DONALD L. KATZ

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by
James J. Bohning
at
Holland, Michigan
on
22 August 1986
E BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

Oral History Program

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(Signature) Donald L Katz
(Date) 3/15/89

(Revised 20 February 1989)
DONALD L. KATZ

1907 Born in Jackson County, Michigan on 1 August
1989 Died in Ann Arbor, Michigan on 29 May

Education

University of Michigan
1931 B.S.E., chemical engineering
1932 M.S., chemical engineering
1933 Ph.D., chemical engineering

Professional Experience

1933-1936 Research Engineer, Phillips Petroleum Company
University of Michigan
1936-1942 Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering
1942-1943 Associate Professor
1943-1964 Professor
1951-1962 Chairman, Chemical Engineering Department
1964-1977 A. H. White University Professor
1977-1989 Emeritus Professor

Honors

1950 Hanlon Award, Gas Processors Association
1959 President, American Institute of Chemical Engineers
1959 Michigan Engineer of the Year, Society of Petroleum Engineers
1962 Distinguished Lecturer, Society of Petroleum Engineers
1963 Visiting Professor, National School of Chemistry, Rio de Janeiro
1964 Carll Award, Society of Petroleum Engineers
1964 Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award, University of Michigan
1964 Founders Award, American Institute of Chemical Engineers
1967 Warren K. Lewis Award, American Institute of Chemical Engineers
1968 Member, National Academy of Engineering
1968 William H. Walker Award, American Institute of Chemical Engineers
1969 Honorary Member, Phi Lambda Upsilon
1970 Mineral Industries Award, American Institute of Mining Engineers
1972 Distinguished Public Service Award, U.S. Coast Guard
1975 Murphree Award, American Chemical Society
1977 Gas Industry Research Award, American Gas Association
1978 Lucas Gold Medal, American Institute of Mining Engineers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Award/Recognition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Award of Merit, Michigan Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Selected as an Eminent Chemical Engineer, 75th Anniversary of American Institute of Chemical Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>National Medal of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Designated Distinguished Member, Society of Petroleum Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Honorary Member, American Institute of Mining Engineers</td>
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The late Donald Katz starts the interview by briefly referring to his current projects but then describes his family background and his genealogical interests, stimulated by his 1952 trip to his father's birthplace in a German village. Katz went to a small country school in rural Michigan but was encouraged by a church minister to attend high school in a nearby town. After working in a machine shop, Katz entered the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and majored in chemical engineering. He put himself through college by hard effort; cleaning offices, restaurant work and some summers back in machine shops. As he continued into graduate studies, Donald Katz acted as George Brown's assistant, helping other graduate students, junior faculty and with patent cases. He recalls courses, coworkers and faculty at Ann Arbor and gives three anecdotes illustrating the influence of surface chemistry, as taught by Floyd Bartell, at later stages of Katz's career. When Katz started his research career at Phillips Petroleum he was assigned to reservoir studies and he summarizes some of his activities during this period. An invitation by Brown brought Katz back to the University of Michigan and he details his early researches and consulting work. The war years altered some of his teaching and research responsibilities and led him, for instance, into heat transfer investigations. On Brown's promotion to Dean, Katz took over as departmental chairman for several years. During this part of the interview Donald Katz describes his involvement in the introduction of computer education into the chemical engineering curriculum, both at Ann Arbor and nationally. Other recollections follow; safety and the hazards of bulk chemicals; pipelines; the underground storage of gas and air; the origins of the Handbook of Natural Gas Engineering. Katz concludes his interview with some thoughts on the changes in the academic chemical engineering profession over his long career.

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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1 Childhood and Early Education  
   Family background. Genealogical interests stimulated by 1952 trip to the father's German birthplace. Sibling, stepfather. Attendance at country school, encouragement to continue on to high school. Work in machine shop.

8 Studies at the University of Michigan  
   Admission to University and extramural employment as office cleaner, restaurant worker and summers in the machine shop. First car and tour of North Dakota. Assistant to George Granger Brown, laboratory studies on distillation, some related to patent cases. Ph.D. research. Courses and faculty at Michigan. Influence of Bartell and his teaching of surface chemistry; anecdotes on surface chemical applications useful to Katz in his career. Further discussion of chemical engineering at University of Michigan in 1930s. Effect of the Depression, especially on fellow students.

20 Phillips Petroleum Company  
   The laboratories at Bartlesville, initial assignments on oil reservoirs. Set up of field well testing unit. Organization of Phillips research activities.

25 Faculty position at University of Michigan  
   Return to Ann Arbor as assistant professor, beginning research projects and outside consulting. The bibliography on PVT properties of hydrocarbons. Summer work in industry. Early graduate students; fatal accident to one of them. War years at the University, changed teaching responsibilities and research interests. Safety concerns. Properties of liquid metals, work at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

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16. see Beckman Center Oral History file #0052


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