

Avon B+B owner contributes to Corona vaccine!



The Skinny Kid

There was a deep recession in the summer of 1982 and a skinny kid from Marion, IA had a hard time finding a job on his first break from college. He drove his mother, brother and sisters crazy and that young man vowed never to have a frustrating summer like that again.

Upon his return to school that fall at the University of Iowa, the skinny kid went looking for a job and ended up in the lab of a young professor named Mark Stinski, in the department of Microbiology.

Well, the skinny kid dropped more glassware than he was worth and Stinski, being a wise and forgiving man, decided to have the kid start doing some bench research work, with the idea that it would probably cost the lab less money and just maybe the skinny kid would come up with something good.

Wary of the skinny kid, Stinski put the young man in the lab space right next to the young professor and gave the kid the same bench space previously used by Nobel Prize winner Paul Berg.

Working on DNA in 1982

The kid was greatly appreciative, worked long hours, and became somewhat productive. His job was to put a sequence of DNA (which is the chemical substance that encodes genes in humans), in front of several genes of disparate origin in the hopes of getting cells to express the genes that were not native to the those cells.

One of the young man's assignments was an absolute failure, but Stinski, seeing promise, still gave the young man an A for the class he was taking. Stinski reported that this caused him such consternation that Stinski, a good Catholic man, had to go to confession for giving the young man a grade he probably did not deserve.

The experiment finally worked!

Answering the professor's prayer, the young man finally got the experiment to work and the results were written up for a poster session to be presented at Cold Spring Harbor, then run by the famed Nobel laureate, Francis Crick.

Two weeks before

the conference, the thin young man was playing a pickup basketball game with his lab mates and fell violently, fracturing a couple of bones in his lower back. Since the young man could hardly walk or stand up, he was not able to make the trip to Cold Spring Harbor.

While the rest of the lab workers made the journey, the young man stayed behind in Iowa City and made a new construct that made his job easier by placing the DNA sequence known as a promoter into a vector with special sequences of DNA that made it easy to put this promoter in front of any piece of DNA chosen, and have it face either to the right or the left.

This way, the promoter that attracts the cellular machinery that makes RNA from DNA, in a process called transcription, could easily be put close to any gene in hours, instead of weeks (RNA transfers genetic information from the nucleus of the cell into the main body of the cell to be made into proteins).

Since Berg and Stinski had previously proven that the CMV (Cytomegalovirus) promoter, that the young man was working with, was the strongest promoter known in human cells, the utility of this construct was obvious.

Upon returning from Cold Spring Harbor, the young man presented Professor Stinski with this new DNA construct, and suggested it be patented.

The University Foundation filed for a patent on the Skinny Kid's discovery!

Stinski had already made arrangements with the University Foundation to meet with him in the following weeks to patent some other DNA constructs, so he suggested that the young man tell the foundation representatives about this idea as well.

When asked by the foundation representative what the value of this chunk of DNA would be, the proud young man told them it would be worth millions, and the products made from it would eventually sell for billions of dollars. The foundation men shrugged and said, "OK. Let's file a patent," which they did.

A month or so later, Stinski asked the young man if he wanted his name on the patent, too. By then, the young man was ready to go to medical school and knew he had no time to defend such a thing, and that any value to come from it would only be due to the future defenses by Stinski, so the young man showed his gratitude to the professor and declined the co-ownership possibility.

Another patent was filed in Europe!

Later, a visiting professor came to work in the lab, named Bernhard Fleckenstein. Over the course of a couple of weeks the young man convinced Fleckenstein that he

too should file patents in Europe, using the same constructs, since European patent laws differed from the US. The young man talked to the visiting professor from Germany about the merits and process for such an activity.

Twenty- Five years later both patents were about to expire, and the young man, now a retired physician, was at a fund raiser for the University where he struck up a conversation with the Dean of the medical school.

Patent earned over \$100 Million for the University!

Upon checking into the information, the patent he suggested many years before had indeed made the University over \$100 Million in the United States, and an unknown amount for Fleckenstein's University in Germany.

Another \$8 Billion earned!

The construct had over 45,000 uses and 8 commercially viable medications, one of which, by itself, had sales that year in the United States alone, of over \$8 Billion.

Stinski retired from his professorship a successful man and decided to give back to the University that he had spent most of his adult life working at, by endowing professorships, including the Chair of the Department of Microbiology and some undergraduate scholarships, so that

Continued on Page 9

