

Jin Kinoshita Oral History Interview
May 31, 2005
Conducted by Edward McManus

Mr. McManus: One of the first questions that I wanted to ask you was what did you hear—when did you hear first about the NEI, do you have any recollections about that, about an institute being started? See you were at Harvard and Cogan might have discussed that with you.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, of course Dave was one of the spearheads of establishing the NEI, isn't that right?

Mr. McManus: Yes, absolutely, he was in all the early meetings. It was basically his idea.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah. Well, I think it was and I was in his department, the Howe Laboratory of Ophthalmology in Harvard and there came a time when they had some problems at Harvard, the Howe Laboratories and so Carl invited us down to NIH to join the NEI there.

Mr. McManus: Who did he invite down?

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, there was Toshe Kuwabara the pathologist, myself, two of us and our people who worked with us.

Mr. McManus: Jerry Chader.

Dr. Kinoshita: Peter Kador.

Mr. McManus: Oh, was Peter with you at Harvard?

Dr. Kinoshita: I think he was, yeah.

Mr. McManus: I think he was. Now you worked at both in the academia and you worked at the NIH.

Dr. Kinoshita: Right.

Mr. McManus: What were the differences or what was your take on—I mean there's not many people who did that. Who had a full career, you really had a full—you were a full professor at Harvard?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And then you attended at NEI. What were the differences? What were your thoughts on it? That's a question Carl was interested in.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well the difference was that the NEI was all emphasis on research 100% and at Harvard you know, you were involved in teaching as well as research so those were the main differences I guess.

Mr. McManus: One of the things you moved be the Scientific Director after a number of years.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, I was Chief of the Laboratory first I think. I came in as that and then later on as Scientific Director, right.

Mr. McManus: When we do the Intramural chapter we're going—we want to do a section on philosophy. What was your philosophy for the Intramural Program?

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, (chuckling) if I had a philosophy I wouldn't know it. But you know, I was interested in people who had great imaginations and research abilities and that's essentially what I followed.

Mr. McManus: You also kind of supported some high risk programs. What I would call high risk.

Dr. Kinoshita: What kind of programs?

Mr. McManus: High risk, kind of taking a shot of trying to get some clinical implications out of working aldose reductase and cataract. Was NIH more conducive to being able to do that kind of thing?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, I think I could devote more time on that problem and of course there were people in other institutes that were very helpful too.

Mr. McManus: I remember we put together several million dollars to get an animal colony and there were some guys, Moe Berg was one of the collaborators I think who did—it wasn't on the animal part, there was somebody else who collaborated on the animal. But, I think Berg and Kador worked on cataract and maybe more than on aldose reductase. But with the ability to put together those kinds of resources I don't think that could have been done so easily in a university.

Dr. Kinoshita: That's right. You can mobilize your program to really zero in on the problem.

Mr. McManus: Who? I think you attracted—you and Kuwabara came and your fellows and students, Kador and Chader and like that. Then I think you were able also to attract some immunologist, Toshe Shinohara.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yes, Toshe Shinohara.

Mr. McManus: And Egal Gery.

Dr. Kinoshita: Egal Gery.

Mr. McManus: And I think at that time probably, you know that was probably in the late '70s so probably Art Silverstein was probably still one of only full time immunologist in vision research.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And then we were able to get Piatigorsky.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, well Joram was in molecular biology and really a real force in that area and we were very fortunate to have him join the NEI.

Mr. McManus: Yeah, that was great. But I think it wasn't easy because I remember and you probably remember Ed Rall was very supportive of your—I think your relationship with Ed Rall was very crucial to that recruitment because Rall was very supportive of Piatigorsky.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: But he didn't have any space.

Dr. Kinoshita: Pardon me?

Mr. McManus: He didn't have any space. I remember we went to him and asked for space and he had two modules on the 12th floor.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well space was always a problem at NIH.

Mr. McManus: Right. But we put together that recruitment and I think another big recruitment was Bob Wurtz.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah. Well Bob Wurtz was a leader in his field and he had a very strong group of people there in his area of research.

Mr. McManus: What would you say were some of the biggest scientific advances during your time in the Intramural and in general?

Dr. Kinoshita: Gee, I don't remember all the details.

Mr. McManus: How about the aldose reductase?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, well, we introduced the aldose reductase concept and then Joram was very strong in molecular biology and he was a leading force in the eye field.

Mr. McManus: Did Chaperone.

Dr. Kinoshita: Who?

Mr. McManus: The Chaperone. Was it the Chaperone gene?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: I remember that, that was a big deal too, that was very important.

Dr. Kinoshita: We had very strong people there. Joram of course was very accepted as a leader in his field and of course Toshe was a well-established pathologist. And then some of the younger people, Peter Kador and that group came.

Mr. McManus: Right. And you were Scientific Director but you had your office over in, your administrative office in Building 31. And you were able to, I know uh, it was very good, the scientists would come and talk to you and then you would be so bursting with information from Joram or someone..., it was very excitable anyhow. You know, it was very interesting for the NEI because you sort of brought science to the sixth floor. Because when Joram came all excited to you, you would come running over to me and we would grab Carl and it was those little things I think were very important to bring Carl closer to what was going on.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, Carl was exceptionally keen in pushing basic scientists into the research area and so he was very supportive of our activities.

Mr. McManus: Carl had another—you may not recall this but, Carl was telling me a story when I was talking to him the other day about one of your first research grants before there was a NEI there was—I probably have this wrong, but you were doing some basic work using the lens and assuming it was like a blood cell and you were trying to illuminate some basic mechanisms and the grant got turned down because they said you should do this in blood cells, not in the eye. Do you remember that?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And I was wondering what—you know, and Carl had sort of said that always to him meant that vision research wasn't taken seriously.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh, I see, yeah, that's true.

Mr. McManus: And that's why we needed a new—to him that was one of the major reasons, the lessons that that's why we needed an eye institute.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well Carl had exceptional vision into the future and he could see that some of the things that were going on in eye research couldn't really contribute heavily to general medical science.

Mr. McManus: I noticed the other day, I was reading the NEI website and they just regenerated the optic nerve and grant, and uh, fantastic. I mean, if there wasn't an NEI people wouldn't even be looking at those kinds of things.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh that's right, yeah.

Mr. McManus: What are the things that.

Dr. Kinoshita: I think that's you know, as I said Carl had tremendous vision, I mean he could see what was needed ahead and he really worked hard to fulfill his concepts and dreams.

Mr. McManus: Because he was exposed—partly because he was exposed to Dave Cogan and the Howe Laboratory.

Dr. Kinoshita: That's right.

Mr. McManus: At the beginning.

Dr. Kinoshita: That's right. I think Dave Cogan was the father of us all. He had—He was tremendous. He's the one who really bought basic scientists into ophthalmology which was unusual in his days and he really supported the basic scientists.

Mr. McManus: And he learned the basic science.

Dr. Kinoshita: Huh?

Mr. McManus: He learned the basic science.

Dr. Kinoshita: That's right! He would go to lectures in biochemistry as a first year medical student. He would sit in the back there and take it all in. He was there for a full semester, I mean he didn't just go once or twice but he was there for every day for the full semester.

Mr. McManus: Yeah. I think he did pathology first but that was more clinical.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh yeah, pathology was his main interest.

Mr. McManus: Now you uh, that reminds me to talk about that influence because when molecular biology came along you went to some special course in Boston

for two or three months in molecular genetics. Yeah, uh you took a course up in Boston, I remember that.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mr. McManus: I mean that was, I mean (laughter) you were a senior person at the NIH going back to do that.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, but we were very fortunate to have Joram Piatigorsky come into the Eye Institute because he was already an established molecular biologist then.

Mr. McManus: I think Joram and I think Bob gave us credibility, I think that the people that you brought and yourself from Boston, I mean who—I don't know where. I guess maybe the head of the Genome Institute, I'm balking on his name, but he came in with a group uh, you know, there may be a few others but there's not many full-fledged groups from academia who've made that shift over to the NIH Intramural. And I don't think, I don't think our Intramural program would have got off the ground had you not been able to do that.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well then after Dave retired from Harvard he came down to the NEI.

Mr. McManus: And he was 65, 66. I'm now 66. He was a young man.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh he was very—still very active.

Mr. McManus: Yeah. And I always—I was thinking of this in the past and I thought what a lost opportunity for me. I interacted with Dave sometimes but not as much as I should have because he was so brilliant.

Dr. Kinoshita: Right, he was—he was not only a great leader in ophthalmology but he was really a great man.

Mr. McManus: He wanted to get to know me when he first came, so I would—some Christmas party, he had a party and he was always trying to bring people together. And so then he said well we'll have to play tennis because he liked tennis early in the morning as you know. But he wanted to beat me because he knew I was a tennis player because he had this competitive streak you know he did. So he got me over there one morning about 7:00.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh?

Mr. McManus: I had to come all the way from Damascus to his house. And we played and I won... and that was it. He said okay (chuckles) that was fun. The other thing that I really wanted to talk some about is the international programs. Uh, one of the chapters that we'll do in the book is on international because I think we made a real mark.

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, that's true uh, well we had Japanese scientists come in to our labs so it was only natural that we develop a strong relationship with the eye department in Japan. So that was a very exciting and profitable from a research point of view.

Mr. McManus: And from a development point of view for the field as a whole and for the Japanese. Nakijima and myself serve on a board for the International Lions Clubs.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh, is that right?

Mr. McManus: And I see him three times a year. I'll see him in a couple of months, in...no, I'll see him on May 17th and he always asks me about you. And he's doing well. I don't know how he makes that trip, but he comes over for a couple of days. I think he has a daughter or someone in the US and he sees her and goes there but he always asks about you. But he knows I'm doing this project and I'll interview him too, but he's already sent me a paper on the evaluation of the contributions of the Japanese scientists who had worked in the NEI and had been part of the exchanges. But he says hello to you and I'll tell him. But then—so there was—and you and I went to Japan and that was a very interesting trip for me. And then we had the Chinese—we had the collaboration with the Chinese.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And those two centers that we mainly collaborated with were in Canton and Beijing. The Canton Center is growing by leaps and bounds.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: That lady I think, um Professor Li passed away. I think she had she had cancer. She was a cataract—a lens researcher wasn't she?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: There was that and then we roped you into India. Let's see, did you go to Hyderabad or was it mainly New Delhi? Mainly New Delhi I think.

Dr. Kinoshita: Um-hmm.

Mr. McManus: And, oh, but out of that came your relationship with Balu because I guess he related to Joram and lens research, right?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And I saw Balu a lot, probably eight or nine months ago because we— because of that you know, his interest and the relationships we'd had with Indian scientists, a group headed by Balu wanted to do more with the NEI recently.

Dr. Kinoshita: Oh?

Mr. McManus: So I and others, Leon Ellwein, while I was doing this job as Executive Director was at an ARVO headquarters. So I got ARVO involved with Balu and we did a conference grant proposal between the US and India, they had just had—but it came out of ARVO... When we did these programs, it was always us telling them what to do. This one was from the community.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: And Balu headed it up from the Indian side and they got funded. Paul is interested in it, Paul Sieving and so there's a group of US scientists maybe 20 of them and Indian scientists, maybe 40 of them got together in February, they're going to submit a bunch of grants and it really is exciting. I think that that collaboration will go forth.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, that's great.

Mr. McManus: But it started with Balu.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah.

Mr. McManus: If Balu hadn't been hanging around then, so he's going. Uh, let's see, what else? Carl had wanted to know about you know the intramural program, and let's see what other questions I have. Do you have any thoughts on the future of eye research? When I say that I mean I'll give you my thoughts, it's how do we...I think that one of the big things that still has to be tied together is how do we get research into clinical results?

Dr. Kinoshita: Well, uh, that's the main purpose for the research. So some of the clinical problems... I think, I don't think we don't have to worry about that because I think the motivation comes from the investigators themselves and they set their goals and I think uh, that should take care of that.

Mr. McManus: Good. The uh, one of the things that we're also going to do is a chapter on the beginnings of the NEI that goes back to Jules Stein and Dave Weeks and some of that early stuff. And of course Cogan—uh, meeting with Cogan and Maumenee. See Cogan, Maumenee, Newell, uh those were the three main guys, and Straatsma and Herb Kaufman complete the group. But Herb Kaufman was also at Harvard with Cogan, is that right?

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah in the beginning and then he went down where, Miami?

Mr. McManus: Miami with—no Jacksonville with Jay Enoch, I think. I think he went there. And of course—oh that's right, Miami, Miami was that guy from Boston, the retina fellow. I don't see his tracks, what was his name? I forget, but I don't see his tracks much in this history. Well, let's see, I think that was the end of my kind of scripted questions. My last one was

do you have anything that you wanted to add to all that Jin? About the NEI..., your role...?

Dr. Kinoshita: Well you know the thing that comes to mind are the individuals who were responsible for pushing this forward. And foremost was Dave Cogan and Carl Kupfer. And you know those two are the leaders...

Mr. McManus: And Everett Kinsey.

Dr. Kinoshita: Pardon me?

Mr. McManus: Everett Kinsey. I should not forget Everett.

Dr. Kinoshita: Everett Kinsey?

Mr. McManus: He was on the Council.

Dr. Kinoshita: Yeah, he was on the Council. Everett did his share too. But to me its Dave and Carl that really set the pace.

Mr. McManus: I agree. I agree. That will be it.

End of Interview