

News release

London, UK
Tuesday 21 February 2012

For immediate release

Italian biologist Renato Dulbecco has died at his home in California aged 97. Joint recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1975 for furthering the understanding of cancer caused by viruses, Dulbecco had also created a vaccine using a mutant form of the polio virus and had played a significant role in initiating the Human Genome Project.

Born in Catanzaro in southern Italy, Renato Dulbecco showed an early interest and talent in mathematics and physics, but later decided to pursue a career in medicine. In 1936, Dulbecco was called up for army duty as a medical officer, and it was not until after World War II that he managed to move to the US with his friend Rita Levi-Montalcini where, with the help of Salvador Luria, he began to study bacteriophages.

Renato Dulbecco continued his studies on viruses when he joined Max Delbruck's team at Caltech in 1949. It was here that he taught the two methods employed by his then student, Howard Temin, and by David Baltimore, used in the discovery of reverse transcriptase. As a result, Dulbecco shared the 1975 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their discoveries concerning the interaction between tumour viruses and the genetic material of the cell.

In 2005, Renato Dulbecco chose to share his life story and record it in depth for Web of Stories. Here he talks about early educational and wartime experiences and how his move to America and Nobel Prize achievement changed his life: *'For a scientist, the Nobel Prize is a truly amazing thing, because there are only a few of them... I remember that I went to work at this institute... one morning I arrived there... got changed, I took off my coat... and then I went to the laboratory. When I came back... I noticed that the secretary had a piece of paper in her hand, she shook it and said "What does this mean?" I went to have a look at what she had and it was a telegram from Stockholm, from someone that I knew and had known for quite some time, which said "Congratulations, we'll see you in Stockholm in December", but it was mysterious, there was nothing specific... there was a signature, but it didn't say what it was about, because he couldn't say, as the official announcement would take place a few hours later. So, I said "The only thing I think it can mean is the Nobel Prize". The poor woman stood as if struck by lightning'*

<http://www.webofstories.com/people/renato.dulbecco/32>

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Notes for Editors

About Web of Stories

Everyone has a story to tell. Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers members of the public the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and a web was slowly being created of connected stories. After a while we also invited famous people outside the field of science to tell their life stories.

Web of Stories is also open to the public to record their stories for the world to view and share. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear. The great thing about Web of Stories is that anyone can come and talk about virtually anything they like. Just like our famous speakers, it is an account of their experiences as they remember them.

We hope to provide lasting, first-hand accounts of people's experiences. Imagine that in a hundred years' time your grandchildren or great grandchildren will be able to watch you telling stories about your life today!

Contact:

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