

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

JAMES N. SHOOLERY

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

Arnold Thackray and David C. Brock

at

Palo Alto, California

on

18 January 2002

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
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JAMES N. SHOOLERY

1925 Born in Worland, Wyoming on 25 June

Education

1948 B.S., chemistry, University of California at Berkeley
1952 Ph.D., chemistry, California Institute of Technology

Professional Experience

Varian Associates, Inc.
1952-1962 Director, Applications Laboratory
1962-1969 Marketing Manager, Analytical Instrument Division
1972-1990 Senior Application Chemist

Consulting
1969-1972 Independent Consultant
1990- Independent Consultant

Honors

1964 Sargent Award
1965 Award in Chemical Instrumentation, American Chemical Society,
Division of Analytical Chemistry
1982 Anachem Award, Federation of Analytical Chemistry and
Spectroscopy Societies

ABSTRACT

James N. Shoolery begins the interview by discussing his family background and growing up during the Depression. His interest in chemistry began in his childhood and grew further during his undergraduate years at the University of California, Berkeley. His education was interrupted by World War II, during which he served in the U.S. Navy as a radar technician in the South China Sea. Upon his return to the United States, Shoolery toyed with the idea of pursuing electrical engineering because of his experiences in the Navy, but ultimately decided against it. Shoolery decided to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry at the California Institute of Technology and worked under Don M. Yost on microwave spectroscopy. After visiting an electronics show in Los Angeles, California, and seeing their exhibit, Shoolery wrote to Varian Associates, Inc. about the possibility of his coming to work there on applications for nuclear magnetic resonance. He joined Varian Associates, Inc. in 1952 and spent nearly forty years working there. Shoolery shares his impressions of Varian Associates, Inc., its management, its products, and his pride in having been able to follow the development of NMR for such an extended period of time. Shoolery concludes the interview with a discussion of his life outside of Varian and shares some final thoughts about his career.

INTERVIEWERS

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.

David C. Brock is Program Manager for Educational and Historical Services at the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department, Program in the History of Science at Princeton University. In 1995, Mr. Brock received his M.A. in the History of Science from Princeton University and in 1992, he earned a M.Sc. in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge from the University of Edinburgh.

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