Mendel, Muller, Morgan, Mom, and me: An ever expanding voyage of discovery

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H. J. Muller invented novel ways to map genes on chromosomes by looking at genes and nearest neighbors. His research collaboration with Thomas Hunt Morgan at Columbia University, using fruit flies, proved that genes reside in specific homes on chromosomes and that Mendelian principles govern inheritance.

My mother was also a biologist working with fruit flies at Columbia.

Like my mom, Morgan, Muller, and Mendel—I became a Gene Hunter. Starting in 1979, I began my voyage to Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela, home to the world’s largest family with Huntington’s disease, to look for the HD gene.

In 1983, against all odds, we discovered a DNA marker which gives the neighborhood of the HD gene. We then launched an international collaboration of more than 100 scientists to find the HD gene itself. It took a decade of work. In 1993, we found the HD gene.

As a Cure Hunter, I continue our quest—to find treatments and cures for Huntington’s disease and related brain bandits.

This yearly award and lecture series was established in 2016 to honor Professor Hermann Joseph Muller—renowned geneticist, Nobel Laureate, social activist, and esteemed IU Bloomington faculty member (1945-67).

The Muller award and lecture series recognizes luminary international geneticists whose discoveries, like Muller’s, have or are making a significant impact on the field of genetics and society.

View interviews of Dr. Wexler at
www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/shows/one-on-1.html
www.makers.com/nancy-wexler

Learn more about the award and lecture series and Hermann J. Muller at go.iu.edu/muller.

The Hermann J. Muller Award for Contributions to Our Understanding of Genes and Society and Lecture Series is funded by Indiana University Bloomington, College of Arts and Sciences, and Dept. of Biology.