

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Walden

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Walden, William, 1954-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Walden,
Dates:	January 20, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:18:42).
Abstract:	Biology professor and molecular biologist William Walden (1954 -) has been a leader in the area of cellular iron regulation and iron-related gene expression in eukaryotes. He has served as a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago since 1987. Walden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 20, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_004
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Molecular biologist and biology professor William Walden was born on October 13, 1954 in Washington, D.C. to George Ray Walden and Erma Lucille Walden. After graduating from Suitland High School in 1972, he received his B.S. degree in biology from Morgan State University in 1976. During college, Walden worked as a research assistant for the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, and the Baltimore Cancer Research Program. Walden went on to earn his Ph.D. degree in molecular biology from Washington University in St. Louis in 1983. His final dissertation was entitled, "mRNA Competition in vivo."

In 1987, Walden started his over twenty-year career at the University of Illinois at Chicago as an assistant professor in the College of Medicine's Department of Microbiology and Immunology. He was a recipient of the Scheppe Foundation Career Development award from 1988 to 1991. In 1992, Walden was promoted to associate professor and associate department head of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. He began working with the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) in 1994, where he chaired the steering committee. Since 2004, Walden has held the position of full professor. In 2006 and 2007, he served as co-chair of the Campus Promotion and Tenure Committee. Walden was a fellow of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation-Academic Leadership Program from 2006 to 2007, which mentors administrators for higher leadership opportunities. Since 2006, he has served as director of the Office of Graduate Diversity Programs, which works to increase the number of underrepresented students who successfully earn a Ph.D. degree in the College of Medicine. In 2007, Walden became the Special Assistant to the Provost for Diversity. His research focuses on cellular iron regulation and iron-related gene expression in eukaryotes. Walden has published numerous scientific research articles including his 2006 paper, "Structure of Dual Function Iron Regulatory Protein 1 Complexed with Ferritin IRE-RNA," which was published in the journal, *Science*.

In addition to his research, Walden has mentored many graduate researchers, and has served on NIH grant review panels and as a peer reviewer for top scientific journals including, *Science*, *EMBO Journal*, *Blood*, and *Journal of*

Biological Chemistry . William Walden lives in Oak Park, Illinois and has two adult children, William A. Walden and Michael D. Walden.

William Walden was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 20, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William Walden was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 20, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Biology professor and molecular biologist William Walden (1954 -) has been a leader in the area of cellular iron regulation and iron-related gene expression in eukaryotes. He has served as a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago since 1987.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Walden, William, 1954-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Walden, William, 1954- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

University of Illinois at Chicago

Occupations:

Molecular Biologist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, January 20, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_001, TRT: 1:28:59 ?

William Walden describes his family background. Walden's mother, Emma Lucille Powell, was born in central North Carolina around 1911. Powell tended to the farm animals and was able to graduate from high school, though education was not a major path for her side of the family. She moved to Washington, D.C. after school to escape the rural life. Walden's father, George Ray Walden was born in Chatham County, North Carolina on his family's property in the early 1920s. Walden's paternal family descended from free black brothers who moved to North Carolina from Virginia before the Civil War and acquired 600 acres. As a teenager, George Walden moved to Detroit, Michigan and then served in the Pacific theater of WWII as a Naval galley cook. Upon his return, he moved to Washington, D.C. and secured a job as a defense printer at the Pentagon.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_002, TRT: 2:31:06 ?

William Walden's parents, George Walden and Emma Powell, were married in Washington, D.C. around 1946. Walden describes his mother's dedication towards ensuring the well-being of her family, and his father's insistence at perfectionism. Walden attended the segregated Brooks Road Elementary School in Prince George's County, Maryland. He was eager to follow in his siblings' footsteps and uphold the positive reputation of the Walden family. As a boy, he became familiar with science through the natural world and school science demonstrations. Walden attended Spaulding Junior High School where he was preoccupied with adapting to an integrated environment as one of two black students in his classes. An average student, Walden did not exhibit scientific prowess, but did become interested in entomology during high school biology.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_003, TRT: 3:30:12 ?

William Walden talks about his experience on the track team in junior high and high school. A successful 400 meter runner, he eventually switched to running short sprints in high school. Walden's interest in science continued, and his closest scientific mentor was his father, who was constantly doing or fixing something. Walden enjoyed taking things apart to see how they worked, and his thirst for the process of discovery fueled his interest in science. Though Walden's family supported his interest, he met with some resistance from church leaders when he questioned religious teachings. Walden was an honor roll student at Suitland High School, and interacted with many students. As a member of the black student union, Walden was touched by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and its effect on the Washington, D.C. area. He continued his education at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_004, TRT: 4:29:38 ?

William Walden experienced real laboratory science during the summer of 1974 while working at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in a biochemistry lab. This experience, along with another at NASA Ames Research Center in Moffett Field, California, helped shape his career path. Walden continued to develop as a scientist while at Morgan State University, but he also benefited from the cultural exposure on campus. He enjoyed participating in challenging religious discourse as part of a religious group on campus. Despite most of his biology classmates' goal of medical school, Walden aimed at a research career in which he could control the path of his work. Realizing that a need for a Ph.D. degree in order to pursue his goal, he applied to several graduate schools including Ohio State University and Washington University in St. Louis. He attended Washington University, where he studied cellular iron metabolism.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_005, TRT: 5:30:06 ?

William Walden explains iron regulation in the human body including hereditary hemochromatosis or iron overload, as well as iron deficiency or anemia. During graduate school, Walden learned the importance of describing his work in a context that everyone can understand. As a doctoral student, he studied protein synthesis at the cellular level, which led to his dissertation, 'Messenger RNA Competition in vivo'. Walden then became interested in regulation of the iron storage protein, ferritin. After graduate school, Walden accepted a faculty position within the medical school at the University of Illinois, Chicago where his initial task was to identify the binding protein that prevents ferritin formation. He splits his time between conducting research, advising graduate students, and teaching.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_006, TRT: 6:28:40 ?

William Walden's discovery of the two protein master regulators of iron metabolism, including their molecular structure, has contributed to our understanding of iron disorders at the cellular level. He has been a member of the molecular and cellular hematology study section at the National Institutes of Health and established himself as a leader in the field of metals in biomedicine. While Walden would like to continue researching for his whole life, he acknowledges the challenges of securing continuous funding. Walden describes his administrative work related to diversity at UIC. As assistant to the provost, Walden has striven to incorporate diversity issues into the core of the university rather than focus on surface level statistical measurements of diversity. Walden

goes on to list the appealing qualities of UIC, including its mission of quality public education as well as its location in the dynamic city of Chicago.

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Video Oral History Interview with William Walden, Section A2012_004_001_007, TRT: 7:20:01 ?

William Walden expresses his concerns for the African American community, which are rooted in the existence of educational disparity. In response to additional summary questions, Walden reflects on how he chose his career and education path and what he might have done differently, such as taking a more systematic approach to choosing a college. Walden describes his legacy as one of persistence and credits his major accomplishments to his perseverance.

Walden had gotten married and he and his wife raised two sons, William Ashan [born 1983] and Michael Desmond [born 1986]. Family and parental support for his career and that of his siblings was very strong. Walden was also supported throughout graduate school by his brother-in-law, Joe Ross, one of the few other black students at Washington University. Walden would like to be remembered as a creative visionary in his field who listened to and valued others.

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