Magda Marquet & François Ferré

Interview conducted by

Helen Weiss, Historian

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Magda Marquet and François Ferré

Dr. Marquet is co-Founder and co-CEO of ALMA Life Sciences LLC, an early stage investment firm focusing on the creation and growth of innovative health care companies with an overall focus on prevention. She is co-founder and co-Chairman of Althea (a member of the Ajinomoto Group), and served as its co-President and CEO for ten years. Dr. Marquet is also co-founder of AltheaDx, a spin-off of Althea focusing on companion diagnostics development and pharmacogenomics. She serves as a Board member for Sente, Portable Genomics and Independa. She is also co-Chairman of the Advisory Board of MD Revolution, advisor for Mesa Verde Venture Partners and for City National Bank. She is a Director of BIOCOM and was its Chairman during 2013-2014. She is currently Chairman of the Board of UCSD Moores Cancer Center. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the San Diego Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and of the Kyoto Prize Symposium Organization. She is also a member of the UCSD Biological Sciences Dean Leadership Council. Dr. Marquet has over three decades of experience in the biotechnology industry in the United States and Europe. She was formerly Executive Director of Pharmaceutical Development at Vical Incorporated, where she patented several novel methods for the production of clinical grade DNA for use in gene therapy and DNA vaccines. Prior to joining Vical, Dr. Marquet held management positions at Amylin Pharmaceuticals, Protein Polymer Technologies, Syntro Corporation and Transgene. Dr. Marquet holds a Ph.D. in Biochemical Engineering from INSA/University of Toulouse, France. Dr. Marquet has received numerous awards throughout her career. She was the winner of the 2005 Regional Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in the Life Sciences category, the Athena Pinnacle award, the Most Admired CEO award from the San Diego Business Journal and while leading Althea Technologies, received several Best Companies to Work For awards.

Dr. François Ferré is the co-CEO of ALMA LifeSciences LLC, an investment and consulting firm. He is also the Chairman and co-Founder of AltheaDx, a privately-held company (spinoff of Althea Technologies) focusing on the development of pharmacogenomic tests. Dr. Ferré was the CEO of AltheaDx from 2010 to June 2013. Prior to AltheaDx, Dr. Ferré co-founded Althea Technologies and served as co-CEO from 1998 until 2008. He was a Director of Althea Technologies until April 2013 and has recently been appointed a Director of Ajinomoto-Althea after the acquisition of the company by Ajinomoto. He also currently serves on the board of a number of additional private companies including Biomatrica and Portable Genomics. He is also co-Chairman of the Advisory Board of MD Revolution. Dr. Ferré was the winner of the 2005 E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year award in the Life Sciences category. Dr. Ferré is a leader in gene quantification and biomarker development and published several authoritative reviews on these topics, including the co-edition of a bestseller book on PCR with Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Kary Mullis. He received his PhD in molecular oncology from the Pasteur Institute, France and did his post-doctoral training at the University of California, San Diego.

Magda Marquet and Francois Ferre will be inducted into the CONNECT Hall of Fame in April, 2016 and Magda Marquet will be the first woman to enter the CONNECT Hall of Fame.

THE SAN DIEGO TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEWEE: **Magda Marquet and François Ferré**

INTERVIEWER: **Helen Weiss, Historian**

DATE: **January 20, 2016**

WEISS: I'm Helen Weiss and I'm interviewing Dr. Magda Marquet and Dr. François Ferré, and this is the 20th of January 2016. This is an interview for the San Diego Technology Archive, and I'll be asking Dr. Marquet first about her own current position and her educational background. Dr. Marquet.

MARQUET: Hi, Helen. Thank you so much for the opportunity. Yes, I'm Magda Marquet and I am a biochemical engineer by training. I came here 29 years ago with my husband François. Currently, I am a co-founder and co-chair of Ajinomoto Althea.

I'm also co-founder of AltheaDX, which is a personalized medicine company. I am co-CEO of Alma Life Sciences, which is a company that helps startups in the life science arena – mainly in the prevention area – and I'm also very involved in the non-profit side. I am currently chair of the Moores Cancer Center. I'm also very involved with UCSD and hold several advisory roles. I am on the board of the Economic Development Corporation, the Kyoto Symposium Organization, and I think that's it.

And oh, by the way, I was past chair at BIOCOM for the last two years. I knew I was forgetting something.

WEISS: Tell me about your educational interests growing up. You came from France. Where in France, and when did you start getting interested in the life sciences?

MARQUET: Actually, I grew up in a very small country. It is called Andorra. It's one of the smallest countries in the world—with about 70,000 people. So, when I was growing up, obviously biotech didn't exist and people who lived in Andorra were, one

way or another, involved in the tourism industry. So, I thought that's what I would do somehow, but I was always interested in science.

And there were some unfortunate events, also, that pushed me in that direction. When I was 15, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, and I think at the time, in high school, where I was really deciding what I wanted to do, this is when I made the decision that I wanted to work in healthcare and really make a difference in that field. I didn't know exactly how I was going to do it, because again – it was a very small country. I had to leave the country when I was 15, and I went to high school in France and then to college in France. So, I didn't know how I was going to accomplish what my vision was, but somehow, I was guided.

The world of biotechnology was started about 30 years ago when I graduated from college.

WEISS: Where did you graduate from college?

MARQUET: I went to college in Toulouse – in the South of France – at an engineering school called INSA, and this is where I graduated from.

WEISS: At that time, were there many women in your class?

MARQUET: Not many. Not many. It was – compared to other engineering specialties, I think biochemical engineering – which was my specialty – was more open to women, but not many women were in the class. And, in fact, I happened to graduate first of my class of engineering, and one day, the director of the school called me to his office and he said, "I have very good news, and I want to share them with you. Maybe that won't be very good news for you."

I thought, "What does he want?" And then he said, "Well, there is an opening for a position in the department, and in the past, when these things have happened – and this is very rare – I always granted this to whoever was first. But this year, because you're a woman, I'm going to grant it to number two." And I thought, "Wow." I was shocked, but I asked him why.

And he said, "Well, I'll tell you why. Because this is very rare and we know you're very motivated and you're smart, but I know that five years from now, you'll decide to have a family and have kids and then you'll decide to teach part-time and leave science." And somehow, I wanted to prove him wrong.

WEISS: Now, this is when you were getting your Ph.D. at that point, actually.

MARQUET: Yes. I was ending my Ph.D. This is when that happened. And actually, he helped me later on. He really was helpful in my career, but for this specific position, he was very clear why he was not going to give me this position and he was giving it to number two.

WEISS: And what was the topic of your dissertation?

MARQUET: It was on the production of glutamate, which is an amino acid. And the reason I chose this topic is because it was well funded by industry, and at the time, I wanted to make sure that I could do research that led me to an easier way to find a job. And later on, when we sold the company that François and I started together, we sold it to Ajinomoto, which is the world's largest producer of glutamate and MSG. And somehow, it wrapped up the story.

WEISS: You started working right away when you got your Ph.D. in France. You worked for a few companies then?

MARQUET: I did. I worked for a company called Transgene which was located in Strasbourg, and that was 1983. And at the time, it was one of the few – or maybe the only one – biotech companies in Europe, and it was started by two very well-known scientists – Drs. Pierre Chambon, Phillipe Kourilsky – and then they decided to create this great center in the private sector for biotech and bring top notch scientists from all over the world and really work on what we call recombinant DNA technologies and producing proteins using biological processes. That is what I did before coming to the United States.

WEISS: Give me a brief timeline then. You were going to college and then university and grad school in what years, approximately?

MARQUET: I finished college in '81. I finished grad school in '83. I worked at Transgene from '83 to '86, and then we came here in December of '86.

WEISS: Then we'll ask Dr. Ferré to go through the background. Could you introduce yourself, please, and then your current capacities, and then we'll go a little bit through your education before you both come to San Diego.

FERRÉ: Thank you so much. My name is François Ferré. I am the lucky husband of Magda Marquet, and my background is also in science. I got my education in France. Did first a master in Toulouse – that's where I met Magda when she was finishing her Ph.D.—and then I moved to a different town in Northern France, Lille to do my Ph.D. at the Pasteur Institute.

I did my Ph.D. in molecular oncology. In the early '80s, all the rage was about oncogenes. I was fascinated by this space and decided to get some training and get my graduate education in that field. This meant that I had to move from Toulouse, a really wonderful town in South of France to Lille, which is a much more challenging town in Northern France, but I think it was worth doing, because I got great education in the space I really liked.

WEISS: When did you first decide that you were going to actually pursue sciences? I mean, when you were a young boy, there was curiosity, but what inspired you to enter the field?

FERRÉ: I'm not sure. I don't have a very good recollection of when I really started to be interested in biology, specifically. I always was a curious mind about how the universe was working and all the different things that surround us, but I came to biology by accident. I was first interested in geology. I am still very interested in how the planets are formed and how our world evolved, in fact, from magma rock.

I realized that geology was not really my call after all. Very interested in it, but not really my call. I had to take some classes in chemistry and biology and started to like it.

WEISS: To round this out, I want you to introduce what your current positions are now, too. That was one thing that we kind of started with.

FERRÉ: Yes. Sure. Let me cover that. Currently, I'm involved, like Magda, in the community. We have a small venture fund that we've been very active with.

I co-partner, if you wish, with Magda – we call ourselves "Co-CEOs" of Alma Life Sciences, and are also very involved with a number of different startups in San Diego. The one that I'm most involved with is AltheaDX. I'm currently the chairman of AltheaDX. Like Magda mentioned, it is a new medical diagnostic company focusing on pharmacogenomics, and we are really excited about the platform that we are now

commercializing. It's a commercial state company, and can really help a lot of people with drug choice and drug interaction with the genetics of the patients. Really interesting.

I'm involved with a number of different private boards as well. I'm involved with Keck Graduate Institute in Claremont – I'm a trustee there. I try to help them shape new students and create great leaders in our industry. I am also a director of the Chopra Foundation and I am part of the Executive Committee.

WEISS: You were married, I hear, 30 years ago this year. Tell me just a little bit, if you want, about how you met. And then you applied for your post-doc here and you said you would come, and you didn't really know anybody in San Diego. So, maybe you could tell us a little bit about how you met and who you came to do your post-doc with in San Diego, and then we'll talk about your decision to move here and solicit work.

FERRÉ: Yes. Do you want the real story then?

WEISS: Whatever you want the public to know.

FERRÉ: It was just in the cards. There was a friend of ours that mentioned Magda in passing and for some reason, I said, "Look, I would love to be introduced to this young lady." They were very good friends. I said, "You know, could we meet?" So that's how it all started. It was through a common friend.

WEISS: And you applied for your post-doc and you were already working in France, Magda, so then what happened? Who was the post-doc with?

FERRÉ: Okay. What happened is that we worked together in Toulouse, and Magda decided – you know, she's a strong woman – she said, "Look, we're happy together, but I need to move on to do my thing." She moved to Strasbourg. I said –they have some very good science over there, but what was really exciting to me was a position at the Pasteur Institute in Northern France. "Well, look, we can continue the relationship from a distance." We did not fully realize how difficult it would be to travel from Lille to Strasbourg, specifically during the wintertime.

I don't think we were very good in geography. But we managed to do that for three years before we moved to the U.S., so we had an exciting relationship, even during the time where we were both working in very different cities in France.

WEISS: When you came to UCSD, is this something you solicited because you were interested in a particular professor and department here? Or how did you decide to do your post-doc here?

FERRÉ: In all honesty, no. The truth is, Magda and I really wanted to come to the U.S., to have this U.S. experience. We looked at different places. We wanted, first and foremost – because we were both in very rainy and cold places in France—a place with a lot of sunshine – of course, good science, but a lot of sunshine. So, we looked at the both coasts.

We were not ever interested in the center of the United States. There's nothing wrong with it, it's just we never really considered it. But we considered both coasts, and obviously, from Europe all the rage at the time was already California. So, we settled on California. Magda, in fact, was more interested in Northern California because she saw, rightly so, that it would be easier for her, with her education, to get a job. Genentech was already up and coming and other companies were also happening.

So, we looked at San Francisco, and then we also looked at San Diego, and we decided to settle in San Diego. I really wanted to get a good experience, so I contacted a couple of labs in the field I was interested in – which was oncology – and got a position at Dr. Gernot Walter's lab at UCSD.

WEISS: And say again the name of the professor at UCSD?

FERRÉ: Dr. Gernot Walter.

WEISS: Walter. And what did you do in that capacity?

FERRÉ: Well, I was hired as a post-doc to help him with discovering some interesting protein that he had found in his lab that could have some very important role into how a gene goes from normal to oncogenic. I was working on one of those proteins for a year or so before I left to go to industry.

WEISS: Dr. Marquet, maybe you can tell us. You come to San Diego and you know nobody. In one of the articles in one of the business journals said you come with no resume in hand. What did you expect and what did you want in terms of industry or an interest in academia? Did you know you wanted to go work in business?

MARQUET: Yes. So, let me go back a little bit if you don't mind, Helen. I always had this California dream, and don't ask me where it was coming from. I grew up in a very cold country with lots of snow, and I was hearing music from the '70s and '80s Beach Boys and The Eagles. I think I was influenced by California. I didn't know much about it, but I was influenced.

So, when I finished my Ph.D. – in fact, I was going to interviews with big pharma, and I remember that I was telling them that, "I want to go to the U.S. I want to go to California, and I wanted them to pay for a fellowship in the U.S." They would say, "Well, that's fine, but you need to work here for a couple of years and then, we'll see." So, I was a bit impatient. Then I went to Transgene, which had so many people from all over the world. I think this made this urge to go to the U.S. – and specifically, to the West Coast – even more clear.

François shared the same kind of interest. I started writing letters from so far away. I was responding to ads in magazines because this is how we were looking for jobs at the time. But, of course, who was going to pay for an entry level Ph.D. to fly from overseas for an interview in San Diego? Forget it.

So, then I thought, "Okay, well, I'm going to ask my professors, my bosses, to give me recommendation letters and then we'll just show up and we'll see." So, everyone was telling me, "You are nuts. You have a good job here." Sure, I had a good job. It was my first job, but I had a group of people reporting to me and I was doing interesting research.

I was working at a good company, and everyone was telling me, "You're not going to find a job there. No one will recognize your degree. You'll end up flipping burgers." I would say, "That's okay. I'll learn some English. I'll flip some burgers. I'll be back." So I did resign from my job at Transgene.

We got married in the summer of '86, and then people said, "One of the most stressful things that you could do is get married, move, and then find another job." So, we did that in three months or so. We came here, and we took one of these very inexpensive flights – charter flights – where we had to make sure that we had one piece of luggage. François was very good at discarding many things that we may not need. Then we had this crazy flight from Paris/Brussels, Brussels/Chicago, Chicago/San Francisco, San Francisco/San Diego – we were exhausted. Fortunately, a volunteer from UCSD Center for International Studies gave us a very warm welcome.

Her name was Bernie Miller – we owe her so much. Bernie Miller came to pick us up at the airport at 10:30 PM on December 16, 1986, with a sign with our names, and all the way, I was thinking, "Oh, we're not going to find anyone. We don't know a single person." But she was there and she was the most wonderful person. She was just great!

She took us to her home. It was the Holiday season. Bernie was very social, so she had parties at her house or she was inviting us to parties at her friends' house, and we were supposed to stay three days. That was what the contract with UCSD said.

But every time we said, "Okay. We have to go", she would say, "No. You have plenty of time." Then, when we were finding a small apartment, she would say, "No. This a bad neighborhood. You don't want to go there." "Yeah, but Bernie, we have to go. Look – it says three days." "No. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it."

So, in December, we spend time with this wonderful lady and her four sons and she was our American mom. We always think, if we didn't have such a warm welcome… For some reason – don't ask me why – we came to San Diego, we arrived at the airport and we felt at home. We felt like we've been here our whole lives. People are very friendly here.

Even when we were going to all these holiday parties, people were friendly and welcoming and curious and very helpful. That was already very reassuring. So, François went to UCSD, and then I went to see people that were recommended by my bosses or my professors, and started knocking on doors. I think what really helped me is that San Diego at the time – and still now – had a lot of basic scientists, but they didn't have much in terms of engineers or product developers or commercial scientists. I was one of them, and I went to this company, Syntro, and they gave me a great job and a visa and a green card.

And my boss, Chuck Richardson who became a good friend, living now in Montana, recently told me, "You know, I remember one day, I came to the office and you were there. It was before 8:00 in the morning, and you were sitting at the doorsteps with your resume in your hand." So, yes, I was pretty desperate and quite persistent I think, but somehow it worked… Then I went to an interview and they asked me to give a seminar. Oh my gosh!

At the time, we had transparencies. It was a one-hour seminar. I thought I would die. François was helping me the day before doing the slides. The transparencies were – you couldn't really make many changes, right? Not like a Power Point.

So, anyway, I survived. Then I got the job, and then after that, it's been one thing after the other. I've met wonderful people. From the beginning, there was a sense of welcome that I've never seen anywhere else, frankly.

WEISS: So, you stayed with Syntro for a couple of years. This is beginning in 1987, actually, when you started at Syntro?

MARQUET: Yes. I started in February of '87, and I stayed for two years, and then, with some people from Syntro, we started a company called Protein Polymer Technologies as a spin off from Syntro. It is interesting that early on, I had this entrepreneurial bug because we started this company. After that, I went to Amylin and then Vical and then we started Althea.

WEISS: To decide to become an entrepreneur at this point, what did you see around you happening in San Diego? Where were these companies? What were they doing? How did you decide to actually do that?

MARQUET: What, you mean, when we started Althea? Or before?

WEISS: When you started before, yes.

MARQUET: Well, it took so much effort, I think, for us to leave our family, to leave our country, to go into a place where we didn't know anyone – to even speak a different language. That, in a way, was liberating, I think, in a way. It's like, "Yeah, sure, I'll do that. And if I fail, well, that's okay." Maybe I wouldn't have done that in my own country, because I would have had my family and my friends and it would have been a little more complicated.

But, at the time, I think that I saw an opportunity. I saw a project that wasn't getting much attention and I thought, "Hey, why not? Let's give it a try."

FERRÉ: To your question also, I think that when we came here, one of the reasons that I didn't mention that we came here was one of my professor at Pasteur Institute had done, years before, a post-doc at UCLA. He was telling me, "François, don't make

the same mistake I made. Don't go to LA. No European will ever understand LA. Few Americans do. But you would be lost in LA."

“But there is this really interesting town south of LA that I've been a couple of times, and I had some colleague there that were working at UCSD and Scripps”. He knew I wanted to do biotechnology at the time – it was clear that we wanted to go down that path – and he was telling me, "Look. If you really want to explore that a bit as well, that could be interesting, because it's just emerging. There's very little there, but the foundation is quite good." He knew of the quality of the research of course, of t Salk Institute, Scripps and UCSD.

So, that was another reason why we came down here as well, to explore. I think when we came and decided to have jobs – we changed jobs quite frequently, at least in the beginning, to explore a bit more, and it was very obvious that at the end of the '80s, early '90s, this town was already buzzing in biotechnology. It was the beginning of something bigger, really. I mean, a number of startups – very exciting startups – were emerging like Vical, Amylin, and Immune Response Corporation – we'll talk about that in a minute – but those were really up and coming companies with a lot of potential. And so it was clear that we were in the right place at the right time.

MARQUET: And at the time, there was Hybritech, of course, which was the biggest company. But one of the things that always surprised me is that in the late '80s, even early '90s, when I was in a social gathering and I was saying I worked in biotech, I had to explain what it was. Now we go to a social event and people will say, "Oh, yeah. My brother works at one of the companies" or, "My neighbor works at another company in biotech."

So, people know because I think biotech now is a major presence in San Diego. When we came, it was more tourism, military. There was a bit in terms of life sciences, but you couldn't even compare to what it is now.

WEISS: How did you get investors interested at that point when everything was just emerging? You were young. You left your post-doc position, right? You decided to go. You left a company.

Did you put yourselves together with some of the other entrepreneurs here?

FERRÉ: So, we're not talking about Althea?

WEISS: Well, you mentioned Syntro, then you went to start at your own company, right?

FERRÉ: No. Let's differentiate this. Magda was involved with a startup that was part of Syntro. But we did many things after that before starting our own company. So, let me start talking about that first.

So, after a post-doc at UCSD, I went to a small lab called Cytometrics, which was a satellite of a bigger lab – a reference lab called Specialty Labs in Los Angeles, and got some training as a lab director, if you wish. First as a scientist at the bench, and then lab director at Cytometrics. And then because I gathered some real good expertise and experience in a very important technology called polymerase chain reaction, I was able to get the position at the Immune Response Corporation. That was a company founded by the late Jonas Salk and some people that were previously at Hybritech and other places such as Dennis Carlo and Jim Glavin.

And in this company, I stayed seven years and was really interested in developing an HIV vaccine. It was a therapeutic vaccine, not a prophylactic vaccine and that was a very interesting experience. I learned a lot about clinical development, what kind of tests are important, what to do and not to do. Unfortunately, we did a bit too much "not to do" and not enough what need to be done. But the story of our Immune Response is a whole story on its own.

But I just wanted to share that with you. These were very important years of formation for me, as a scientist, as somebody involved in clinical trials, clinical development on infectious disease such as HIV.

WEISS: Did you have any meetings with Dr. Salk directly?

FERRÉ: Yes. I worked with Jonas Salk for five years. He was an interesting character. I loved his drive, I loved his passion – unfortunately, I think he was a bit too driven to make sure that his vaccine would be approved by the FDA when he was still alive. I think he knew already, when we started working together, that his heart was getting weaker and weaker.

So, he was a bit too much in a hurry, pushing too hard, and so obviously, we never saw the vaccine. He died in '95 without seeing it and the company never succeeded either. So, you know, we'll never know if, at the end of the day, this was good enough

to be a vaccine. I felt that there were some other paths we could have taken that could have led to different outcomes. But again, we'll never know.

MARQUET: Well François, was at Immune Response, and I was at Vical at the time. Vical, for me, was a wonderful opportunity because it was a pioneering company in the fields of gene therapy and DNA vaccines. At the time, we were the first people to talk to the FDA on the development of a DNA vaccine. I was part of the team, so I really loved the fact that we were doing pioneering work. And there was a point where it was a collaboration with the agencies to really decide, "What should we be injecting into people?" Which was an interesting question with a lot of consequences, if you wish.

At the time, I got really interested in the field of gene therapy. When François was at Immune Response, he also was working on a project that was related to gene therapy. Both of us were big believers in this field and technology. We were turning 40 at that point and then we thought, "You know what? We should be really starting something together."

We love to always share our ideas or problems, so we were very close and always meeting for lunch or coffee or dinner and sharing everything. So, I said, "Why don't we start a company together?" And that was an interesting story, because, of course, as soon as we shared that with our friends, they were saying, "Why would you do that? That's stupid. I mean, husband and wife?

You have good jobs. Why would you do that? Maybe one should start the company and the other one – you know, when things get better, you go and join." We would say, "No, no, no, no. We want to do that together."

Actually, François started a little earlier. He started like, three months earlier, and I jumped in. But you were asking about investment – how did we do that. I think we were very lucky. We were very lucky because we had an idea, we had a dream – we wanted to start the company.

But we were working in companies already, so we didn't have any technology, intellectual property, anything that was really unique, right? But we had our skills, and we thought, "You know, we'll combine our skills." François is a basic researcher. He also has experience in clinical research. I'm more like a product development, manufacturing person, clinical development person.

Let's put these two skills together and create a company that really makes a difference in gene therapy, and with the idea to give all these new products to the patients faster. So, that's how we wanted to start the company at the beginning. Our investors – I'll let François talk about this – because that's really your story with Jim Glavin and how we managed to get him involved in the company.

FERRÉ: Yes. We were basically two scientists pursuing a dream, but we were aware enough at the time to realize that the story on our own, will be very difficult to sell. We were lucky to have great relationship with our two bosses at the time – Magda with the CEO of Vical, Alan Schreiber, and my relationship with Jim Glavin – at the time, was a chairman of Immune Response Corporation, and a very good friend, because we developed friendships through playing tennis. That's one of the big perks of this country – you can be a bench scientist in a company and still, on Saturday morning, go and play tennis with the CEO of the company. I don't think you would see that in many other places on Earth, but it's still the case in the U.S., which I think is wonderful.

We developed a great friendship with Jim and when we decided in early '97 with Magda that we wanted to start our company—we wanted to do that sooner rather than later – decided that although we're still employed with Immune Response, we talked to Jim about the potentiality. I think it was the May/June time frame. We already had some ideas on paper – not a business plan yet and so on so forth. After one of our wonderful tennis session, I mustered the courage to come to him and say, "Jim, I just wanted to share with you what we have in mind." And he was absolutely wonderful.

"This is great, François. We'd love for you to do that. I think the time for you is right." Just so encouraging. "I just want you, of course, to do that professionally with Immune Response."

He helped us and he said, "Look – if it comes to fruition and you really want to do it and you're ready to commit to it, I'll be happy to be your first investor and help you." And so Jim joined our board. So did Alan Schreiber, and Alan also invested. We were really blessed to have the support of people that knew us, trusted us as scientists, and knew, as well, that we would need a lot of help on the business side. So, that's how it started, and I think honestly, that gave us some credibility into our business strategy

– because we had the backing of two important people within the industry in San Diego.

Again, Alan Schreiber, at the time, was the CEO of Vical and Jim was the chairman of the Immune Response Corporation. That's how it all got started.

MARQUET: Yes, I think that is a very important part of starting a company. Just choose the right investors and the right people on the board, because that really can make a huge difference. Another person who really also made a huge difference is Tim Wollaeger. I mention that I was at Vical at the time, and the CFO of the company, Martha Demski one day called me into her office and said, "Hey, I heard that you're starting a company. Do you want to go to lunch?" And I said, "Sure."

When she called me I thought it's probably because I spent too much money in new equipment. But no. It was not that. So, we went to lunch, and she said, "Well, what do you have in terms of investors?" And so I say, "Well, we have Jim Glavin and Alain Schreiber committed and we have a couple more." Then she says, "Well, how about Tim Wollaeger?"

Tim Wollaeger at the time, was involved in all the major successes in town. He was very intimidating. Then I told Martha, "Well, no, no. We don't want big venture capitalists. This is just a small startup. I don't think we are ready to talk to Tim."

She said, "Well, if you want, I'll introduce you. He's a great guy and he will be good to meet him, even if you end up not getting him as an investor." So, she helped us, and then I talked to François and he said, "Fine." So, she did help us.

She prepared the meeting, and then we went and met with Tim Wollaeger. Tim is a very intuitive person. He makes decisions very quickly based on how he feels regarding a certain person. I think what he saw in us, you know, we were coming from a different country. We really had fire in the belly and we wanted to make it happen.

At the end of the meeting, he said, "Well, I would be happy to invest and I would be happy to join your board." We could not believe it! Tim was such a great addition to the company because he knew how to build successful companies. He'd been there before, and he knew that in the life of a company, you have lots of ups and downs,

and that you need to have the right investors and board members. He was really key to the success of the company.

WEISS: Well, before you then left Vical, you were credited with some novel methods for production of clinical grade DNA for use in gene therapy and DNA vaccines, so how much in the patenting process were you involved there? Was that your first patent? How did that translate into doing work later with your own companies that you founded?

MARQUET: When I was at Vical, there were a lot of opportunities to develop new techniques, right? Because DNA had been purified, made in a lab setting for many years, right? But in order to inject this in humans, you needed to have new methods and make sure that you couldn't inject anything that could be toxic, and also, you had methods that could be scaled up. So, I had lots of opportunities at Vical to help my team develop new methods for DNA production, and also to be involved in some other patents or just expression systems for DNA vaccines and other kind of products. So, it was really a good time, because the field was so new.

At the same time, these patents are the patents of Vical, so when we started the company, everything that we did had to be novel. But I think it gave us some credibility. The fact that we had publications, patents – it gave us some credibility.

WEISS: So, then maybe we could get a little bit into when you started your own company. Did you have any relationship with UCSD at the time? Did you try—because you felt you were so warmly welcome here when you first came—did you have a way to bring in post-docs from UCSD or other places? Or how big was the company? How many people were actually working there when you started off?

FERRÉ: Well, when we started off, we had very few people.

MARQUET: We started from scratch.

FERRÉ: We did hire from UCSD. But that's a very good point. UCSD has been a big part of the growth of Althea over the years because there's so much talent that come out. For a lot of people, it's a first job, and we had a lot of entry-level jobs at Althea as we grew the business. We were always so pleased to be so close to UCSD because the pool of talent was always there for us. So, over the years, we've been very lucky with a lot of great people coming out of UCSD for sure.

WEISS: Once you started Althea, what did it achieve in terms of what your initial goals were to start a company and what kind of culture? I've read that you both have wonderful relationships with your employees over the time. What did you do to create positive work in a research environment?

MARQUET: Thank you. I think that even before starting a company, I always was convinced that you achieve so much using your technical skills, but you really need to bring your people skills into the equation to build an organization. That could be a team or a group. In this case, it was a company. We always believed that the company would be as good as the people that we were able to attract, not just François and me.

We were just the beginning. We were the catalyzer, but again, we've always been very people oriented. I was mentioning that in the case of investors, board members. I think this is key. You need to have the right chemistry in the board room.

You have to make sure you have people that challenge you, but respect you, give you the opportunity to grow. Same thing with your employees. I think that I've been in many jobs where I wasn't motivated or I felt that I was using 20 percent of my skills because of whatever reason. When we started the company – I wanted to make sure that everyone coming there had an opportunity to grow, to express themselves, and then to really make it the company. So, that was something that was very clear to François and me since the beginning.

We were reading books. We had a coach. We were going to seminars. We always wanted to learn more in this arena, because in our field – in the biotech field – often, we're very, very focused on technology, and I think technology doesn't make a company. People do.

WEISS: In your view – question for both of you – who is responsible for making life sciences, biotech a priority for the city of San Diego or this area? Were there any people in particular?

MARQUET: Yes. I think Hybritech. Hybritech was really the starting point. I think that the founding of Hybritech created the seeds for everything else that has been happening ever since. Then, in addition to that, I would say it is the collaborative attitude of everyone involved in the life sciences community.

If you compare – there are three major clusters in the U.S. – Cambridge/Boston area, the Bay Area, and San Diego. San Diego is a place where people collaborate, where you have a lot more interactions. We were talking about UCSD, before. When I was head of BIOCOM – chair of BIOCOM – I could see also lots of collaboration, people that liked to create things in San Diego. But I think it started with Hybritech.

WEISS: Who were the other major players at the time that you were – were in competition with them? Or, you say "collaboration" – do you feel that your company was able to kind of fit in in a special way?

FERRÉ: Yes. At the time, when we started Althea in '98, we had a lot of competition in the big guys in terms of CROs and other players. But because we were specialized in gene therapy, we had no much competition in a direct space. We tried very hard to offer special skills, special tests that the field was really needing, and I think we succeeded in that until, of course, we had to adjust the business plan, business strategy. We haven't talked about that, but in 1999, in fact, we –

MARQUET: So, one year later.

FERRÉ: – one year later, we got hit with a major disaster in the field of gene therapy with the death of Jesse Gelsinger. That pretty much annihilated the whole field because it was so unexpected, and also, because his dad – Jesse's dad – became an incredible crusader against the space saying that we were not ready, that everybody involved in gene therapy were just cowboys. Right or wrong, he succeeded. I think that he had some very good points. At the same time, I think the whole negativity on gene therapy went overboard, if you wish, because of that.

That really slowed down the research in that space for many years. And now, of course, it's a space that's alive and kicking today, but for a good 5 to 10 years, it did impact the field in a very big way.

We had to reinvent ourselves fast and furious and that's one of the attributes, of course, of being able to pivot. We had, again, very bright people in our company that were able to help us redirect the energy of what we were doing and trying to regroup to be able to address other markets. And we did that successfully in 2000 and 2001.

But that was a pivotal moment in the life of Althea, because something that was completely out of our control did happen and we had to change course very, very quickly.

WEISS: Did your investors pull out of the company at that point because they thought maybe gene therapy was going – or were you able to transition enough that you said, "Well, this is going to be our new focus"? Did you have to get new investors? What was that whole climate like?

MARQUET: Good question.

FERRÉ: The investors were, indeed, concerned, but they also realized that we had the ability to pivot. So we did, and we communicated clearly with them what needed to happen. Obviously, we had contracts ongoing, so those were still running their course. What was more alarming was, for the growth of the company, how we were going to be able to continue to grow with a field that is disintegrating in front of you. But we were able to demonstrate to them that with the skills we had developed inside the company and the tool set we had, and so on, so forth, we were able to address all the markets pretty rapidly. We did that. So, it did not throw us tremendously. It was just lucky that we were able to pivot, despite the fact that again, the market we were going after disappeared under us.

WEISS: How many people did you have working with you at this time?

FERRÉ: I would say that in late '99 early 2000, we had 30 to 40, Magda?

MARQUET: Something like that. Yes.

FERRÉ: 30 to 40 people.

WEISS: Then, once you switched course and started doing other work – I just need a little bit more understanding of what that new direction was.

MARQUET: Yes. Then what we said, “Okay, what can we do? We have very talented people. What is it that we can do?" And we looked at the industry in general, and we saw a major shift in the fact that companies in biotech were not fully integrated anymore.

This was all the rage in the '80s when you were building a fully integrated company, which meant that you wanted to do everything from A to Z. In the late '90s, venture capitalists were not supporting this model anymore. They wanted more of a virtual model that was going to use contract manufacturing, contract services organizations, right? We thought, "Okay, we can play a role in contract services. We can help the industry grow by providing these very specialized services."

This is how we were able to regroup. Then also, we saw another major trend, which was the change in the pharmaceutical industry from small molecules to biologics. If you look at it now, I would say the majority of new products are biologics. There's been a dramatic change in pharma, so we decided to specialize in biologics. That was a good bet, because it's been growing and growing.

That was, I think, a good decision that we made at the time, and it's been better for us, also, because then it help us to expand the market and play in a different field. So, you asked the question before, "What were we thinking at the time and what did it become?" In a way, it's very different. But in a way, it's the same. When we started, we wanted a company that had products and services, to accelerate therapeutic development for the patient, right?

We took a lot of twists and turns, but, at the end of the day, we are a company that provides technologies and services to the pharmaceutical industry. I think in principle, it is what we wanted to do.

FERRÉ: I just want to also add that our ability to pivot the way we did was really, really connected – in a big way – with the people we hired. We were fortunate, with Magda, to come across a couple of people – some of them have worked with us in the past in other capacity, a couple of people we brought on board worked with me at the Immune Response Corporation – some of Magda's colleagues at Vical joined us. But we had for example, one of our key players, Rick Hancock – who became really the guy that ran the show later on in the life of Althea technologies. Rick was essential in our ability to pivot. I knew him – and Magda as well, from the Immune Response Corporation. He was very unique in his ability to make something out of nothing.

He was a magician – specifically in the field of vaccine manufacturing using mammalian cells. A very complex thing to do. Very few people are able to do that. Rick was always succeeding. So, knowing that we had this type of talent on our team,

helped us realize that, "Hey, we can make this happen. We can move into another direction."

I will always remember, at one point, in the growth of the company. Rick brought on the idea of shifting a bit, even more, the business saying, "Look – we're focusing on making biologics, but how about fill-finish? I know a lot of small companies that don't like to go to the big guys to do fill-finish. Why don't we contemplate that?" So, we looked at it. I could not say we did a huge market study, but we listened to our customers..

We went more on guts than anything else, which was also Rick's forte. But we contemplated that with Magda for a while, talking to a bunch of people, and came back to Rick and so on, and so forth. And we decided to move into that space, because we knew that if Rick recommended it and he has done some of that before a little bit, we would have a successful service, because he's so good at what he does. That is really how we were able to utilize the amazing talent pool that we had inside Althea to reinvent ourselves when we needed to and really be able to thrive at the end of the day. We had fantastic people with us.

WEISS: In terms of giving women opportunities – because you talked about your own initial experiences – did you make any special effort to try to make sure that there was recruiting of women at all different levels? And if so, how?

MARQUET: Sure. I think that when you are a woman in this position, you really want to make sure that you make a special effort to increase diversity. So, I think, yes, absolutely. I always encouraged young women in our staff to attend events at Athena, for example, because I think that one of the main reasons women are not as present as men in the industry is really because there is a lack of mentorship, a lack of education, a lack of networking between women and a lack of inspiring role models. So, I always encourage doing that, and we do have a lot of women in very key positions to this day at Althea. Sure. Absolutely!

WEISS: You were mentioning the Athena group and CONNECT at UCSD where you have affiliation with that. Is that one of the ways where the networking was done? Tell me just a little about that.

MARQUET: Well, Athena's an organization that really specializes on helping women. Athena was created at UCSD. It is an organization that trains and mentors, women in

tech and life sciences, I am still involved with this organization. I think it's great that women get encouraged to get mentoring and grow.

WEISS: How did Althea get its name?

MARQUET: Oh, that's a great story. Yes. When we wanted to start the company, of course we were looking at all kinds of names. Well, they had to have "gene" or "bio" right? And every time we liked a name, then it was taken.

It was just very difficult. So, we started to go in a completely different direction. Then we looked names in a flower book and found out that Althea meant "healing" in Greek. So, we thought, "Well, that's appropriate, because this is what we want to do." It's about healing after all. So, we were all happy about our name and everything and we talked to our board and then they say, "Why would you choose a name that you can't even pronounce?

Get rid of the 'H'". We said, "No, we can't do that. Then we will just get rid of the meaning as well." But that was the story. It was about HEALING, and we thought that was a nice connection with what we wanted to do.

WEISS: At a certain point, you started more companies. Althea had spinoffs? I don't know the exact business term to use.

MARQUET: Yes, you're absolutely right. We had these two backgrounds– François on gene quantification, myself on product development, manufacturing – at some point, we created something that was a reflection of what our backgrounds were. When you're a small startup, it's easy to do all kinds of things. But when you grow and you have to make a decision on which area you want to really bring specific talent on, you compete for resources.

At some point, we thought, "Well, we have a very interesting technology in the area of gene quantification, diagnostics, personalized medicine – maybe it would be a good idea to do a spinoff." That's AltheaDX right now. It was not a decision we took lightly. We looked at all kinds of different scenarios. We had very different opinions at the board level in terms of should we keep it together, should we spin it out.

We decided to spin it out mainly when we decided to take the other company – Althea Technologies – to the commercial level. When you go to commercial, it takes an amazing amount of resources. In fact, San Diego has maybe 600-700 companies in

life sciences, but the companies that are in the commercial field? You can count them on the hand. There's not too many of them.

WEISS: Do you need to pause for a second? I'll just pause and here we go.

So, now we're continuing to talk about Althea, your spinoff companies, and you were saying that there was only a handful of big companies here that really continue today, but there are many small companies. Do you have a feeling for how many companies actually are in San Diego in this arena?

MARQUET: Yes. I think that we have about 600-700 companies in life sciences in San Diego ranging from startups to large companies. But the majority of the companies are relatively small, I would say.

WEISS: The majority of the companies are located just in the area? Is it mostly here right near UCSD and also Sorrento Valley? Or where would you say the other companies are basing?

MARQUET: I think there's also a cluster in Carlsbad – North County – and then yes, Sorrento Valley, Mira Mesa, UTC area. And right now, there's some companies downtown as well.

WEISS: And how do these clusters function?

MARQUET: Well, I think it comes from the proximity to a research lab. I think that the fact that we have so many world-renowned research institutes on the Mesa here is really what created the first companies. So, you want to be closer to where the investigators are because at the beginning, it all starts with great science.

WEISS: Now are there people that you think are taking responsibility? Who do you see as the key leaders in the area to keep moving ahead with the life sciences?

MARQUET: I think BIOCOM. BIOCOM plays a huge role in being the leader to continue to create the cluster, make it stronger. So, what BIOCOM does is identify what companies need and at which stage. From the formation of a company to the needs that it takes when you go into the clinical arena, into the commercial arena, the regulatory affairs, the capital – there's so many aspects in growing a company.

There is also CONNECT, who is key in the startup stage. I think what they do with Springboard, with MIPs, is also very, very important, because they give entrepreneurs the tools, to prepare a pitch, to write the business plan, to go in front of investors. It's a very important thing. So, CONNECT is another one. Then, I think serial entrepreneurs also make a big difference.

People tend to want to keep being in San Diego, and they go from one company to another, but it's very rare – even when a biotech company is sold – it's rare to see the key executives leave San Diego. They usually stay and then they'll create ten more companies. That's what makes San Diego so successful. So, these people are also very, very key.

WEISS: You mentioned the three hubs in the U.S. now being Boston, and then Silicon Valley, and then here. Do you have any companies that just left San Diego for the Silicon Valley totally or pulled away to Boston and pulled out that you felt you really lost somebody that was key in this sector here?

MARQUET: Not specifically. Sometimes, companies get acquired. Let's say a company could get acquired like Amylin, for example, it got acquired by Bristol-Myers Squibb which is a pharma company based in New Jersey, but most of the key people from Amylin stayed and started new companies. That talent stayed. I don't think we lost much. I think we really created an even bigger talent pool.

WEISS: Then, at a certain point, you decided to sell your own company, Althea. What was the decision to do that?

MARQUET: Well, I think that as soon as you get investors in your company, you need an exit. You really need to make sure that it's not a lifestyle company – it's not just about François and me. But it was very clear that we have to give a return, to our investors, and to our employees and to everyone who's been in the company. So, it was a very difficult decision because the fact that we were together in Althea, it was a 24/7 effort. It was a very difficult decision.

Therefore, when we agreed to sell the company, we had very specific criteria for whoever the acquirer would be. We wanted a very simple thing: Everyone wins. It's not a situation where only one kind of investor wins and no one else. Every single person involved will win with this transaction: all employees and all investors.

And also, we're going to choose a partner who really takes what we created as a foundation for higher growth. So, they keep the team and they continue to build, because they have more financial means than we do, but we continue the story, we continue our vison. Those were the criteria we wanted with François. We were very clear with our board, and I think with Ajinomoto, we got that. They have been a terrific partner.

FERRÉ: Yes. To your question of why in 2013: I think the other reason is, that in any company, we have cycles of growth. We were getting into a level of revenue that was substantial, but we knew also, that to get to the next level, an enormous amount of capital would be needed. At the time, we started to have a little bit of fatigue on the investors that were with us, so it would have required getting new investors. It was a good time for us to transition, basically, because of all the reasons I mentioned. The life cycle of the company was at a very good time.

We were fortunate, again, that at the time, we needed really accelerated growth – like Magda said – to encounter a partner that we felt was ideal for what we wanted for the company. It's extremely rewarding to have now Althea still growing in San Diego, and with partners that have a long term vision, that want to really make a big story here. So it's been wonderful for us.

WEISS: As scientists, how much time did you feel like running Althea you were able to devote to new research versus having to do management and keep things going once the company started to grow?

MARQUET: You know, in a startup you have to do it all and do it all at the same time. You're wondering how it works at the end of the day, because you are wearing so many hats. I think management takes a lot of time. I mentioned before that people – the chemistry that you have, the culture – it's very, very important. But also, you need strong science.

You really need strong science. You need to make sure that you're the best in your field, because if not, you won't make it. So, you have to do all these things all together, which is not always easy.

WEISS: How much talent did you find yourself having? You mentioned UCSD had been essential because of the science, but were you having to compete to bring other talent from all different countries at a certain point?

MARQUET: We had to bring talent from different places in the U.S. mainly. We certainly did. We certainly did bring people from other places in the U.S., mainly in the area such as sales or marketing and commercial operations. Everything that's basic science, you have so much going on in San Diego. But in the early days– the commercial aspect – we had to go beyond San Diego.

WEISS: Before you sold the company, how much did you tap into research that was actually going on? It wasn't just bringing people in, but were you looking to work with different departments at UCSD to see what kind of research might be able to help your company expand or look into new kind of discoveries?

FERRÉ: We did that a little bit in the space of biomarker discovery. So, we talked to a number of investigators at UCSD, specifically in oncology, to see if we could develop some product together. So we had some varied discussion. I would say that we never really had an opportunity to go beyond the early discussion, because in the space of biomarkers what was always missing was clinical validation.

They have always been on the cutting edge of research, but there was not enough real clinical work happening at the highest level at UCSD to have critical mass in what we were doing. So, that was always a bit of a limiting factor. I think we are correcting that as we speak, but I believe the clinical aspect of the biotech in San Diego is still limited, and we are – I mean, Magda can tell you that more than I can but I think we are addressing this issue heads on.

MARQUET: Yes. I think that if I look at UCSD and the fact that yes, we have very close ties with UCSD – and we did from the beginning – but it's been mainly in terms of talent. Many of our talented employees came from UCSD Biological sciences and also from Rady School of Management. That has been key. In terms of scientific collaborations, I'm not happy to say that, but we had more with NIH or with University of Pennsylvania just because the kind of projects we were doing were closer to what they were doing as well. You have to look for the right fit.

WEISS: And how about the institute that you co-founded at Pitzer?

MARQUET: Our sons – we have two sons, Alex and Max. They are 27 and 23, and they were going to college at Pitzer in Claremont. We became acquainted with the faculty there, and then we connected with a gentleman called Larry Grill. Larry had been developing vaccines using plants and he had a collaboration with the University

of Botswana to develop this new method of vaccine production with plants that really would make such a big difference in terms of cost. So, we were very attracted to this idea, because I think in terms of global health, you need to really address cost.

We helped Larry start a center for vaccine development using plants. We went to Botswana to meet our partners and it was a very fun and interesting collaboration.

WEISS: How involved are you now in the collaboration?

MARQUET: Now, we are not as involved. This project moved within the Claremont campus. It moved to the Keck Graduate Institute and the clinical studies look very promising. We are glad we initiated this endeavor.

WEISS: But you're both very involved in many activities that you've outlined – among these, the UCSD Moores Cancer Center. So, tell me a little bit about your work with that.

MARQUET: Sure. I just started as chair of the UCSD Moores Cancer Center Board of Visitors three weeks ago, and it's just fascinating what's going on there. It's absolutely first class. I really think that Dr. Scott Lippman is a wonderful physician.

He puts his heart and soul in creating one of the top cancer research centers in the U.S. In terms of the kind of people that are part of the cancer center, it's amazing. Not just intellectually, best doctors in the country, but the care, the patient experience, the whole staff, the infrastructure – it's an amazing place. So, I'll try to do whatever I can to really help all of them get to where they want to be, but I think that it's just one example of what UCSD can do. It is impressive.

For me, it's hard to keep up with everything that's going on there. . And everywhere I go at UCSD, I say the same thing because it's amazing. I'm very excited about that.

WEISS: Your many other activities? What else keeps you, in a way, positive looking toward new projects?

MARQUET: Well, I think that we have two kinds of activities. One is all the entrepreneurial activities that we have, and the other one is the non-profit involvement. I think it comes from the fact that we realize that we came to San Diego without knowing anyone, and the fact that where we are now is some kind of miracle.

We're not here just because of us, but because of the many, many, many people who helped us along the way. So, giving back is important to us.

We want to be involved with organizations that help San Diego – the UCSD Moores Cancer Center is one example. Or the Economic Development Corporation – what can we do to really make sure San Diego is the best that it can be? Or BIOCOM, or any other organization that we're involved with. It's really with the idea to give back to San Diego. Then Alma Life Sciences is really helping entrepreneurs with mentoring or initial financing and anything that we can do to help them create a successful company. We want to make a difference in a positive way.

Also, because we like to learn new things and meet interesting people, we have curious minds and we don't like to be bored. That's our idea of fun.

FERRÉ: Yes. I think that one aspect of what we're doing right now – which is being quite involved in growing young companies in our space – and right now, we're really interested in trying to change the paradigm of healthcare in this country. And it's tough. We still struggle to change mentalities in the way of looking at the world. One of the things that we know is that the pace of healthcare costs increases is unsustainable.

We're going to go broke before 2035 or sooner at the pace we're going. So, we recognized that with Magda some years ago, and also, because of our interest in well-being and health and, we've been focusing on companies that are basically interested in preventive care. We feel that there's a big future in these area. Unfortunately, it's not necessarily right now the most rewarding financially, because there's been a lot of challenges in diagnostics. Last year was a disaster year for the space of diagnostics.

Regardless we strongly believe that prevention is the future of healthcare. We've got to really, really focus much more on prevention. Other things worth mentioning is that we are both involved with the Chopra Foundation because Deepak Chopra is really interested in moving into well-being big time, and we really want to have a big impact in this area. We are focusing on that as well. One other comment I want to make on Alma and the fact that we've been working with so many entrepreneurs in San Diego – it has been rewarding at some levels.

At other level, it's been a big learning curve for us and a big lesson, because it is very difficult, and I think that we took on a lot of mentoring a lot of risks trying to help

financially. Clearly, it's always exciting to get to a new idea from an entrepreneur. It's much more difficult and it's very hard work to grow the company and to go through the different transition phases, specifically when you start developing a real strong relationship with the entrepreneur, and that entrepreneur doesn't work out anymore. Those are tough times because they became your friends and you have to separate friendship and business somehow.

That's a big lesson we are learning with Magda here in trying to help entrepreneurs – very few people are really gifted from the beginning of the company to drive the whole process to an exit for investors.

So, we have had real joy in creating companies with people and then helping them, but we also have to be really honest with you–we have had some real pains as well in the process over the last few of years.

MARQUET: I always compare young startups to babies. I love babies and when you see a startup, it's like a baby. I love them all. You know, all of them are great, full of potential and with smiley faces.

But which baby will make it to college and will become a successful and happy adult? It's not easy. It's the same for early stage companies. Some of them just won't make it. It's a numbers game. Also, I think that if I reflect on my journey of entrepreneurship, what I love the most is really the fact that it's been such an opportunity for personal growth. Because you have to learn about yourself. You have to face your fears, your own limitations and learn from your mistakes. You also have to take full responsibility for every single thing, good or bad.

Also, like François said, when you see the growth of a company, it's like the growth of a child. A child will need many different types of caregivers and teachers: from a kindergarten teacher or a college professor. These teachers have very different skills. The growth of a company, also requires many different skills along the way, because like François said, it's very rare to find entrepreneurs that can grow with the company and then be good at all these different roles.

So, for me, the Althea experience has been very rewarding. The fact that we did this together – it's really unique. It could have been a disaster, when you think about it. It's been really a fun experience. I've learned so much about myself, develop many wonderful friendships along the way and I think I became a different person.

FERRÉ: I want to add that what we just said about entrepreneurs also applies to us. After driving Althea for ten years, we realized that we were not the ones that should be driving the bus anymore. We could probably find a talented executive who had better skills to grow Althea to the next phase. We'd got challenged in finding the right leader to do that, but that was the right call. I mean, we were close to the limit of what we could provide for the growth of the company, but we were fortunate to – again, reflecting on it together on a daily basis, we were able to recognize that we needed somebody else at the helm to help us grow to the next level.

When we came to the board, I still remember that. And our new investors – we've got investors back in 2006, and we came to them in the spring of 2007 to let them know already of our interest to really find some new leadership. They were not really excited about that. They were betting on us, but we told them, "Look, it will be much better for the company, for all the stakeholders, if we step down as the co-CEOs of the company" – at the time we were co-CEOs – "we would still be, of course, involved at the board level and so on and so forth, but we want a new leadership." They were really surprised.

So, we already understood that there is a transition that needs to happen. Again, there's very, very few Bill Gates in the world, and so it does matter that you can see – like Magda said – because of the work you do on yourself, you can see your own limitations.

But it also been very rewarding, so I don't want to just say that it's been tough. It's just also been very rewarding. Like Magda said, at the end of the day, what we're trying to do as well is continue to grow ourselves as hopefully, better human beings – human beings that can really continue to contribute in any way we can to this community that we cherish so much.

WEISS: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Ferré and Dr. Marquet. I appreciate so much your time, on behalf of the San Diego Technology Archive, for being willing to participate in this interview today and your ongoing involvement in the community.

MARQUET: Thank you very much, Helen. It's been a pleasure.

FERRÉ: Thank you.

END INTERVIEW

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The San Diego Technology Archive (SDTA), an initiative of the UC San Diego Library**,** documents the history, formation, and evolution of the companies that formed the San Diego region's high-tech cluster, beginning in 1965. The SDTA captures the vision, strategic thinking, and recollections of key technology and business founders, entrepreneurs, academics, venture capitalists, early employees, and service providers, many of whom figured prominently in the development of San Diego's dynamic technology cluster. As these individuals articulate and comment on their contributions, innovations, and entrepreneurial trajectories, a rich living history emerges about the extraordinarily synergistic academic and commercial collaborations that distinguish the San Diego technology community.