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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Interview with Professor Clarence E. Bennett

Date: May 24, 1955

Recording number: Reel-to-reel Tape 6, part 6

Length of recording: 4:17

[transcript begins]

Announcer: The following material on Professor Clarence E. Bennett, Head of the Physics Department at the University of Maine, was made as part of one of our feature stories in the Spring of 1955.

Mincher: Some vital data about Professor Bennett reads like an entry in Who's Who, and that's just where it's from. It's too long to read but it certainly shows that Professor Bennett is well known in his profession or science. Out of the many organizations here listed, Professor Bennett, to which you belong, which one would you say are you proudest of?

Bennett: Well, that's always difficult to say, of course we have our professional organizations. The American Physical Society is perhaps the big society in physics and to be a fellow of that is something to be proud of. I've also had a very active association with the American Association of Physics Teachers, having been on national committees of that for some time. In recent years, I've been particularly active in the American Society for Engineering Education. Our engineering physics here at the University of Maine represents a pioneering effort in that direction. We are credited with having done some of the early work, and largely because of it, I think I have been on the council, been elected to the council of the American Society for Engineering Education. I've also been active in the Physics Division of that society and still am.

Mincher: Where did you... in science, of course, you can't very well say where did you get your education because that's something that continues all the time, and also where you're in the teaching field you can't very well limit it to the academic education, primarily, that is while you were still enrolled as a student.

Bennett: I got my degrees at Brown University. Since then, I have been on the staff at MIT, where I was prior to coming here in 1934.

Mincher: Did you come here as an instructor, and worked up gradually?

Bennett: I'm sorry, I was Instructor at MIT. I did come here as an Assistant Professor.

Mincher: And have worked up to Head of the Department. How long have you been the head?

Bennett: Oh, since approximately ... 1939. [Laughing slightly.]

Mincher: [Also laughing] Now, I imagine if I had asked you the specific gravity of something, the answer would have been right on the tip of your tongue. Well, in our pre-taping conversation, Professor Bennett mentioned something that I think would also interest the public in a non-technical way, and that is that around 1900 is considered to be the birth of what he called the New Physics. Just what does that mean?

Bennett: What I meant to imply was that around the beginning of the century, physics took quite a turn. Just prior to that time, people got the idea that physics was about all done, all the important discoveries had been made. But just about 1897, plus or minus a year or two, things started to happen. Within a year or two, such things as the discovery of the electron, the discovery of X-rays, and the discovery of radioactivity took place. And those three phenomena have certainly played very important parts in our modern world, leading to all of our present communications, telephonic radio, television, and in the field of radioactivity, we now have the atom bomb, and well, so many things happened about that time that that period is thought of as the beginning of the New Era in Physics.

[transcript ends]

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