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BRUNO H. ZIMM

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

at

Anaheim, California

on

9 September 1986

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BRUNO H. ZIMM

1920 Born in Woodstock, New York on 31 October

Education

1941 A.B., chemistry, Columbia University
1943 M.S., chemistry, Columbia University
1944 Ph.D., chemistry, Columbia University

Professional Experience

1941-1944 Teaching Assistant, Columbia University
1944-1946 Research assistant and Instructor, Polytechnic
Institute of Brooklyn

University of California, Berkeley
1946-1950 Assistant Professor of Chemistry
1950-1952 Associate Professor of Chemistry

1951-1960 Research Associate, General Electric Co.,
Schnectady

1960- Professor of Chemistry, University of California,
San Diego

Honors

1957 Baekland Award, North Jersey Section, American
Chemical Society

1958 National Academy of Sciences
1960 Bingham Medal, Society of Rheology
1963 High Polymer Physics Award, American Physical
Society
1981 Chemical Sciences Award, National Academy of Sciences
1982 Kirkwood Medal, New Haven Section, American Chemical
Society

ABSTRACT

Bruno Zimm recalls growing up in Woodstock, New York and the influence of his father's interests in natural science. After briefly reviewing his schooldays and his developing fascination with science, Zimm describes his undergraduate and graduate studies at Columbia. During this section of the interview, he recalls faculty and curricula and tells of the effect of World War II on the research activities at Columbia. In 1944 Zimm transferred to Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute to work on a wartime project on the degradation of polyvinyl chloride; here he also first started his study of the theory and practice of the light scattering of polymer solutions, which he continued at the University of California, Berkeley. From there, and after a one year sabbatical at Harvard, Zimm moved to the General Electric laboratories at Schenectady, where he developed further his studies of dynamic methods for the investigation of polymer solutions. A short time as a visiting professor at Yale rekindled his interests in biological polymers, especially DNA. At the new University of California, San Diego campus at La Jolla, Zimm continued instrumental research as well as his theoretical interests, which he briefly reviews. The interview closes with Zimm reflecting on the changes in polymer science over the duration of his career, and he comments on educational opportunities in this discipline.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning holds the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, and has been a member of the chemistry faculty at Wilkes College since 1959. He was chair of the Chemistry Department for sixteen years, and was appointed chair of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in 1988. He has been associated with the development and management of the oral history program at the Beckman Center since 1985, and was elected Chair of the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society for 1987.

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