

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

DAVID R. BRYANT

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James G. Traynham

in

South Charleston, West Virginia

on

8 April 1998

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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DAVID R. BRYANT

1936 Born in Greensboro, North Carolina on 8 May

Education

1958 B.S., chemistry and math, Wake Forest University
1961 Ph.D., organic chemistry, Duke University

Professional Experience

	Union Carbide Corporation
1961-1967	Senior Chemist
1967-1975	Research Scientist
1975-1979	Senior Research Scientist
1984-1987	Corporate Fellow
1987-present	Senior Corporate Fellow

Honors

1989 Chemical Pioneer Award, American Institute of Chemists
1990 Honorary D.Sc., Wake Forest University
1992 Industrial Chemistry Award, American Chemical Society
1993 Carothers Award
1998 Perkin Medal, Society of Chemical Industry (American Section)

ABSTRACT

David Bryant begins the interview with a discussion of his childhood. Bryant was one of seven children and grew up in North Carolina. He began working at age ten, and held various jobs until he earned a scholarship to Wake Forest University. Influenced by his high school science teacher, Bryant double-majored in chemistry and math. While at Wake Forest, he became a lab assistant, and conducted some synthetic research. After receiving his B.S. in 1958, Bryant decided to attend graduate school at Duke University. Focusing on organic chemistry, he worked on the conversion of organic compounds into dianions under Charlie Hauser. Bryant earned his Ph.D. in 1961 and immediately took a job with Union Carbide Corporation. He worked on developing a method of producing vinyl acetate without halide, and later worked with benzyl acetate, acrylic acid, and rhodium triphenylphosphite in the Oxo process. In the 1970s, Bryant became involved in the scientific side of intellectual property disputes for Union Carbide. Bryant concludes the interview with comments on the nature of industrial research and development, the difficulties of government regulation, and his approaching retirement in 2000.

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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