CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PAUL B. WEISZ

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

State College, Pennsylvania

on

27 March 1995

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Paul B. Weeg

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PAUL B. WEISZ

1919 Born in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, on 2 July

Education

1938-1939	Physics Study, Technical University, Berlin
1940	B.S., physics, Auburn University
1966	Ph.D., ETH [Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule], Zürich

Professional Experience

1938-1939	Assistant, Humboldt University, Berlin
1940-1946	Research Assistant, Bartol Research Foundation and Project Engineer, MIT Radiation Laboratory (wartime assignment)
1942-1943	Instructor, Swarthmore College (evening courses to U.S. Signal Corps trainees

Mobil Research and Development Corporation

1946-1961	Research Associate
1961-1967	Senior Scientist
1967-1969	Manager, Exploratory Process Research
1969-1982	Manager, Central Research Laboratory, Princeton, N.J.
1982-1984	Scientific Advisor
1984	Retired
1974-1976	Visiting Professor, Princeton University
1984-	Distinguished Professor of Chemical and Bio-Engineering, University of Pennsylvania, (now emeritus)
1993-	Adjunct Professor, Chemical Engineering, Pennsylvania State University
1984-	Consultant, Catalysis and R&D Strategy

Honors

1972	E. V. Murphy Award in Industrial Engineering Chemistry, American Chemical Society
1974	Pioneer Award, American Institute of Chemists
1977	Leo Friend Award, American Chemical Society
1977	Elected member, National Academy of Engineering
1978	R. H. Wilhelm Award, American Institute of Chemical Engineering
1980	Honorary Doctorate (Sc.D., technological science), Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
1983	Lavoisier Medal, Société Chimique de France
1983	Langmuir Distinguished Lecturer Award, American Chemical Society
1985	Perkin Medal, Society of Chemical Industry
1986	Chemistry of Contemporary Technological Problems Award, American Chemical Society
1987	Carothers Award, American Chemical Society
1988	DGKM Kollegium Award (Germany)
1992	National Medal of Technology

ABSTRACT

Paul Weisz begins this interview by discussing his family background. Because of the political uncertainty of Austria-Hungary in the post World War I period, his family moved to Berlin when he was a young boy. Weisz was educated in the Gymnasium, where he was exposed to basic science and developed an interest in physics and chemistry. His father further encouraged him to pursue the sciences, and Weisz remembers building small radios. Weisz attended the Technical University in Berlin, and spent his free time in the laboratory of Wolfgang Kohlhoerster at the Institute of Cosmic Radiation Research. There, he worked on Geiger counter instrumentation and cosmic ray measurements. Because of Hitler's rise to power, Weisz decided to come to the United States, and arranged an exchange program with Auburn University. He earned his B.S. in physics from Auburn in 1940, and accepted a research position at the Bartol Research Foundation in Pennsylvania. There, Weisz worked on radiation counting, and projects relating to the National Research Defense Council. After gaining clearance to do classified work, he moved to the MIT Radiation Laboratory where he helped to develop a long range navigation trainer (Loran). Weisz returned to Bartol, but soon decided to move away from cosmic ray research. He accepted a position with Mobil Corporation, where he worked on catalysis and cracking catalysts. In the 1950s, Weisz began to investigate zeolites and shape selective catalysis. In 1966, he completed his Sc.D. at the Eidgenossische Technische Hochschule in Zurich, where he had worked with Heinrich Zollinger on dye chemistry. Weisz concludes the interview by discussing innovation in industry, the importance of interdisciplinary thinking, and his later work on Alzheimer's Disease and angiogenesis.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning is 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 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. He currently writes for the American Chemical Society News Service.

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