

Jennifer Liebschutz

Mr. Reed

AP Chemistry

06/11/07

Reflection Essay: Samuel Wait

When I first heard we were interviewing older scientists, I was excited to learn how science had been viewed over the past century, and Dr. Wait didn't let me down. Dr. Wait had had a chemistry set from a very young age, and was allowed quite a bit of freedom to do with it whatever he pleased, especially by today's standards. His reminiscences of making stinky concoctions in his basement or at school evinced that his passion for chemistry wasn't artificially created and was perhaps catalyzed by this freedom and access to resources.

It was very interesting to learn of his times at various universities, including Oxford. It really struck me when he said he enjoyed university work more than doing research for businesses because he could choose what he wanted to research instead of someone telling him what to do. Dr. Wait's love of teaching showed through when he began to teach us what his research has focused on. He gave each of us a packet filled with information about his research and he took care to see if we understood what he was talking about.

I also thought it was cool that Dr. Wait had been one of the first people to use a computer to do calculations from data entered from a spectrophotometer. It highlighted how we take for granted the equipment we have available and how the research we do today is very different than it once was. Dr. Wait also mentioned that he used linear algebra to do calculations, and this was very reassuring to hear; as a linear algebra student, I have had trouble understanding the point of learning it, but this showed me that people actually use it. Dr. Wait was a very cool guy and meeting him gave me a new appreciation for how far science has come.