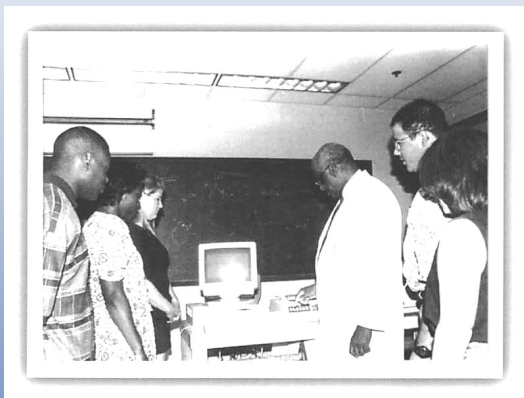


Biography

The transformation of Dr. William Conan Davis (b. August 22, 1926), Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at St. Philip's College, into one of the giants of industrial, pharmaceutical and environmental chemistry was precipitated by his boyhood encounter at Tuskegee Institute with Henry Ford and Dr. George Washington Carver. A "Wounded Warrior" of the Korean Conflict, Dr. Davis is also the research chemist credited with discoveries leading to or improving numerous amenities we take for granted, among them the potato chip, the instant mashed potato, Stractan (the organic glue that holds together wood-chip wood, particle board, and soft serve ice cream), Kinetic water (which led to the "Water Revolution" and the formulation of Dasani), the mail order laboratory processing of body fluids and tissue samples, innovations in endocrinology and toxicology and the accessibility of alternative medicine. The many formative influences on Dr. Davis included his grandfather Jonas Franklin, a full-blooded Sioux Indian and his father K.C. Davis, a protégé of Dr. George Washington Carver. During boyhood summers spent on their grandfather's farm with his older brother Kenneth, William observed firsthand how, "An Indian is a natural ecologist, without formal training."

The seemingly exponential growth and the cultural impact of early 20th Century technological innovations in the rural South were also factors in Dr. Davis's growth and development. While William—and his siblings, including actor Ossie Davis—were growing up, his family lived successively in the Georgia towns of Cogdell, Homerville, Waycross and Valdosta, where his father, a self-taught herbalist and self-made entrepreneur, built a railway to meet the growing needs of industry, designed and constructed three churches, manufactured and distributed his own patent medicines, opened the first pharmacy—with an ice cream parlor and a telephone—and created an HMO for Blacks.



When, in November 2006, William C. Davis spoke at the international "Race, Ethnicity and Place Conference" at Texas State University-San Marcos, his long-time friend and colleague Dr. Jeanette Passty had the good fortune to be in the audience. Since then, Drs. Davis and Passty have collaborated on a series of articles detailing his life and work. Their most recent publication, "Conquering Diabetes" (2012), explores Dr. Davis's post-doctoral research at the VA Hospital in the Bronx in the RIA (Radioimmunoassay) Laboratory of Nobel Prize Winner Rosalyn Yalow.

--Dr. Jeanette N. Passty