



**American Welding Society®**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **William A. Rice Elected 2012 President and Chairman of the Board of the American Welding Society**

**MIAMI, Fla., January 23, 2012** – William “Bill” A. Rice, a 65-year veteran of the welding industry, has been named as the 2012 president and chairman of the board of the American Welding Society (AWS).

During his term, Rice will manage the affairs of the Society and will preside at all board of directors and executive committee meetings, as well as the Society’s annual meeting and any special meetings of its members. Rice will also represent the American Welding Society at many of its local section meetings, and other technical, national and international meetings.

“The opportunity to serve as president of the American Welding Society has huge personal meaning for me, as it coincides with my 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the welding industry,” said Rice. “My goal this year is to complete some very important milestones for the Society and I look forward to continuing to help AWS become the most forward-thinking and prestigious welding society in the world.”

Rice was born into a family of welders and learned to weld at seven-years-old. His grandfather, V.S. Rice, started as a blacksmith and welder and founded Virginia Welding as a fabrication business in Charleston, W.Va., in 1917. His father left the Navy

to run the business and later became one of the early presidents of the National Welding Supply Association, which was cofounded by his grandfather, and is now the Gases and Welding Distributors Association (GAWDA).

After 20 years of running the family welding distributor business, Rice sold it to Airgas in 1992. He then served as president and COO of Airgas before retiring eight years later. He later served as interim executive director of AWS during a period of change in the Society's leadership.

A member of AWS for over 25 years, he currently serves as CEO for OKI Bering, one of the largest wholesalers of welding and safety products in the welding industry.

Among his many activities, Rice is chairman of the of Charleston Area Medical Center Inc., a former member of the board of trustees of the University of Charleston, and a former member of the board of directors of One Valley Bank. He has served in leadership roles in numerous educational, civic, cultural, health and human services organizations.

Rice received a bachelor in science degree in marketing from West Virginia University.

#### About AWS

*The American Welding Society (AWS) was founded in 1919 as a multifaceted, nonprofit organization with a mission to advance the science, technology and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes including brazing, soldering, and thermal spraying. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, and led by a volunteer organization of officers and directors, AWS serves more than 68,000 members worldwide and is composed of 22 Districts with 250 Sections and student chapters. For more information, visit the society's website at <http://www.aws.org> and click on "Pressroom."*

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