

A Conversation with Churchill Eisenhart

Ingram Olkin

Abstract. Churchill Eisenhart was born on March 11, 1913, in Rochester, New York, but was raised from infancy in Princeton, New Jersey. He majored in mathematical physics, as an undergraduate at Princeton University, received an A.B. degree in 1934, and an A.M. in mathematics in 1935. During 1935-37 he was a doctoral candidate in Egon S. Pearson's Department of Statistics, University College, London, with Jerzy Neyman as his thesis advisor and was awarded his Ph.D. by the University of London in 1937.

From 1937 to 1947 he was employed by the University of Wisconsin in Madison, rising from Instructor to Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and serving concurrently as Statistician, Biometrician and Head of the Biometry and Physics section of the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station. On World War II leave from the University of Wisconsin, he was a Research Associate on a Navy project at Tufts College from January to March 1943, then a Research Mathematician, Applied Mathematics Group, Columbia University, 1943-44 and a Principal Mathematical Statistician, Statistical Research Group (SRG), Columbia University, 1944-45.

He went to the National Bureau of Standards (NBS) in October 1946, on leave from the University of Wisconsin, to take charge of a small statistical consulting group in the Office of the Director. He became the first Chief of the NBS Statistical Engineering Laboratory in mid-1947, a position he held until 1963 when he was appointed a Senior Research Fellow. He retired from the NBS in 1983. He is now a Guest Researcher in the Computing and Applied Mathematics Laboratory of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (successor in 1988 to the National Bureau of Standards).

He received the Bullitt Prize in Mathematics in his junior year at Princeton, a U.S. Department of Commerce Exceptional Service Award in 1957, a Rockefeller Public Service Award in 1958 and the Wildhack Award of the National Conference of Standards Laboratories in 1982. He was President of the American Statistical Association in 1971 and received the Association's Wilks Memorial Medal in 1977.

The following conversation took place at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C.

Olkin: Churchill, thank you for agreeing to have this interview for *Statistical Science*. I know that you have been interviewed and videotaped for other journals. Could you give us the details on these other interviews?

Eisenhart: In 1984, I gave the Pfizer Colloquium lecture at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. The lecture was videotaped, but unfortunately the associated sound record was almost unintelligible. I gave

essentially the same lecture again in 1989 at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (successor to the National Bureau of Standards). A videotape of this lecture is available through the American Statistical Association. The only other time I was taped was inside the Bureau for the Bureau's own history, and I'm still editing the transcript of that.

PRINCETON DAYS

Olkin: Churchill, I'd like to put on record something about your background, in particular, how you got into statistics and your collegiate background.

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