRoche and Company, 85
Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 42, 61,
62, 63, 88, 89
HPLC. *See* high-pressure liquid
chromatography
Huang, Alice S., 72

human immunodeficiency virus, 58, 59, 81,
82, 83, 85

I

IBM. *See* International Business Machines
Igen, 31
Imanishi-Kari, Thereza, 72, 90, 91
imo, 4
insulin, 86
International Business Machines, 36
Ithaca, New York, 11
Iverson, Brent L., 30

J

Juhn, Charles S. (maternal uncle), 4
Juhn, Mark S (cousin), 4
Juhn, Mi Sah (maternal aunt), 4
Juhn, Thomas K (cousin), 4
Jun, 55

K

Kaiser, A. Dale, 37
Kallenbach, Neville R., 30, 31
Karplus, Martin, 53
Khorana, Har Gobind, 73
Kim Metalios, Joy S. (sister), 18
Kim, In Ho (father), 1
Kim, Jeremy Pum-suk (son), 9, 19
Kim, Kathryn Spitzer (wife), 8, 17, 36
Kim, Mi Heh Ryu (mother), 1, 15, 34, 60,
72
Kim, Michael Pum-shin (son), 9, 19, 36
Kim, Sung Hou, 9
kinetic intermediates, 26
Klemm, Juli D., 70
Klug, Aaron, 42
Kollmorgen Corporation, 31
Korea, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
Kornberg, Arthur, 37, 72, 73, 80
Kuriyan, John, 79, 80

L

L amino acid, 87, 88
L amino acids, 87

L enantiomer, 86
Lake Tahoe, Nevada, 18, 20
Lander, Eric S., 84
Larrabee, Wendy A., 47
Lederberg, Joshua, 1, 45, 82, 83, 94
Lee, Sung, 8
Lerner, Richard A., 30, 31, 38, 39
leucine zippers, 54, 55, 57, 70, 85
Levitt, Michael, 53
lipophilic, 58
Lobban, Peter E., 37, 38
Lodish, Harvey F., 43, 84

M

Maas, James B., 13
Maddox, John, 50, 80
Marqusee, Susan, 28, 35
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 13,
20, 37, 43, 45, 47, 54, 56, 61, 62, 63, 64,
65, 69, 71, 73, 84
Matsudaira, Paul, 43, 73
MBT. *See* Molecular Biophysics
Technology, Inc.
McConnell, Harden M., 18
McKnight, Steven L., 54, 55
Medical Laboratory of Molecular Biology,
42, 48
Medical Science Training Program, 15, 20,
21, 35, 41
Metalios, Joy S. Kim (sister), 2
MIT. *See* Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
Molecular Biophysics Technology, Inc., 30,
31, 84
Moloney, 58
molten globule, 41
Mostov, Keith E., 43
MRC. *See* Medical Laboratory of Molecular
Biology
MSTP. *See* Medical Science Training
Program

N

Nasmyth, Kim, 42
Nathans, Daniel, 20

Nathans, Jeremy, 20, 64
National Academy of Sciences, 7, 9, 14, 72
National Institutes of Health, 20, 21, 29, 33,
62, 88, 89
New Jersey, 2, 3, 4, 7, 17, 36
New Jersey College of Medicine, 16
New York City, New York, 2, 6, 7, 74
Newark, New Jersey, 16
NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health
Nirenberg, Marshall W., 73
Nisonoff, Alfred, 29
NMR. *See* nuclear magnetic resonance
Nobel Prize, 20, 24, 30, 37, 41, 42, 73
Northeastern University, 48
nuclear magnetic resonance, 25, 26, 27, 28,
47, 52, 53, 54, 69, 78

O

Oas, Terrence G., 47, 49, 52, 54, 69, 73, 75,
92
O'Donnell, Michael E., 80
oncoproteins, 55, 72
O'Shea, Erin K., 54, 55, 70

P

Page, David C., 43
Parry, David A. D., 57
Pasteur, Louis, 87
Pauling, Linus C., 23, 29, 55
PCR. *See* polymerase chain reaction
Peng, Zheng-yu, 64
peptide, 28, 40, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 53, 54,
55, 58, 59, 73, 75, 84, 86, 87, 88, 92
peptide synthesis, 46, 47, 48, 84
Perutz, Max, 77, 78
Pew Charitable Trusts, 67
Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences, 1,
18, 39, 47, 49, 62, 64, 67, 68, 77, 79, 82,
90
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 4, 18
polymerase, 80
polymerase chain reaction, 87
Princeton University, 2, 57
Procept, 85
protease, 75, 86

protein folding, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,
28, 29, 41, 42, 47, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56,
65, 69, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 91, 92
proteolysis, 75
pulse-labeling, 27, 28

R

Radetsky, Peter, 33
Revlon, 44
ribonuclease, 27, 28, 35, 53
ribonuclease A, 27, 28, 53
ribonucleic acid, 23, 42, 57, 85
Richards, Frederic M., 22
Ridgewood, New Jersey, 2, 5, 8, 10
RNA. *See* ribonucleic acid
Rockefeller University, 17, 72, 79, 90
Roeder, Heinrich, 27
Rothman, James E., 42, 43
Rutkowski, Rheba, 48, 70
Ryu, Chi Soo (maternal grandfather), 4
Ryu, Kenneth (cousin), 4
Ryu, Rita (cousin), 4
Ryu, Seh Hyuck (maternal uncle), 3, 9
Ryu, Seh Man (maternal uncle), 4
Ryu, Seh Moon (maternal uncle), 4, 9
Ryu, Yumi (maternal aunt), 4

S

Sachs, Alan B., 35
Saint Louis, Missouri, 17
Saltus, Richard, 24
San Francisco, California, 18, 44, 84
Sarah Lawrence College, 18
SAT. *See* Scholastic Aptitude Test
Sauer, Robert T., 63
scaffold model, 40
Scheraga, Harold, 22
Schmid, Sandra, 42
Scholastic Aptitude Test, 3
Schultz, Peter G., 30, 31, 38, 39
Schumacher, Ton N.M., 88
Scripps Research Institute, 30
ScripTech Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 85
Scriptgen, 85
Seoul National University, 2

sequential multiple analyzer, 44
Shoemaker, Kevin R., 28
Shore, David, 42
sialic, 57
simian immunodeficiency virus, 58
SIV. *See* simian immunodeficiency virus
SMA. *See* sequential multiple analyzer
Smith College, 54
Snow, C. P., 34
Spitzer, Kenneth H. (father-in-law), 8
Spitzer, Lois Stuber (mother-in-law), 8
src 5H3 domain, 88
Staley, Jonathan P., 53, 69, 70, 92
Stanford University, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20,
21, 26, 29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43,
44, 46, 47, 53, 64, 71, 72, 91
Stock, Jeffry B., 57
Streisinger, George, 50
Stryer, Lubert, 18, 37, 64
Syracuse, New York, 8

T

Technicon Corporation, 44
The Johns Hopkins University, 20
Tinoco Jr., Ignacio, 42
tobramycin, 84
transcription, 54, 55, 72, 85
Trimeris, 59
tritium, 27
Tularik, 85

U

UCLA. *See* University of California at Los Angeles
UCSF. *See* University of California at San Francisco
United States Congress, 33, 34, 90
University of California at Berkeley, 8, 9,
18, 30, 35, 42, 47, 65, 70
University of California at Los Angeles, 62,
77
University of California at San Francisco,
44, 70
University of Colorado at Boulder, 42
University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2

University of Massachusetts Medical School, 85
University of Oregon, 47, 50, 51
University of Pennsylvania, 30
University of Texas, 30
University of Utah, 70

V

Vail, Colorado, 43, 45, 46
vancomycin, 83

W

Walsh, Christopher, 83, 85
Washington University, 17
Washington, D.C., 17, 33
Weesner, Marjorie P., 21
Weigle, Manfred, 85
Weissman, Jonathan S., 69, 70, 92, 93
Wellesley College, 48
Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, 9, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 60, 61, 63, 71, 72, 73, 74, 82, 84
Whitehead, Edwin C., 43, 44, 45, 94
Whitehead, Edwin Carl, 44
Whitehead, John, 45, 46
Whitehead, Peter, 45, 46
Whitehead, Susan, 45, 46, 94
Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research, 84

Whitesides, George M., 84
WHO. *See* World Health Organization
Widom, Jonathan, 42
Wiley, Don C., 57, 58
Winston, Patrick H., 84
Wolf Prize, 30
Worcester, Massachusetts, 85
World Health Organization, 82
Wüthrich, Kurt, 53

X

x-ray crystallography, 25, 56, 77, 78, 79

Y

Yale University, 17, 18
Yosemite National Park, 18
Young, Richard A., 82

Z

zebra fish, 50, 51, 52, 71

α

α helix, 23, 28, 40, 52, 53, 55, 57

β

β sheets, 23, 40, 52