

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PHILIP E. EATON

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James G. Traynham

at

Chicago, Illinois

on

22 January 1997

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

Philip Eaton

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program
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PHILIP E. EATON

1936 Born in Brooklyn, New York, on 2 June

Education

1957 B.A., chemistry, Princeton University
1960 M.A., chemistry, Harvard University
1961 Ph.D., chemistry, Harvard University

Professional Experience

1960-1962 Assistant Professor, University of California at Berkeley

 The University of Chicago

1962-1965 Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry

1965-1972 Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry

1972-present Professor, Department of Chemistry

1963-1969 Research Fellow, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

1983-present President, Eaton Associates

1965-1977 Consultant, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc.

1968-1972 Consultant, National Institutes of Health

1983-1989 Consultant, Dow Chemical Company

1984-present Consultant, U. S. Army ARDEC

1985-1994 Consultant, Enichem Synthesis

1986-1991 Consultant, Fluorochem, Inc.

1996-present

1986-1991 Consultant, SRI International

1988-present Consultant, Geo-Centers, Inc.

1990-1991 Consultant, Displaytech Corporation

1992-1995	Consultant, Steroids, Ltd.
1996-1997	Consultant, DAS Group, Inc.
1998-present	Consultant, Eastman Chemical

Honors

1963	Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellow
1975	Research Award, Rohm & Haas Company
1985	Alexander von Humboldt Prize
1995	Alan Berman Research Publication Award, Naval Research Laboratory, U.S. Navy
1997	Arthur C. Cope Scholar Award, American Chemical Society

ABSTRACT

Philip Eaton begins the interview with a description of his childhood, parents, and early education in Brooklyn, New York. At age seven, Eaton and his family relocated to Budd Lake, New Jersey, where he attended Roxbury Grammar School and later Roxbury High School. Eaton displayed a great interest in science during his high-school years, and his parents' and teachers' encouragement strengthened his desire to major in chemistry. He attended Princeton University, receiving his B.A. in 1957. After graduating from Princeton, Eaton attended Harvard University for both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. While at Princeton and Harvard, Eaton worked during the summers at Allied Chemical, where his group leader, Everett Gilbert, had a profound effect on his career. There, he first became involved with cage chemistry, specifically Kepone. In his final years as a graduate student at Harvard, Eaton accepted a postdoctoral assistant professorship at the University of California, Berkeley. There he taught introductory organic chemistry with Melvin Calvin. In 1962, he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago, where he remains a professor today. Shortly after his arrival at Chicago, Eaton began researching chlorocarbon compounds, which led him to cubane synthesis. With the assistance of his postdocs, Eaton synthesized on several other cubane-based compounds. Other projects included photochemistry work and dodecahedrane synthesis. Eaton's students praised his teaching methods and his dedication to excellence in education. His research accomplishments have earned him several awards, including the Humboldt Award and the Arthur C. Cope Scholar Award. Eaton concludes the interview with a discussion on the future of scientific research, maintaining excellence in chemistry education and research, and thoughts on his wife, Phyllis.

INTERVIEWER

James G. Traynham is a Professor of Chemistry at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. He holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Northwestern University. He joined Louisiana State University in 1963 and served as chemistry department chairperson from 1968 to 1973. He was chairman of the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry in 1988 and is currently councilor of the Baton Rouge section of the American Chemical Society. He was a member of the American Chemical Society's Joint-Board Council on Chemistry and Public Affairs, as well as a member of the Society's Committees on Science, Chemical Education, and Organic Chemistry Nomenclature. He has written over ninety publications, including a book on organic nomenclature and a book on the history of organic chemistry.

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11	University of Chicago	Leaving University of California for the University of Chicago. Michael J.S. Dewar. Quadrupole spectroscopy. Cage compounds. Cubane research and synthesis. Thomas W. Cole, Jr.
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2. Philip E. Eaton, "Isomerizations in the Dicyclopentadiene Series; Accelerations of the Diels-Alder Reaction by Aluminum Chloride; and Studies in the Chemistry of Perchloro Compounds" (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961).
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4. John Horgan, *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age* (Reading, MA: Helix Books/Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1996).
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