

Get to know your council: interview questions

1. What inspired you to become a scientist?

Answer: In high school, was an artist (a sculptor). I made life size statues of infants and small children. Because of this, many people thought I should be an artist (or a plastic surgeon), but at 15, I wasn't ready to dive into either profession. Besides, I could already sculpt and needed other challenges. My high school biology teacher was very demanding and, in part because of him, I picked science. It also helped that science was also something that my brother (13 months my senior) wasn't interested in pursuing. Note that my two worst classes during my freshman year of college were biology and chemistry. I was great in humanities, foreign language etc., but alas not challenging enough!

2. Who was a significant mentor for you during your career and why?

Answer: I know I didn't have any female role model-like mentor as a developing scientist. Additionally, there were lots of people, both men and women, whom I knew did not want to emulate. I post-doc'ed with Drs. Howard Young and Joe Oppenheim at the NCI. Working with them was an amazing experience. Among other life lessons, I learned about the benefits of "team science" and "cloning by phone." I remember writing a review article on something related to interleukins, and Joe asked why I didn't include more of my own data into the article. He said "if you don't brag about your accomplishments, who will?" That line stuck with me, so I guess it must have been a significant mentoring experience. In terms of "survival skills" once I hit academia, two people helped: 1) Dr. Mary Manteuffel, a faculty member at Loyola told me that when her daughters were sick and couldn't go to school, she brought them into her office and they napped on a sleeping bag on the floor of her office while she worked. As a single mom, this was a biggie. My daughter, Cathy, had 12 ear infections before her 2nd birthday and spent a lot of time on the little mermaid sleeping bag that lived in my office. I never asked if it was ok to bring my daughter with me to work, I just did it. And no one complained. 2) I also learned from Dr. Richard Gamelli (then Chair of the Department of Surgery, who was my boss at that time): "It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission." Maybe Dr. Gamelli verbalized and confirmed what I already knew.



3. How do you balance work and life issues?

Answer: I don't balance mine well, but somehow I survived nearly a quarter of a century being a researcher, a teacher, a mentor, and a colleague while also being a single mom. I think it goes back

to: 1) the “I think I can, I think I can” mentality and 2) being able to function reasonably well without a lot of sleep.

4. What keeps you happy outside of science and work?

Answer: I love sports, both playing and watching. Strangely, I also like to knit. Knitting is by far the best thing I learned in graduate school!! Thankfully, I figured out how to knit while doing other things, like watching football on TV. Knitting helps me pay attention to whatever I am listening to, so don't be shocked if you find me knitting at an SLB meeting. On Oct 2, 2011, I walked in



the >6 mile JDRF walk to cure diabetes in NYC. For the third year in a row, I knitted while I walked! I have also combined work with happiness, by knitting, watching football and “writing” a grant application using voice recognition software. I guess women are just good at multitasking.

5. In this age of limited research resources and growing competition for grant awards, how would you advise young faculty who are just beginning their adventure in science?

Answer: 1) Work on something that your boss likes. If you have the opportunity to work in a research area that your boss likes, this may better enable you to collaborate with him/her... and he/she may be able to help you emotionally (intellectually), physically and, the all-important, financially. 2) Think about freezer science. If/when doing animal research, collect parts that you would not normally collect and put them in a freezer for a rainy day. One year, when our animal facility was closed due to a mouse hepatitis outbreak, my lab ground up lots of things that were in the freezer and wrote a dozen papers. (Yup, literally a dozen!!) 3) Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate! (Like location, location, location in real estate.) Find some friends and do team science. Success (and misery) love company.

6. Why is SLB important for you?

Answer: I grew up with SLB. I started attending SLB meetings as a graduate student and have been going to the meetings ever since. As a postdoc and junior faculty member and really liked the meeting size, where it is small enough to be able to see, track down, and speak with whomever you want to find. Unlike other meetings that are huge, at SLB meetings you don't have to stalk a people to find them.

7. What made you decide to run for SLB council?

Answer: The first time I ran for councilor I was an assistant professor, back in ~1903 when the council expanded from 4 to 8 members. I don't remember what made me decide that time. Several years later, I was asked to run for president. While I agreed, and ran, I know that I voted for the

other candidate. At the time, I believed that almost anyone could do a better job than I could. I was probably right.

Years later, I was asked to run for council again and then, toward the end of my term on council, for president again. This time, I am pretty sure I voted for myself. During the interim when I was off council, I attended nearly every SLB meeting and on several occasions organized satellite conferences in conjunction with the Society meetings (mostly on aging & innate immunity and alcohol & immunity). I like the fact that at SLB meetings many of the talks are selected from submitted abstracts and, by holding satellite meetings, it allowed even more trainees to attend SLB meetings and have a chance to give podium presentations. Under Dr. Bill Nauseef's presidency (when I was president elect), the society blossomed and was reinvigorated by the establishment of "task forces" organized and run by volunteer members. Those task forces are now maturing into committees and are doing outstanding work to help members of the Society with better lines of communication (through the new and improved web site) ,and mentor/inform/unite members (through the Professional Development Committee, and the Committee on Women & Diversity). Now as president, I am initiating a "trainee task force" (which probably needs a better name) to focus on the needs of our most junior members of our Society, namely graduate students. I am hoping to run a "Streets Smarts of Science" session at upcoming meetings to help these individuals find peers, team up with mentors and put them on track for survival in the world of science. In short, what I like about being on the SLB Council (and/or being president) is being able to formulate ideas about how a scientific society can help my peers and junior colleagues, and more importantly finding like-minded people who will help me implement those ideas.

8. What is the most challenging aspect of being an SLB councilor?

Answer: For me that is clearly not being able to enjoy the science at SLB meetings. That is the thing that I find most challenging because I am so busy doing President things, like attending multiple committee meetings that are often scheduled at the same time or back to back. I objected vehemently to having committee meetings during scientific talks or poster sessions, as I want council members to be able to participate in those scientific activities, but as a consequence, there is no down time, even to call home.

9. What do you think are the challenges for the SLB in the future?

Answer: Like many other societies, SLB's biggest challenge is keeping its membership. Keeping membership costs low and providing impressive benefits that other societies do not (or cannot) offer has kept, and hopefully will keep, our members happy and involved in the society.

10. What motivated you to start working in your chosen field of research?

Answer: As mentioned above, I thrive on challenges. As a young scientist macrophages fascinated me, and I love inflammation and fibrosis! By either luck or skill, I started working on inflammation and am happy (?) that this field is both clinically relevant and plays a role in nearly every disease.

11. Do you feel that women have a tougher time getting to where they want to go with their research careers compared with their male colleagues?

Answer: Yes. Juggling child care and academic life is tough. BUT on a few rare occasions, being a woman has helped my career. For example, I believe I was asked to serve on study section at an early age to help raise the quota of women on study section. While it was tough leaving my elementary school child home to fly off to Maryland for the then 3 day study section meetings three times a year, being on grant review panels was like the peace corps: the toughest job you will ever love. I learned much more about writing grant applications serving as a member of a study section than almost everything I did in pre and postdoctoral training combined.

12. What would be your tips for managing a productive lab and keeping everyone in the lab happy?

Answer: Feed them!!

13. As president of the SLB, can you explain what you do and how it is important to other SLB members?

Answer: Some of what I do as President is oversee the activities of the society, but thankfully the day to day effort is conducted by Jen Holland, our outstanding Executive Director.

Both at scientific meetings, and throughout the rest of the year, the most important thing that I do as president is to assist with the programs and ideas brought forth by society members and committees/task forces consisting of member volunteers. Note that none of us get paid for serving on committees, council, or as president. We do it because it is the right thing to do and it helps others.

