George E. Alcorn Biography

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Biography

A strong student and athlete during high school, George Alcorn attended Los Angeles's Occidental College. He graduated in the top of his class with a degree in physics and eight sports letters. In 1963, after a summer working on trajectories and orbital mechanics for *Titan 1* and *Titan 2*, *Saturn IV*, and *Nova* at the space division of North American Rockwell, he completed his M.S. in nuclear physics from Howard University. Two years later, he obtained a doctorate in atomic and molecular physics from the same university. His next project was a NASA grant to research negative ion formation. Alcorn enjoys teaching science and math, but his greatest contributions have been in the production of semiconductors, for which he holds eight patents. He has adapted chemical ionization mass spectrometers to detect amino acids, developed experimental methods to study planetary life, perfected systems to enable missiles to reenter the atmosphere, masterminded secret defense projects, designed instruments for space travel, created devices to test atmospheric contamination, built magnetic mass spectrometers, devised mass analyzers, taken new directions in magnet design, and invented a high X-ray spectrometer.