

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

GEORGE W. GOVIER

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

James G. Traynham

at

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

on

7 May 1997

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
Oral History Program  
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*George W. Govier*  
Dr. George W. Govier

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

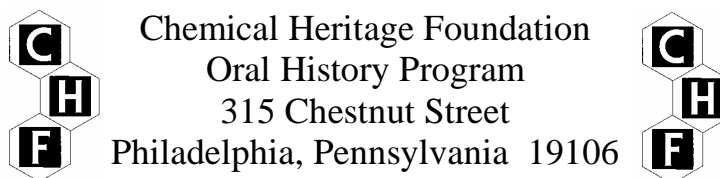
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## GEORGE W. GOVIER

1917 Born in Nanton, Alberta, Canada, on 15 June

### Education

1939 B.A.Sc., chemical engineering, University of British Columbia  
1945 M.Sc., physical chemistry, University of Alberta  
1949 Sc.D., chemical engineering, University of Michigan

### Professional Experience

Standard Oil Company of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia  
1939-1940 Plant Operator  
1941 Office Engineer

1940-present Consultant

University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada  
1940-1942 Lecturer  
1942-1948 Assistant Professor  
1948-1963 Professor  
1948-1959 Head, Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering  
1959-1963 Dean, Faculty of Engineering

Aluminum Company of Canada, Arvida, Quebec  
1942 Design Engineer

Oil and Gas Conservation Board, Alberta, Canada  
1945 Special Studies Engineer

Energy Resources Conservation Board, Alberta, Canada  
1948-1959 Member  
1949-1962 Deputy Chairman  
1962-1975 Chairman  
1977-1978 Chairman

University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
1963-1975 Professor

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
|              | Petroleum Recovery Institute                                 |
| 1966-1979    | Board of Directors   |
| 1976-1979    | Vice-President   |
|              | Alberta Helium Limited (later International Permeation Inc.) |
| 1973-1990    | Chairman, Board of Directors                                 |
| 1985-1990    | Managing Director  |
|              | Department of Energy and Natural Resources, Alberta, Canada  |
| 1975-1977    | Chief Deputy Minister  |
|              | Coal Mining Research Centre                                  |
| 1977-1978    | Chairman, Policy Committee                                   |
| 1978-1979    | Vice-President   |
| 1978-present | President, Govier Consulting Services Ltd., Alberta, Canada  |

### Honors

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1964 | R. S. Jane Memorial Award, Chemical Institute of Canada   |
| 1964 | Award of Merit, Canadian Natural Gas Processing Association                                       |
| 1967 | Sesquicentennial Award, University of Michigan  |
| 1967 | Centennial Medal of Canada  |
| 1970 | Centennial Award, Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta |
| 1971 | Selwyn G. Blaylock Medal, Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy                             |
| 1976 | Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Calgary  |
| 1976 | Gold Medal, Canadian Council of Professional Engineers  |
| 1976 | Achievement Award, Government of Alberta  |
| 1978 | Named "Oil Man of the Year" by <i>Oilweek Magazine</i>  |
| 1981 | Doctor of Science, honoris causa, McGill University   |
| 1985 | Doctor of Engineering, honoris causa, University of Waterloo                                      |
| 1986 | Distinguished Services Medal, Petroleum Society of CIM  |
| 1987 | Sir John Kennedy Medal, The Engineering Institute of Canada                                       |
| 1989 | Anthony F. Lucas Gold Medal, Society of Petroleum Engineers of AIME                               |
| 1992 | Half Century of Membership Award, American Institute of Chemical Engineers                        |

## ABSTRACT

George Govier begins the interview with a discussion of his family background and youth. Govier grew up in Canada, the son of a business owner. While in high school, he developed a strong interest in chemistry, mathematics, and physics, and decided to pursue chemical engineering because it combined many of these interests. Govier attended the University of British Columbia, where he earned his B.A.Sc. in chemical engineering in 1939. After graduation, he accepted a position with Standard Oil of British Columbia. A year later, he became an instructor at the University of Alberta, and began his graduate studies, receiving his M.Sc. in physical chemistry in 1945. As he had summers off from teaching, Govier took short-term positions with Standard Oil, the Aluminum Company of Canada, and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Conservation Board. During this time, he also took a brief leave from the University of Alberta to pursue his doctoral studies at the University of Michigan; he received his Sc.D. in chemical engineering in 1949. In 1948, Govier became the head of the University of Alberta's Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering, and was instrumental in developing the program there. Eleven years later, he accepted the position of dean of the Faculty of Engineering, a position which he held until his departure from the University of Alberta. Govier then became the chairman of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Conservation Board, an organization in which he had been active since 1948. He discusses the activities of the board, his involvement in various professional organizations, and his consulting experiences. Govier concludes the interview with his thoughts on the future of the petroleum industry in North America.

## 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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## NOTES

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  7. Trudy Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985).

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