



Eula Bingham

A Life and Work Remembered
July 9, 1929 — June 13, 2020

September 2020

*This is a collection of memories of Eula Bingham
from some of her many colleagues and friends.*

*Eula helped to create and mentor a new generation
of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals and activists.*

*Eula was our generation's Alice Hamilton.
She will be greatly missed, but we'll remember her as we continue fighting
for worker and environmental health and safety.*

I've been reading heartfelt exchanges from colleagues about Dr. Bingham. One theme that's repeated is: Eula was a mentor. That's certainly one that resonates with me, too.

When I started working at OSHA in 1991, it wasn't long before I heard the name Eula Bingham. I learned about her stature in toxicology and occupational health. I learned about her persistence in demanding—not just any workplace safety regulations—but the most protective ones. I learned about her vision to build the capacity of workers to learn about their rights, train others to do the same, and act collectively to demand healthy and safe jobs.

I had the pleasure of collaborating with Eula beginning in 2002. It was a joy to meet her that very first time and a joy to see her on every occasion.

She was a scientist through and through, and layered on top was an added skill: Mastering the back-stabbing and sandtrap-laden environment of Washington, DC. Dr. Bingham was not the least bit pretentious and could see through b.s. I loved that about her, as well as her wonderful laugh and twinkle in her eye.

Long into her "retirement," Dr. Bingham stayed up-to-date on the worker health and safety movement. She was repulsed by politicians and industry consultants who erected and maintained obstacles meant to protect workers from injuries and disease. She never gave up the fight and she expected all of us to continue it. Most importantly, she also stressed our responsibility to bring new, younger and representative people into the movement.

Eula was a great story teller—and she had many. There were stories of White House meetings where she and Labor Secretary Ray Marshall stood up to anti-regulatory forces in the Carter administration.

She told me about her visit to Willow Island, WV, one day after the Pleasants Power Station collapsed. The April 27, 1978 disaster killed 51 construction workers. There was unfathomable massive destruction. "It was like a bomb went off," she told me. "All the workers were local. The town was in shock." The site of the destruction and death was indescribable. She said she'd never ever forget that scene.

I last had the pleasure of seeing Eula in April 2019 when she was honored by the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization. Knowing Eula's knack for story-telling, retired assistant surgeon general Richard A. Lemen, DrPH, shared this one:

"When President Carter's administration concluded, Dr. Bingham departed from OSHA. One of her critics infamously decreed 'the wicked witch is dead.' How did Dr. Bingham respond? She said, 'Well, I'm here to tell you that the wicked witch is not dead. She's merely rearranging her broom — and passing out a lot more brooms to her students.'"

I am so grateful and proud to be one of her many, many students. Thank you Eula for the broom!

*Celeste Monforton, DrPH, MPH
Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini
Lecturer in Public Health
Texas State University*



Eula, NIEHS meeting, 2015

On Saturday, the heart that embraced the rights of every worker stopped beating and Eula Bingham slipped away. She leaves a legacy of laboratory research relevant to the workplace, health and safety policy and regulations, students who went on to improve workplaces and the environment through professional practice and research, and generations of workers empowered to limit exposure to toxics. The Bingham ripples into the future are mighty: continued progress toward 'employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards' inches forward each day, as the winds blow beneath all those many wings she embolden to fly.

*Carol Rice, PhD, CIH
Professor Emerita
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine*

In the spring of 1990, I had the privilege of driving Dr. Bingham from LaGuardia Airport to IBEW Local 3's training facility at Bayberry on Long Island to speak at an NYCOSH conference on OSHA at 20.

In the course of our ride, I asked her what she thought was the most important thing she did during her tenure as head of OSHA. She responded, without hesitation, that the establishment of the New Directions Program which trained workers about their rights to safe and healthy working conditions and institutionalized safety and health programs within unions was her most important accomplishment. She said that the program helped build a political base that would defend and extend the agency's mission and prevent those who wanted to gut the agency from doing so.

I thought she was right then and thirty years later still agree with her assessment.

*Joel Shufro
Retired, Director
New York Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH)*

She was one of my heroines. Eula's influence extended beyond the US borders. Her health and safety "children" and those who didn't know her have been able to fly and fight more effectively thanks to her efforts. Glad I got to record Eula's chance conversation with Mark Catlin at last year's ADAO conference and see her in action. A wonderful model. She will be missed but her legacy will make its mark.

Eula Bingham, presente!

*Dorothy Wigmore
Winnipeg, Manitoba*



Eula with Peg Seminario and David Michaels, Washington, D.C., June 2014

The adage that we see farther because we stand on the shoulders of giants seems so apt here. Eula was a true giant and champion of working people, insisting tirelessly that workers had the absolute right to be safe on the job. Her example and thoughtful and generous advice shaped all us and our entire field, preventing countless illnesses and injuries with her insightful and steady leadership. We will all miss her greatly, especially at this time when leadership is in such short supply.

*David Michaels, PhD, MPH
George Washington University
Assistant Secretary for OSHA (2010-2016)*

As we fight to protect public health, let us all remember the many people like Eula, who paved the way forward for us. For so many of us, Eula blazed the path and set the example that safety and health knowledge and skills aren't worth a damn unless combined with activism, commitment and the willingness to fight for what is right and just. So much of what we have accomplished in the last five decades is due to the vision she provided, the direction she set and the foundation she built - all based upon the belief that ensuring strong rights for workers and unions was a prerequisite for protecting workers safety and health. How blessed and fortunate we all are to have had such a good teacher, leader and friend.

*Peg Seminario
Retired Director
Safety and Health Department*

Eula Bingham died yesterday and Steelworkers everywhere should celebrate her life and legacy.

Eula was the head of the DOL's Coke Oven Advisory Committee in 1975-76. Her work there led to what was then – and perhaps still is – OSHA's most innovative standard. Jimmy Carter nominated her to be the head of OSHA, and she served there throughout his Administration. She was not the first OSHA head but she was the agency's architect, establishing standards for lead, arsenic, cotton dust, field sanitation, many safety hazards, and beginning work on a right-to-know standard. She focused enforcement on the most serious hazards and the worst offenders. She guided the OSHA through the treacherous waters of deregulation, pushed by Carter's Council of Economic Advisors and powerful members of Congress, and the agency emerged undamaged.

Before and after her tenure at OSHA she was a professor of environmental sciences at the University of Cincinnati, and served as the University's Vice-President. But she always remained a committed safety and health activist. She was the first recipient of the USW's award for outstanding service to worker safety and health, named for her close friend J. William Lloyd. She also served as an advisor to the USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center.

A sad day, but one tempered by the joyful remembrance of a life so well lived. There are few who combine Eula's scientific integrity, activism, vision, and humanity. She wasn't the first OSHA head, but she was its architect. She showed what OSHA could be, not just a "regulatory agency," but a smart group of public servants committed to human welfare. Steelworkers owe her a special debt of gratitude for her skilled leadership of OSHA's Coke Oven Advisory Committee before she became Assistant Secretary. Her work there led directly to what was at the time OSHA's most innovative standard.

I remember her terrible disappointment when Jimmy Carter bowed to pressure from the Defense Department and the predecessor to the Energy Department, and cancelled the beryllium rulemaking. She must have considered resigning, but knew she could accomplish more. And she did – cotton dust, lead, arsenic. She also reoriented the agency's priorities toward the most dangerous hazards and exposures and the worst offenders, completing and extending work that had begun with her predecessor, Mort Corn. She skillfully navigated through the deregulatory shoals in both the Administration and Congress, and kept it afloat and intact.

She was also important to the early days of the right-to-know movement. There had been significant opposition within the OSHA staff to a "labeling" standard, as they called it. A lot of health professionals thought it was a waste of the agency's resources; that workers wouldn't understand the information; and that chemical safety ought to be left to the experts. Eula strongly disagreed, and ultimately won many of them over. Although the draft standard quickly died in the early days of the Reagan Administration, Eula's influence persisted and paid off when we forced the Administration to act by passing right-to-know all over the country, a fight she helped with after leaving the DOL.

Eula would be the first to say that her accomplishments were not hers alone, and required collective will and action. But a collective is made up of individuals, and the part she played was fundamental.

*Mike Wright
Director of Health, Safety and Environment
United Steelworkers*



Eula meeting with President Carter , White House
Washington, D.C., February 4, 1977

I had the pleasure of working with Eula and her solicitors, while temporarily transferred from my NIOSH post, for the Cotton Dust Hearings of the then proposed Cotton Dust Standard based on our North Carolina studies. After successfully fending off an industry inspired congressional mandate to produce a cost-benefit study, the completed standard required the Presidential approval of Jimmy Carter.

As related to me by Eula years later, this required DOL Secretary Ray Marshall and her to meet with Carter, VP Walter Mondale and his economic advisers in the Oval Office, to decide the fate of the standard. After hearing from the economic advisers, who opposed issuing the standard, and Eula who provided, I am sure, a spirited defense, President Carter, with his characteristic smile, put his arm around Eula's shoulder and said "I am with Eula on this one."

With that the Cotton Dust Standard was promulgated, to be litigated through the courts and politically opposed by the Reagan Administration, but too late—the Supreme Court had accepted the contested case pitting formal cost-benefit analysis for such health-based standards vs. worker health, and then upheld the standard while setting precedence for many decisions to come. This is but one of many stories that cement the legacy as champion of worker health and safety that was Eula Bingham.

Jim Merchant, MD, DrPH



Eula, OSHA/DOL, Washington, D.C., 1980

Her death is balanced, overwhelmingly by her life and achievements. It is hard to imagine what occupational health and safety would have been without her tireless efforts for workers. She did a great job and we will always remember her.

The passing of Dr. Bingham is the end of an important period in US occupational safety and health.

*John Morawetz, ScM
Center Director
International Chemical Workers Union Council/
UFCW
Cincinnati, OH*

Eula Bingham was a pioneer of the modern workplace safety and health movement. A friend of working people and a mentor to me. Eula lead safety and health from her position as head of OSHA, and kept her leadership role in our movement since 1980. Eula never gave up.

*Frank Mirer, PhD
Former Director
Safety and Health Department
United Autoworkers Union*

She was an unofficial mentor to me. She fought for a strong OSHA when the well-meaning Carter Administration faltered and feared strong OSHA standards like asbestos and lead. And also an OSHA enforcement system that was working.

Too me, she was a heroine that we should study and adopt many of her strengths and tactics to return OSHA and NIOSH to its original mandate. The one the Tony Mazzocchi envisioned and fought for. They were a great combination!

She was an administrative genius. Yes administrative genius. Those who derided her administration skills just didn't like her policies. She also had a hell of a team at OSHA AND NIOSH.

With Eula, the Black Lives Matter movement would fully support. Why? Eula wanted all workers protected. Not just those who had some union protection. She looked at the working class from the bottom up. If you protect the most at risk, you protect everyone. She was my heroine.

*Frank Goldsmith, DrPH
Director, Occupational Health, Local 100, TWU*

I want to echo everyone's messages regarding Eula Bingham. I met her during the summers of 1977 and 1978 when she led OSHA. I was first working with Tony Mazzocchi in Washington, DC and helped the OCAW prepare for the Beryllium and Benzene hearing for OSHA standards. Then I spent about 3 months working with OSHA in 1978 before beginning medical school.

Meeting Eula was pivotal for me seeing a strong woman playing a leading role in the Occupational Safety and Health movement. The combined experience of working with both Eula Bingham and Tony Mazzocchi at such a formative time in my life has played a huge role in shaping how I have tried to make my mark on improving workers' lives. Thank you Eula!

*Sherry Baron, MD, MPH
Professor
Barry Commoner Center for Health
and the Environment
Queens College*



Eula and Earl Dotter, ADAO Conference,
Arlington, Virginia, April 2019

She was a true giant and we all stand on her shoulders. One of her most enduring legacies is the New Directions program that created the legions of health and safety activists that exist today nationwide—in unions, in communities, in academia—that continue the fight for a safe workplace. Many of us, including me, would not have gotten into this work without her.

*Debbie Berkowitz
National Employment Law Project*

Somehow I imagined that Eula would always be there. Such was her energy and enthusiasm.

*Les Boden, PhD
Boston University School of Public Health*

Special memories and thanks go to Eula for her steadfast and inspirational words about health and safety. You continue to inspire me!

*Elaine Marie Faustman, PhD
Professor
Department of Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences*



Eula with CACOSH Staff and Board Members, Chicago, Illinois, 1981

A memory when Eula came to Los Angeles.... UCLA's Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (UCLA LOSH) received one of the early OSHA New Directions grants, providing welcome support to a fledgling organization. I was a public health student at the time, taking my first occupational health course with Marianne Brown who connected me with Los Angeles Coalition on Occupational Safety and Health (LA-COSH) to do an internship. Eula came to town at some point after leaving OSHA - and wanted to meet with workers. We typed up an LACOSH flyer: "Come see the movie that was BANNED BY OSHA under the Reagan administration (Can't Take No More) and meet the former head of OSHA who made the movie."

We had a full house of workers and union representatives. She was in her element. Indeed, a leader, a scientist-activist, a force to be reckoned with - and with a great sense of humor. Thank you all for sharing memories of her.

*Linda Delp, PhD, MPH
Director, (Retired)
UCLA LOSH*

I spent 35 wonderful years of my life in this field due to the New Directions grants so I owe much of my life and perspectives to her and the community she built!

Alice Freund, Biology Teacher



Eula leading a public health team investigating cleanup worker health and safety after the Exxon-Valdez oil spill. Anchorage, Alaska, April 1989.

I first met and worked with Eula in April 1989, when she came to Alaska to investigate health and safety problems reported by cleanup workers, after the Exxon-Valdez oil spill. The Alaska Commissioner of Labor Jim Sampson, the Laborers' National Health and Safety Fund and the Alaska Laborers Union had requested her assistance. I recall the shocked faces of Exxon corporate managers on seeing Eula in Valdez, Alaska - the center of the cleanup. She was amazing as she asked them direct and pointed questions about their lack of worker protections.

Years before I ever met Eula, she had a most positive impact on my life. My first industrial hygiene position, from 1981-84, was funded by an OSHA New Directions grant to the Allied Industrial Workers Union. After that position ended, I moved to Alaska to work for a COSH Group and the Alaska Laborers' Union under other New Directions grants. Thanks so much to Eula for creating this important program which gave me and so many of us our first jobs with unions, COSH Groups and universities, and led hundreds of us into careers in occupational health and safety.

During the past decade, I worked with Eula collecting video recordings from her time as head of OSHA, from 1977 to 1981. She shared wonderful stories from those days, with great insight on how that history was relevant to current health and safety work. I'm grateful we can still hear Eula, in her own words and voice, on more than twenty videos posted on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTzcoIK5_QWf_IGz9zrRXNUNyiXcfVy-Q.

*Mark Catlin
Industrial Hygienist*

Eula Bingham was an extraordinary scientist, leader, and I must add, politician. I had the great honor of working with her from 1997-1999 at OSHA. During that time, we managed to create landmark standards for OSHA on lead and cotton dust, the most comprehensive occupational health standards at the time. I believe that the occupational lead standard is the most important achievement of my long career, later with NIOSH and then at UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. Eula and I have always remained close friends. Her loss to the world of occupational health is major.

*John Froines, PhD
Professor emeritus
UCLA*

She was a remarkable leader - and an even better person.

*Bill Kojola
Former Deputy Director
Health and Safety Department
AFL-CIO*

She was an inspiration to me and so many others and it was one of the highlights of my career to have worked with her when I was at OSHA.

*Abby Ginzberg
Social Action Media
Berkeley, CA*

We have lost another giant in our corner of public health. Dr. Eula Bingham was a leader who brought the science together with policy leading to significant improvements for workers' health. I wish her memory to be a guide for the rest of us in the future; we need and demand it in the wake of the current administration.

*David Goldsmith, PhD, MSPH
Georgetown University & George Washington University*

What incredible vision and tenacity Eula had, picking her battles in a man's world, usually unruffled, so when she got angry it really made an impression—and often with a twinkle. Thanks to all of you and SKAPP for giving those of us who would have known Eula only from afar the chance to get to work with her.

*Polly Hoppin, ScD
UMass-Lowell*

I never knew Eula, as well Mike Wright and others who worked closely with her at OSHA or in her years after OSHA, but I got to know her a bit through the union (and the NIEHS grant community). She had such an amazing presence. Every time that I was with her I could feel the energy, the wisdom, and the commitment emanating from her to make occupational health and safety better through whatever she was saying or doing.

Eula reached out to me a few times by phone over the years and provided encouragement and advice and helped me quite a bit in some difficult times of the constant struggle that is the progressive occupational health and safety movement.

I was very taken back that Eula Bingham was calling me directly. I also will never know how she knew that I needed her encouragement. I remember initially thinking, 'I wonder if she knows another person named Jim Frederick and thinks that she is calling him' But it was indeed me that she was calling and it was very inspiring.

Thank you to Eula for the path that she forged for so many to have health and safety improvements in their workplace.

*Jim Frederick
Former Deputy Director
Health and Safety Department
United Steelworkers*

I would also like to add my appreciation to and admiration for Dr. Eula Bingham and second the many wonderful things that have been said about her.

In 1975, Tony Mazzocchi encouraged me to write a booklet about safety and health hazards for oil refinery workers. At age 24, I was over my head. But Tony connected me to Eula who reviewed the section on catalytic cracking and benzene and ensured its accuracy at a point when benzene was not a widely accepted carcinogen. To have a person with her stature do this for a young person was something I will always cherish. Based on this experience, I know she was a great teacher and mentor, in addition to her other major contributions to worker safety.

*Rick Engler
Former Board Member
U.S. Chemical Safety Board*

Such sad news. She died on my father's birthday (June 13th) so hopefully they are cooking up some trouble and probably good food wherever they are. I was so lucky to have met her a few years ago.. Not only was she such an obviously important person, she was also so warm and I remember her laugh the most.

*With love and solidarity,
Kristina Mazzocchi (daughter of Tony Mazzocchi)*



Eula Bingham at NIEHS meeting, RTP,
North Carolina, July 2016
(Photo by Jim Remington)

I am not much into naming inanimate objects, such as buildings, after people but I would think Eula should have at least one of the Labor Department imperial edifices in DC rededicated in her honor as the dynamic leader who set OSHA on its course focusing on protecting workers whose core survives though with limbs broken awaiting splinting.

*Peter Orris, MD, MPH
Professor and Chief of Service
Occupational and Environmental Medicine
University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences
System*

She was my advisor for my MS in occupational hygiene at University of Cincinnati. Her scientific contributions to toxicology, specially occupational carcinogenesis, advanced substantially the knowledge on causes and mechanisms of cancer.

She educated a generation of scientist-activists that defined occupational health as a human rights issue. She was attacked by the UC academics for supporting labor on H&S (she advocated for OCAW during the Shell strike in 1973 and supported actions on campus).

When she was called by President Carter to Washington to direct OSHA, she made the post of head of OSHA a position to advocate for workers health rather than a bureaucratic post to argue both sides of the "issue." When she came back to UC she continued her advocacy for workers' health.

She will be missed. Workers health and safety has lost an effective advocate.

*Rafael Moure-Eraso, PhD
Professor Emeritus
UMass Lowell*

Her most enduring contribution is that "She showed what OSHA could be."

*Steven H. Wodka
Attorney-At-Law
Little Silver, NJ*

Eula Bingham was a class act. Her calmness, wit, and steadiness were attributes which made her a pillar of the Occupational Safety and Health movement for decades in this country. She was an advocate for workers at all times and under all circumstances when she entered government service she unlike some others did not forget what she was there for, the improvement of protections for workers. Neither the stature of the job, nor the attention of the media, Congress or the Administration, swayed her from her mission. While she recognized the need for compromises, she also remembered that she was there for improving workers' health and safety. And in her role of consoler she offered sound advice coupled with humor and the recognition that the world is not a perfect place and at times the good is better than the perfect. She will be a calm and lovely voice which will be missed.

Davitt McAteer
Assistant Secretary of Labor for MSHA (1993-2000)
Acting Solicitor of Labor (1996 -1998)



Eula Bingham, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, 1977-1981

In 2000, Eula was the first recipient of the American Public Health Association's David P. Rall Award for Advocacy in Public Health.

This award is made to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to public health through science-based advocacy.

On receiving this award, a colleague praised Eula as a statesperson scientist who worked "with one eye on truth and the other on social justice"

David P. Rall, MD, PhD, brought scientific research to bear on policy making in environmental health and his science-based advocacy advanced public health and prevention across many fields and in many forms.

In 1984, Eula received the Alice Hamilton Award from the Occupational Health and Safety Section of the American Public Health Association.

Dr. Alice Hamilton, a pioneer of occupational health in the United States lived from 1869–1970. She was a founder of the APHA OHS Section in 1914.

The American Public Health Association is a community of 50,000 public health professionals who champion the health of all people.