

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

GILBERT STORK

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning and Leonard Fine

at

Columbia University

on

6 August 1991

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

THE CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program

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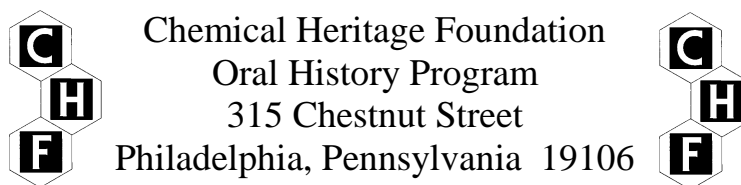
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GILBERT STORK

1921 Born in Brussels, Belgium on 31 December

Education

1942 B.S., chemistry, University of Florida
1945 Ph.D., organic chemistry, University of Wisconsin

Professional Experience

1945-1946 Lakeside Laboratories, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Senior Research Chemist

1946-1948 Harvard University
Instructor

1948-1953 Harvard University
Assistant Professor

1953-1955 Columbia University
Associate Professor

1955-1967 Columbia University
Professor

1967- Columbia University
Eugene Higgins Professor of Chemistry

Honors

1957 Award in Pure Chemistry, American Chemical Society

1959 Guggenheim Foundation Fellow

1961 D.Sc. (honorary), Lawrence University

1961 Baekeland Medal, North Jersey Section, ACS

1962 Harrison Howe Award

1966 Edward Curtis Franklin Memorial Award, Stanford University

1967 Award for Creative Work in Synthetic Organic Chemistry, American Chemical Society

1971 Gold Medal, Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association

1973 Nebraska Award

1978 Roussel Prize, Paris

1979 D.Sc. (honorary), Université Pierre et Marie Curie

1980 Nichols Medal, New York Section, ACS

1982 Edgar Fahs Smith Award, Philadelphia Section, ACS
1982 Willard Gibbs Medal, Chicago Section, ACS
1982 Award in Chemical Sciences, National Academy of Sciences
1982 D.Sc. (honorary), University of Rochester
1983 National Medal of Science
1983 Pauling Award
1985 Tetrahedron Prize
1986 Remsen Award, Maryland Section, ACS
1986 Cliff S. Hamilton Award, Nebraska
1987 Monie A. Ferst Award and Medal, Georgia Tech
1988 D.Sc. (honorary), Emory University
1991 Roger Adams Award
1992 George Kenner Award, Liverpool
1992 Robert Robinson Lectureship Award, U. K.
1992 D.Sc. (honorary), Columbia University
1993 Robert A. Welch Award
1996 Wolf Prize, Israel
1997 D.Sc. (honorary), University of Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

Gilbert Stork begins his interview with a description of his childhood and family background in Paris. Stork and his family moved to the United States in 1939. He decided to begin his graduate studies in chemistry at the University of Florida in 1940. There, Stork earned his B.S. in 1942, and in 1945 he received his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Wisconsin. While earning his Ph.D. at Wisconsin, he taught a section of the Army Special Training Program. Synthesis related to quinine, and stereochemical control in synthesis highlighted Stork's graduate work and early career. His first employment after receiving his Ph.D. was with Lakeside Laboratories, working on estrone synthesis. There, Stork also began work on hydrogenation techniques. Stork left Lakeside in 1946 and began an instructorship at Harvard University. While at Harvard, he also consulted for the Syntex Corporation. In 1953, Stork left Harvard and joined the faculty of Columbia University as an associate professor, where he continued his organic synthesis research. Next, Stork worked on polyene cyclization and enamine alkylation while continuing his synthesis work. Stork concludes the interview with a discussion of various developments in organic chemistry, the future of university research funding, and memorable students and co-workers.

INTERVIEWERS

James J. Bohning is currently a professor at Lehigh University. He has served as Professor of Chemistry Emeritus at Wilkes University, where he was a faculty member from 1959 to 1990. He served there as chemistry department chair from 1970 to 1986 and environmental science department chair from 1987 to 1990. He was chair of the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry in 1986, received the Division's outstanding paper award in 1989, and presented more than twenty-five papers before the Division at national meetings of the Society. He has written for the American Chemical Society News Service, and He has been on the advisory committee of the Society's National Historic Chemical Landmarks committee since its inception in 1992. He developed the oral history program of the Chemical Heritage Foundation beginning in 1985, and was the Foundation's Director of Oral History from 1990 to 1995.

Leonard Fine is Professor of Chemistry and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Chemistry at Columbia University. His special interests include polymer chemistry and materials science, industrial inorganic and organic chemistry, engineering plastics, problems in solid waste management, and the recovery and recycling of post-consumer plastics. Among his recent publications are two practical manuals on principles and practices of infrared spectroscopy and a general chemistry textbook for engineers and scientists. He holds a B.S. in chemistry from Marietta College and a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Maryland at College Park.

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