CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

JEFFREY M. LIPTON

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

Ron Reynolds

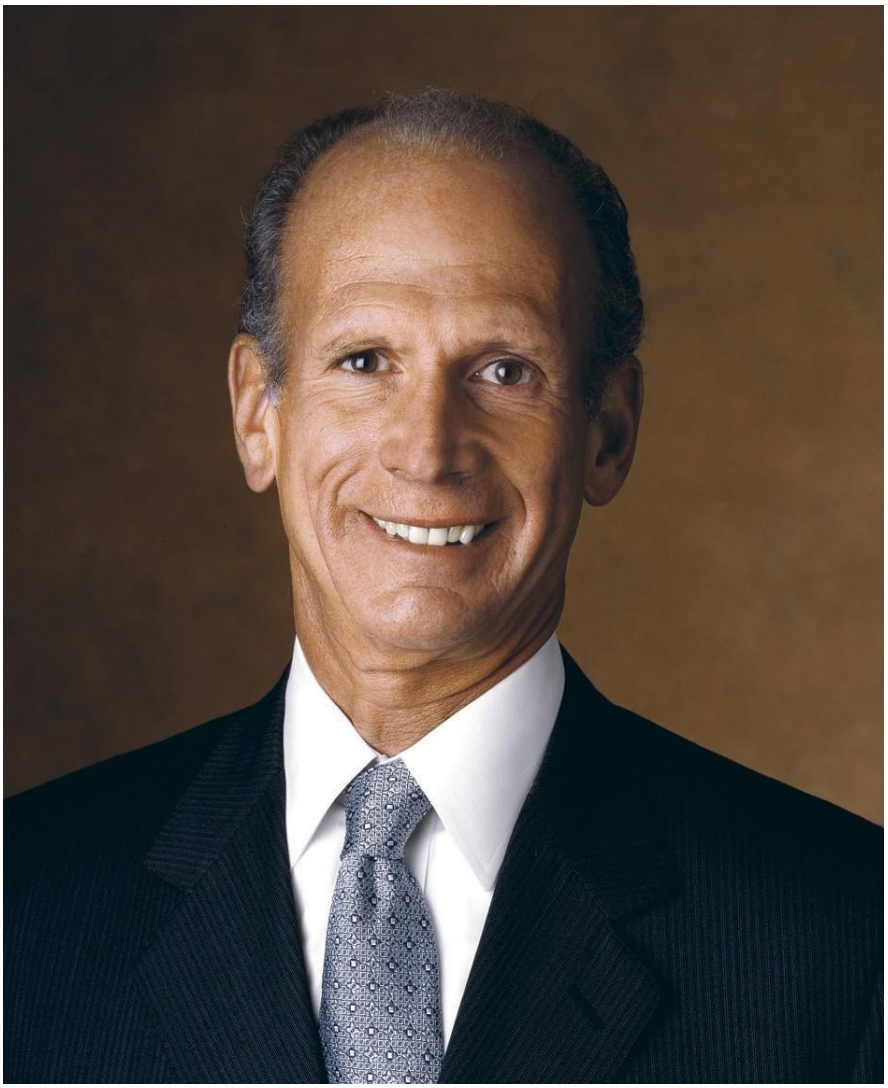
at

Sewickley, Pennsylvania

on

4 and 12 August 2009

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)



Jeffrey M. Lipton

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 the 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.

This project is made possible through the generosity of the Society of Chemical Industry (American Section) member companies.

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Oral History Program
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Chemical Heritage Foundation
Oral History Program
315 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

JEFFREY M. LIPTON

1942 Born in Bronx, New York on 5 July

Education

1963 B.S., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Chemical Engineering
1965 MBA, Harvard Business School

Professional Experience

E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company
1965-1966 Foreman, Pigments Plant, Newark, Delaware
1966-1967 Area Supervisor and Plant Superintendant, Pigments Plant, Newport, Delaware
1968-1993 Various positions, Wilmington, Delaware
- Manager, Mineral Sands
- Business Manager, Color Pigments
- Purchasing Manager (3 positions)
- Director of Development Division
- General Director, X-ray Film and Printing Films

Chief Operating Officer, New England Nuclear, Boston, Massachusetts
Vice President and General Manager, Polymers,Wilmington, Delaware
1993 Vice President, Corporate Planning, M&A, and Cost Reduction, Wilmington, Delaware

NOVA Corporation
1994 Chief Financial Officer and Senior Vice President, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
1995-1998 President and Chief Operating Officer

NOVA Chemicals Corporation
1998-2009 Chief Executive Officer

Honors

2007 International Palladium Medal, Société de Chimie Industrielle (American Section)

2008	Tree of Life Award, Jewish National Fund
2009	Chemical Industry Medal, Society of Chemical Industry

Corporate Board Memberships

NOVA Corporation
NOVA Chemical Corporation
Trimeris
Hercules Chemicals
U.S. Steel

ABSTRACT

Jeffrey M. Lipton was born and raised in Bronx, New York, the son of a Polish immigrant. Although trained as an accountant, Lipton's father could not find work in that field and took a position in his father's (Lipton's grandfather's) grocery store along with, eventually, Lipton's mother. There were a number of formative educational experiences during Lipton's childhood, including his time at PS-102 and his high school education at the Bronx High School of Science. Competition at his high school, as well as, as he notes, the juxtaposition between his own working-class look and background and the largely "preppy" student body, shaped his educational experience. He matriculated at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he majored in chemical engineering and was active in school politics. A job at Tidewater Oil Company during the summer after his junior year rejuvenated Lipton's interest in his chemical engineering curriculum. After his senior year, he sought out another summer job, and happened upon the DuPont Company color pigments plant in Newark, New Jersey. Lipton took a position in scheduling, the first of dozens of positions in his career at DuPont. Meanwhile, he began attending Harvard Business School, where he sought to build up his leadership skills and focused on marketing and the acquisition and management of new and small businesses.

After receiving his MBA, Lipton remained in pigments at DuPont, moving to the pigments plant in Newport, Delaware. After two invitations to join sales, he acquiesced, tackling his first job at the Wilmington, Delaware headquarters: creating a new use and business for tailings from a DuPont ilmenite mine in Florida. After his success, the company called upon him for various other projects and roles, and at age twenty-nine Lipton was named business manager and head of marketing of color pigments. With this new title, he prioritized sales of pigments, but was soon called to the purchasing department. DuPont then acquired Conoco, a decision with which Lipton disagreed, though a decision that also allowed him to interact with then-CEO Irving Shapiro. DuPont called on Lipton to take on further management positions, including director of the development division, head of the photo products division, COO of New England Nuclear (a DuPont acquisition), and manager of the polymers division. In this section of the interview, Lipton discussed his various projects in each of the aforementioned areas, as well as the international nature of the polymer business and his contact with former DuPont CEO Ed Woolard. Finally, Lipton moved to the planning division, where, in the search for methods of cost reduction, he developed and utilized cash flow cycle time to analyze the company. He concluded his discussion on his lengthy career at DuPont by reflecting on the evolution of the company, the company's complexity, and the way in which his business school training affected his tenure at DuPont.

Lipton detailed his transition from DuPont to Nova Chemicals Corporation, which he joined as a CFO. He explained his recruitment to the company, as well as the company's history, including the spinoff of Nova Chemicals, and his involvement in Nova's styrene and polystyrene businesses. Lipton steered the company through the commodity chemicals industry difficulties of 2001, and, after noting the various consolidation and joint venture efforts along the way, spoke about the 2008 and 2009 industry issues, including the loss of financial system support and the initial talks with Abu Dhabi firm IPIC. The interview concluded with Lipton talking about some broader industry themes including: how the chemical commodity industry might evolve; the possibilities for United States chemical companies and shale gas; and the role good board members, who are increasingly difficult to recruit, play in major companies in the

industry; and his own growth in management, as well as individuals who have influenced him during his career.

INTERVIEWER

Ron Reynolds is currently the director of the Center for Contemporary History and Policy at CHF. Before joining the organization, he spent a long career in the refining and chemical industry with a broad range of responsibilities that included research, manufacturing, logistics, and business development. He holds a B.S. in chemical engineering from Lafayette College, an M.S. in chemical engineering from the University of Massachusetts, and an M.S. in environmental engineering from Drexel University. His current research focuses on how policy decisions are made in areas of complex and evolving technological systems, such as energy and climate change.

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