Mendel Lectures 2002—2003

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Sir Walter Bodmer

*1936

Institute of Molecular Medicine, Oxford, UK

May 13, 2003

After obtaining a PhD in Genetics from Cambridge University, he moved to Stanford University in California where he rose to the position of Professor. In 1970, he returned to the UK as the first Professor of Genetics at Oxford University. He subsequently became the Director of Research, and finally the Director General, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in London.

In 1996, Sir Walter Bodmer assumed his current position at the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine as Head of the Cancer and Immunogenetics laboratory and more recently also became Head of the Cancer and Immunogenetics Laboratory within Department of Oncology at the University of Oxford.

Walter Bodmer is a geneticist with a wide field of study. Early in his career, he helped to discover the human leukocyte antigen (HLA) system, vital for the success of organ and bone marrow transplants. His interest in human populations led him to set up a UK population gene bank that could be used as a control group in research. Sir Walter was also one of the first to suggest the idea of the human genome project. More recently, he has successfully grown bowel cancer cells in the lab in structures similar to those found naturally inside the bowel. His research group's primary interests lie in the fundamental genetics and biology of colorectal cancer and their potential applications, and the characterization and population distribution of genetic diversity in human populations, especially of the British Isles.

Sir Walter Bodmer is credited with beginning the movement for the public understanding of science, having chaired the first committee set up to establish standards for communicating science and technology, and for that was awarded the Michael Faraday Prize. He has also received Royal Medals for his seminal contributions to population genetics, gene mapping and understanding of familial genetic disease. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society and was knighted in 1986.

In 2005, Bodmer was appointed to lead a £2.3 million project by the Wellcome Trust at the University of Oxford to examine the genetic makeup of the United Kingdom – the "People of the British Isles" project. In 2013 he was awarded Royal Medal from the Royal Society.



The Human
Genome:
Past, Present
and Future

Mendel taught us that the choice of phenotype is the key to finding clear-cut patterns of inherited variation. This lesson remains as important today as it was to Mendel for his discovery of the laws of inheritance.

Charles Weissmann

*1931

Institute of Neurology, London, UK

May 13, 2003

Charles Weissmann began his career with degrees in both medicine and organic chemistry from Zurich University, and then turned to the new field of molecular biology where he was recognized as one of the most creative investigators over several decades. He contributed to the first cloning of the genes for interferon, a protein released in response to viral infection that can now be synthesized on an industrial scale for use as a medicine. He was the first to discover and document the lifecycle of bacteriophages - viruses that infect bacteria – and subsequently investigated a number of pathogens, including those responsible for tuberculosis and malaria.

In recent years, Professor Weissmann has made breakthroughs in the investigation of diseases induced by prions (small proteinaceous infectious particles that resist inactivation by procedures that modify nucleic acids) that affect animals, such as mad cow disease, and humans, for example Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Professor Weissmann has been internationally recognized for his work, including memberships in the Royal Society (UK) and National Academy of Science (USA). He has been awarded several honorary doctorates from universities around the world and many leading scientific prizes, including the 1995 Robert Koch Gold Medal. He was a co-founder of Biogen, the first European biotechnology company, and he continues to serve on several corporate boards.

Charles Weissmann received the Warren Alpert Foundation Prize in 2004. He was Chair of and Professor in the Department of Infectology, Scripps Florida (2004–2012), then became Professor Emeritus at the Department of Infectious disease until 2015, and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Immunology and Microbial Science (IMS) in 2015–2017. On 16 May 2011 Weissmann became Doctor of Science Honoris Causa at New York University.

The Role of **DNA** in Prion Diseases

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Horace Judson

* 1931

George Washington University, USA

L June 5, 2003

Horace Judson was a science writer whose 1979 book *The Eighth Day of Creation* is regarded as the definitive account of the breakthroughs that transformed molecular biology in the mid-20th century.

At age 15, he entered the University of Chicago and earned a bachelor's degree in 1948. He worked at writing and editing jobs in New York and wrote a book, *The Techniques of Reading*, before being hired in 1963 by *Time* magazine, for which he reviewed books and reported on the arts and sciences from London and Paris.

While in Britain, Mr. Judson became acquainted with Max Perutz, the Austrianborn molecular biologist and Nobel laureate known for his work on haemoglobin. This acquaintance suggested a narrow book idea about the discovery of the structures of cellular macromolecules. Following a discussion with Jacques Monod in 1969, Judson expanded his planned book to a general history of molecular biology: The Eighth Day of Creation. The book is considered among the greatest popular science books ever written, not only in its subject matter but also its method. It was described by Mr. Judson as a fusion of journalism and history with a strong emphasis on first-person testimony. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews with over 100 scientists conducted over decade, it established a new kind of science writing.

Although Mr. Judson had no science degrees, he taught the history of science at Johns Hopkins University from 1981 to 1990 and spent four years as a senior research scholar at Stanford University before being named the director of the Center for History of Recent Science at George Washington University, where he taught from 1994 to 2003.

Mr. Judson published another book on science, *The Search for Solutions* (1980), a series of essays on how scientists approach their work.

In 2004 he published *The Great Betrayal:* Fraud in Science, an examination of the deliberate manipulation of scientific data.

Mr. Judson died in 2011.

Before the Structure: The Roots of Evolution in Biology





Photo: Kiva