

DR. ROBERT ANDREWS MILLIKAN

March 22, 1868 – December 19, 1953

Dr. Robert Andrews Millikan, Life Member of the Southern California Academy of Sciences, died December 19, 1953.

Dr. Millikan, dean of the world physicists, was awarded more than twenty medals for his outstanding scientific achievements. Among these were: The Comstock Prize, National Academy of Science (1913); The Edison Medal, American Institute of Electrical Engineers (1922); The Hughes Medal, Royal Society of Great Britain (1923); The Nobel Prize in Physics (1923); The Faraday Medal, London Chemical Society (1924); The Matteucci Medal, Societa Italiana della Scienz (1925); The Gold Medal, American Society of Mechanical Engineers (1926); and the Messel Medal, Society of Chemical Industry, Great Britain (1928). Twelve other societies also awarded medals of honor.

Dr. Millikan was granted the A.B. degree by Oberlin in 1891 and a M.A. degree in 1893. Columbia University conferred the Ph.D. degree in 1895. He attended the Universities of Berlin and Göttingen in 1895-1896. As his leadership in physics brought him world renown, more than twenty-five colleges and universities at home and abroad conferred honorary degrees upon him. Among these were: The University of California (1924); The University of Southern California (1931); Mills College (1935); and Loyola University (1938).

Most of Dr. Millikan's research work was done at the University of Chicago (1896-1921), and at the California Institute of Technology (1921-1946). In addition to research in fundamental problems, he wrote eighteen textbooks and hundreds of technical papers.

The public knew him best for his research on the cosmic ray. But the Nobel Prize was awarded to him for his isolating and measuring the electron. He also contributed to establishing the validity of one of Dr. Albert Einstein's most important equations. He also worked with Dr. Ira Bowen to develop a series of laws which led to basic discoveries about electrons. He and Dr. C. C. Lauritzen extracted electrons from metals.

During the First World War, Dr. Millikan was a Lt. Colonel in the Signal Corps of the United States Army. In that capacity, he was vice-chairman of the National Research Council, and head of the physics branch of that body.

Dr. Millikan came to the California Institute of Technology in 1921 and he retired as administrative head in 1946. During those years he built it into an institution known throughout the world for its faculty, its graduates and its leadership in research.

Dr. Millikan's body was interred in the Memorial Court of Honor, Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

—Homer P. King.