

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

J. FRANKLIN HYDE

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

Marco Island, Florida

on

30 April 1986

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

Oral History Program

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J. FRANKLIN HYDE

1903 Born in Solvay, New York on 11 March

Education

1923 A.B., chemistry, Syracuse University
1925 M.A., chemistry, Syracuse University
1928 Ph.D., organic chemistry, University of Illinois

Professional Experience

1928-1930 Post-doctoral Fellow, Harvard University
Corning Glass Works, Corning, New York
1930-1938 Research Chemist
1938-1951 Manager, Organic Laboratory
1951-1975 Dow Corning Corporation, Midland, Michigan

Honors

1963 Distinguished Achievement Award, Dow Corning Corporation
1963 Hon. D.Sc., Syracuse University
1963 Outstanding Inventor Citation, Michigan Patent Law Association
1971 Whitehead Memorial Lecturer, Engineering Section, National Research Council
1971 Perkin Medal, Society of Chemical Industry
1974 Midgley Award, Detroit Section, American Chemical Society
1975 Hon. D.Sc., Michigan State University
1979 Elected to Plastics Hall of Fame, Society of the Plastics Industry
1980 Silicone Pioneer Award, Dow Corning Corporation
1982 Five of Genius Award, Saginaw Valley Patent Law Association

ABSTRACT

In this interview Franklin Hyde briefly tells of his childhood and his schooling in Solvay, New York. At Syracuse University, Hyde majored in chemistry and continued on to a master's degree. It was during this period, under the influence of Reginald Boehner that Hyde became an organic chemist and he continued with that speciality with Roger Adams at Illinois and then with Conant at Harvard. He recalls both his colleagues and the faculty at Urbana and at Cambridge. Despite an offer to join Carothers at Du Pont, Hyde chose to accept the challenge of a position with Corning Glass works, where he was the lone organic chemist. At Corning, Hyde started his studies of organosilicon compounds and where he entered the growing field of polymer chemistry. During the interview Franklin Hyde summarizes several of his research endeavors that contributed to the present-day importance of silicones. Included in this section of the interview are instances of the critical role of newly introduced materials to the scientific contribution to World War II. Hyde also describes the chronology of the competition between Corning and General Electric that eventually led to a major patent interference suit. The interview ends with a survey of Hyde's later work with Dow Corning and his reflections on laboratory research and scientific management.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning holds the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, and has been a member of the chemistry faculty at Wilkes College since 1959. He was chair of the Chemistry Department for sixteen years, and was appointed chair of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in 1988. He has been associated with the development and management of the oral history program at the Beckman Center since 1985, and was elected Chair of the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society for 1987.

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