

RYAN HONORED ON EVE OF HIS 'RETIREMENT'

Electrical Wizard To Continue Research In High Voltage

In honor of his retirement from teaching and executive duties at the end of the present school year, Dr. Harris J. Ryan, head of the electrical engineering department at Stanford and "wizard" of man-made lightning, was paid tribute last evening at a banquet given in the Stanford Union by faculty members and students of the school of engineering.

At a meeting of the faculty in the afternoon Dean Theodore J. Hoover announced the appointment of Dr. Ryan as honorary director of the Harris J. Ryan High Voltage Laboratory, in which he will continue his research work.

The events of the day were in the nature of a surprise to Dr. Ryan. Felicitations were extended to him at the dinner by Dr. William F. Durand, Dr. Charles D. Marx, and other associates in the engineering school at the university. His faculty colleagues presented him with a pair of binoculars, and his students, through Victor Siegfried, chairman of the Stanford student branch of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, as an expression of appreciation gave Dr. Ryan a desk set.

Is World Authority

Dr. Ryan has for many years been recognized as a world authority in the field of high voltage. He came to Stanford in 1905, from the position of head of the electrical engineering department at Cornell University, which he had held since 1889.

During the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct he acted as consulting electrical engineer for that city, and during the World War he directed the Anti-Submarine Supersonics Laboratory of the National Research Council at Pasadena. He is a member of many engineering, scientific and honor societies, including the National Academy of Science. He was elected president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers for the year 1923-24, and in 1925 he was awarded the Edison Medal by this organization for his achievements in the field of high voltage.

In his younger days Dr. Ryan's interests were largely in the field of electrical machinery. His early work on transformers attracted world-wide attention. The compensating winding for direct current motors, from which has developed the modern commutating pole winding to prevent commutator sparking, was invented and developed by him.

After moving to the Pacific coast Dr. Ryan became interested in high voltage. His research studies have been a large factor in the discovery of the laws of corona on high voltage transmission lines. He was the first engineer in this country to recognize the cathode ray tube as a valuable piece of apparatus for studying high voltage effects. He was also a pioneer in the field of high voltage transmission line insulation, and his investigations in this connection have been an important factor in making possible modern high voltage transmission lines.

Laboratory Built in 1926

The Ryan laboratory was established at Stanford in 1926 as a tribute to Dr. Ryan's outstanding achievements in high voltage research. The measurement of the power loss into the atmosphere due to corona has been one of the main problems of this laboratory. This problem has been worked on for many years by Dr. Ryan, and convenient and accurate methods for its attainment is the most recent outstanding accomplishment of the Ryan laboratory. The laboratory is co-operating with the power companies of the Pacific coast in obtaining a solution of many of their technical problems.

The problem of the type of insulation most suitable for the power transmission at high voltage has been studied. The effects of dust and fog on the insulating properties of transmission line porcelain insulators have been determined. The type of investigations undertaken and the knowledge obtained by Dr. Ryan and his associates at the Ryan laboratory has done much to advance the science of power transmission at high voltage to the point where the industry can now undertake the problem of transmitting the power from Hoover Dam to the City of Los Angeles.

EDITORIAL

DAILY PALO ALTO TIMES, PALO ALTO, MAY 30, 1931

World Will Be Gainer Because Harris J. Ryan's Work Is to Be Continued

It is of personal interest to his friends, but of everlasting importance to the world that Dr. Harris J. Ryan, though retiring as executive head of Stanford's electrical engineering department this year, is to continue actively in research work in the special field—high voltage—in which he is an acknowledged authority.

As newspapermen we profess no understanding whatever of the most rudimentary things in Dr. Ryan's specialized field. But we can safely accept the word of electrical engineers that his work has pioneered the way to successful application of electricity to greater usefulness of society than was dreamed possible a decade ago. The type of investigations and the knowledge obtained by Dr. Ryan and his associates in the high voltage laboratory at Stanford, it is said on technical authority, have done much to advance the science of power transmission at high voltage to the point where industry can now undertake the problem of transmitting power from Hoover Dam to the City of Los Angeles.

That, of course, is only one item illustrative of the far-reaching usefulness of Dr. Ryan's important contribution to world advancement. But it is sufficient to indicate clearly how the complete retirement of men of Dr. Ryan's type under an arbitrary age limit rule would be disastrous to the world. Retirement however which means merely relief from certain routine duties and hampering departmental responsibilities and the increase of the scholar's opportunities for research work is something different. It is gratifying in every case of this kind—and there have been numbers among the emeritus professors of Stanford—to know that the treasury of knowledge and ripened experience amassed over a long period can still be drawn upon for the benefit of the world.