

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

EDGAR S. WOOLARD, JR.

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James G. Traynham

at

Wilmington, Delaware

on

10 June 1999

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program
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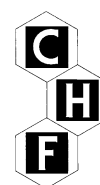
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Oral History Program
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EDGAR S. WOOLARD, JR.

1934 Born in Washington, North Carolina, on 15 April

Education

1956 B.S., industrial engineering, North Carolina State University

Professional Experience

1956-1957 Industrial engineering, Alcoa Corporation

E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Co., Inc.

1957-1959 Industrial Engineer

1959-1962 Group Supervisor, industrial engineering

1962-1964 Supervisor, manufacturing section

1964-1965 Planning Supervisor

1965-1966 Staff Assistant to Production Manager

1966-1969 Production Supervisor

1969-1970 Engineering Supervisor

1970-1971 Assistant Plant Manager

1971-1973 Plant Manager

1973-1975 Director, Product Marketing Division

1975-1976 Managing Director, Textile Marketing Division

1976-1977 Manager, Corporate Planning

1977-1978 General Director, Products and Planning Department

1978-1981 General Manager, Textile Fibers

1981-1983 Vice President

1983-1985 Executive Vice President

1985-1987 Vice Chairman

1987-1989 President and Chief Operating Officer

1989-1996 Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

1996-1998 Chairman

Honors

1995 International Palladium Medal, Society of Chemical Industry

1998 Chemical Industry Medal, Society of Chemical Industry

ABSTRACT

Edgar S. Woolard, Jr. begins the interview with a description of his family and childhood years in Washington, North Carolina. Woolard's parents encouraged him to excel in both academic and social environments. As a high-school student, Woolard held an interest in mathematics. After graduation, Woolard enrolled in North Carolina State University as a nuclear engineering major. Woolard enjoyed college life and was involved in several extra-curricular activities, including serving as house manager for his fraternity. In his junior year, he switched his major to industrial engineering, and received his B.S. in this field in 1956. Shortly after graduating from NC State, Woolard married his junior-high-school sweetheart and accepted a position at Alcoa in Maryville, Tennessee. Woolard left Alcoa after one year to serve a six-month term in the U.S. Army. Upon his return, he was offered a job at DuPont in industrial engineering. After two years, he was promoted into management as a supervisor, a position that Woolard relished. He quickly rose through the ranks at DuPont, gaining valuable learning experiences from each promotion. Woolard entered DuPont's Planning Division in 1976, where he oversaw many breakthroughs in DuPont polymers, especially Dacron[®] production. Throughout his career, Woolard helped shape DuPont into a more streamlined and environmentally-friendly company. In the late 1970s, DuPont responded to a spike in oil prices and high inflation by reducing senior management and combining departments. In 1983, under DuPont's new system, Woolard was given responsibility for three departments: Agricultural Chemicals Division, Medical Division, and Photo Products Division. He served in that capacity for three years before becoming Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer. Woolard became CEO in 1987 and worked to both streamline and evenly downsize DuPont for the good of the company. Although this period was difficult, his efforts proved successful for both DuPont and its employees. For his earnest reorganization of DuPont, Woolard received the Chemical Industry Medal in 1998. Woolard concluded the interview with a discussion of DuPont's major achievements during his career, retirement, and thoughts on his family.

INTERVIEWER

James G. Traynham is a Professor of Chemistry at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. He holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Northwestern University. He joined Louisiana State University in 1963 and served as chemistry department chairperson from 1968 to 1973. He was chairman of the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry in 1988 and is currently councilor of the Baton Rouge section of the American Chemical Society. He was a member of the American Chemical Society's Joint-Board Council on Chemistry and Public Affairs, as well as a member of the Society's Committees on Science, Chemical Education, and Organic Chemistry Nomenclature. He has written over ninety publications, including a book on organic nomenclature and a book on the history of organic chemistry.

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