



Odyssey—A Journey of Discovery

Bi-Annual Newsletter for the Odyssey Program

Philanthropy and the Odyssey Fellows

The Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement at MD Anderson

A handful of postdoctoral fellows at MD Anderson have one of the most influential philanthropists in Houston’s history to thank. It all goes back to 1990, when Caroline Wiess Law paved the way for budding young scientists on an odyssey of professional development and scientific discovery.

That was the year after her husband’s death, when Law - legendary arts patron and community leader - contributed \$1 million to establish the Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement at MD Anderson. At the time, her contribution was the largest ever made to MD Anderson’s Scientific Achievement Fund. Today the Theodore N. Law Scientific Achievement Award is one of eight annual Odyssey program fellowships. Donations from H-E-B; Houston Endowment Inc.; Kimberly-Clark Foundation, Inc.; The Cockrell Foundation; CFP Foundation; Laura and John Arnold Foundation and The Pauline Altman-Goldstein Foundation also support the fellowships.

In establishing the endowment, Law hoped to help MD Anderson attract and retain the finest young minds in academic oncology. More than two decades later, it has given 26 promising postdoctoral scientists the means to embark on a journey of scientific achievement, free of funding worries, through the Odyssey Program. Her generosity ensures future progress in the fight against cancer as the “best of the brightest” pursue diverse, innovative projects on their way to

becoming successful, independent investigators.

The first Theodore N. Law Scientific Achievement Award supported the research of Christelle Desbois, Ph.D., formerly with the Department of Molecular Genetics. Her research explored the process through which prostate cancer spreads to the bone. Recent Odyssey Fellows receiving funding through the award include:

- Prabodh Kapoor, Ph.D., Carcinogenesis
- Yun Zhang, Ph.D., Genetics,
- Sofie Claerhout, Ph.D., Systems Biology
- Grace Smith, M.D., Ph.D., Radiation Oncology
- Rachel Miller, Ph.D., Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
- Glauco Souza, Ph.D., GU Medical Oncology
- James Jackson, Ph.D., Cancer Genetics
- Bhanu Pappu, Ph.D., Immunology
- Sean Hartig, Ph.D., Experimental Pediatrics

The endowment continues in perpetuity as a resource for scientific achievement in the oncology field. Recipients of the award share two goals: to understand how and why cancer develops, and to enhance the development of new and better detection, treatment and prevention methods. Thanks to Law’s generosity, Odyssey Fellows are helping conquer the mysteries of cancer and making meaningful differences in the lives of patients, their families and their caregivers everywhere.



Turn the pages to read more about our donors, the success story of an Odyssey Fellow and more

About the Donors

Caroline Wiess Law and Theodore (Ted) N. Law, longtime MD Anderson friends, made a significant impact on numerous organizations and institutions through philanthropy aimed at raising the quality of the arts, health and education in Houston.

Ted Law, whose memory the Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement honors, was a Life Member of The University Cancer Foundation Board of Visitors (BOV). Named for his grandfather, oil baron Theodore Newton Barnsdall, he served on the BOV for 25 years before his death in 1989. He also served on the board of Rice University, where he endowed the T.N. Law professorship in bioengineering. He founded Falcon Seaboard Drilling Company, which merged with Diamond Shamrock in 1979, and Mid-Continent Airlines, which merged with Braniff Airways in 1952.

Caroline Wiess Law was born in Beaumont, one of three daughters of Olga and Harry Carothers Wiess, a founder of Humble Oil Co., now ExxonMobil. She attended Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y. In 1948, she married Bill Francis, a partner in the law firm Vinson, Elkins, Weems. Francis died in 1958 while serving as assistant secretary of

defense to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Caroline returned to Houston, where she had many cultural, educational and civic interests. She was especially active with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Two years later, she and Ted married. Caroline died on her 85th birthday, Dec. 24, 2003.



Caroline Wiess Law

The Laws, both MD Anderson patients, left a lasting legacy through contributions totaling more than \$30 million to the institution. Their estate funded three distinguished university chairs: the Olga Keith Wiess Distinguished University Chair for Cancer Research, The Harry Carothers Wiess Distinguished University Chair for Cancer Research and the Olga Keith and Harry Carothers Wiess Distinguished University Chair in Cancer Research. The couple also designated \$16 million to establish the Caroline Wiess Law Endowment for Cancer Prevention and contributed \$5 million to the Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences to develop early detection methods using molecular markers.

Opinion

Are you like me? Even though I have provided support to the Odyssey Program for the last five years and continue to do so, I never stopped to think who are the people behind the endowments that not only support the program which funds some of the best and brightest postdoctoral fellows but the many other activities throughout MD Anderson. The articles on the Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement certainly opened my eyes to the people and history behind one of our many donors. It is because of their generosity that we are able to continue our work. To all our generous supporters - Thank You!

Upcoming Dates to Note

- March 31, 2011 - Application due for Odyssey Program
- June, 2011 - Odyssey Advisory Committee will meet to review and select candidates to be funded from September 1, 2011
- June 16, 2011 - Annual Mini Odyssey Symposium. Program will start from 9 am in Searls Conference Room, R11.2103. Detailed information will be available later.

The Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement at Work for an Odyssey Scholar - Ashby Morrison, Ph.D.



Ashby Morrison, Ph.D.

Ashby Morrison, Ph.D., received an Odyssey Award for a scholarship supported by **The Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement** in June 2004 and completed the program three years later. As an Odyssey Scholar, Ashby worked under the supervision of Dr. Xuetong “Snow” Shen

in the Department of Carcinogenesis. Her study was “The Role of the INO80 Chromatin-Remodeling Complex in DNA Repair”, which investigates mechanisms of DNA repair, a process which when deregulated contribute to carcinogenesis. In Dr. Shen’s lab, Ashby was exposed to many different experimental techniques, particularly the use of powerful yeast system, to study cellular processes, such as DNA repair.

Ashby said that acquiring this knowledge and experience allowed her to expand her scientific expertise and undoubtedly improve the level of her research throughout her career. With the support of the award, she was able to focus on her research without interruption and was extremely productive during her Odyssey scholarship tenure. She published many papers including two Cell papers and received numerous awards, one of which was the Odyssey Outstanding Research Publication Award. She also established a number of collaborations that further progressed her research objectives.

Upon completing the Odyssey Program, Ashby said that she felt her scientific career has the momentum that will allow her to obtain a faculty position at a prestigious scientific

research institution. She added that as a recipient of **The Theodore N. Law Endowment for Scientific Achievement** award gave her the many opportunities that allowed her to significantly advance her career and reaching her goal of becoming a productive independent cancer researcher.

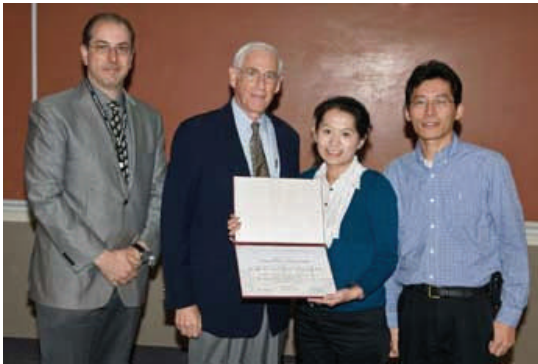
Today, Dr. Morrison is an Assistant Professor at Stanford University, Department of Biology. She has established her own lab and her research interests are centered on elucidating the contribution of chromatin to mechanisms that promote genomic integrity. The regulation of chromatin is a crucial component of DNA metabolism and processing in eukaryotic organisms. Chromatin-remodeling complexes, modified histones, and higher order chromatin structure are all factors influencing genome stability. An integrated approach is utilized of genetic, biochemical, and molecular techniques, in both yeast and mammalian systems, to examine the involvement of chromatin in processes that prevent genome instability and the pathogenesis of disease.



From left: Dr. Xuetong “Snow” Shen, a friend and Dr. Ashby Morrison

(Editor’s Note: Odyssey Scholarships have since been Discontinued)

Winners of the 2010 Outstanding Research Publication Awards



*Oliver Bogler, Ph.D., John Mendelsohn, M.D.,
Chia-Hsin Chan, Ph.D. and Hui-Kuan Lin, Ph.D.*

2010 Outstanding Research Publication Award supported by
The Ernst W. Bertner Memorial Fund
Chia-Hsin Chan, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, Molecular and Cellular
Oncology

Mentor: Hui-Kuan Lin, Ph.D.

“Deciphering the transcription complex critical for *RhoA* gene
expression and cancer metastasis”

May 2010, issue of *Nature Cell Biology*, Vol. 12/Number 5



*John Mendelsohn, M.D., Chun-Ju Chang, Ph.D.
and Oliver Bogler, Ph. D.*

2010 Outstanding Research Publication Award supported by
The Heath Memorial Fund

Chun-Ju Chang, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, Molecular and Cellular
Oncology

Mentor: Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D.

“EZH2 promotes expansion of breast tumor initiating cells through
activation of RAF1- β -catenin signaling”

Accepted for publication by *Cancer Cell*

Each year the Odyssey Program presents two awards to postdoctoral fellows for work accomplished at MD Anderson. The annual awards are sponsored by The Ernst W. Bertner Memorial Fund and The Heath Memorial Fund. Recipients of the awards are the acknowledged main author of an outstanding contribution to the scientific literature in the broadly-defined area of cancer research.

The presentation by the winners of the 2010 Outstanding Research Publication Awards took place in early January. For the first time, an interview with each winner was taped and put on YouTube by Dr. Bogler. The interview was done in both English and Mandarin, the native language of both winners. This is not all that the two winners have in common: they both come from Taiwan, were classmates in high school, went to the same university - different discipline, and both are now in the Department of Molecular and Cellular Oncology. You can view the interviews by following the links below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neAwugusZKE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCoK2vpT3Cc>

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