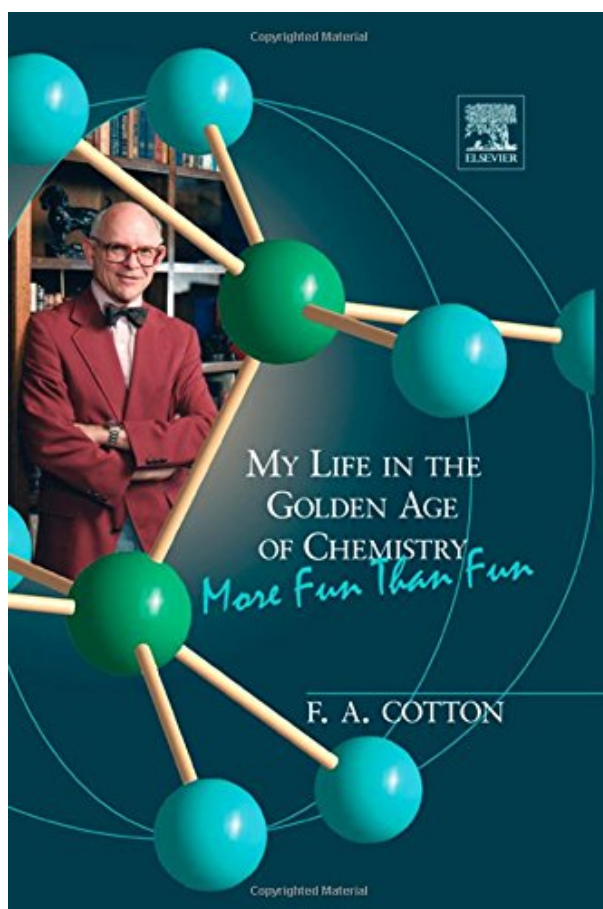
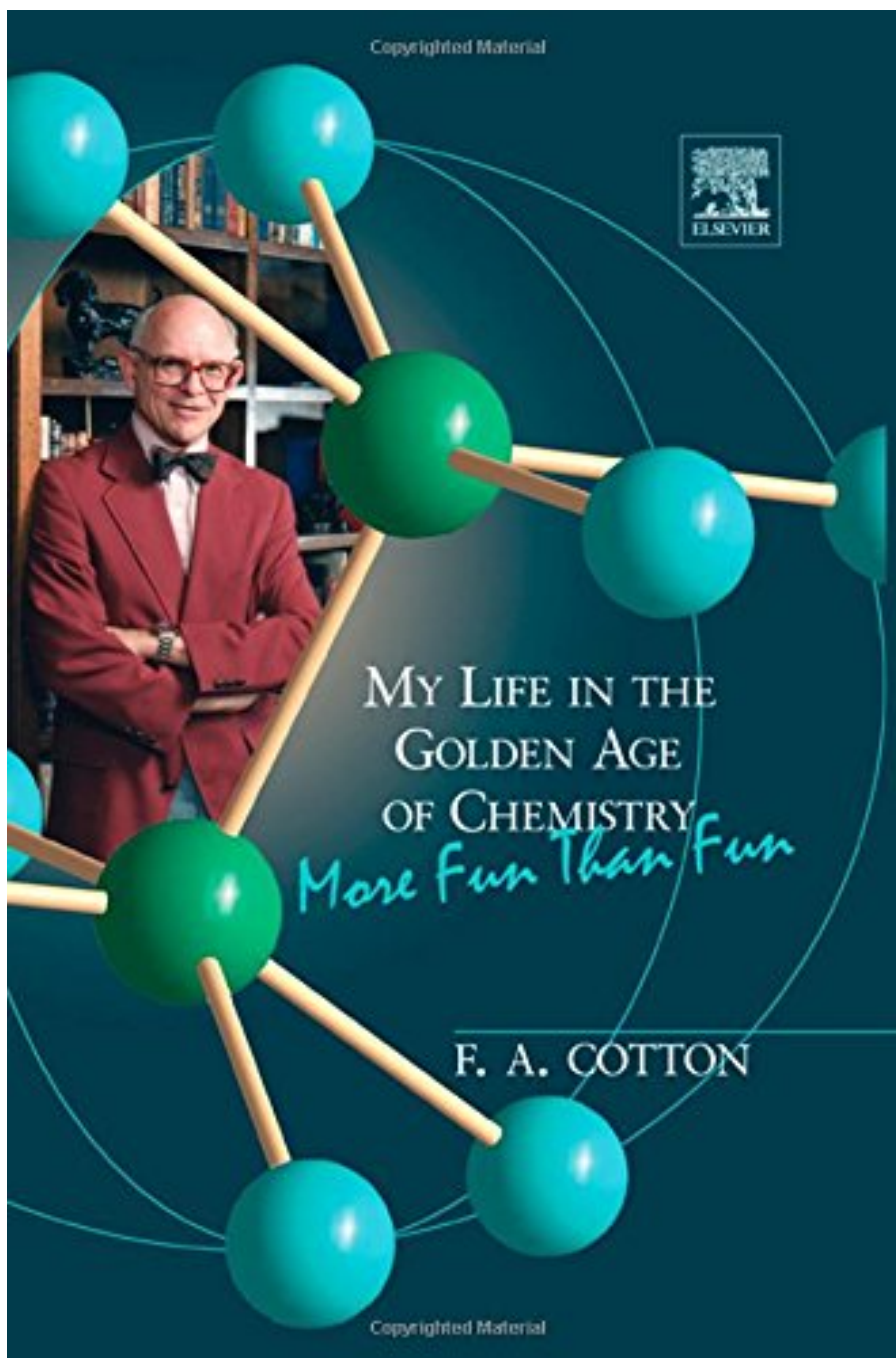


MY LIFE IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHEMISTRY: MORE FUN THAN FUN BY F. ALBERT COTTON



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Review

"...one of the most outstanding inorganic chemists of recent times...The book will be of particular interest to inorganic chemists and is a record of a remarkable and high-achieving scientist."

From the Back Cover

A giant in the field and a man of clear opinions, F. Albert Cotton's contributions to inorganic chemistry and the area of transition metals are substantial and undeniable. In his own words, *My Life in the Golden Age of Chemistry: More Fun than Fun* describes his early life and college years in Philadelphia, his graduate training and research contributions at Harvard and his academic career from becoming the youngest ever full professor at MIT (aged 31) to his extensive time at Texas A&M. Professor Cotton's autobiography offers his unique perspective on the advances he and his contemporaries achieved through one of the most prolific times in modern inorganic chemistry, in research on the then-emerging field of organometallic chemistry, metallocenes, multiple bonding between transition metal atoms, NMR and EPR spectroscopy, hapticity, and more. Working during a time of generous government funding of science and strong sponsorship for good research, Professor Cotton's experience and observations provide insight into this prolific and exciting period of chemistry.

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- Offers personal and often wry perspective from this prominent chemist and recipient of some of science's highest honors: the U.S. National Medal of Science (1982), the Priestley Medal (the American Chemical Society's highest recognition, 1998), membership in the U. S. National Academy of Sciences and corresponding international bodies, and 29 honorary doctorates
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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating Memoir

By Chemistry One

F.A. Cotton, the famous inorganic chemist, studied at Drexel and Temple as an undergraduate, then went to Harvard for his Ph.D.

where his research director was Geoffrey Wilkinson. Later, Cotton joined the faculty at MIT for several years before moving to

Texas A&M for the final portion of his career. This book is his memoir, and includes many details of his research in a narrative form

illustrated by a great many structural formulas and experimental data such as photoelectron spectra. There are literature references for 1620 of his publications dating from 1950-2006. Cotton died mysteriously in Texas, apparently murdered. Few details are given .

The book runs chronologically by decade, and mentions many of the 119 PhD students he supervised(all are listed in an appendix, together with

more than 100 postdoctoral fellows who worked under his direction). Cotton is lavish in praise for many of these individuals, many of whom appear in the many photographs.

Cotton loves horses and dogs, and some parts of his book concern his animals and his penchant for hunting to hounds. The frontispiece of the book shows the author on one of his mounts.

With Wilkinson, Cotton did some of the first studies of ferrocene and other cyclopentadienyl metal complexes. Wilkinson and E.O Fischer

eventually were awarded a Nobel prize for this research. At MIT, Cotton began to study transition metal complexes with metal-metal bonds-

at the time a great novelty.A hallmark of his work was the extensive use of X-ray crystallography-routine now but rare for preparative chemists

at the time. Much of the work concerned rhenium , but later included many other transition metals.

Cotton traveled very extensively, giving lectures and receiving honors in Germany, France, Russia, Israel, Japan and other countries. There are interesting stories about these travels, including his impressions and

friendships with dozens of fellow chemists in these countries.

There is a section of the book telling Cotton's relations with Wilkinson. Of course they collaborated in writing a successful Advanced Inorganic Chemistry text that has run to 6 editions and been translated into several languages. Unfortunately there are some very negative

comments about Wilkinson here : his tendency to belittle other chemists, and treat them disrespectfully.

Cotton is very explicit about this.

Near the end of the book, Cotton becomes very philosophical about his life. He also states clearly that he has no use for religion.

In a final appendix appears Cotton's Priestley medal address of 1998. He speaks of a "Golden Age" of chemical research which he believes is

coming to an end because of the public's distrust of the value of basic research as opposed to research leading to immediate commercial

profits. He criticizes the increased bureaucracy involved in research funding and university administration , and recommends that the budget of the National Science Foundation be doubled.

I found the book very absorbing. I read it quite quickly, and recognized some of his people and situations since I was a graduate student at Harvard from 1957-1962 shortly after Cotton and Wilkinson moved on. But we still heard a lot about them, and Wilkinson came back to lecture

at least once. Harvard did not grant him tenure, but some regretted it later. I and some other Harvard students went down to MIT to take

Cotton's group theory course(which he later developed into a book). This was a valuable experience.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The life and discoveries of a giant of Inorganic Chemistry

By Pichierri Fabio

It is fortunate that, thanks to his friends and coworkers, the autobiography of the late Professor F. Albert Cotton (1930-2007) has been published posthumously in 2014. Cotton is known for his discovery (in 1964) of multiple metal-metal bonds, specifically the quadruple Re-Re bond in the Re_2Cl_8 dianion, which appeared in the journal Science. Furthermore, other important discoveries made by the Cotton's group are those of fluxional organometallic molecules, a new type of intramolecular interactions later named "agostic interactions", molecular machines (although the organometallic complexes synthesized at that time were not called so), and extended metal atom chains (EMACSs).

In addition to advancing the field of inorganic chemistry, Cotton was a scholar concerned with the education of students; he wrote (either alone or in collaboration) many influential books such Basic Inorganic Chemistry (now in its 3-rd edition), Advanced Inorganic Chemistry (now in its 6-th edition), Multiple Bonds Between Metal Atoms (now in its 3-rd edition), and Chemical Applications of Group Theory (now in its 3-rd edition). When I started my chemistry studies at the university, I studied inorganic chemistry from Cotton and Wilkinson's Advanced Inorganic Chemistry (this was the translation in Italian of an early edition of the book). This autobiography is a pleasure to read and I highly recommend it to both students and professionals.

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