

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**THE TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT:  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
CHARLES L. ELKINS**

Transcript of Interviews  
Conducted by

Jody A. Roberts and Kavita D. Hardy

at

Washington, D.C.

on

9 April 2010

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

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## CHARLES L. ELKINS

1940 Born in New York, New York on 14 April

### Education

1962 B.A., Philosophy, Yale University  
1967 J.D., Yale Law School

### Professional Experience

1967-1971 U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C.  
Budget Examiner for Environmental Programs

1971-1972 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.  
Special Assistant to the Administrator

1972-1973 Principal Deputy to the Assistant Administrator, Office of  
Categorical Programs

1973-1974 Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Categorical Programs

1974-1975 Director of Program and Management Operations, Office of  
Water and Hazardous Materials

1975-1981 Deputy Assistant Administrator for Noise Control Programs,  
Office of Air, Noise, and Radiation

1982-1983 Director, Office of Policy and Evaluation, Office of Air and  
Radiation

1983-1983 Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation

1983-1985 Director, Office of Program Development, Office of Air and  
Radiation

1985-1986 Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation

1986-1990 Director, Office of Toxic Substances

1990-1994 Associate General Counsel

1995-1999 Jellinek, Schwartz & Connolly, Inc., Washington, D.C.  
Vice President

1999-Present Chuck Elkins & Associates, Washington, D.C.  
President

Honors

1972 Gold Medal for Exceptional Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## ABSTRACT

**Charles L. Elkins** witnessed the centralization of federal environmental regulation in the early 1970s, first as an Office of Management and Budget examiner and then in the newly created Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Within the new EPA, Elkins worked in the Office of Categorical Programs, where he was involved with the pre-Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Office of Toxic Substances and the Noise Abatement Program. The categorical programs struggled from a lack of constituency and attention compared to the larger water and air pollution programs of the Office of Media Programs. Elkins became the director of the Office of Toxic Substances in 1986. While there were managerial challenges to running the office, the biggest challenge he faced was TSCA's lack of a coherent mandate; the program instead consisted of several distinct tasks, each beset with procedural impediments. The new chemicals program worked well, and the testing program was considered too unworkable, so he focused on revitalizing the existing chemicals program, primarily by taking action on asbestos. That rule was overturned by the courts.

Elkins laments the lack of involvement by environmental and public health advocates in the Office, limiting the pressure it could exert when negotiating with industry for more stringent voluntary measures. He mentions some voluntary initiatives the Office undertook with industry, and cooperative programs with other federal agencies. He is skeptical that Congressional oversight could have improved the Office's performance. While the Toxics Release Inventory was not a part of the TSCA program, he thinks it was influential in creating a constituency both within EPA and the public for increased data on toxics.

## 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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