NIKOLA TESLA, INVENTOR, DIES AT AGE OF 85

Gained Fame in Field of Electricity.

New York, Jan. 7 (AP)—Nikola Tesla, 85, an electrical inventor, died tonight in his suite at the Hotel New Yorker.

Members of the hotel staff reported that Tesla had been in failing health for two years. He was found dead in bed. With emphatic ideas on personal health as well as electrical engineering, Tesla was a vegetarian, and had his meals especially prepared for him.

The son of a Greek clergyman and a Serbian mother who was the daughter of an inventor, Tesla was born July 10, 1857, in Smiljan, a village of Austrian Croatia, and grew up with ideas buzzing in his head.

He got his schooling at the Polytechnic Institute in Graz and at the University of Prague. In after years such institutions as Yale, Columbia, and Vienna Polytechnic loaded him with honorary degrees.

Worked with Edison.

His practical career began in 1881 at Budapest, where he brought out his first invention, a telephone repeater. Three years later, when he was 27 years old, he migrated to the United States and became an American citizen.

For a time he worked at Orange, N. J., with the late Thomas A. Edison, specifically in designing motors and generators. He described Edison as “by far the most successful and probably the last exponent of the purely empirical method of investigation.”

He soon went into research on his own hook, sending forth a stream of inventions. He conceived the first effective method of using alternating electrical current. Four years after landing in the United States, he patented an induction motor, making it possible to convert electrical energy into mechanical energy more efficiently and economically than by direct current.

Many Other Inventions.

The principle of the rotary magnetic field embodied in the apparatus used to transmit powers from Niagara falls was his invention.

Other work which helped raise him to a place among American inventors included a system of arc lighting, a system of electric conversion and distribution by oscillatory discharges, researches and discoveries in radiations, materials streams, and emanations.

New forms of dynamos, transformers, induction coils, condensers, and other electrical apparatus also were chalked up to the credit of his genius.

A bachelor always, his daily routine was unusual. His hour for retiring was 5:30 a.m. and he usually got up at 10:30 a.m.
Midwest Christmas Annual
Life of Nikola Tesla
First Full Biography
Of Electrical Genius
Reviewed by
Joachim J. Joesten

PRODIGAL GENIUS: THE
LIFE OF NIKOLA TESLA. By
John J. O'Neill, Ives Wash-
burn, 322 pp., $3.75.

FAME can be measured by
the limelight accorded each great
name in the standard reference
books, the Yugoslav-American
inventor Nikola Tesla undoubtedly
has not yet come into his
own. In both the American
speaking world he trails his com-
petitors in electrotechnical glory.
The "Britannica" gives Tesla
only 20 lines as compared with
108 for Guglielmo Marconi and
56 for Thomas A. Edison; in the
"Americana" he rates 33 lines
against 98 for Marconi and 100
for Edison.

In the eyes of John J. O'Neill,
science editor of the New York
Herald Tribune and a 1957 Pu-
blisher Prize winner, this is a fla-
grant injustice which he has set
out to correct in his "Prodigal
Genius," the first full-length bi-
ography of Nikola Tesla. He does
so with all the skill of an expert
writer, the verve of an able and en-
tertaining writer, and the com-
plete devotion of an admiring disciple
to whom the master once said,
"You understand me better than
any man alive."

The net result is an unstinting
eulogy as has ever come across
my desk. O'Neill has no doubt
whatever that the object of his
veneration was the greatest
man ever to tread this earth.

This is not to say that O'Neill
does not make a perfectly plau-
sible case for his hero-worship.
By any standard Tesla was a genius,
if not the greatest in the world,
but he was a man of the people
whose wizardry will stand un-
muffled for a long time to
come. Whether he really deserves
full credit for all the spectacular
achievements which his biographer attributes to
him—and that includes dozens of
things from the harnessing of Ni-
gara Falls to robots, radar and
remote control—no layman could
venture to decide. But even if
O'Neill had been as extravagant
in scientific acknowledgment as
he at times is in his style, the
uncontested and uncontestable
achievements of Tesla, in particu-
lar his advocacy of alternating in-
stead of direct current, his poly-
phase system of power transmis-
sion, his transformer, arc-lighting,
and bladeless turbine made him
out one of the greatest in the field
of electrical progress.

Tesla's life story, which the au-
thor presents in a captivating and
frequently entertaining manner, is
a typical and yet unique American
saga. Born on the stroke of mid-
night, July 9 to 10, 1856, at Smil-
jan, a Croatian hamlet not far
from Gospic in what is now Yuko-
slavia but then was Hungary, Tes-
la was the son of a Greek Ortho-