

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

NANCY M. HOLLINGSWORTH

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

William Van Benschoten

at

SUNY Stony Brook
Stony Brook, New York

on

11, 12, and 13 November 2002

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



Nancy M. Hollingsworth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NANCY M. HOLLINGSWORTH

1958 Born in San Francisco, California, on 2 July

Education

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1988 Ph.D., Genetics, University of Washington

Professional Experience

1988-1989 Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington
Postdoctoral Fellow

1989-1994 University of California, San Francisco, California
Postdoctoral Fellow

1994-2000 State University of New York at Stony Brook, New York
Assistant Professor, Department of Biochemistry & Cell Biology
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Honors

1978-1980 Oregon State Scholarship-Leadership Honoree
1979 C. Robert Herrick Jr. Memorial Scholarship
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1988-1991 Damon Runyon-Walter Winchell Cancer Fund Postdoctoral Fellowship
1991-1993 American Cancer Society Senior Postdoctoral Fellowship
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1995 Ad hoc member of the NSF Microbial Genetics Study Section
1996-2000 Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences
2000-2004 Member of the NIH Microbial Genetics and Physiology II Study Section
2002-present Member of the Pew Charitable Trust Sponsored Science and Society
Institute

Selected Publications

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ABSTRACT

Nancy M. Hollingsworth was born in San Francisco, California, but spent most of her youth moving around—to Oregon, Panama, New Mexico, California, and, finally, Arizona—with her parents and older brother. Her father was a psychiatrist (and the reason for the travel); her mother was a trained dietitian who chose not to work while her children were growing up. Hollingsworth enjoyed school from a young age, a precocious child who loved reading, schoolwork (she would also play “school” when at home), playing cards with her family, nature, and music. In high school she had a great interest in literature, mathematics, and history, though did think about pursuing zoology as a major in college.

Hollingsworth matriculated at Oregon State University and felt fortunate to have Peter Dawson as her advisor and mentor—Dawson was a population geneticist who worked on the flour beetle, *Tribolium castaneum* and *Tribolium confusum*, and who also taught the undergraduate genetics class. Though maintaining an interest in history and literature, Hollingsworth began working in Dawson’s lab very early on in her undergraduate career, doing crosses and measuring map distances between some genes in *Tribolium*. She completed her degree in zoology, moving on to a master’s degree at Oregon State. She participated in a summer course at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, working under the tutelage of Lynna Hereford and Mary Anne Osley and solidifying her decision to attend the University of Washington for doctoral studies (instead of one of the three Ivy league schools that accepted her). At the University of Washington, Hollingsworth chose to work in the lab of Breck E. Byers, studying meiosis in yeast, ultimately developing a mutant screen for yeast recombination proteins and subsequently identifying the *HOP1* mutant; she also had the opportunity to meet Leland H. Hartwell, with whom she also worked. From there she moved on to postdoctoral research in Gerald R. Smith’s laboratory at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, studying *Schizosaccharomyces pombe* recombination, at which point she also met her future husband, Aaron Neiman. She transferred to the University of California, San Francisco to work with Alexander D. Johnson on *Hop1* biochemistry and *HOP1* alleles. She then accepted a position at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and began her research on the recombinant promoter gene *MSH5* in yeast and on the roles of the *Mms4/Mus81* complex and of *Mek1* in recombination.

The remainder of the interview focuses on the topics of Hollingsworth’s lab, her mentoring style, and her thoughts on contemporary issues in science and its practice. She talks about the impact of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences on her work; her teaching duties; how she chooses her research projects; and how she balances family (she has three children) and career. The interview ends with her thoughts on collaboration and competition in research; the national scientific agenda the role of scientists in informing the public and determining public policy; gender issues; and more on the influence of Lynna Hereford and Mary Ann Osley on her career.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

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

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Hollingsworth's office, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Dates, length of sessions: November 11, 2002; November 12, 2002; and November 13, 2002

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Persons present during interview: Hollingsworth 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' 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 Nancy Hollingsworth to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed prior Pew scholars interviews and the documentation in Hollingsworth'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 the interview against the original tape recordings, edited the punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Nancy Hollingsworth reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

Carol L. Squires prepared the table of contents. Victoria Simmons compiled the

interview history. TechniType Transcriptions compiled the index.

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