CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

VINCENT L. GREGORY, JR.

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by
James J. Bohning
at
Rohm and Haas Company
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
on
14 February 1995
(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This oral history is one in a series initiated by the Chemical Heritage Foundation on behalf of the Society of Chemical Industry (America Section). The series documents the personal perspectives of Perkin and Chemical Industry Award recipients and records the human dimensions of the growth of the chemical sciences and chemical process industries during the twentieth century.

This project is made possible through the generosity of Society of Chemical Industry member companies.
CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program
RELEASE FORM

This document contains my understanding and agreement with Chemical Heritage Foundation with respect to my participation in a tape-recorded interview conducted by
Dr. James J. Bohning on 14 February 1995.
I have read the transcript supplied by Chemical Heritage Foundation and returned it with my corrections and emendations.

1. The tapes, corrected transcript, photographs, and memorabilia (collectively called the "Work") will be maintained by Chemical Heritage Foundation and made available in accordance with general policies for research and other scholarly purposes.

2. I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to Chemical Heritage Foundation all right, title, and interest in the Work, including the literary rights and the copyright, except that I shall retain the right to copy, use, and publish the Work in part or in full until my death.

3. The manuscript may be read and the tape(s) heard by scholars approved by Chemical Heritage Foundation subject to the restrictions listed below. The scholar pledges not to quote from, cite, or reproduce by any means this material except with the written permission of Chemical Heritage Foundation.

4. I wish to place the conditions that I have checked below upon the use of this interview. I understand that Chemical Heritage Foundation will enforce my wishes until the time of my death, when any restrictions will be removed.

   a. [ ] No restrictions for access.
      NOTE: Users citing this interview for purposes of publication are obliged under the terms of the Chemical Heritage Foundation Oral History Program to obtain permission from Chemical Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia, PA.

   b. [ ] My permission required to quote, cite, or reproduce.

   c. [ ] My permission required for access to the entire document and all tapes.

This constitutes our entire and complete understanding.

(Signature) Vincent L. Gregory, Jr.

(Date) Oct 14, 1997

Rev. 3/21/97
This interview has been designated as Free Access.

One may view, quote from, cite, or reproduce the oral history with the permission of CHF.

Please note: Users citing this interview for purposes of publication are obliged under the terms of the Chemical Heritage Foundation Oral History Program to credit CHF using the format below:


The Chemical Heritage Foundation (CHF) serves the community of the chemical and molecular sciences, and the wider public, by treasuring the past, educating the present, and inspiring the future. CHF maintains a world-class collection of materials that document the history and heritage of the chemical and molecular sciences, technologies, and industries; encourages research in CHF collections; and carries out a program of outreach and interpretation in order to advance an understanding of the role of the chemical and molecular sciences, technologies, and industries in shaping society.
VINCENT L. GREGORY, JR.

1923  Born in Oil City, Pennsylvania, on 10 June

**Education**

1949  B.A., economics, Princeton University
1949  M.B.A., Harvard University

**Professional Experience**

1941-1942  Awaiting Call-Up, U.S. Army Air Force
1942-1945  U.S. Army Air Force—Final Assignment
            Fighter Pilot, 374th Fighter Group, U.S. 8th Air Force, U.K.

Rohm & Haas Company

1949-1952  Plant Accounting Supervisor, Finance Division
1952-1955  Financial Manager, Société Minoc, France
1955-1958  Assistant Managing Director, Lenning Chemicals, England
1958-1964  Managing Director, Lenning Chemicals
1964-1968  Director, European Operations
1968-1970  Assistant General Manager, Foreign Operations
1970-1978  President and Chief Executive Officer
1970-1978  Member, Board of Directors
1978-1988  Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer
1988      Retired

**Honors**

1984  Public Service Award, Harvard School of Public Health
1988  Chemical Industry Medal, Society of Chemical Industry (American Section)
1989  Alumni Achievement Award, Harvard Business School
ABSTRACT

Vincent L. Gregory begins this interview with a description of growing up in a family of nine during the Depression. While deciding between entering the priesthood and a business career, Gregory opted to study economics at Princeton University. He finished a year at Princeton before enlisting in the U.S. Army Air Force at the start of World War II, and served as a fighter pilot in Europe during the war. After the war, Gregory simultaneously gained both a Bachelor’s degree at Princeton University and a Master’s degree at Harvard University. Then in 1949, he began his career at the Rohm and Haas Company by conducting internal auditing in three plants. After three years, Gregory was transferred to France to start up the first Rohm and Haas plant outside the United States. He then ran Rohm and Haas’ agricultural-chemical operations in England before becoming Director of European Operations. Under his leadership, Rohm and Haas-Europe’s share of total company profits increased from one to thirty percent, building on postwar conditions and Rohm and Haas’ quality products and customer service. Gregory then returned to the United States to head operations in Latin America and the Pacific. In 1970, F. Otto Haas chose Gregory as the first non-family president of Rohm and Haas. Gregory instituted such changes as a ten percent across-the-board downsizing, adding board directors from outside Rohm and Haas, and revamping the company’s management system. The oil crisis, along with DuPont Lycra’s increasing market share in polyesters, led to Gregory’s decision to withdraw Rohm and Haas’ stretch fabric, Anim-8, from the market. Gregory then focused the company’s product lines on polymers, plastics, and agricultural chemicals. Additionally, he tightened the company’s environmental controls when bis-chloromethyl ether was discovered to cause cancer in rats and participated in hearings leading to the passage of the Toxic Substance Control Act [TOSCA]. Gregory’s support of R&D led to the development of Vacor, which was later taken off the market, and Blazer. Here, Gregory discusses the CEO’s role in supporting R&D, his views on teamwork, and the future of innovation in the chemical industry. He ends the interview by describing his work with the Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology [CIIT] and the Center for Cancer Prevention at Harvard University.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning is Professor of Chemistry Emeritus at Wilkes University, where he was a faculty member from 1959 to 1990. He served there as chemistry department chair from 1970 to 1986 and environmental science department chair from 1987 to 1990. He was chair of the American Chemical Society’s Division of the History of Chemistry in 1986, received the Division’s outstanding paper award in 1989, and presented more than twenty-five papers before the Division at national meetings of the Society. He has been on the advisory committee of the Society’s National Historic Chemical Landmarks committee since its inception in 1992. He developed the oral history program of the Chemical Heritage Foundation beginning in 1985, and was the Foundation’s Director of Oral History from 1990 to 1995. He currently writes for the American Chemical Society News Service.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Family Background and Early Education  
   Depression years in large family. High school career as class president and valedictorian. Decision to go to Princeton. Outbreak of World War II.

3 World War II  
   Fighter pilot with U.S. Army Air Force in Europe. Parachute made into bridal gown for wife-to-be.

6 Completion of Education; Early Career  
   Simultaneous pursuit of B.A. at Princeton University and MBA at Harvard University Business School. Decision to work with Rohm and Haas Company. First job in plant accounting supervisors group. Mr. Otto Haas’ dominance of Rohm and Haas and designation of successor, F. Otto Haas.

9 Career in Europe  

19 Rohm and Haas Presidency  

35 Views of Business Leadership  
   CEO’s role in developing R&D. Development of teamwork. Enactment of Superfund with Irving S. Shapiro. Public relations development. Relationship with Haas family.

45 Changes in the Chemical Industry
Industry trends toward diversification, consolidation, and MBA leadership of chemical companies. Future of innovation in chemical industry. Significance of winning Chemical Industry Award. Involvement with Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology [CIIT] and Center for Cancer Prevention at Harvard University.

47 Notes

48 Index
NOTES


INDEX

A
Alamagorda Island, 4
Alger, Horatio, 7, 40
Alien Property Custodian, U.S., 22
Anim-8, 25-27
Army Air Forces, U.S., 3, 4
Arras, France, 11

B
B-17 bombers, 5
Badische Anilin und Soda Fabrik [BASF], 16
Baltimore, Maryland, 23
Battle of Britain, 5
Beitsell, Spike, 33
Berlin, Germany, 5
Biloxi, Mississippi, 4
Bis-chloromethyl ether, 27
Blazer, 31, 32, 34
Borg-Warner, 33
Boston Consulting Group [BCG], 30, 31, 41
Branch, C. Benson, 27

C
C-64 Norseman, 6
Cambridge, England, 5
Carson, Rachel, 41
Carter, James E. [Jimmy], 41
Case Western Reserve University, 4
Center for Cancer Prevention [see Harvard University, Center for Cancer Prevention]
Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 32
Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology [CIIT], 32, 44, 45
risk assessment program, 45
Chemical Industry Medal, 44
Chemical Manufacturers Association [CMA], 28, 42
Chemical Week, 27
Church, --, 28
Coffeyville, Kansas, 4
Colorado Springs, Colorado, 4
Congress, U. S., 41
Connor, Ralph, 11, 20, 24, 25
Darmstadt, Germany, 16
Davis, Ken, 42
Decon, 32
Deming, --, 31
Depression, The, 1, 3, 21
Diamond Shamrock Corporation, 33
ion exchange business, 33
Dithane, 13, 15
Doriot, Georges F., 8
Dow Chemical Company, 13, 27, 44
European operations, 13
Drexel Bank, 22
E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., 8, 25, 26, 41

Environmental movement, 41

IG Farben, 16
Felley, Donald L., 12, 30
Feuchy, France, 11
Forbes Magazine, 31
Frankfurt, Germany, 6
Fungicides, 13

GI Bill, 7
Grapes, 13
Gregory, Marjorie G.S., 5-7
mother, 5, 6
Gregory, Vincent L.
father, 1, 3
mother, 1, 3
Phi Beta Kappa, 7
siblings, 1, 3
views on CEO’s role in R&D, 35-39
views on chemical innovation, 39, 43
views on motivation, 38
views on teamwork, 39, 40
Gunpowder, 41
Gunthart, --, 17
H
Haas, Carol, 45
Haas, F. Otto, 9-11, 14, 15, 17-22, 25, 27, 30, 42, 45
  wife [see Haas, Carol]
Haas family, third generation, 42
Haas, John, 20, 22, 27, 30, 42
Haas, Otto, 9-11, 15, 16, 20-22, 37
  wife, 11
Hannay, N. Bruce, 22, 23, 24, 39
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 42
Harvard University, 7, 10, 22, 24, 40, 44, 45
  Center for Cancer Prevention, 45
  Harvard Business School, 7, 8, 10, 22, 40, 44
  Harvard Law School, 7
  School of Public Health, 44
  Vincent Gregory Professorship of Cancer Prevention, 45
Hopkinson, --, 22
Hurrie, Herbert, 9
Hutchinson Institute of Cancer Prevention, 45

I
Imperial Chemical Industries [ICI], 26
International Business Machines, Inc. [IBM], 33
Ion-exchange resins, 13

J
Japanese, the, 31
Jarrow, England, 12

K
Kane, Ed, 28
Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi, 4
Kidder, Peabody & Co., Inc., 22
Knoxville, Tennessee, 8-10
Korea, government of, 32

L
Leather bate, 12
London, England, 12
Lycra, 25, 26
M
R. Maag Company, 17
 Manufacturing Chemists Association [MCA], 28 [see also Chemical Manufacturers Association]
 Market Growth, Market Share, 30, 31
 Merriwether, Duncan, 8
 Metroliner, 23
 Miller, Arthur, 12
 Moore Field, Mission, Texas, 4
 Munich, Germany, 5, 6
 Murphy, Donald, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17-19
 Muskogee, Oklahoma, 4

N
Nader, Ralph, 28
 Nelson, Norton, 24, 28
 New York, New York, 23
 New York University, 24
 Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 12
 Ninth Air Force, U.S., 6
 Notre Dame, University of, 2
 Nylon, 6, 26

O
Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA], 41
 Oil additives, 13
 Oil City High School, 1
 Oil City, Pennsylvania, 1
 Oil crisis, 22, 25-27, 30
 Omenn, Gil, 23, 24, 45
 Oxford University, 7

P
P-40 fighter planes, 4
P-51 fighter planes, 4
P-51D fighter planes, 4
Paint polymers, water-based, 40
Paints, 13, 14
   acrylic emulsions for, 13
   outdoor weathering, 14
Paris, France, 11
Pearl Harbor, 2, 3
Philadelphia Inquirer, 28
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 8, 22
Plastics, 33
Plexiglas, 4, 9
Polyester, 26, 27
Polymers, 32, 33
Potatoes, 13
Princeton University, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10
  band, 3
  college entrance examination board, 2
Pruitt, Malcolm E. [Max], 44
Pusan Peninsula, Korea, 32

Q
Quesada, Elwood [Pete], 6

R
Research Management, 35
Return on Net Assets [RONA] management system, 30-33, 41
Rhine River, 16
Rhodes Scholarship, 7
Röhm, Otto, 4, 12, 22
Rohm & Haas Company, 4, 7-9, 11-16, 18-34, 36-39, 41, 42, 44, 45
  agricultural chemicals, 11, 13, 32, 33
  board of directors, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28, 33, 45
  corporate business team department, 37
downsizing, 21
environmental advisory council, 23
European operations office, London, England, 12, 13
European operations, 12, 13, 15
facilities in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 8, 9, 14, 21, 22, 28
fibers production, 14, 22, 25-27, 33, 38
financial division, 8
government office in Washington, D.C., 42
Latin American region, 18, 19
management ladder, 36
marketing, 37
matrix management system, 29, 30
Pacific region, 18, 19
patent reward system, 38
plant accounting supervisors group, 8, 9
plant in Argentina, 12
plant in Bristol, Pennsylvania, 4, 8, 9, 21
plant in Fayetteville, 26
plant in Feuchy, France, 12
plant in Italy, 12
plant in Jarrow, England, 12, 14
plant in Knoxville, Tennessee, 8, 9
plant in Louisville, Kentucky, 14
plant in Vienna, Austria, 16
product group research, 37
public relations department, 29, 42
R&D, 24, 31, 34, 36
research division, 21, 24, 36
research facilities in Spring House, Pennsylvania, 25, 38
South American region, 18, 19
stockholders, 26, 39, 42
technical ladder, 36, 39

Rohm & Haas—Germany [Röhm GmBH], 16
Rohm and Haas—History of a Chemical Company, 31, 33, 34
Royal Canadian Air Force, 3

S
Scheide, --, 2
Scott, Hugh, 42
Scribe Hotel, 11
Sea Island, 33
Seattle, Washington, 23
Shapiro, Irving S., 41, 43
Silent Spring, 41
Society of Chemical Industry, 44
Spitfires, 5
Spring House, Pennsylvania, 17, 38
Steuber, Irving, 22
Superfund, 41
Swiss, the, 17

T
Talucci, Samuel, 12
Tetzlaff, Frederick, 12, 14
374th Fighter Squadron, U.S., 5
Total Quality Leadership system, 31
Toxic Substance Control Act [TOSCA], 28

U
Union Carbide Corporation, 41

V
Vacor, 31, 32
Valbonne, France, 17
Vienna, Austria, 16

W
Washington, D.C., 42
Washington, University of, 23, 24, 45
    School of Public Health and Community Medicine, 23
Water-based polymers, 16, 40
Weicker, --, 28
Western Reserve University [see Case Western Reserve University]
William Penn Foundation, 27, 42
Wilson, Lawrence, 43
Wishnick, William, 41
Witco Corporation, 41
World War II, 2-6, 41, 42