

1978
awarded posthumously

OSCAR KNEFLER RICE

Oscar Knefler Rice is a physical chemist of the highest distinction. Born in Chicago in 1903, he took Bachelor's and Doctor's degrees in Chemistry from the University of California and did further work at the California Institute of Technology and the University of Leipzig. He began his teaching career at the University of California and taught also at Harvard before coming to the University of North Carolina in 1936. He was made Kenan Professor in 1959, Professor Emeritus in 1975.

Professor Rice serves as a model for excellence in scientific scholarship. He is the author of almost 200 papers and books and of many important lectures. His research in the quantum physics of atoms and molecules, dating almost from the beginning of quantum mechanics, and his more recent research in statistical mechanics both have profoundly influenced physical science. Most particularly, he has made lasting contributions to the understanding of critical phenomena, and his is the definitive synthesis of statistical and quantum concepts in the theory of chemical reaction rates.

Oscar Rice has been described as "very likely the most distinguished chemist ever to have lived in North Carolina." At the same time he is a warm human being who has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to his colleagues as well as to his students, and he and his wife are exemplary citizens of Chapel Hill. With this honorary degree the University now recognizes his enduring contributions to modern science.