

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

W. H. CLARK, JR.

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

Chicago, Illinois

on

8 November 1994

(With Subsequent Additions and Corrections)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This oral history is one in a series initiated by the Chemical Heritage Foundation, on behalf of the Society of Chemical Industry (American Section). The series documents the personal perspectives of Perkin and the Chemical Industry Award recipients and records the human dimensions of the growth of the chemical sciences and chemical process industries during the twentieth century.

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CLARK #0110

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W. H. Clark, Jr.
W. H. Clark, Jr.

(Date)

Oct 12 1996

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W. H. Clark
W. H. Clark

(Date) _____

Nov. 8 1994

(Revised 17 March 1993)

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Oral History Program
315 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106



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W. H. CLARK

1932 Born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, on 18 June

Education

1956 B.S., industrial engineering, North Carolina State University
1957-1958 Cleveland-Marshall Law School, Northwestern University
1977 Stanford University Executive Program

Professional Experience

1956-1960 Sales Engineer, Standard Oil of Ohio [SOHIO]
Nalco Chemical Company
1960-1964 District Representative, Industrial Division, Houston
1964-1967 Area Manager, Houston
1967-1968 District Manager, Wisconsin District
1968-1971 District Manager, Michigan District
1971-1974 Sales Manager, Water Treatment Chemicals Group
1974-1978 General Manager, Water Treatment Chemicals Group
1978-1982 Group Vice President; President, Industrial Division
1980-1994 Member, Board of Directors
1982-1982 Executive Vice President, Domestic Operations
1982-1990 President
1982-1994 Chief Executive Officer
1984-1994 Chairman, Board of Directors
1994 Retired

Honors

1993 Chemical Industry Medal, Society of Chemical Industry
1993 Distinguished Engineering Graduate, North Carolina State University
1990 Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration, North Central College

ABSTRACT

W. H. Clark begins this interview by reviewing his growing-up years in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, and his early interest in journalism. He continues with his subsequent decision to major in industrial engineering at North Carolina State University, where he became interested in technical selling. He then discusses his first job at SOHIO as a sales engineer and his move to Nalco Chemical Company, where he spent the rest of his career. He describes his early experiences at Nalco, as well as the role Nalco's technical salespeople play in meeting customer needs and inventing new products. As the just-retired CEO, he discusses chemical industry changes and their impact on the chemical industry: most notably the environmental movement, Bhopal, and today's government regulations. He further presents his views on promoting successful creativity, innovation, and teamwork; management-employee relations; communicating company goals to outside audiences; and sales and management opportunities. He then discusses his current project, helping set up technical selling training programs in U.S. universities. He closes with his views on the future of chemical innovation in this country.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning is Professor of Chemistry Emeritus at Wilkes University, where he was a faculty member from 1959 to 1990. He served there as chemistry department chair from 1970 to 1986 and environmental science department chair from 1987 to 1990. He was chair of the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry in 1986, received the Division's outstanding paper award in 1989, and presented more than twenty-five papers before the Division at national meetings of the Society. He has been on the advisory committee of the Society's National Historic Chemical Landmarks committee since its inception in 1992. He developed the oral history program of the Chemical Heritage Foundation beginning in 1985, and was the Foundation's Director of Oral History from 1990 to 1995. He currently writes for the American Chemical Society News Service.

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2. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1962).
3. William Wishnick, interview by James J. Bohning in New York City, 13 May 1991 (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, Oral History Transcript #0093).

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