

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Arnold Stancell

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Stancell, Arnold F, 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell,
Dates:	May 14, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:38:49).
Abstract:	Chemical engineer and corporate executive Arnold Stancell (1936 -) had a thirty-one year career with Mobil Oil starting in research and rising to vice president of Exploration and Production. He served on the National Science Board and advised the United States government after the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill. Stancell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 14, 2012, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_090
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemical engineer and corporate oil executive Arnold Stancell was born on November 16, 1936 in Harlem, New York to Maria Lucas, a seamstress and Francis Stancell, a musician. He lived with his single mother and was focused on his education throughout his youth. After passing competitive exams to attend Stuyvesant High School, Stancell went on to City College of New York where he graduated magna cum laude with his B.S. degree in chemical engineering in 1958.

Stancell was awarded a graduate fellowship from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and became the first African American to earn his Ph.D. degree from MIT in chemical engineering in 1962.

After graduation, Stancell worked at Mobil Oil Corporation from 1962 to 1970, researching new chemical and plastic products. During this time, he was awarded eleven patents for new plastics processes and plasma (ionized gas) reactions for new products. In 1970, Stancell took a leave of absence from Mobil Oil to teach at MIT. He started a research program on plasma reactions at surfaces and his student, David Lam, went on to found Lam Research, the preeminent company worldwide in plasma etching of circuits into the surface of silicon chips. In 1971, Stancell declined a tenured professorship position at MIT to return to Mobil Oil. He continued to excel at Mobil, becoming vice president of Mobil Plastics in 1976 and led the commercialization of a new plastic film that revolutionized packaging and replaced cellophane. In 1982 he became vice president of Mobil Europe Marketing and Refining based in London. He then progressed through a number of additional executive positions becoming vice president of oil and natural gas Exploration and Production in 1989 responsible for finding and developing oil and natural gas reserves in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East and Australia. Stancell initiated, negotiated and launched the now \$70 billion liquefied natural gas production joint venture between Mobil and Qatar which sells natural gas to markets worldwide.

In 1993, he retired from Mobil after a thirty-one year career and a year later accepted George Institute of Technology's invitation to join its faculty as professor of chemical engineering. He became the Turner Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering in 2001, and in 2004 retired as Professor Emeritus. After the 2010 British Petroleum (BP) oil spill, Stancell consulted and advised the United States Department of Interior. In 2011, he was appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Science Board.

Stancell has received numerous recognitions including the American Institute of Chemical Engineers National Award for Chemical Engineering Practice, Career Achievement Award of City College of New York, Professional Achievement Award of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers and in 1992 was named Black Engineer of the Year. In 1997, he was inducted into the National Academy of Engineering and in 2009, was elected to its Board. In 2010, he was appointed to the Governing Board of the National Research Council. He has also received numerous outstanding teacher awards. Arnold Stancell is married to artist Constance Newton Stancell.

Arnold Stancell was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 14, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Arnold Stancell was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 14, 2012, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Chemical engineer and corporate executive Arnold Stancell (1936 -) had a thirty-one year career with Mobil Oil starting in research and rising to vice president of Exploration and Production. He served on the National Science Board and advised the United States government after the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Stancell, Arnold F, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Stancell, Arnold F, 1936---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Chemical Engineer

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, May 14, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section A2012_090_001_001, TRT: 1:30:10 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell talks about his family background. His mother, Maria Lucas, was born in January of 1918 in Emporia, Virginia. In 1926, her family moved to Harlem, New York and she lived with one of her aunts. Stancell's father, Francis Stancell, was born in 1917 in Harlem, New York. He did not finish high school and later served in World War II. After Stancell was born in 1936, his parents did not maintain a relationship. He did not meet his father until he was around ten years old. Stancell talks about his growing up in Harlem, New York and his favorite childhood games.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.
African Americans--Harlem (New York, N.Y.).

Childhood and youth--Harlem (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_002, TRT: 2:30:41 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell grew up in Harlem, New York, where he attended Friendship Baptist Church. He also attended P.S. 68 and Stitt Junior High School, where he was placed into an accelerated program that propelled his interest in science. In 1949, Stancell was accepted into the advanced placement program at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, New York, a public high school that specializes in math and science education. While he enjoyed all of his subjects, including the humanities, he was especially engrossed in science and math and developed an interest in pursuing a career as an engineer. Stancell graduated from Stuyvesant among the top of his class in 1953. He then went on to attend the City College of New York, where he majored in chemical engineering. Stancell talks about his decision to attend CCNY and his experience there.

Friendship Baptist Church--Harlem (New York, N.Y.).

Gifted children--Education--New York (State)--New York.

Advanced placement programs (Education).

Stuyvesant High School (New York, N.Y.)--Alumni and alumnae.

City University of New York. City College. Chemical Engineering Department.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_003, TRT: 3:28:57 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell describes the cultural atmosphere and shifting social politics of Harlem during the 1950s. After graduating from Stuyvesant High School in 1953, Stancell began his studies in chemical engineering at the City College of New York. His interest in chemical engineering was fueled by his fascination with the fundamentals processes of developing a product from raw materials, such as plastic materials or polymers. He was also particularly interested with the oil industry. After graduating magna cum laude in 1958, Stancell accepted a position at the Esso Research and Engineering Lab, which

was acquired by the Exxon Mobil Corporation. He served as a process design engineer and designed the manufacturing processes of polypropylene. After realizing the educational backgrounds of his colleagues and growing dissatisfied with night school, Stancell decided to pursue his doctoral degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on a fellowship.

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Social conditions--20th century.

Chemical engineering--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Polymers--Industrial applications.

Esso Research Laboratories.

African American college students--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section A2012_090_001_004, TRT: 4:31:04 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell graduated from the City College of New York in 1958. After working at Esso Research and Engineering, he received a fellowship to pursue doctoral studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT. Stancell's dissertation research focused on designing a process for improving crude oil recovery from oil reservoirs. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in chemical engineering in 1962, Stancell joined Mobil's research lab where his research concerned the development of efficient manufacturing processes of organic compounds and polymers. In 1970, Stancell was invited to serve as a visiting associate professor at MIT's Department of Chemical Engineering. There, he supervised the thesis project of David Lam on plasma etching. Stancell talks about receiving the Professional Achievement Award from the National Organization for Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) and how he met his wife.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Department of Chemical Engineering.

Engineering design.

Enhanced oil recovery.

Plasma etching--Dissertations, Academic.

National Organization for Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_005, TRT: 5:30:44 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell met his wife in 1970. At that that time, Stancell was appointed as a visiting associate professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent a year doing research and supervising the doctoral project of David Lam. He returned to Mobil Chemical in 1971 and served as a research manager and planning manager. In 1976, he was appointed to vice president of the plastics division at Mobil Chemical. Stancell's roles at Mobil became increasingly progressive and concerned with corporate planning. He became vice president of Mobil Europe Marketing & Refining in London, England. Stancell talks about his career at Mobil, describes his projects and considers the environmental implications of his line of work.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Department of Chemical Engineering.

Doctoral students.

Mobil Oil Company.

Oil industries--Management.

Oil industries--Environmental aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_006, TRT: 6:31:18 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell returned to his alma matter, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in 1970 as a visiting associate professor. He talks about his advisee, David Lam, whose doctoral research on plasma became a catalyst for the establishment of Lam Research Corporation. Despite an offer of a tenured-track position at MIT, Stancell decided to return to Mobil after one year at MIT. In 1982, he moved to London and was appointed as vice president of Europe Marketing and Refining and worked to improve refinery operations in Europe, as well as financial processes. In 1986, Stancell returned to the

U.S. and served as vice president of Global Marketing and Refining Planning. He talks about his appointments as vice president at Mobil, Mobil's drilling activities, and the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology--Faculty.

Lam Research Corporation.

Lam Research Corporation.

Petroleum refineries.

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, Alaska, 1989.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_007, TRT: 7:27:07 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell retired from Mobil in 1993. In 1994, he joined Georgia Institute of Technology's Chemical Engineering department as a professor. Stancell was named professor emeritus of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering in 2004. Stancell talks about the BP oil spill, reflects upon his career and legacy, shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and talks about his family.

Georgia Institute of Technology. School of Chemical Engineering.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Arnold Stancell, Section
A2012_090_001_008, TRT: 8:08:48 2012/05/14

Arnold Stancell describes his photos.

Photographs.