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I have found it challenging and rejuvenating to change positions every 5 to 10 years. In this way I have had the opportunity to serve as teacher and researcher at three great research universities – Columbia, Caltech, and MIT. The face to face discourse with students and faculty, the laboratory, library, and computational resources, the air of imminent discovery at these places provide an ideal environment for a scientist to be creative and fulfilled.

After some 25 years so occupied, I received a call from President Jimmy Carter to become his Science Adviser. Although the work during the four year term was taxing and stressful, not particularly enjoyable, and ended my life as a bench scientist it was an experience not to be missed. Other than learning on the job, there is no way to prepare oneself for the turbulent world of politics and its intersection with science and technology (which includes most issues faced by a nation's chief executive). I had to prove myself all over again in a new environment where credentials and publications meant little and contributing to the success of a political administration meant everything. Perhaps I had it a bit easier than other Science Advisers because President Carter was trained as an engineer, was conversant in science, and most importantly, I agreed with his goals.

In 1981 I was elected to the Presidency of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and served for 12 years. I took less interest in the honorific aspects of the Academy than in its unique role as one of the most influential advisory bodies to any government. I was well prepared for this position because of my earlier academic and government position. Although advising the government as president of a private organization is not the same as being on site in the White House, I am proud of the many ways in which the NAS helped the government to address issues ranging from the AIDS epidemic, to arms control, science budgets and industrial productivity.

As I look back on my career (hopefully, it is not yet over), I am proud of my discoveries as a scientist in partnership with my graduate students and colleagues. But most of all I take particular pleasure in my undergraduate textbooks *Earth* and *Understanding Earth*, co-authored with Professor Raymond Siever of Harvard, which from 1974 to 2000 have introduced a million or so students to the planet on which they live.