

Awards voted by the Board this year. Class III Awards follow:

To *Richard H. Ranger* of Rangertone, Inc., for the development of a picture-synchronous recording and reproducing system using quarter-inch magnetic tape, without sprocket holes.

To *Ted Hirsch, Carl Hauge and Edward Reichard* of Consolidated Film Industries for an automatic scene counter for laboratory projection rooms, permitting the laboratory technician to identify each scene by number during the screening of a print for timing corrections.

To the *Technical Departments of Paramount Pictures Corp.*, for engineering and development of the Paramount lightweight horizontal-movement VistaVision camera.

To *Roy C. Stewart & Sons, to Dr. C. R. Daily and to the Transparency Department of Paramount Pictures Corp.*, for the engineering and development of the HiTrans and Para-HiTrans rear-projection screens. These new process screens provide a much higher light transmission and reflect far less front spill light than earlier types of screens. Uniform and reproducible characteristics are obtained by improved manufacturing techniques.

To the *Construction Department of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* for a new hand-portable fog machine which operates from light, quickly replaceable Propane gas tanks. It is self-contained, has a large capacity and a wide range of output volume.

To *Daniel J. Bloomberg, John Pond, William Wade, and the Engineering and Camera Departments of Republic Studios* for the Naturama adaptation to the Mitchell camera. The Naturama precision adaptor provides Mitchell cameras with an anamorphic attachment lens and a single remote control unit which insures simultaneous focusing of the anamorphic lens with the regular Mitchell camera lens.

The Academy Board of Governors expressed its appreciation to each member of the Scientific or Technical Awards Committee and Subcommittees making the recommendations, for their cooperation and assistance in this year's consideration of the entries. The committees included:

John O. Aalberg, *Chairman*, Daniel J. Bloomberg, John W. Boyle, Daniel B. Cathcart, Charles R. Daily, R. H. Duval, Farciot Edouart, Ferdinand Eich, Glenn Farr, Feild Gray, Sol Halprin, William Hornback, G. Carleton Hunt, John P. Livadary, Louis Loeffler, William Mueller, Charles Rice, Gordon Sawyer, Sidney P. Solow, Clifford Stine, Jack Tait and Byron Vreeland.—R. H.

(We are indebted to *Dan H. Baer* of the Los Angeles Office of *Harshe-Rotman Inc.* for the basis for this report.)

SPE + TD(PSA) = SPSE

A communication from *Edward S. Cobb*, 1201 Valley Ave. S.E., Washington 20, D.C., announces the consolidation of the Society of Photographic Engineers, Incorporated, P. O. Box 6077, Mid-City Station, Washington, D.C., and the Technical Division of the Photographic Society of America which has been under the editorial direction of Paul Arnold, APSA, 26 Hotchkiss St., South Binghamton, N.Y. The consolidation will create the Society of Photographic Scientists and Engineers.

Under the new masthead "Photographic Science and Engineering," the Society will continue to publish its technical journal. Each subscription will cover one volume consisting of four issues. Two issues of Volume 7 of "Photographic Engineering" remain to be published. These will be sent to all 1956 subscribers.

Subscriptions in 1957 will apply to the next volume. The journal is not issued quarterly and the first number of the next volume will be published about July, 1957. New subscribers will receive all four numbers of the volume, regardless of date of issue.

Back issues are now available at \$5.00 each for volumes 1 through 5, and at \$8.00 each for volumes 6 and 7. After present stock is exhausted, back numbers will not be reprinted.

Biographical Note



Mervin W. La Rue, Sr., Honored as SMPTE Pioneer in 1954 and by BPA in 1956

[*Editor's Note: This biographical note was prepared by Mervin W. La Rue, Jr., at the Editor's request. The intimate details and informal anecdotes contribute to a delightful picture of a certain segment of motion-picture history. Mervin W. La Rue, Sr., who perhaps may still be described as "the young photographer," is now the president of the company, specializing in medical films, that bears his name.*]

Mervin W. La Rue, Sr., was born July 6, 1892, in Bound Brook, N.J., the eldest son of Adella Worthington and William B. La Rue. According to a family anecdote a Christmas gift of a box camera when he was a young boy was the turning point in his life, or at least a contributing cause to his choice of a career.

During summer vacations from high school he worked for the local photographer, but at the time must have felt this was not a very promising future, since many of his studies were directed toward a teaching career in manual training. During this period he won several prizes as a result of his skill in wood carving.

His career really began at the age of 20 when he joined the New York firm of Underwood and Underwood as assistant to a staff photographer. The assistant's duties

consisted mainly of carrying the photographer's luggage but the youthful assistant eventually convinced the management that he deserved a trial as a photographer on his own.

He left the studio the first morning with assignment sheets for about ten or twelve hours of work, and just out of apprenticeship he himself carried all the equipment and supplies needed for the day. All went well until he received a late evening assignment for a flash picture of elevator equipment in a sub-basement. It was well after working hours, all lights were out, and the basement was dark. Anxious to finish, he focussed the camera by candlelight, generously sprinkled flash powder into the open flash gun, and fired it off directly under a fire sprinkler head. Later, while firemen were pumping out the basement, he was back at the studio developing the plates in his shorts. The next day his appointment was confirmed, which he now describes as a brilliant form of discipline he has never completely understood.

Much of the work here was just what an adventurous young man must have wanted. One assignment was the photographic recording, for the Roebling Company, of the methods used in erecting the new steel building frameworks which were supplanting the older stone-on-stone building methods. This involved climbing around in empty air hundreds of feet over New York City, while carrying the bulky and heavy equipment needed for the job. It was in between assignments of this sort that he became acquainted in 1913 with the young lady who later became Mrs. La Rue, and who at that time was secretary to one of the company officers.

His immediate goal at that time was to become a motion-picture cameraman, and he obtained a job in the Pathé Studio after assuring them that he could "do anything with a camera."

He soon learned that this took in a little too much territory, and the next day Pathé started him out in the "salt mine" where he spent twelve hours a day winding film on wooden racks prior to processing. This was in 1915. From there he progressed to negative developing, printing machines, title photography, print-assembly, and then was selected to work with one of the first developing machines. This was a complicated arrangement of vertical pipes through which the processing solutions were circulated. Temperature control of the solutions was obtained by keeping one whole section of the machine in a meat refrigerator, a procedure also reported to help keep the tempers of the operators cooled down to a proper working temperature. A system of lights and buzzers on this nearly block-long monster warned of film breaks and buckles. Considerable speed and dexterity were required to clear trouble without stopping the machine, and the operators all wore track or tennis shoes so that they could get away to a fast start.

During this time there were opportunities to visit other departments, and possibly as a result of the interest he displayed in other operations, he was given the job of photographing a new trailer trade-mark for Pathé—the crowing rooster. A velvet-lined box with a glass face secured the rooster, and with the equipment ready to go all was well except that the rooster

only



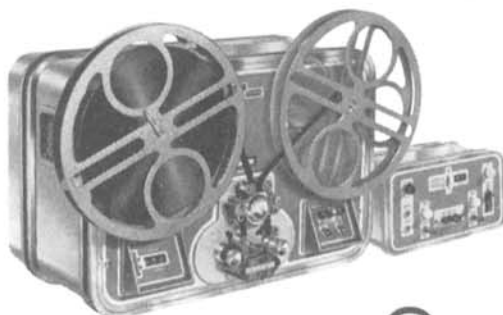
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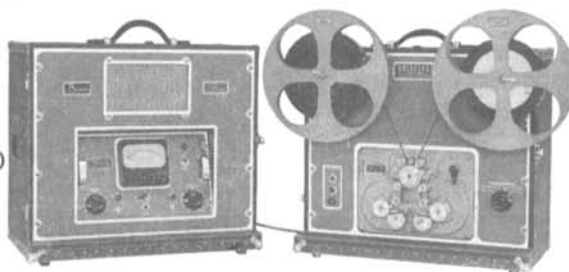


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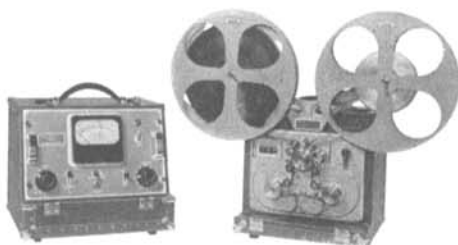
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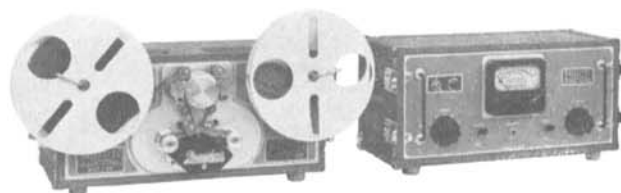
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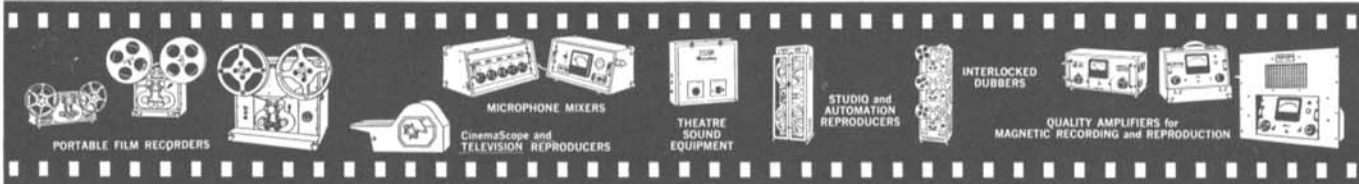


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would not crow. After using almost every device known that might supply the necessary encouragement, he finally decided to wait for dawn, and perhaps bring a hen or two into the act. During these difficulties the usual assortment of kibitzers contributed helpful hints.

While the discussion about the non-crow-ing rooster continued among friends and well-wishers, the young photographer was called away. Upon his return he was informed that the scene was made and all he had to do was develop the negative. The scene was perfect, but the successful kibitzer would not tell until much later how it was done. Eventually it was learned that a loop of thread around the rooster's neck, pulled tight when a crow was wanted, had done the trick. The rooster wasn't crowing, he was choking to death; a prime example of movie trickery.

The next major change was in late 1916, from the Pathé Studio to Pathé News; and after converging news and magazine assignments in the United States for a time, he was transferred to Canada on a roving assignment. Canada was at war then, and news assignments were plentiful. When the United States entered the war in 1917, things became confused. After reporting to the American Consul and to New York headquarters, La Rue found himself with a briefcase bulging with papers and an assignment as instructor in aerial photography at Camp Borden, Ontario, where United States fliers were to be trained. By his own report, no one else seemed to know very much about aerial photography either, so he managed to keep out of difficulty for the duration.

There was much traveling involved during and after the war, including several trips abroad—but during all this confusion, he was able to persuade his fiancée to come to Toronto, where they were married.

He was covering all outstanding events in Canada during this time, the most strenuous being the official tour of the Prince of Wales (the present Duke of Windsor) through Canada and the United States. He lived on the royal train for the entire tour of six weeks, through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to British Columbia and return.

His first venture into the field of medical photography occurred in Toronto where Dr. Banting and Dr. Best were doing the work that led later to the discovery of insulin as a treatment for diabetes. With a newsman's sure instinct he sensed that important developments were taking place at the University. He interviewed Dr. Banting who, with the caution typical of the man of science, refused to permit any publicity until the results of the experiments had been verified. The doctor and the photographer, however, worked out a "deal." Dr. Banting needed a special kind of assistance with his experiments. He promised his help with the news reel when the time came for the announcement, provided the young news photographer would help him by photographing the rats used in the experiments. This chance assignment probably led to his continuing interest in motion-picture photography as a tool of medical science and hence to some important developments and discoveries reflected in the increasing life

expectancy of today as compared to even a generation ago.

The first surgical move he made was certainly unusual as compared with today's methods. He has described the experience as follows:

"Soon thereafter, I was asked to make a movie of a surgical procedure in the Toronto General Hospital. Remember that all we had at this time was color blind film of one speed — slow — and the only artificial light source was open arc. They used open drop ether, so for the safety of the operating personnel and cameraman — as well as the patient — this made it necessary to support a "sun-arc" on a scaffold erected outside the skylight in such a manner as to permit its being focused on the surgical area during the operation. We worked out a system of signals so that I could direct the electrician in focusing the light should it become necessary during the surgical procedure.

"They mounted me on a metal stepladder over the head of the patient where they perhaps thought I would be out of the way. I did not know any better, so during the procedure managed to absorb a great deal of ether meant for the patient. Shortly after things got under way, someone moved the operating table and the electrician refused to acknowledge my frantic signals for adjustment. It was only later that I learned he could not see a thing because the reflection of the arc on the glass soon blinded him to what was going on inside.

"Somehow I kept turning the camera crank — as slow as I could to increase the exposure time without making the action too fast — but I do remember sliding down the ladder and leaving the operating room on all fours when told that I could do so. I was draped over the balustrade taking in all the fresh air possible when the surgeon appeared behind me and invited me to have lunch with him. That did it — and so once in my life I had to turn down a free meal."

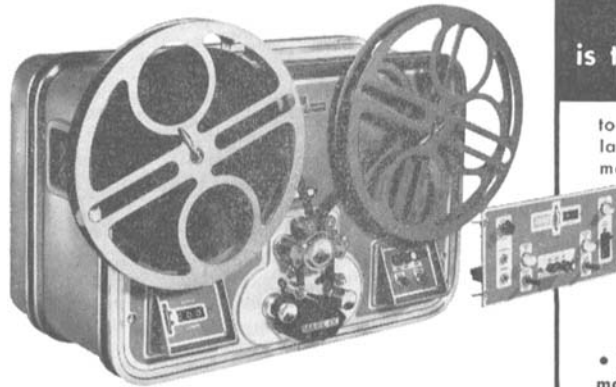
During a trip to England, he, by chance, became acquainted with J. H. McNabb, then president of Bell & Howell Co., who invited him to spend a week-end in Chicago. Shortly thereafter he was offered a position with the firm beginning in October 1926. The project for which he was hired involved setting up the new processing equipment and methods required by sound motion pictures in laboratories throughout the country. This was a time of great change in the industry. The Bell & Howell firm aided many laboratories to change from their ancient rack-and-tank methods to controlled machine operations almost overnight. During this period he also directed several films including what is believed to be the first all sound medical film. This was sponsored by the Eli Lilly Co. and was designed to bring the story of insulin, including the details of its use, to the medical profession.

By 1931, laboratories and producers were familiar with the new techniques of sound motion-picture production, and industry was beginning to see the educational and sales potential of sound movies. The way was paved for the later acceptance of Bell & Howell's 16mm sound movie equipment. The Bell & Howell project was completed about the time that the depression was

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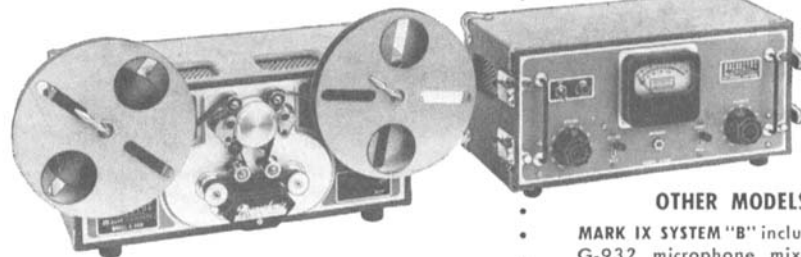
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catching up with business in general. La Rue left Bell & Howell and went with Burton Holmes Films as a "one man band"—salesman, writer, producer and cameraman. This might seem an unusual combination of activities, but it suited the talents and ambitions of the rising young photographer. When encountering a new situation, his method was to get all the relevant information possible by means of a course of study in a nearby university, a correspondence school or the nearest public library. His knowledge of selling techniques, for example, was acquired from a correspondence school course.

With the development of 16mm equipment, an increasing number of inquiries arose, relating to the application and adaptation of this equipment to special purposes. Problems in motion study, time-lapse photography, microscopy, and other fields kept coming to his attention, and the experience gained in working out these problems continued to intensify his interest in them. The advantages of motion pictures in the medical field were becoming better known, and work on some medical films began at Burton Holmes Films. However, the production of 35mm films by large producers was a severe handicap to the small budgets of the medical field, great as were the needs for such films. The use of black-and-white film was an additional disadvantage in a field where so much of the information to be transmitted relates to color and texture. These factors, considered along with the rapid improvements being made in color films, resulted in his decision

to leave Burton Holmes Films and begin free-lancing.

His confidence in this new field must have been great even then. The move was made in 1936, during the very bottom of the depression, when the expected life of a new business venture was short. This one started out with a purchase of capital equipment consisting of a Bell & Howell "70" camera, three lenses, a 400-ft magazine, a tripod, a few accessories and lamps. While not much of a physical inventory, when combined with a tremendous background, real enthusiasm, and no particular concern about the hours of work, the result was only a few anxious months before things really started to hum.

"The Business," as it is still called, continued to improve and expand until in 1947 it became a corporation. Its scope has grown to include the well-defined functions of production of medical motion pictures and allied types of illustrations, the distribution of audio-visual equipment and, audio-visual consultation to the medical profession. It is certain that the most important factor in its success has been its founder's philosophy that if he gives prompt advice and service wherever there is a need for it, everything will work out all right.

In 1954, at the Society's 75th Convention and Pioneer Awards Session, among the 26 Pioneers was Mervin W. La Rue, Sr., whose citation read: "A 30-year member, Mr. La Rue was a cinematographer with Pathecope of Canada at the time he joined the Society. He has been active in the work of the Central Section of the SMPTE, is a

Fellow of the Biological Photographic Association [whose Louis Schmidt award he received in 1956] and has received seven formal awards for medical motion pictures in which he specializes. Since 1916 he has been making motion pictures. Over the years he has been associated with Underwood and Underwood, Pathecope, Bell & Howell, Burton Holmes, Jack Eaton and since 1936 has been known for his development and adaptation of motion-picture techniques to research, to visual instruction and to science." — *Mervin W. La Rue, Jr.*

Automation—A Conference for Executives is a report on an automation conference held Feb. 14-15 in Chicago. The 116-page, illustrated book is priced at \$4.50 and is available from the Armour Research Foundation of the Illinois Institute of Technology, 10 W. 35 St., Chicago 16. Remittances should be marked for the attention of MF:AU1.

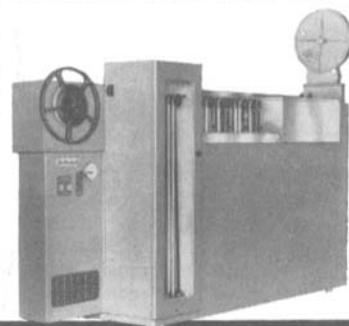
The 1957 Spring-Summer edition of **Television Factbook** has been issued by Television Digest, Wyatt Building, Washington 5, D.C. Included in this edition are 75 departments and directories. Under each category complete information, such as names, addresses, phone numbers, facts and figures, is listed. Each book contains a 43 × 29 in. wall map that shows TV stations and networks throughout the United States and Canada. Single copies are priced at \$4.50 but in lots of 5 or more, the price is \$3.00.



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