

CITATION FOR THE THOMAS JEFFERSON AWARD

ERNEST LUDWIG ELIEL

ERNEST LUDWIG ELIEL was born in Cologne, Germany, but left the "gathering storm" in 1938 and completed high school and a year of university study in Edinburgh, Scotland. After a year in Canada he spent the remaining years of World War II in Cuba, where he earned the Doctor of Science degree in physical chemistry from the University of Havana in 1946. Two years later he received the PhD degree in organic chemistry from the University of Illinois and accepted his first faculty appointment at the University of Notre Dame.

In 1972 he joined this faculty as William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor of Chemistry and immediately adopted a deep commitment to this University. He became a part of the very fabric of this institution through service on a myriad of University-wide committees, including the Advisory Committee, the University Library Board, the Chancellor's Committee on International Programs, various critical search committees, committees to select teaching award winners, and the Faculty Council Committee on Research. He chaired many of these committees and boards and served as president of the local AAUP chapter. He has provided gentle, thoughtful and critical leadership and has inspired his colleagues through his professional and ethical values. His institutional citizenship has been superimposed on a remarkable career as an eminent scientist, scholar, teacher, and leader in the affairs of his profession.

Professor Eliel is a world-recognized scientist and a pioneer in modern stereochemistry, to which he has made seminal contributions reported in more than 300 original scientific research papers. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences and has been counted among the twenty most-cited authors in science.

Other recognitions include the Laurent Lavoisier Medal from the French Chemical Society, various American Chemical Society awards, and the North Carolina Award in Science. He holds honorary doctoral degrees from Duke University and Notre Dame.

He has lectured extensively in virtually every country of Europe, sometimes in the French or German languages, and in the orient. Notably, throughout his career, he has tried to repay a deeply-felt debt to the Spanish-speaking world through innumerable lectures, short courses, and technical assistance, always using the Spanish language, throughout Latin American countries including Mexico, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

This tireless educator has been recognized as a teacher with the Amoco Teaching Award locally and the Manufacturing Chemists Association's College Teacher Award nationally. His landmark book on stereochemistry has been a "bible" for students and professional scientists all over the world and has been translated into the French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Czech, and Japanese languages.

Nationally, Professor Eliel has enthusiastically served the American Chemical Society in major ways throughout his long career. During three years as Chairman of its Board of Directors, he led the planning and prosecution of a successful capital funds campaign that included among its major objectives: chemical education in the schools, programs for minority students, a project to preserve the history of chemistry, and ways to promote public understanding of science. In January, 1992, he will be president of the Society, a post served by two of his predecessors at UNC, Francis P. Venable and Charles H. Herty.

Professor Eliel is widely read in the humanities and is a "regular" at musical, artistic, and other cultural events. It has been written that "the learned Jefferson was a scientist, an architect, and a philosopher, vitally interested in literature, the arts and every phase of human activity." This description fits Ernest Eliel, who, like Jefferson, also enjoys haute cuisine and fine French dinner wines -- and an occasional Cuban cigar.

This faculty honors itself when it recognizes Ernest Eliel with the 1991 Thomas Jefferson Award.

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