

**Obituaries**



**Rudolph Rolf Epstein**

Rudolph Rolf Epstein died in July, 1968, at the age of 51. He was born in Mainz, Germany, was graduated from the Realgymnasium there and then attended the University of Basel in Switzerland and the E.M.I. Radio School in Hayes, England. He specialized in sound and in 1939 he came to the United States. From then until 1947 he was associated with United Broadcasting Company, Chicago; Reeves Sound Studios, New York, and Loew's Inc., MGM International Division, New York. In 1947

he returned to Switzerland as Chief of the Sound Department of Praescens Film Ltd. in Zurich. He was fluent in five languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) and he worked on feature films in Switzerland, Italy, France, Germany, Austria and Belgium. He returned to New York in 1953 to work on feature films for Louis de Rochemont Associates and Stanley Warner. The following year he went back to Praescens and in 1956 he returned to New York where he worked with Photo-Magnetic Sound Studios and later with MPO-TV. In 1959 he went to the National Film Board of Canada as a consultant in charge of reorganizing sound division services. Later he was appointed head of the National Film Board's Sound Division and in 1961 he became Chief of the Sound-Recording and Projection Division.

He had been a member of the Society since 1944 and was made a Fellow in 1967. He was active in Society affairs and had served as Topic Chairman and Administrative Assistant at the Toronto (1961) Conference and as a member of the Equipment Exhibit Committee at the Montreal (1965) Conference.

He participated in the planning and design of equipment for the Labyrinth Pavilion at Expo 67 which he described in a paper that appears in the March 1968 issue of the *Journal*, with co-authors J. Creighton Douglas and Peter Mundie. Earlier *Journal* papers by Mr. Epstein include (with Leo O'Donnell and L. Green) "Lightweight Synchronous Recording System" (January 1966); and two papers

(with Leo O'Donnell) "Modifications of Tape Reproducing Equipment for Use With the Pilot-Tone Synchronization Systems" (December 1961) and "Operating Experiences With a Modified Pilot-Tone System" (September 1963).

A colleague at the National Film Board said, "The motion-picture industry and the National Film Board in particular has lost a distinguished engineer in Mr. Epstein's untimely death. He was a rare combination of the disciplined technical expert and the sensitive creative worker who was able to live harmoniously with the conflicting demands of this industry."

*This Society's Journal contains many special contributions, and underlying these are efforts made in varying degrees by persons who are not credited. Because of the Editor's personal knowledge of Rolf Epstein's numerous and varied contributions, most recently for Expo 67, some expression was sought from Frank Lewin. He replies:*

On a sunny day last September (1967) Rolf Epstein and I, and our wives, met in a restaurant near the Film Board's headquarters. My wife, who had known him from their childhood days in Mainz, was seeing him again for the first time in more than 25 years. For myself it was the renewal of an acquaintance which dated back a dozen years when Rolf and I worked on a film in New York.

I was visiting Montréal to gather material for an article on Expo for the SMPTE *Journal*. Rolf had been most helpful in supplying preparatory information and



**Special Effects in Motion Pictures**

(Some Methods for Producing Mechanical Special Effects)

*Frank P. Clark*

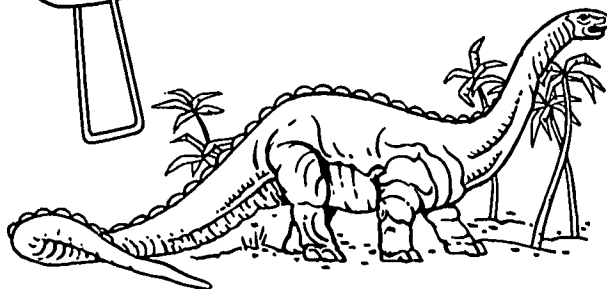
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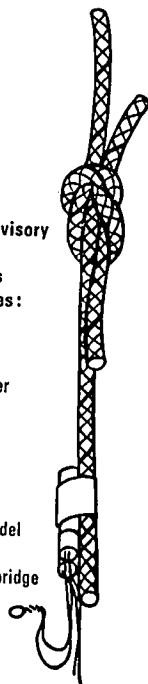
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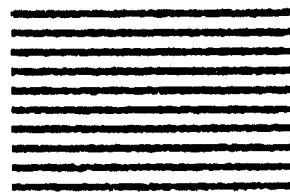
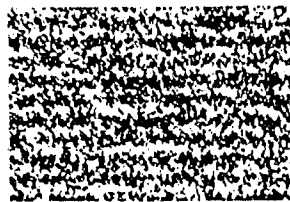
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Television raster lines (right) enlarged from 16mm film frames. Lower: EBR-100 recording on 3M fine-grain (less than 0.1 micron) electron recording film. Top: kinescope recording on television recording film. Line-to-line spacing in both pictures is approximately 0.00058 inches or 14.7 microns.

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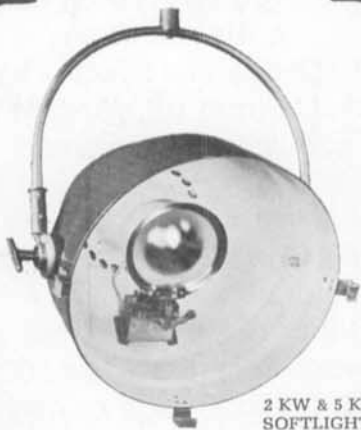
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smoothing arrangements. We had set aside this morning for a tour of the Film Board's facilities, and now — at lunch — our talk veered back and forth between the personal and work. We talked about our families, we talked about Labyrinth, about the Film Board's work and future plans for Osaka in 1970, we talked about friends and acquaintances, about his trouble-shooting at Expo pavilions during the opening weeks, about standards for sound in our industry. There was nothing unusual in this kind of a mixed conversation, for Rolf's work was evidently inseparable from his personal life, and especially so during the summer of Expo.

We made plans to see each other in the United States after Expo had closed, but as things worked out this lunch was our last meeting. We did, however, subsequently correspond at length and had many phone conversations. And it is here that I come to the point of this small personal addendum to the Society's obituary, for I owe a great measure of thanks to Rolf for his help and suggestions in the preparation of my article ("Man and His Sound — Expo 67," *Journal*, March 1968). What had started out as a short account of a visit to Expo turned into a fairly extended and detailed opus. This meant that a mass of figures needed to be verified, information tracked down (often after repeated, unsuccessful tries) and sources credited, terminologies clarified, etc. In all these areas Rolf was of cheerful assistance. But his attention was not confined to nailing down facts. When the finished manuscript was sent to him for comments, he tactfully suggested the tempering of overly exuberant statements, and in several instances supplied inside information which explained and suggested alleviating circumstances for items which had come under criticism. I must add that I was encouraged by his enthusiastic concurrence in conclusions which he also had arrived at, independently, but had not been able to voice publicly himself.

Though no acknowledgment of Rolf's help was possible at the time of publication, I think it is in order now. His contribution was the act of a colleague who was also a friend.—Frank Lewin



**Clarence S. Ashcraft, Sr.**

Clarence S. Ashcraft, Sr., died June 30, 1968, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. He had lived there since his retirement, in 1962, as President of C. S. Ashcraft Manufacturing Company, of Long Island, N.Y., a firm he

and his wife, Mary, had founded in 1918. He was born October 28, 1891, and his career in the motion-picture industry began in 1914 when he joined the original Goldwyn (subsequently M-G-M) Studios as a set lighting specialist and four years later, in 1918, he founded the firm which still bears his name, and of which his son, C. S. Ashcraft, Jr., is now President. That same year he built a carbon-arc lamp for motion-picture projection and during the next 50 years he continued his research and development of many types of carbon-arc lamps. He was issued a U.S. patent to cover the Core-Lite system of carbon arc projection lamps and equipment. He pioneered the development and use of silver water-cooled positive carbon contacts and forced-air cooling of the reflector.

He was a Fellow of the Society. Other affiliations included Honorary Membership in the 25-30 Club of New York. I.A.T. S.E. awarded him (in 1966) the Certificate of Merit "for outstanding contributions to the profession of the projectionist."



**John W. McNair**

John W. McNair, Technical Director of the American Standards Association (now the USA Standards Institute) from 1958 to 1965, died at his home in Virginia on November 17. He was 68 years old.

He was graduated from the University of Virginia in 1924 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He was affiliated with Consolidated Edison in New York from 1924 until 1926 when he joined National Electric Light Association, now the Edison Electric Institute where he worked on the National Electrical Safety Code. He joined ASA in 1930 as an electrical engineer. He was appointed Assistant Technical Director in 1954 and Technical Director in 1958. As Technical Director he supervised the entire ASA technical program, covering some 500 standardization projects.

During World War II, Mr. McNair was in charge of ASA War Committees on radio, electrical indicating instruments, photography and cinematography, and wood poles. In 1955 he was elected an Honorary Member of the Photographic Society of America "for his contributions to the technical phases of photography, particularly in the field of standardization." He was a Life Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and a Founder Member and Fellow of the Standards Engineers Society.