

About Dr. Arnold O. Beckman



Dr. Arnold O. Beckman, founder of the company Beckman Instruments, Inc., created devices that revolutionized the study and understanding of chemistry and human biology. He was born in the year 1900 in the town of Cullom, Illinois, and became interested in chemistry at the age of nine when he found a book in the attic of his family home called *Steele's Fourteen Weeks in Chemistry*. He graduated from high school at age 18 and enlisted in the U.S. Marines. During that time, World War I was underway. Around the same time, he met a woman named Mabel Meinzer who would later become his wife.

After the war, Arnold completed his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He earned his master's degree the following year and went on to achieve a doctorate in photochemistry at the California Institute of Technology. Afterward, he stayed on as Assistant Professor. While still teaching, Dr. Beckman was contacted by a former classmate who wanted his help with a device to measure the acidity of lemons in the field. Dr. Beckman created the acidimeter (pH meter), which earned him a place in the National Inventors Hall of Fame and also kick-started what would become an extremely successful business. Dr. Beckman left Caltech and grew his business with the addition of a team and new photochemical instruments, including the DU Spectrophotometer (considered the scientific equivalent of Ford's Model T).

Dr. and Mrs. Beckman adopted two children, set up a home in Orange County, California, and established a Beckman Instruments factory and headquarters in Fullerton. The company was a great success and Dr. and Mrs. Beckman decided to use their wealth to help other scientists. They established five Beckman Institutes at Caltech, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, City of Hope, University of California, Irvine, and Stanford University. Then, they formed the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation to support young scientists with grants to further their research and help them make breakthrough discoveries. For Dr. Beckman's contributions, he has been recognized with the National Medal of Science, the Presidential Citizenship Medal, the National Medal of Technology, and numerous other awards and accolades. Dr. Beckman lived to the age of 104 years old; he passed away in May 2004.