

Biographical Note



Robert Mills Morris

Robert Mills Morris was born January 18, 1902, in Washington, D.C. He attended Western Reserve University and the Case School of Applied Science in Cleveland, Ohio, after which he became a radio transmitter operator for WEAf, AT&T's new broadcast station in New York in 1924. Forty-three years later, when he retired from the post of Staff Consultant to American Broadcasting Company's Engineering Department, he could look back on a career that had spanned one of the most revolutionary eras in the history of communications — an era in which he had been an active participant and which, in some degree, he had helped bring about. His work on significant advances of that time

included development of the VU meter (a joint project of NBC, CBS and Bell Telephone Labs), early 60-line television tests of W2XBS, supervision and operation of high-definition television tests from Empire State Building pf 120-, 343-, 441-, and 525-line systems, development of improved disc recording methods and standards for broadcasting, development of color film standards for TV operation, improved methods of remote and automatic control for radio and television transmitters, and other important milestones in the field of television and radio broadcasting.

In addition to attending Western Reserve and Case School, Mr. Morris attended Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and later (1926) he studied at Columbia University under Professor Morecroft. Although he has been described as a "walking encyclopedia" in the field of broadcasting engineering, he does not hold a college degree. His many achievements and his extensive interests have raised some questions about the limitations of formal specialization.

During World War II (1942 to 1945) he was with the U.S. Army Chief Signal Officer as Chief Radio Engineer and Chief of the Communications Branch of the Army Security Agency. He was responsible for the design and construction of large radio installations for which he received the Exceptional Service Medal.


He has been a member of the Society continuously since 1957 and was a member of SMPTE prior to 1940. He was made a Fellow in 1967. He has taken an active part in Society affairs and has served on a number of Engineering Committees, including

Television, Television Studio Lighting and Video-Tape Recording. He was a member of the Television Committee from 1950 through 1966. In 1966, he was a member of the U.S. National Committee of the International Commission on Illumination (C.I.E.). He has also been a member of a number of committees in other organizations including National Television System Committee Panel 4 in 1940 and NTSC Panels 14 and 17 in 1952. He also served as a member of CCIR Study Group X.

Other professional societies of which he is a member include the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers of which he is a Fellow and Life Member.

Among other honors and awards which have been bestowed during his long and distinguished career is the Emile Berliner Award which was presented by the Audio Engineering Society "in recognition of his pioneering work in the field of disc recording, particularly in orthacoustic recording and preemphasis, and the standard volume indicator (the VU meter)." (This refers to early developments of the Development Engineering Group of National Broadcasting Co. Mr. Morris was head of the Group.) The work on the improved orthacoustic method of lateral disc recording for electrical transcription work in broadcasting led to the establishment of the first NAB Recording Standards.

He is also a recipient of the Engineering Achievement Award from the National Association of Broadcasters and the Scott Helt Award of the IEEE Group on Broadcasting.



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