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Liquid Crystals

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Obituary



Professor Glenn H. Brown

Everyone associated with the field of Liquid Crystals was saddened by the news that Professor Glenn H. Brown, founder of Kent State University's Glenn H. Brown Liquid Crystal Institute died at Laurel Lake, Hudson, Ohio on April 18, 1995. He was 79.

He had a long and distinguished academic record, teaching and researching in the years 1941 to 1960 in the Universities of Mississippi, Vermont, Cincinnati and Iowa State, before he became a faculty member of Kent's Chemistry Department, a position he held from 1960-1985, chairing the department from 1960-1965 and serving as Dean for Research from 1963-1968. He established the Liquid Crystal Institute in 1965 and served as its Director until he retired in 1983 to carry out full time research.

The Liquid Crystal Institute was the nation's first and is its largest Academic Institution devoted solely to the conduct of fundamental and applied research on liquid crystals. The Board of Trustees of Kent State University renamed the Institute the Glenn Brown Institute in his honour in 1986 and bestowed on him the title of Emeritus Director.

The forward vision which Professor Brown showed by the creation of the Institute was also evident in his setting up of the First International Liquid Crystal Conference at Kent State in 1965. That meeting had only some 100

delegates, but it created the world-wide family of liquid crystal researchers which has grown and flourished ever since, meeting every two years at the continuing International Meetings which have been held worldwide since 1965. The 16th of these conferences will again be hosted by Kent State in 1996, but then over 1000 delegates are expected to attend. This meeting coincides with the completion of Kent's new Liquid Crystal Institute building—all a direct outcome of Glenn Brown's earlier work.

His world-wide recognition in the field of liquid crystals began as long ago as 1958 when Glenn Brown with his co-author W. G. Shaw—again showing his very clear vision for the future—published their famous article on the subject in *Chemical Reviews*, and there can be no question but that this sparked the international resurgence of research in liquid crystals that was soon to follow, catalysed further by the 1965 Kent Conference. The seminal work on the twisted nematic liquid crystal electro-optical display cell was carried out at Kent in 1967—just 2 years after the Institute was founded. This important discovery, patented in the United States in 1971, changed the information display industry totally and paved the way for today's omnipresent liquid crystal display readouts in watches, calculators, instrument panels and numerous other devices. Today of course liquid crystals are essential to the multi-billion dollar flat-panel

display industry, and scientists at the Institute are now developing a new generation of non-reflective displays with paper-like viewing quality.

Professor J. W. Doane, Glenn Brown's successor as Director of the Liquid Crystal Institute, has said: "We owe Glenn Brown a great debt for creating the Institute at Kent in 1965. He recognized the importance of this area of science before many others and established Kent State University as the leading liquid crystal research institution in the world. He saw liquid crystals as an area of interdisciplinary research, including physics, chemistry and biology. And he saw Kent as the right place to have such an Institute. He also recognized that this field could bring Kent added visibility in the sciences."

During his long research career, Professor Brown was author of numerous research papers, articles and books on liquid crystals, and for many years he was editor and then editor-in-chief of the journal *Molecular Crystals and Liquid Crystals*. He also acted as editor for no less than six volumes of the Academic Press series *Advances in Liquid Crystals*.

He was a strong supporter of professional bodies—Chairman of the Akron Section of the American Chemical Society, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Fellow of the American Institute of Chemists, and a member of the American Crystallographic Association and of the New York Academy of Sciences.

Glenn Brown's services to international science in the field of liquid crystals have therefore been very great, and this has been recognized in the many honours and distinctions bestowed upon him over the years. In 1977 he received the Morley Award for distinguished service to the field of chemistry, in 1980 he was recipient of the Kent State University President's Medal for distinguished service, he obtained the Bickerman Award in 1981 and in

1985 the International Liquid Crystal Society recognized his great contributions to liquid crystal science by creating the Glenn Brown Awards which annually recognize, under peer review, distinguished dissertation research by young research workers in the chemistry and physics of liquid crystals.

A very great tribute to his science was paid in 1986 when the Ohio Board of Regents designated him a Regents Professor, the state's highest academic ranking. In the same year he obtained the Governor's Excellence Award and in 1991 he was among a select group of scientists and teachers honoured as Centennial Honorees for their contributions to science, to education and to the Ohio Academy of Sciences of which Glenn Brown had much earlier, in 1966, received its Distinguished Service Award, served as its President and earned Fellowship status.

During his life's work, Glenn received great support from his wife Jessie. He would wish this to be noted and also that she was a great supporter of the International Liquid Crystal Society and its meetings.

In composing this obituary and tribute to Professor Brown, I have been very greatly helped by Elaine Landry, his secretary for many years, who kindly supplied me with a copy of the University's formal obituary to him. His contribution to the field of liquid crystals cannot be over valued, and personally I express my own gratitude to him for persuading me in 1965 to stay in the field at a time I almost moved into other scientific areas. To me and many others he was a good friend, and I hope it is fitting to end with my own memory of him as a strong, vigorous man at the early KSU International Meetings, wearing a large Texan hat and wielding a baseball bat to good purpose in the games afternoons which were a feature of these first conferences.

G. W. GRAY