

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

DONALD L. KLEIN

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

David C. Brock

By Phone

on

2 and 9 March 2006

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

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Donald L. Klein
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DONALD L. KLEIN

1930 Born in Brooklyn, New York on 19 December

Education

1952 B.S., Chemistry, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn
1956 M.S., Inorganic Chemistry, University of Connecticut
1959 Ph.D., Inorganic Chemistry, University of Connecticut

Professional Experience

1952-1954 Sylvania Electric Products, Inc., Woburn, Massachusetts
Chemist, Chemistry and Physics Department

1954-1958 University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut
Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant, and Assistant
Instructor, Chemistry Department

1958-1967 Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, New Jersey
Member of Technical Staff and Supervisor

1968-1987 IBM Corporation, East Fishkill, New York
Senior Engineer, Manager, and Technical Staff
1987-present Consultant

1987-1988 Dutchess Community College, Poughkeepsie, New York
Member of Faculty, Department of Physical Sciences;
Lecturer in Chemistry

Honors

1982 IBM Invention Award
1994 Inducted into New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame
1994 Jack A. Morton Award of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics
Engineers
1999 Brooklyn Technical High School Alumni Hall of Fame

ABSTRACT

Donald L. Klein is the son of a Hungarian father and a Hungarian-American mother, who grew up in Brooklyn, New York. With his childhood friend, Neil Wotherspoon, Klein developed an early passion for chemistry, electronics, and amateur radio, interests that would follow him throughout his life and career. At Brooklyn Technical High School, he discovered an additional passion for metallurgy. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry at Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now Polytechnic Institute of New York University), then found a job in the semiconductor industry to support his new wife (who also received a degree in chemistry). After working for a couple of years, he pursued a graduate degree at the University of Connecticut to study photochemistry under Dr. Roland Ward.

Klein was recruited to work for Bell Laboratories, and began working on the production of semiconductors. His group was involved in developing etching techniques for semiconductors and methods to prevent different types of contamination in semiconductor production. In February 1966, Klein was in charge of a brainstorming session with several other Bell scientists to design a better process for building FET devices. They first identified the problems with current models and processes; out of that meeting came the idea of using a heavily doped polycrystalline silicon layer as the gate of an FET. The gate was to be supported on dual layers of a silicon nitride and silicon dioxide serving as the gate insulator. Using the FET as a model for integrated circuits, they fabricated and characterized hundreds of FET devices at high yield that exhibited close electrical tolerances. Klein and his colleagues published several papers on their new technology, and applied for patents on their process, though Bell's management was slow to appreciate the breakthrough its scientists had made. After a restructuring, Klein left Bell to work for IBM.

The rest of the industry, however, was quick to adopt and improve the silicon gate technology. There were legal disputes throughout the 1970s, but by that time Klein was at IBM developing photoresist technologies and more efficient processes for manufacturing electronic packaging.

INTERVIEWER

David C. Brock is a senior research fellow with the Center for Contemporary History and Policy of the Chemical Heritage Foundation. As an historian of science and technology, he specializes in oral history, the history of instrumentation, and the history of semiconductor science, technology, and industry. Brock has studied the philosophy, sociology, and history of science at Brown University, the University of Edinburgh, and Princeton University (respectively and chronologically). His most recent publication is *Understanding Moore's Law: Four Decades of Innovation* (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Press), 2006, which he edited and to which he contributed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Family History, Childhood, and Schooling	1
Father's immigration experience. Born in Brooklyn. Early interest in chemistry. Interest in amateur radio and electronics. Brooklyn Technical High School. Interest in chemistry and metallurgy.	
Undergraduate Education, Early Career, and Graduate School	9
Undergraduate at Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. Solid-state and radio frequency titrimetry. Scholarship work on polarography. Marriage. Sylvania Electric Products, Inc. Semiconductors and diffused transistors. Graduate studies at the University of Connecticut. Photochemistry.	
Bell Laboratories	28
Recruitment. Early projects on semiconductors. Moisture contamination. Etching. Bell management. Plating. Aluminum oxide contamination. Gallium arsenide doping.	
Silicon Gate	43
Interdepartmental meeting. Goal to develop a process like a chemist. Problems with field effect transistors. Idea of sandwich structure with silicon. Trial and error construction of silicon gate device. Personal, company, and industry response. Restructuring at Bell. Patents.	
Later Career	71
Move to International Business Machines. Spread of silicon gate technology. Silicon gate legal disputes. Lithography. Research in electronic packaging technologies.	
Index	97

INDEX

A

ACS. *See* American Chemical Society
AIME. *See* American Institute of Mining,
Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers
Allentown, Pennsylvania, 70
aluminum oxide, 38, 39
American Chemical Society, 7, 50, 75, 76
American Institute of Mining,
Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers,
80
American Radio Relay League, 20
arsenic, 18, 42
Azoplate Corporation, 87

B

Beckman DU spectrophotometer, 25
Bell Laboratories, 18, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34,
36, 40, 43, 47, 49, 50, 55, 68, 69, 70, 71,
73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 88,
94
bipolar transistor, 47, 48, 83
Blackwell, Oklahoma, 1
Boston University, 27
Boston, Massachusetts, 16, 17, 80
Back Bay, 22
Boyle, Willard S., 43, 54, 65
Bracht, Werner, 48, 49
Bronx High School of Science, 6, 7, 8
Bronx, New York, 7, 31
Brooklyn Poly. *See* Polytechnic Institute of
New York University
Brooklyn Technical High School, 1, 3, 6, 7,
8, 9, 11, 12, 39
Brooklyn, New York, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 22

C

Carnegie Mellon University, 50
Cleveland, Hugh, 66, 70, 72
Columbia University, 14

D

Dames Club, 28
diffused transistor, 19, 21, 51

E

Edwards, Roger, 71, 77
Electrochemical Society, 75, 76
ethyl orthosilicate, 52

F

Fairchild Semiconductor, 78, 79, 80
FET. *See* field-effect transistor
field-effect transistor, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49,
51, 55, 56, 59, 63, 67, 68, 69, 71, 83, 84,
95
Finne, Ronald M., 32, 36, 47, 49
Fortune, 90

G

gallium, 19, 33, 41
gallium arsenide, 38, 41, 42
General Micro Electronics, 78, 81
germanium, 18, 19, 20, 30, 32, 33
germanium dioxide, 19, 20
Grove, Andrew S., 76
Gunn oscillator, 41

H

ham radio, 3, 4, 5, 27, 31
Harvard University, 16
Hughes Semiconductor, 78, 81
hydrofluoric acid, 33, 34, 35, 59, 60

I

IBM. *See* International Business Machines
IEEE. *See* Institute of Electrical and
Electronics Engineers
IGFET. *See* insulated-gate field-effect
transistor

indium, 19
Institute of Electrical and Electronics
Engineers, 41, 76
Spectrum, 76
insulated-gate field-effect transistor, 45
Intel Corporation, 14, 76, 78, 79, 81, 82
Intel Science Talent Search, 14
International Business Machines (IBM), 7,
8, 18, 36, 40, 41, 47, 49, 74, 77, 78, 81,
83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94

J

Journal of the American Chemical Society,
26
Journal of the Electrochemical Society, 75

K

Kalle Corporation, 87
Kerwin, Robert E., 50, 56, 69, 71, 75, 77, 80
Kleimack, Joseph J., 69
Klein, Emily V. (mother), 1, 2
Klein, Herbert J. (brother), 3, 4, 5, 7, 9
Klein, Kalman (father), 1, 2, 3, 11, 12
Klein, Ruth R. (wife), 3, 4, 16, 17, 27, 31
Kodak Photo Resist, 34, 35, 84, 85
Kodak Thin Film Resist, 85, 86
Koontz, Donald E., 70, 72, 73, 74

L

Lawley, Ken, 41
Lenovo Group, 93

M

Manhattan, New York, 4, 7
Radio Row, 4
Manual Training High School, 3
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 16,
50
Metallurgical Society, 75, 76, 79
metal-oxide-semiconductor, 45, 80
MIT. *See* Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
molybdenum, 8, 92
Moore, Gordon E., 76, 79, 80

MOS. *See* metal-oxide-semiconductor
Murray Hill, New Jersey, 30

N

Needles, California, 2
New York Public Library, 3
New York, New York, 2, 6
nitric acid, 34
North Adams, Massachusetts, 28
Northeastern University, 17, 22
Noyce, Robert N., 79, 81

O

Onsager, Lars, 32

P

perchloroethylene, 8, 92
Philadelphia Storage Battery Company, 28
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 28
Pitha, Carl, 22
point-contact transistor, 19, 20, 21
polarography, 14, 15
polysilicon, 51, 53, 57, 61, 62, 73, 79, 80,
82
Polytechnic Institute of New York
University, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16,
17, 22, 23
Pratt Institute, 2
Purdue University, 32

Q

QST, 20

R

Radio Corporation of America, 77
radio frequency titrimetry, 13, 14, 15
Raytheon Company, 16, 21
RCA. *See* Radio Corporation of America
Rockwell International, 78

S

Sarace, John C., 9, 50, 69, 70, 73, 74, 75,
77, 80

Scientific American, 92
Seagers, C. J., 15
Seattle, Washington, 2
Shockley, William B., 46, 56
silicon dioxide, 20, 40, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62,
63, 64, 81, 85
silicon gate, 9, 37, 39, 40, 43, 52, 70, 73, 75,
76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 94
silicon nitride, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64
Snow, Edward H., 79, 80
Solid Logic Technology, 90
Solid-State Electronics, 71, 75, 77, 78
Spoerri, Paul, 15, 16
Sprague Electric Company, 28, 49
Stuyvesant High School, 7, 8
Sullivan, Miles V., 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
Sylvania Electric Products, Inc., 16, 17, 20,
21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 48

T

tetraethylorthosilicate, 59
Toronto, Canada, 73

U

United States Army
Quartermaster Corps, 2
Signal Corps, 23
University of Connecticut, 22, 23, 26, 28
University of Paris, 2
University of Wisconsin, 10, 32

V

Vadasz, Leslie L., 76

W

Ward, Roland, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28
Westinghouse Science Scholarship. *See*
Intel Science Talent Search
Woburn, Massachusetts, 17, 22, 29
World War I, 2
World War II, 3, 4, 16, 22
Wotherspoon, Neil, 4, 5, 6, 12, 16

Y

Yale University, 32
Yamen, Mike, 32