THE TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT:
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
MARILYN C. BRACKEN

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

Jody A. Roberts and Kavita D. Hardy

at

Institute for Defense Analyses
Alexandria, Virginia

on

5 March 2010

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)
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MARILYN C. BRACKEN

1935 Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on 5 November

Education

1957 B.S., Chemistry, Carnegie Institute of Technology
1967 M.A., Public Administration: Technology of Management, American University
1971 Ph.D., Public Administration: Technology of Management, American University

Professional Experience

Melpar, Inc., Falls Church, Virginia
Chemist
1957-1958

National Bureau of Standards, Washington, D.C.
Chemist
1962-1964

Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
Information Systems Analyst, Office of Information Systems
1971-1973

Division Director, Division of Scientific Coordination, Bureau of Biomedical Sciences
1973-1976

The MITRE Corporation, McLean, Virginia
Associate Department Head, Environmental Chemistry and Biology
1976-1977

Department Head, Energy and Environmental Information Systems
1977-1978

U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Program Integration and Information, Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances
1978-1980

Associate Assistant Administrator for Toxics Integration, Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances
1980-1983

Environmental Testing and Certification Corporation, Edison, New Jersey
Vice President of Product Testing and Liability
1983-1988
Metcalf and Eddy, Wakefield, Massachusetts
1988-1989
Senior Vice President for Special Projects

Metcalf & Eddy de Puerto Rico, Inc., San Juan, Puerto Rico
1988-1991
President

Air and Water Technologies, Inc., Miami, Florida
1991-1992
President, South Region

Air and Water Technologies, Inc., Washington, D.C.
1992-1993
Senior Vice President, Federal Programs

Paragon Global Services, Ltd., Fairfax, Virginia
1993-1994
President

Applied Biosciences International, Inc., Fairfax, Virginia
1993-1994
Vice President, Marketing and Business Development

Bracken Associates, LLC, Washington, D.C.
1994-Present
President and General Manager

Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia
1996-2005
Adjunct Research Staff Member, Systems Evaluation Division
2005-Present
Adjunct Research Staff Member, Operations Evaluation Division

Honors

1966-1970
National Institutes of Health Graduate Trainee Fellowship
1976
Chairman’s Special Citation, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
1978
Distinguished Alumna Award, American University
1980
Presidential Rank Award, Meritorious Executive, U.S. Government
1981
Fellow, American Association for Advancement of Science
2002
Fellow, Society of American Military Engineers
ABSTRACT

Marilyn C. Bracken’s oral history interview begins with a discussion about the relationship between her family life and early career. Once Bracken became a mother, she transitioned out of the laboratory and began pursuing graduate work in information science. She worked for and with several government agencies before joining EPA’s Office of Toxic Substances as the deputy assistant administrator (DAA) for program information and toxic integration. Her responsibilities in program information included creating the TSCA Inventory, where the office decided to use the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) to assign unique identities to chemicals. She was also involved in developing Section 8 rules, and supporting industry efforts to develop internal reporting mechanisms. Internationally, she participated in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) discussions to facilitate data sharing and develop a “base set” of data for new chemicals. As the DAA for toxic integration, Bracken was responsible for facilitating interagency and intra-agency data sharing. From Bracken’s perspective, EPA’s culture of stovepiping, a lack of coordination throughout the administration, and procedural burdens within TSCA severely hampered any effort to create a holistic chemicals regulation policy, and Congress was critical of EPA’s performance. After the change in administration and the arrival of Anne M. Gorsuch as administrator, Bracken left the EPA because of the lack of administrative support.

Bracken believes that TSCA was unique in its authority to be a regulatory catchall with the ability to prevent pollution before it happened. She emphasized the role that access to information, both by the government and the public, plays in effectively carrying out that authority. She discussed the challenge that nanotechnology presents to the CAS system of chemical identity that she developed. Bracken argues that the procedural burdens to EPA action must also be addressed in a TSCA reform process, specifically proving “unreasonable risk” and the limitations around confidential business information (CBI). She concludes with a discussion of the changing language of “safety,” and the significance of the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances changing its name to the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

INTERVIEWERS

Jody A. Roberts is the Associate Director for the Center for Contemporary History and Policy and the Manager of the Environmental History and Policy Program at the Chemical Heritage Foundation. Roberts received his Ph.D. and M.S. in Science and Technology Studies from Virginia Tech and holds a B.S. in Chemistry from Saint Vincent College. His research focuses on the intersections of regulation, innovation, environmental issues, and emerging technologies within the chemical sciences.

Kavita D. Hardy is a research assistant in the Environmental History and Policy Program at the Chemical Heritage Foundation. She received a B.A. in Chemistry and Economics from Swarthmore College.
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