

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

WILLIAM JOHN BAILEY

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

The University of Maryland

on

3 June 1986

William J.

Bailey

JH

3/15/96

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WILLIAM J. BAILEY

1921 Born in East Grand Forks, Minnesota on 11 August
1989 Died in Honolulu, Hawaii on 17 December

Education

1943 B.Chem., University of Minnesota
1946 Ph.D., University of Illinois

Professional Employment

1946-1947 Arthur D. Little Postdoctoral Fellow, Massachusetts
Institute of Technology

Wayne State University

1947-1949 Assistant Professor of Chemistry
1949-1951 Associate Professor of Chemistry

1951-1989 Research Professor, University of Maryland, College
Park

Honors

1955 Fatty Acid Producers Research Award
1968 Service Award, Washington Section, American Chemical
Society
1970 Welch Foundation Lecturer
1971 Research Award, Gulf Oil Foundation
1975 Honor Scroll, District of Columbia Chapter, American
Institute of Chemists
1975 President, American Chemical Society
1976 Outstanding Achievement Award, University of
Minnesota
1976 Rauscher Memorial Lecturer, Rensselaer Polytechnic
Institute
1977 Polymer Chemistry Award, American Chemical Society
1979 Scientific Achievement Award, University of Maryland
Chapter, Sigma Xi
1983 Gossett Award Lecturer, North Carolina State
University
1984 Mobay Award Lecturer, College of Charleston
1984 Hillebrand Prize, Chemical Society of Washington
1986 Applied Polymer Science Award, American Chemical
Society
1988 Henry Hill Award, American Chemical Society

ABSTRACT

The late Bill Bailey starts the interview by describing his upbringing in rural Minnesota, where his family operated a small lumber business. An outstanding high school teacher sparked Bailey's interest in science, which became focused on chemistry during his undergraduate studies at the University of Minnesota, where Lee Irving Smith was a major influence. Indeed, Smith was largely responsible for Bailey's move to Illinois for graduate work with Speed Marvel and research on polymer synthesis. After a year at MIT as postdoctoral assistant to Cope, William Bailey started his teaching career at Wayne University; here he started his noted combination of organic and polymer chemistry. Five years after going to Detroit, Bailey accepted a research professorship at the University of Maryland where he spent the rest of his career. The interview concludes with an account of Bailey's long involvement with the American Chemical Society, including his presidency in 1975, and his thoughts on the current image of chemistry.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning, Assistant Director for Oral History at the Beckman Center, holds the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in chemistry. He was a member of the chemistry faculty at Wilkes University from 1959 until 1990, where he served as chair of the Chemistry Department for sixteen years, and chair of the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department for three years. He was Chair of the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society in 1987, and has been associated with the development and management of the Center's oral history program since 1985.

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