CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

THE TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MARILYN C. BRACKEN

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

Jody A. Roberts and Kavita D. Hardy

at

Institute for Defense Analyses
Alexandria, Virginia

on

5 March 2010

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program
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MARILYN C. BRACKEN

1935 Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on 5 November

Education

1957 B.S., Chemistry, Carnegie Institute of Technology
1967 M.A., Public Administration: Technology of Management, American University
1971 Ph.D., Public Administration: Technology of Management, American University

Professional Experience

Melpar, Inc., Falls Church, Virginia
1957-1958 Chemist

National Bureau of Standards, Washington, D.C.
1962-1964 Chemist

Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
1971-1973 Information Systems Analyst, Office of Information Systems

Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C.
1973-1976 Division Director, Division of Scientific Coordination, Bureau of Biomedical Sciences

The MITRE Corporation, McLean, Virginia
1976-1977 Associate Department Head, Environmental Chemistry and Biology
1977-1978 Department Head, Energy and Environmental Information Systems

U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.
1978-1980 Deputy Assistant Administrator for Program Integration and Information, Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances
1980-1983 Associate Assistant Administrator for Toxics Integration, Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances

Environmental Testing and Certification Corporation, Edison, New Jersey
1983-1988 Vice President of Product Testing and Liability

	Metcalf and Eddy, Wakefield, Massachusetts
1988-1989	Senior Vice President for Special Projects
	Metcalf & Eddy de Puerto Rico, Inc., San Juan, Puerto Rico
1988-1991	President
	Air and Water Technologies, Inc., Miami, Florida
1991-1992	President, South Region
	Air and Water Technologies, Inc., Washington, D.C.
1992-1993	Senior Vice President, Federal Programs
	Paragon Global Services, Ltd., Fairfax, Virginia
1993-1994	President
	Applied Biosciences International, Inc., Fairfax, Virginia
1993-1994	Vice President, Marketing and Business Development
	Bracken Associates, LLC, Washington, D.C.
1994-Present	President and General Manager
	Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia
1996-2005	Adjunct Research Staff Member, Systems Evaluation Division
2005-Present	Adjunct Research Staff Member, Operations Evaluation Division

Honors

1966-1970	National Institutes of Health Graduate Trainee Fellowship
1976	Chairman's Special Citation, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
1978	Distinguished Alumna Award, American University
1980	Presidential Rank Award, Meritorious Executive, U.S. Government
1981	Fellow, American Association for Advancement of Science
2002	Fellow, Society of American Military Engineers

ABSTRACT

Marilyn C. Bracken's oral history interview begins with a discussion about the relationship between her family life and early career. Once Bracken became a mother, she transitioned out of the laboratory and began pursuing graduate work in information science. She worked for and with several government agencies before joining EPA's Office of Toxic Substances as the deputy assistant administrator (DAA) for program information and toxic integration. Her responsibilities in program information included creating the TSCA Inventory, where the office decided to use the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) to assign unique identities to chemicals. She was also involved in developing Section 8 rules, and supporting industry efforts to develop internal reporting mechanisms. Internationally, she participated in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) discussions to facilitate data sharing and develop a "base set" of data for new chemicals. As the DAA for toxic integration, Bracken was responsible for facilitating interagency and intra-agency data sharing. From Bracken's perspective, EPA's culture of stovepiping, a lack of coordination throughout the administration, and procedural burdens within TSCA severely hampered any effort to create a holistic chemicals regulation policy, and Congress was critical of EPA's performance. After the change in administration and the arrival of Anne M. Gorsuch as administrator, Bracken left the EPA because of the lack of administrative support.

Bracken believes that TSCA was unique in its authority to be a regulatory catchall with the ability to prevent pollution before it happened. She emphasized the role that access to information, both by the government and the public, plays in effectively carrying out that authority. She discussed the challenge that nanotechnology presents to the CAS system of chemical identity that she developed. Bracken argues that the procedural burdens to EPA action must also be addressed in a TSCA reform process, specifically proving "unreasonable risk" and the limitations around confidential business information (CBI). She concludes with a discussion of the changing language of "safety," and the significance of the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances changing its name to the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

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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