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## 56. Sir Geoffrey Allan

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**Sir Geoffrey Allen**

tional giant, Unilever, as a member of the main Board in charge of the Science and Engineering Council. Geoffrey Allen retired again, this time from Unilever, and joined a Japanese company, Kobe Steel Ltd., where his responsibilities are that of an Adviser to the President. Since July 1994 he has been Chancellor of the University of East Anglia in Norwich. The Chief Executive of a UK university is Vice Chancellor. The Chancellor is an honorary post and chancellors are often members of the royal family.

Geoffrey Allen was born in a mining town in Derbyshire on October 29, 1928 to John James and Majorie Allen. He went to the Clay Cross Tupton Hall Grammar School, and, at the age of 17, went to the University of Leeds where he studied Chemistry. He continued to study for his PhD degree at the same university and in 1952 was awarded a PhD in Physical Chemistry.

Shortly after receiving his degree his adventurous spirit took him to Canada, where, from 1952 to 1954, he was a Research Scientist at the National Research Council (NRC). There he carried out research on Raman Spectroscopy. A rumor says that, when his supervisor told him to take the Raman spectrum of a sodium chloride crystal, which required a sodium chloride single crystal of the best quality, rather than growing the crystal himself, he ingeniously took a prism from an infrared spectrometer. It is believed that the infrared spectra taken at the NRC after this event had Geoffrey Allen's finger prints for a long time.

After returning from Canada in 1955 he joined the University of Manchester where he was appointed Assistant Lecturer and became interested in polymers, plastics, and rubbers. He started

## Personalities in Polymer Science

*Sir Geoffrey Allen* is known all over the world not only for his outstanding and original scientific achievements but also for his activities as an administrator, as an industrialist and as a politician of science. Starting as an academician and scientist at the University of Manchester, he reached the top scientific position in the UK as the Chairman of the Science Research Council. After retiring from the chairmanship of the Council, he joined the multina-

applying physical techniques to polymer problems. In 1960 his group built a FTIR spectrometer and a Raman spectrometer. In 1969 he pioneered the use of neutron scattering (a technique for which the innovators received the Nobel Prize in 1994) to study structure and molecular mobility of polymers. In 1965 he was appointed Professor of Chemical Physics and in 1970 he was dispatched part-time to ICI's Corporate Research Laboratory for 5 years—his first link with industry.

After 20 years in Manchester, in 1975 he received a call to the position of Professor of Polymer Science at Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London and spent the years 1976 to 1981 there as Professor of Chemical Technology, at the same College.

For his contributions to science and technology Geoffrey Allen was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) which in the UK is a very great honor. In the same year he was appointed a member of the Science Research Council and Chairman of its Engineering Board. Shortly thereafter, Geoffrey Allen was appointed Chairman of the Council and served in this capacity from 1977 to 1981. His achievements during his chairmanship included, among others, the promotion of the collaboration between universities and industry and as a result the name of the Council was changed to: Science and Engineering Research Council. He was also instrumental in fostering joint research and development projects between the United Kingdom and other countries including Japan. For these outstanding contributions to the well-being of the commonwealth he was knighted in 1979 and became Sir Geoffrey Allen.

Sir Geoffrey's intense involvement and interaction with the scientific community of Japan began when he created a joint research program with Japan while he was Chairman of the Science Council; at that time, only a few took notice of Japan. Sir Geoffrey, however, saw clearly Japan's potential in science and technology. Without formality such as exchanges of contracts, he set up a scientific collab-

oration scheme between the United Kingdom and Japan. This development of trust and confidence seems to go back to his friendship with the late Professor Takehiko Shimanouchi whom he first met at a meeting in Columbus (Ohio) in 1953. It is said that this meeting took place in a tavern; Professor Shimanouchi was visiting Professor Bryce Crawford, Jr., of the University of Minnesota at that time. A long friendship ensued between them because they met many times at conferences. Another Japanese scientist, Dr. Tsuneo Yoshino, then of TORAY, and two of Shimanouchi's former students, Dr. Shigeo Suzuki and Professor Mitsuo Tasumi remain friends of Sir Geoffrey to this day.

After the completion of his term at the Science Council, Sir Geoffrey Allen was asked to join the Unilever Pie and Unilever N V in the Netherlands, responsible for Research and Engineering world-wide. Sir Geoffrey Allen became a member of the main board of directors from 1982 to 1990. In this capacity he had working relationships with many countries including Japan, and after his official retirement from Unilever in May 1990, he joined Kobe Steel Ltd. (located in the London office), as Executive Advisor to the President, a rare move for a UK executive.

Sir Geoffrey has published more than 150 papers and is a former member of the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Polymer Science* and *Transactions of the Faraday Society*.

Sir Geoffrey has received many honors during his lifetime. He was elected a Fellow of Imperial College in 1986 and also a Fellow of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology in 1993. Sir Geoffrey received an Honorary Doctorate of Science from ten UK universities, Bath, Bradford, Cranfield, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Leeds, Loughborough, Sheffield and Surrey.

Sir Geoffrey is a past President of the Society of Chemical Industry, he was Vice President of the Royal Society from 1991 to 1993, the immediate Past Chairman of the Council of Science and

Technologies Institutes and since last May he has been the President of the Institute of Materials. (This institute was formed as a result of the amalgamation of the Institute of Metals, the Plastics and Rubber Institute, and the Institute of Ceramics). Sir Geoffrey was instrumental, as President of the Plastics and Rubber Institute, in creating the new Institute. His most recent appointment is at the University of East Anglia in Norwich where he is now the Chancellor of the University.

Sir Geoffrey takes pride in being an engineer and was elected Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering (FEng). Since 1990 he has been an honorary member of the Academy of Engineering of Japan. Sir Geoffrey also has other industrial positions; he is a Director of the Cambridge Quantum Fund Ltd, the Chairman of Enviromed Ltd., and was previously a Director of Courtaulds. Geoffrey Allen's activities are not confined to the UK or Japan. Over the last 10 years he has held numerous positions related to the development and the activities of the European Economic Community.

Sir Geoffrey Allen lives with his wife Valerie, nee Duckworth, a crystallographer, in Wimbledon, a pleasant suburb of London. Their only daughter Naomi finished her First Degree at the Courtauld Institute of the University of London, studying the history of art and is working toward her Masters' Degree from the same Institute.

Though *Who's Who* lists walking, talking, and eating as his leisure interests, Sir Geoffrey still enjoys fine wine and spirit. He is best known for his approachability, being with ease with nearly everybody, whether they are Board members, politicians, publishers, scientific or office colleagues.

*This article was submitted by Shigeo Suzuki, Head of Technology, Kobe Steel Ltd., London, UK and Otto Vogl, Herman F. Mark Professor, Polytechnic University, Brooklyn, NY, USA.*