

Charles Pedersen Biography

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Biography

Charles Pedersen is credited with the discovery of crown ethers. He won a Nobel Prize in Chemistry for this discovery but not for eighteen years after he first published his research. Pedersen was born in Korea in 1904 to a Norwegian engineer and a Japanese woman. His father was working in a gold mine and his mother's family had a business near the mine. Pedersen attended college in the United States. After he earned his master's degree, he found a position as industrial chemist at the Du Pont Company. He chose to continue with research, although it was not essential to his position. Pedersen was working on the problem of removing contaminants from gasoline when he recognized the carbon to oxygen to carbon bond of an ether in an unusual compound. What was unusual was the model of the ether was the zigzag of a crown and it tended to surround metal ions. This discovery was soon applied in the synthetic research to manipulate reactions, particularly in organic compounds. Pedersen died in 1990.