

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

MALCOLM E. PRUITT

TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

Midland, Michigan

on

15 January 1986

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

Oral History Program

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MALCOLM E. PRUITT

1915 Born in Hamilton, Texas on 15 October

Education

1941 B.S., chemistry, Abilene Christian University

Professional Experience

1936-1941 Hamilton County Public School, Texas

1941-1942 Clyde Independent Schools, Texas

Dow Chemical Company, Texas Division

1942-1943 Control Chemist

1943-1944 Research Chemist, Gas Laboratory

1944-1946 Research Chemist, Organic Laboratory

1946-1948 Project Leader

1948-1951 Group Leader

1951-1954 Laboratory Group Leader

1954-1962 Director, Organic Products Development Laboratory

1962-1967 Director of Product Research

1967-1971 Director of Research and Development

Dow Chemical USA

1971-1978 Director of Research & Development

Dow Chemical Company

1975-1980 Vice-President

1978-1980 Corporate Director of Research and Development

Council for Chemical Research

1980-1982 Chairman

1982- Honorary Chairman

Honors

1972 Alumni Citation, Abilene Christian University

1973 Honorary Doctor of Science, Abilene Christian University

1978 Industrial Research Institute Medal

1981 Society of Research Administrators Award

1982 Commercial Development Association Award

1983 Outstanding Alumnus, Abilene Christian University

1985 First Recipient of Council for Chemical Research Award

1987 Earle Barnes Award for Leadership in Chemical Research Management, American Chemical Society

ABSTRACT

In this interview Mac Pruitt discusses his early bringing-up in a rural area of Texas and his struggles to complete undergraduate education during the Depression. After starting as a control chemist on the graveyard shift at the Dow facility in Freeport, Texas, Pruitt progresses through the laboratories and embarks on his extensive studies of the ionic polymerization of cyclic oxide monomers. The circumstances of his move into senior research management and his eventual transfer to Midland, Michigan, are embellished by Pruitt's reflections on R&D and on his initiatory role in the formation of the Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology and the Council for Chemical Research.

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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