

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

H. EUGENE McBRAYER

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

James J. Bohning

in

Mercer Island, Washington

on

11 May 1995

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This oral history is one in a series initiated by the Chemical Heritage Foundation on behalf of the Society of Chemical Industry (American Section). The series documents the personal perspectives of Perkin and the Chemical Industry Award recipients and records the human dimensions of the growth of the chemical sciences and chemical process industries during the twentieth century.

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Oral History Program
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H. EUGENE McBRAYER

1932 Born in Birmingham, Alabama, on 19 January

Education

1954 B.S., chemical engineering, Vanderbilt University

Professional Experience

Exxon Corporation

	Esso Standard, Baton Rouge Refinery
1953	Junior Chemical Engineer
1954-1955	Chemical Engineer, Process Engineering Department
1955-1957	Supervisor, Chemical Technical Service
1957-1959	Division Foreman
1959-1962	Assistant Division Head, Technical Division
1962	Head, Technical Division
1963	Head, Operating Division
	Humble Oil & Refining Company
1963-1964	Head, Refinery Coordination Department
	New Investments Department
1964-1965	Assistant Manager
	Exxon Enterprises
1965-1977	President
	Exxon Nuclear Company
1977-1979	Chief Executive Officer
	Exxon Chemical Company
1979-1986	Executive Vice President
1986-1992	President
1992	Retired

Honors

1992 Chemical Industry Medal, Society of Chemical Industry, American Section

ABSTRACT

Eugene McBrayer begins the interview with a discussion of his family background and early education in Birmingham, Alabama. His father was a small gasoline distributor for Amoco, and McBrayer helped with the business. His parents encouraged him to treat his education seriously, so he spent much of his time studying. This work paid off when he was offered an academic scholarship to Vanderbilt University. Though he had intended to study metallurgy, McBrayer soon became a chemical engineering major, earning his B.S. in 1954. The summer between his junior and senior years was spent working for Exxon's Baton Rouge, Louisiana refinery, and McBrayer decided that he wanted to work for Exxon after graduation. Because of his high grades and previous good work, he received an offer from Exxon, which he accepted. He moved quickly through the management ranks, and in 1964 was sent to New York City to work for Exxon Enterprises. In 1979, he moved again to Exxon Chemical Corporation, becoming Vice President. Six years later, he became President, and began to restructure the company. During his years at Exxon Chemical, McBrayer was heavily involved in environmental issues; he helped to set up Clean Sites, Inc., and has been active in the Chemical Manufacturers Association Responsible Care program. In 1992, the same year that he was awarded the Chemical Industry Medal, McBrayer retired from Exxon Chemical. McBrayer concludes the interview with his hopes for the future of the chemical industry.

INTERVIEWER

James J. Bohning is currently Visiting Research Scientist 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.

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5. William Wishnick, interview by James J. Bohning in New York City, 13 May 1991 (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, Oral History Transcript #0093).

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