

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

ROBERT L. McNEIL, JR.

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

Mary Ellen Bowden and Arnold Thackray

at

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

on

13 and 30 August 2001, and 15 August 2002

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)



Robert L. McNeil, Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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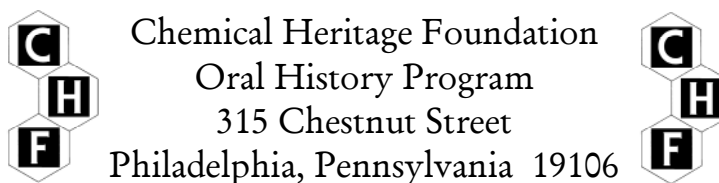
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ROBERT L. McNEIL, JR.

1915 Born in Bethel, Connecticut, on 13 July

Education

1936 B.S., physiological chemistry and bacteriology, Yale University
1938 B.Sc., pharmacy, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science
1970 D.Sc., Hon., pharmacy, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science

Professional Experience

McNeil Laboratories, Inc.
1936-1940 Research Chemist
1940-1948 Director of Research Department
1941-1956 Member of the Board of Directors
1949-1956 Vice President of Production and Development
1956-1964 Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer

McNeil Laboratories Division of Johnson & Johnson
1964-1966 Corporate Development

1946- Venture capital and service on numerous corporate boards including:
Arrow International, Inc.
Arrow Precision Products, Inc.
Botfield Refractories
Chattanooga Group, Inc.
Crescent Brick Co.
Island Gem Enterprises
Johnson & Johnson
McNeil Laboratories (Canada) Ltd.
McNeil de Mexico S.A.
Merrimac Clearance
Peter A. Frasse & Co.
Refractory Specialties Co.

1964- The Robert L. McNeil, Jr. Foundation (renamed The Barra Foundation)
Founder and President

Selected Honors

- 1938 Remington Memorial Prize, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science
1985 Wallace Award, American-Scottish Foundation
1977 Member, American Antiquarian Society
1984 Fellow, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia
2004 Fellow, American Philosophical Society
2005 Gold Medal, American Institute of Chemists
(Four honorary doctoral degrees awarded)

Selected Professional Affiliations

- Member, Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee, National Production Authority during Korean War
Member, Board of Directors, American Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association
President, Philadelphia Drug Exchange
President, Philadelphia branch of American Pharmaceutical Association

Selected National and Local Community Affiliations

- Member, Committee for the Preservation of the White House
Commissioner, National Portrait Gallery
Vice President and Trustee, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Governor, Yale University Art Gallery
Director, Archives of American Art
Trustee, Society for the Four Arts
Trustee, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science
Trustee, Princeton Theological Seminary
Trustee, Germantown Academy
Board of Managers, YMCA of Germantown
Port Warden, Philadelphia Maritime Museum
Director, American Cancer Society (Philadelphia Section)
Director, Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America, Inc. (Delaware Valley)
President, Philadelphia-Continental Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution
Director, Historical Society of Philadelphia
Director, Valley Forge Historical Society
Trustee, First Presbyterian Church in Germantown
Elder, Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill

ABSTRACT

Robert L. McNeil, Jr. begins his interview by discussing his parent's heritage and the evolution of the Firm of Robert McNeil, the drugstore started by his grandfather. As young men, McNeil and his brother worked as errand boys for their father. During the summers, McNeil traveled, working on a ranch and as a camp counselor. McNeil attended high school at Germantown Academy, and went to Yale University to study physiological chemistry and bacteriology. After receiving his B.S. degree, he returned to Philadelphia. Subsequent to his grandfather's death, McNeil, at the young age of twenty, began his career in the family business, which by then had evolved into McNeil Laboratories, Inc., headed by his father, R. Lincoln McNeil.

By attending pharmaceutical conferences as well as enrolling in the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy's four-year program and Temple University's Graduate Pharmacy School course in pharmacology, under Professor James Munch, McNeil was able to gain the experience necessary to eventually head a successful pharmaceutical company. One of McNeil's first challenges was helping McNeil Laboratories update their manufacturing practices in keeping with the new *Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938*. With his strong knowledge of pharmacology, and the advice of many of the top men in Philadelphia's medical field, McNeil was able to introduce what would become some of the top-selling pharmaceuticals in the nation, including Butisol[®] and eventually Tylenol[®].

While helping McNeil Laboratories to reach a new level of success, McNeil was on the board of many pharmaceutical organizations, and was the president of the Philadelphia Drug Exchange, as well as the Philadelphia branch of the American Pharmaceutical Association. McNeil also found time to marry and to help raise three children, along with a stepson from his wife's previous marriage. In 1959, McNeil Laboratories was sold to Johnson & Johnson and after a seven-year "transitional" period, McNeil retired and entered the venture capital field. He also devoted time to the study of our Colonial history and material culture and to the development of The Barra Foundation (originally named The Robert L. McNeil, Jr. Foundation). McNeil concludes his interview with a short comment on his views of the fast evolution of today's pharmaceutical field.

INTERVIEWERS

Mary Ellen Bowden, senior historian at the Chemical Heritage Foundation, has been associated with the institution since 1988. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Smith College and both a master's of arts in teaching history and a doctorate in the history of science and medicine from Yale University.

Arnold Thackray is president of the Chemical Heritage Foundation. He majored in the physical sciences before turning to the history of science, receiving a Ph.D. from Cambridge

University in 1966. He has held appointments at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, the Institute for Advanced Study, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1983 he received the Dexter Award from the American Chemical Society for outstanding contributions to the history of chemistry. He served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania for more than a quarter of a century. There, he was the founding chairman of the Department of History and Sociology of Science, where he is the Joseph Priestley Professor Emeritus.

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