

CENTER FOR HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

CARL S. MARVEL

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Leon Gortler and Charles Price

in

Wilmington, Delaware

on

13 July 1983

Carl S.
Marvel

JH
3/15/96

HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Carl S. Marvel, interview by Leon Gortler and Charles Price at Du Pont Hotel in Wilmington, Delaware, 13 July 1983 (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, Oral History Transcript # 0003).



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CARL S. MARVEL

11 September 1894

Born in Waynesville, Illinois

Education

1915 A.B. and M.S., chemistry, Illinois Wesleyan University
1916 M.A., chemistry, University of Illinois
1920 Ph.D., chemistry, University of Illinois

Professional Experience

Department of Chemistry, University of Illinois

1920-1921 Instructor
1921-1923 Associate
1923-1927 Assistant professor
1927-1930 Associate professor
1930-1953 Professor of Organic Chemistry
1953-1961 Research professor
1961- Emeritus research professor
1961- Professor, Department of Chemistry, University of Arizona

1940-1941 Director, synthesis program, National Defense Research Committee
1941-1944 Director, synthesis program, United States Rubber Reserve Corporation
1944-1946 Chairman, panel to synthesize anti-malarial drugs, National Research Council
1945-1947 Consultant, National Advisory Health Council
1952-1954 Consultant, National Science Foundation
1954-1964 Consultant, National Research Council
1928- Consultant, Du Pont

Honors

1938 Elected to of National Academy of Sciences
1944 Nichols Medal, American Chemical Society
1945 President, American Chemical Society
1946 Honorary D. Sc. degree, Illinois Wesleyan University
1950 Willard Gibbs Medal, American Chemical Society
1955 Gold Medal Award, American Institute of Chemists
1956 Joseph Priestley Medal, American Chemical Society
1963 Honorary D. Sc. degree, University of Illinois

1964 International Award, Society of Plastics
Engineers
1965 Perkin Medal, Society of Chemical
Industry
1967 Chemical Pioneer Award, American
Institute of Chemistry
1970 Dr. Honoris Causa, University of Louvain

ABSTRACT: Carl Marvel speaks about his life and career as a chemist in this interview. He begins by recalling his youth on a farm and his early education. Considerations of his undergraduate days at Illinois Wesleyan College and of his graduate studies at the University of Illinois follow. Marvel then describes his first teaching job at Illinois, his colleagues, and the workings of his department. The central portion of the interview contains extended discussions about Marvel's consulting work for Du Pont, his direction of the federal government's program on synthetic rubber during World War II, and his research on anti-malarial and chemical warfare agents. Marvel then talks about his postwar research in polymer chemistry. The interview concludes with Marvel's appraisal of his contributions to chemistry and remarks about his family, hobbies, and involvement with the American Chemical Society.

INTERVIEWERS: Leon Gortler is a chemist with an interest in history. Born in 1935, he attended the University of Chicago and then received his doctoral degree from Harvard. After doing postdoctoral work at Berkeley for a year, he began teaching at Brooklyn College in 1963. Ten years later, he became professor of chemistry. Both his historical and scientific research focus upon physical organic chemistry.

Charles Price is a chemist who received his bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College in 1934 and his Ph.D. degree from Harvard University two years later. He has taught at the University of Illinois, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Pennsylvania. His research has focused upon the mechanisms of organic reactions and the synthesis of organic compounds. Price has published almost three hundred articles, written seven books, and edited several chemical journals. He has also consulted extensively and been president of the American Chemical Society.

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