

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

DANIEL W. FOX

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Leonard W. Fine and George Wise

at

Pittsfield, Massachusetts

on

14 August 1986

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

Daniel W.
Fox
JH
3/5/96

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DANIEL W. FOX

1923 Born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania on 14 May

Education

1949 B.S., chemistry, Lebanon Valley College
1951 M.S., chemistry, University of Oklahoma
1953 Ph.D., organic chemistry, University of Oklahoma

Professional Experience

1943-1946 Navigator, United States Air Force

General Electric Company

1953-1956 Chemist, Turbine Laboratory

1956-1959 Specialist, Advanced Development, Chemical Development
Department

1959-1962 Manager, Product Development, Chemical Development Operation

1962-1966 Manager, Research and Development, Chemical Development
Operation

1966-1968 Consultant, Chemical Technology, Chemical Development Operation

1968-1970 Manager, Research Operation, Chemical Development Operation

1970-1979 Manager, Central Research, Plastics Division

1979-1988 Manager, Chemical Development, Plastics Technology Department

Honors

1976 Plastics Hall of Fame

ABSTRACT

Daniel Fox begins the interview with a discussion of his family background and early education. Fox and his sisters grew up in various parts of Pennsylvania. He credits his high school chemistry teacher with piquing his interest in science. After graduating from high school, he decided to attend Penn State University. He only spent a year there, however, before joining the Air Force and became a navigator during World War II. When he returned from his military service, Fox went to Lebanon Valley College, where he earned his B.S. in chemistry in 1949. He then went directly to graduate school at the University of Illinois, studying under "Speed" Marvel. There he was first introduced to polymer chemistry. Fox was married by this time, and he and his wife had difficulty finding housing in the Urbana area. So he decided to move to the University of Oklahoma. There he worked on nitration studies of diphenols and biphenyls, and received his Ph.D. in 1953. Though the Air Force wanted Fox to serve during the Korean War, he instead did research for the Atomic Energy Commission, synthesizing isocorsitron. In 1953, Fox accepted a position at General Electric, and spent his entire career there. He worked on various projects, including polycarbonates, PPPO, PBT, and the development of Lexan and Ultem. Fox concludes the interview with his final thoughts on working at General Electric.

INTERVIEWERS

Leonard Fine is Professor of Chemistry and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Chemistry at Columbia University. His special interests include polymer chemistry and materials science, industrial inorganic and organic chemistry, engineering plastics, problems in solid waste management and the recovery and recycling of post-consumer plastics. Among his recent publications are two practical manuals on principles and practices of infrared spectroscopy and a general chemistry textbook for engineers and scientists. He holds a B.S. in chemistry from Marietta College and a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Maryland at College Park.

George Wise is a communications specialist at the General Electric Research and Development Center in Schenectady, New York. He holds a B.S. in engineering physics from Lehigh University, an M.S. in physics from University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in history from Boston University. He worked briefly as a systems engineer before entering his current career in public relations. He has published a book and several articles about the history of industrial research, invention and science. His current research interest is how people can learn from history.

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