

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

ALLISON A. ALDRIDGE

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Jeannette E. Brown

at

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Atlanta, Georgia

on

25 August 2004 and 23 August 2009

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This oral history is one in a series initiated both by the Chemical Heritage Foundation and the Iowa State University Library. The series documents the personal perspectives of women in chemistry, and records the human dimensions of their involvement in academic, industrial, and governmental laboratories during the twentieth century.

This project is made possible through the generous support of the
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ALLISON A. ALDRIDGE

1961 Born in Ottawa, Kansas, on 11 October

Education

1983 B.S., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
1998 Ph.D., Analytical Chemistry, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois

Professional Experience

1984-1993 Hercules Aerospace, Inc.
Senior Environmental Technician; QA Technician

1997-2000 Unilever HPC USA, Rolling Meadows, Illinois
Senior R&D Scientist

2000-2005 Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, Illinois
Associate Research Investigator; Senior Research &
Development Scientist

2005-2009 Mikart, Inc. Atlanta, Georgia
R&D Analytical Manager; R&D Analytical Supervisor;
Senior Scientist

2009 Revogenex, Inc., Winder, GA
Manager of Analytical Services

2009-2011 Speed Laboratory, Inc.
Director of Analytical Services

2011-present U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Interdisciplinary Scientist-Chemist

ABSTRACT

Allison A. Aldridge calls Ottawa, Kansas, her home town. Her father was in the Air Force, her mother worked in industry; and she has three brothers. When she was young, Aldridge wanted to be a veterinarian, but dealing with dead animals in college changed her mind. She attended the University of Illinois as an undergraduate, majoring in biology and taking many courses in chemistry. She then began a job in quality assurance at Hercules Aerospace, Inc. A friend there encouraged her to seek an advanced degree, and she began to take classes to meet the requirements for graduate school. She was accepted into the PhD program in chemistry at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, where she wrote a two-part thesis with two advisors.

Degree in hand, Aldridge accepted a senior scientist job at Unilever, where she stayed for about three years. From there she went to Abbott Laboratories, working in late-stage analysis, then in the more interesting early-stage. At Abbott she joined two affinity groups, which trained, mentored, and supported their members. From Abbott Aldridge moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to Mikart, Inc. Besides Georgia's climate (especially after Chicago's), one of Mikart's attractions was that it had five of the first ten ultra high performance liquid chromatography systems; "small pharma" was also attractive to Aldridge.

The second part of Dr. Aldridge's interview takes place about five years after the first. In it she recounts her career since the first interview. She moved from Mikart to Revogenex, Inc., in Winder, Georgia, as Manager of Analytical Services, and then became Director of Analytical Services at Speed Laboratory, Inc. Dr. Aldridge was also Chair of the Committee on Minority Affairs at the American Chemical Society.

At the end of the interview, Aldridge advises young would-be chemists to have a passion for the science; to work hard; to develop themselves; always to question things; and to build networks as they go along. For herself she contemplates perhaps returning to academia, as she misses the joy of teaching.

INTERVIEWER

Jeannette E. Brown has a research MS degree from the University of Minnesota and a BS degree in the Field of Chemistry from Hunter College. She started her industrial career at CIBA Pharmaceutical Co. as a junior chemist, working there for eleven years, and she held the position of Research Chemist at Merck & Co. Inc. for twenty-five years. Brown is a former Faculty Associate in the department of Pre-College Programs at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, holding the title of New Jersey Statewide Systemic Initiative (NJSSI) Regional Director. She was appointed to the National Science Foundation Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women Minorities and Persons with Disabilities (CEOSE) and served on that committee for six years. She is the 2005 recipient of the American Chemical Society Dreyfus Award for mentoring minorities in science and she is currently working on a book about the history of African-American women chemists.

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