

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

MICHAEL J. OVERDUIN

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

William Van Benschoten

at

University of Birmingham
Birmingham, England

on

8 and 9 February 2005

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



Michael J. Overduin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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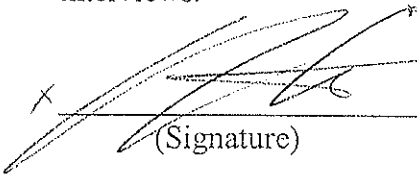
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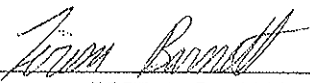
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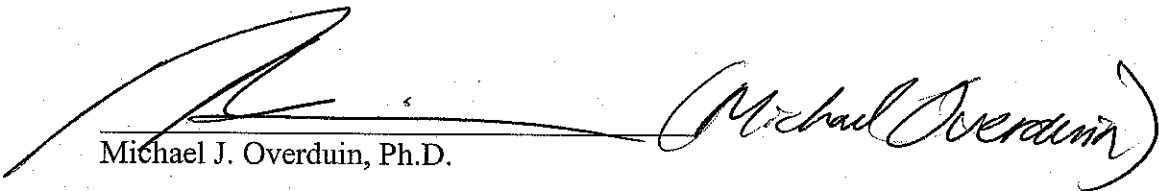
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MICHAEL J. OVERDUIN

1967 Born in Welland, Ontario, Canada on 4 April

Education

1988 B.Sc., Honours Biology with Mathematics Minor, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

1993 Ph.D., Biochemistry, Genetics, and Physical Chemistry, The Rockefeller University, New York City, New York

Professional Experience

1993-1995 University of Toronto/Ontario Cancer Institute, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Medical Biophysics

1995-2002 University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Denver, Colorado
Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology
2002-2003 Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology

2004-present University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom
Professor, Cancer Research UK Institute for Cancer Studies,

Honors

1988 Gold Medal for highest achievement, Dept. of Biology, Wilfrid Laurier University

1993-1995 National Cancer Institute of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship Award

1995 Alumnus of the Year, Wilfrid Laurier University

1997-1998 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Pilot Project Award

1998-1999 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Junior Faculty Startup Award

1998-2000 Basil O'Conner Award, March of Dimes

1998-2002 Pew Scholar, Pew Charitable Trusts

1998-2003 FIRST Award, National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute

2001 Faculty Excellence in Research Award, Department of Pharmacology, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

2003 Chair of Structural Biology, University of Birmingham

2004 Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award

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ABSTRACT

Michael J. Overduin was born in Ontario, Canada, the second oldest of five children. Overduin's father received master's degrees in English and music and was a teacher who traveled around Ontario to develop new programs at various schools—in music, English, and theater; in addition, he was well-respected in musical communities, especially those associated with churches, he put out several CDs, and, later in life, became a professor (without a PhD). Overduin's mother was a teacher as well, before having her children, and musically inclined too—classical music was a mainstay of the Overduin household. As a child Overduin was interested in music (though never performed) and art, and he appreciated the creativity of science. His interests and his parents' belief in education cultivated his love of biology and nature; influential teachers in school and early laboratory experiences proved formative as well.

Overduin matriculated at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and pursued a major in biology and a minor in mathematics. While in college he completed a thesis with Bernard Glick on the transformation of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Escherichia coli* by electroporation. After receiving his baccalaureate of science, he chose to attend Rockefeller University for graduate studies in structural biology, working in the laboratory of David Cowburn. Overduin's graduate work used nuclear magnetic resonance to determine the structure of a signal transduction protein; additionally, he worked with David Baltimore. For his postdoctoral fellowship, he worked with Mitsuhiro Ikura at the University of Toronto and focused on the structural protein cadherin and its involvement in cell adhesion. After his time in Toronto, he accepted a position at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and began research on the domain structure of receptors involved in endocytosis. He also assisted in establishing an NMR spectroscopy facility and biomolecular structure program while there. After several years at Colorado, he moved to the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England, helping build the NMR spectroscopy facility there, and continuing his research on complex systems and protein domains of therapeutic targets.

The interview concludes with Overduin's thoughts on his laboratory management style; the process of writing journal articles; the issue of patents; the role of the scientist in educating the public about science; setting the national science agenda; recruiting foreign students as science graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the United States; and balancing his career and time with his family. Overduin's oral history ends with his reflections on the impact of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences on his research and what he likes most about being a principal investigator.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

William Van Benschoten, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., History, University of California, Riverside, 1990; M.A., History, University of California, Riverside, 1991; C.Phil., History, University of California, Los Angeles, 1995.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Overduin's office, University of Birmingham.

Dates of sessions: February 8 and 9, 2005.

Total number of recorded hours: 5.

Persons present during interview: Overduin and Van Benschoten.

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 project consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Van Benschoten held a telephone preinterview conversation with Overduin to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed documentation in Overduin's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including Overduin's proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Carol Squires 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.

Overduin reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names, made a minor number of corrections and additions and contributed the biographical summary and curriculum vitae.

Carol Squires prepared the table of contents and TechniType Transcripts compiled the guide to proper names.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Childhood, College, and Graduate School	1
Family background. Parents. Religion. Siblings. Childhood experiences. Qualities of a good scientist. Reasons for becoming a principal investigator. Interests as a boy and man. Early schooling. School projects. Interest in art. Creativity in science. Attends middle and high school. Influential high-school Teacher. Competition in science. Attends Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. Social life in school. Laboratory experience in high school and college. Reasons for pursuing science. Extracurricular activities. Attends graduate school at Rockefeller University. New York City. Graduate program at Rockefeller University. Works in structural biology under David Cowburn using nuclear magnetic resonance to determine the structure of a signal transduction protein.	
David Cowburn, David Baltimore, Postdoctoral Work, and Becoming Faculty	24
David Cowburn's management style. Work with David Baltimore. Criteria for developing new projects. Collaboration in science. Postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. Meets future wife. Works in Mitsuhiro Ikura's laboratory at the University of Toronto. Ikura's management style. Postdoctoral work on the structural protein cadherin and its involvement in cell adhesion. Laboratory management style. Accepts a position at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Setting up lab. Research in structural biology and biochemistry at the University of Colorado on the domain structure of receptors involved in endocytosis. Moves to the University of Birmingham, England. Building the nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy facility at Birmingham. Managing an NMR facility. Current research in studying complex systems and protein domains of therapeutic targets. Future research on the mechanism of action of membrane proteins. Scientific collaborations between academia and industry. Tenure at University of Colorado. Teaching responsibilities. Professional duties.	
Scientific Life	47
Administrative duties. Source of ideas. Writing journal articles. Patents. Funding history. Role of the scientist in educating the public about science. National science agenda. Gender. Underrepresented groups in science. Recruiting foreign students as science graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the United States. Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences.	
Index	68

INDEX

A

Abl-SH2, 27
Adirondack Mountains, 24, 30
African American, 61
American Cancer Society, 49
American Chemical Society, 49
Audubon, John J., 10, 22
Australia, 14

B

Baltimore, David, 25, 26, 27
Berlin, Germany, 9
BGS architects, 42
bicycling, 13, 23
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences
 Research Council, 50, 56
Bizzi, Emilio, 9
Bridgeport, Ontario, Canada, 2
British Royal Society, 56

C

cadherin, 31, 32
California, 8
Canada, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 19, 21, 29, 59
Cancer Research UK, 50, 56
cell adhesion, 29, 31, 37, 38
China, 66
collaboration, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37,
 44, 45, 47, 52, 55, 58
Colorado, 36
competition, 7, 18, 27, 28, 53
Connecticut, 30
Cowburn, David, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 52
crystallography, 27, 33

D

Dark Sky, Dark Matter, 8
de Beer, Tonny, 36
Denver, Colorado, 8, 13, 25, 30, 31, 35, 39,
 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 57, 61, 62

Digital Extremes, Inc., 9
DNA, 20, 40

E

E. (Escherichia) coli, 20
EH. *See* Eps 15 homology domain
endocytosis, 37, 38
England, 1, 10, 25, 30, 34, 35, 40, 41, 50,
 54, 59
Eps 15, 37, 39
Eps 15 homology domain, 39
Europe, 10, 11, 13, 23, 34, 54, 62, 64
European Union, 62

F

Fieldes, Mary Anne, 19
FYVE domain, 39, 40

G

genetics, 14, 19, 20
Germany, 9, 54
grants/funding, 6, 21, 28, 35, 41, 42, 43, 45,
 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62,
 63
Great Lakes, 10
Greece, 13

H

Hanafusa, Hidesaburo, 27
Harper's, 13
Higher Education Funding Council of
 England, 42
Holland (Netherlands), 5
Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 36
Hunter College, 30

I

Ikura, Mitsuhiko, 31, 52
India, 34, 54, 62, 66
Iraq, 13

J

Japan, 32, 34, 49, 54
Jones, David, 43

K

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, 2, 4
Kuriyan, John, 27

L

Latino, 61
Leeds, England, 49
Lego, 15, 16
London, England, 13
London, Ontario, Canada, 2
Los Angeles, California, 16

M

Maryland, 30
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 9
Medical Research Council, 50
membrane, 34, 39, 57
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 24
MIT. *See* Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
Montreal, Québec, Canada, 20
Museum of Modern Art, 24

N

Nagar, Bhushan, 33
National Institutes of Health, 31, 36, 49, 59,
62
National Science Foundation, 62
Native American, 61
Netherlands, 1, 5, 6
New York City, New York, 8, 10, 21, 29,
30
New Yorker, The, 13
Niagara Falls, 1
NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health
NMR. *See* nuclear magnetic resonance
Nobel, 26, 28
North America, 33, 34, 54, 62
nuclear magnetic resonance, 7, 14, 19, 25,
26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41,

43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 51, 57, 60, 66

O

Ontario, 1
Overduin, Chloe (daughter), 4, 16, 30, 48
Overduin, Evelyn (sister), 4, 9, 21
Overduin, James (brother), 4, 8, 21
Overduin, Kyle (son), 4, 16, 48
Overduin, Marcella Erskine (wife), 8, 30,
32, 41
Overduin, Paul (brother), 4, 9, 21
Overduin, Sienna (daughter), 4, 16, 30, 48
Overduin, Simon (brother), 4, 9, 21
Oxford, England, 42

P

Paris, France, 10
patents, 54, 55, 56
Peters, Mr., 17, 19, 20
Pew Charitable Trusts, 58
Institute of Science and Society, 58
Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical
Sciences, 11, 56, 60, 63
phospholipid, 40
Princess Margaret Hospital, 29
Pseudomonas aeruginosa, 20
publish/publication, 21, 31, 32, 33, 36, 40,
48, 54, 55, 65

R

religion, 8
Church of England, 8
Free Christian Reform, 2, 8
Mennonite, 8, 15, 19
Presbyterian, 8
Protestantism, 8
RNA, 24
Rockefeller University, 14, 19, 21, 22, 23,
24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 60
Rocky Mountains, 36
Rodrigo, Russell, 19
Roeder, Robert G., 14, 24, 40

S

Sorkin, Alexander, 37
spectroscopy, 19, 40, 66
Src, 25
St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, 2
Stanford University, 8

T

tenure, 36, 40, 47, 48
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 30
transcription, 14, 24, 40, 46

U

U.K. *See* United Kingdom
Union for Concerned Scientists, 59
United Kingdom, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50,
52, 54, 56, 60, 62, 64, 65, 66
United States of America, 13, 26, 35, 45,
49, 62, 64, 66
University of Birmingham, 1, 25, 30, 35,
36, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46, 50, 59, 66

Institute for Cancer Studies, 43

University of Colorado, 10, 25, 29, 35, 38,
39, 40, 48, 61
University of Colorado Health Sciences, 35
University of Oxford, 54
University of Toronto, 21, 23, 25, 29, 33, 61

V

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 3

W

Washington, D.C., 49
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 4, 7
Welland, Ontario, Canada, 1
Wellcome Trust, 42, 50, 56
West Midlands (region), England, 59
Western University, 3
Wilfrid Laurier University, 19, 20, 22

Y

York, England, 49