

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

ELIZABETH DYER

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Herman Skolnik

in

Hockessin, Delaware

on

13 October 1986

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

Oral History Program

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Elizabeth Dyer
Elizabeth Dyer

(Date)

Sept. 6, 1988

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ELIZABETH DYER

1906 Born in Haverill, Massachusetts on 10 May

Education

1927 B.A., chemistry, Mount Holyoke College
1929 M.A., chemistry, Mount Holyoke College
1931 Ph.D., chemistry, Yale University
1931-1933 Postdoctoral Fellow, Yale University

Professional Experience

University of Delaware, Department of Chemistry
1933-1940 Instructor
1940-1947 Assistant Professor
1947-1951 Associate Professor
1951-1971 Professor
1971- Professor Emeritus

Honors

1958 Excellence in Teaching Award, Manufacturing
Chemist's Association
1969 Excellence in Teaching Award, University of
Delaware
1971 Elizabeth Dyer Teaching Award established for
graduate assistants in chemistry, University
of Delaware

ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Dyer recounts her childhood in Haverhill, Massachusetts and entering Mount Holyoke College at the age of seventeen. There she was influenced by two outstanding teachers, Louisa Stevenson and Dorothy Hahn, which led, first to a major in chemistry, and then to the M.A. degree. It was at Mount Holyoke that Dyer had her first experience of teaching chemistry before she moved to Yale for Ph.D. studies, and later post-doctoral work, researching heterocyclic chemistry under the guidance of Treat B. Johnson. In 1933 Elizabeth Dyer accepted an instructorship at the Women's College, University of Delaware, where she was to remain for the rest of her career. She discusses her early years there before the merger of the Women's and Men's Colleges and recounts her sabbatical year working with George Barger at the University of Edinburgh. In 1943 she commenced her research studies in polymer chemistry, largely at the suggestion of the Armstrong Cork Company. She describes her linoleate copolymerization work and her later polyurethane studies. As a consequence of the new research initiative, Dyer set up courses in polymer chemistry, some of the earliest after the polymer program at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. In the final section of the interview Elizabeth Dyer reflects on her priorities as an academic and briefly discusses her retirement hobbies.

INTERVIEWER

Herman Skolnik received the B. S. degree in chemical engineering from The Pennsylvania State University, and the Ph.D. degree in organic chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. He joined Hercules, Inc. as a research chemist in 1942, and served as a divisional research manager from 1952 until his retirement in 1979. He was the founding editor of The Journal of Chemical Documentation, and has published over 200 papers and four books, including A Century of Chemistry, the centennial history of the American Chemical Society.

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