

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

KENNETH EDWARDS



Glendale, Calif.

Education:

'54 B.A., chemistry, Occidental College;
'55 M.S., chemical and metallurgical
engineering, University of Michigan

Profession:

CEO of Dunn-Edwards Paint Co.;
chemist; inventor.

How did you get into the paint business?

I was born into it. My paternal grandfa-
ther was trained to be a painter, and later
my father ran my grandfather's painting
business. In 1925 Frank W. "Bud" Dunn
started a wallpaper and paint store in Los
Angeles, in 1937 he started manufactur-
ing his own paint, and in 1938 my father
bought out Bud's three partners.

What has been your greatest accomplishment?

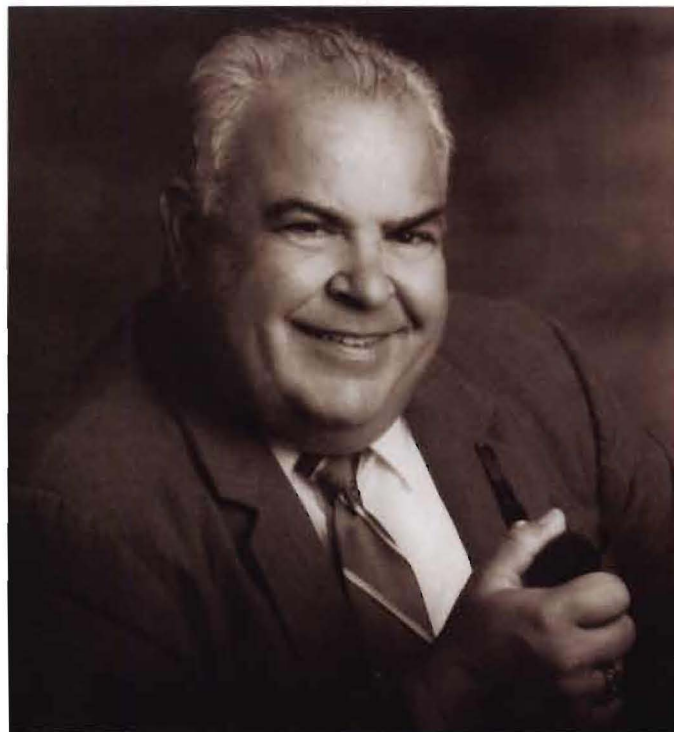
Applying my knowledge of chemistry and
chemical engineering to research and
manufacturing. This focus has allowed
the corporation to become a leader in
product and manufacturing.

You have been instrumental in garnering support for the Western Coatings Technology Center in the university's new Center for Science and Mathematics. How will the center enhance Cal Poly's efforts in research and development, and what will be the benefit to industry?

It will be the only school west of the
Mississippi where students can receive
such intense education in polymers and
coatings, combining darn good teachers
with hands-on training so students will
be specialists. A master's graduate in
polymers and coatings will have approxi-
mately five years' advantage over non-
specialty chemistry grads from other
schools. Every paint company I know
clamors for Cal Poly students.

What are polymers and coatings and why are they such important technologies?

If you look around your office, polymers
and coatings are everywhere. If your



'Every paint
company I
know clamors
for Cal Poly
students.'

— Kenneth Edwards

Kenneth Edwards
Photo courtesy Ken Edwards

living room is blue and your wife wants it
green, you'll be using a coating when you
dip your brush into the paint can. Polymers and coatings students are
entering one of the most complex areas
of chemistry. They need to know organic,
physical, surface, colloidal, and, espe-
cially in our environmentally conscious
time, atmospheric chemistry.

Your company was one of the first coatings manufacturers to work with, rather than against, environmental regulators to lower the amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in coatings. Why is care of the environment good for both society and private business, and how does an emphasis on good ecological practices prepare Cal Poly students for the workplace?

We all breathe the same air and industry
wants to produce environmentally sound
products that people can afford. Wishful
thinking about improving our environ-
ment and non-scientific based
regulation won't do the job – only
careful analysis of the complex mix and
interaction of man-made and naturally
occurring chemicals will allow us to
protect our environment.

Although you are not an alum, you are an enthusiastic Cal Poly supporter. What is it about the school that attracted your attention?

In the mid-'80s, the paint industry started
looking for a place where students could
be given experience in coatings. Two
associates and I visited Cal Poly and liked
what we saw. We were impressed by the
quality of the students, the faculty
members and the hands-on training.

What advice would you give young people who want to enter your field?

Polymers and coatings is a very challeng-
ing field, and if you're good, the sky's the
limit. I've been very lucky all my life, at
the forefront of solving problems other
people couldn't figure out and brought to
me. Few people are that lucky, but Cal
Poly students are capable and well
educated and they can accomplish
whatever they set their minds to.

— Nels Hanson

*Editor's note: Shortly after this interview,
Mr. Edwards was awarded the American
Chemical Society Award for Industrial
Innovation, presented at the ACS regional
meeting in Long Beach on Oct. 15.*