

Urey Room - to honor Nobel laureate Harold Urey and his wife Frieda

October 13, 1972

From the outside it looks like any of the other conference or class rooms in the Department of Chemistry at the University of California, San Diego.

Inside, the contrast is breathtaking. The walls are covered with rich mood paneling. There is a deep wall-to-wall gold rug on the floor. Sliding drapes hide classroom blackboards and a movie screen. There is a small, built in projection booth.

The couches and chairs, designed for conferences and receptions, are upholstered in rich colors. The conference table in the center of the room is a deep mahogany.

It took the efforts of nearly 70 donors to refurbish the room for a special laureate reason: to honor Nobel laureate Harold Urey and his wife, Frieda. A plaque on the wood paneled entranceway lists the numerous friends and colleagues from throughout the United States and the many corporations and foundations who made the honor possible.

Dr. Urey, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1934 and currently University Professor, Emeritus of the University of California, came to UCSD in 1958, six years before the first undergraduates entered and five years before the building in which the Urey Room is housed was built.

As striking as the Urey Room is, a display cabinet on one wall immediately draws the attention of any visitor. It is a treasure chest containing medals and awards, including an exact replica of the Nobel Prize medal, awarded to Dr. Urey during his long and distinguished career. The glass enclosed shelves actually glitter with the gold and silver medals - the Nobel Prize, the Franklin Medal, the Linus Pauling Medal, the Davy Medal, the Medal for Merit from the United States.

Also in the cabinet and on the wall on either side are a few of the many certificates awarded to Dr. Urey both in this country and other parts of the world. Included among them, easily as impressive as the rest, is a diploma from Indiana Common School dated June 24, 1907, the day Dr. Urey graduated from grammar school.

The walls of a small kitchen adjoining the Urey room are decorated with color NASA photographs of the several moon landings and electron microscope blowups of moon rock crystals. The display is a tribute to Dr. Urey's work over the past several years as one of the world's foremost authorities on the origin of the moon and the solar system.

The drive to refurbish the room was under the direction of Dr. Kurt Shuler, Professor of Chemistry at UCSD, who served as Master of Ceremonies at a recent dedication ceremony at which the Urey's were the guests of honor.

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