Obituaries

Mervin W. LaRue

Mervin W. LaRue, a pioneer in the field of medical photography, died 15 April 1973 at his home in Chicago. He was 81 years old.

He began his career in photography in 1912 when he worked as a still photographer for Underwood and Underwood. In 1915 he joined Pathe Studios where he worked with some of the first "rack and tank" developing machines for motion-picture film. (A delightful description of the ingenious, and primitive, laboratory methods in those early days is given in the extensive Biographical Note in the April 1957 issue of the *Journal*, pp. 220–224.) An especially amusing anecdote in the Biographical Note concerns the photographing of the new trailer trademark for Pathe — the crowing rooster. The assignment was given to Mr. LaRue, but the rooster — confined in a velvet-lined box with a glass face — refused to crow. The crowing was finally faked (in Mr. LaRue's absence) by holding a loop of thread around the rooster's neck and pulling it tight when a crow was required. Although in the photograph the rooster seemed to be crowing, the unfortunate bird was almost choking to death.

During World War I, Mr. LaRue served as an instructor in aerial photography for the U.S. Army at the flight school in Camp Bordon, Ontario. At the end of the war, he returned to Pathe and covered major news assignments in the United States and Canada, including the official tour of the Prince of Wales in 1918.

His first experience in medical photography entailed coverage of the historic Banting and Best insulin experiments. His films of their laboratory experiments became part of the research itself. After the great discovery was made public, he prepared the newsreel of this important advance in medicine. As a result of his work on the insulin project, Mr. LaRue was invited to film surgery at the Toronto General Hospital.

In 1926 he accepted a position with Bell & Howell where he supervised the nationwide conversion of motion-picture film laboratories from the crude rack developing process to the (then) new type of film processing equipment. While with Bell & Howell, he made a number of films, including the first sound medical film (sponsored by Eli Lilly). The film was intended to spread the story of insulin to physicians throughout the country.

Later, he joined Burton Holmes Films of Chicago. At that time, the potential of motion pictures in the educational field was beginning to be realized. With the successful development of the less expensive 16mm format and of practical color film stock, necessary for the rendition of medical subjects, Mr. LaRue saw that the use of motion pictures for educational and scientific purposes had come of age. (A paper by Mr. LaRue and his son, Mervin W. LaRue, Jr., "Adaptations and Applications of 16mm Motion Picture Equipment to Medical and Scientific Needs" was published in the September 1947 issue of the *Journal*.)

Mr. LaRue formed his own medical motion-picture company in 1936. He produced his own motion pictures and additional films in cooperation with many noted researchers, physicians, institutions and pharmaceutical companies. He served as consultant for many scientific photographic projects and over the years performed almost every motion-picture function including the scripting of three award-winning films.

It would be impossible to list all his achievements in the medical film world; he had over 400 completed motion pictures and 26 awards to his credit. The productions range from the famous "blue baby" operation to a series of films on kidney function which took five years to make. One of the most famous productions was *Fire and Explosion Hazards for Flammable Anesthetics* which was honored by the American College of Surgeons, cited by the Biological Photographic Association and shown at the Venice and Padua Film Festivals where it won awards.

Mr. LaRue was responsible for equipment innovations and applications which furthered the growth of scientific photography. He improved the methods of cinemicroscopy and he designed and constructed his own equipment for making motion pictures through a microscope. He applied the time-lapse principle to tissue culture photography and adapted infrared photography to the medical field. He also aided the development of body cavity photography.

At the time of his death he was Chairman of the Board of Scientificom, Division of Mervin W. LaRue Films, Inc., a highly sophisticated and scientific audio-visual production and distribution service that grew out of the organization he founded in 1936.

He was a Life Member of the Society, having joined in 1924. At the Society's 75th Conference in 1954 he was honored at the Pioneer Awards Session. He was a Fellow of the Biological Photographic Association and served two terms as President of that organization.

Robert Eisuke Saeki

Robert Eisuke Saeki died 20 July 1973 at his home in Yokohama, Japan, at the age of 78. At the time of his death he was Chairman of the Board of Directors of Yokohama Cinema Laboratories, Inc.

He had been made a Fellow of the Society in 1971 for his international contributions to the motion-picture industry, particularly for his pioneer work in the use of 16mm film and modern processing techniques in Japan, beginning in 1923, and for his later work in 8mm and super-8 techniques.

His career in the motion-picture industry began in 1923 when he established the Yokohama Cinema Co. In the beginning, he was both producer and cameraman, working on assignment for Pathé News and Pathé Review; during that same year he became a staff cameraman for Pathé News. 1923 was also the year of a great earthquake in Japan and that disaster was filmed by Mr. Saeki. The films were distributed by Pathé throughout the world.

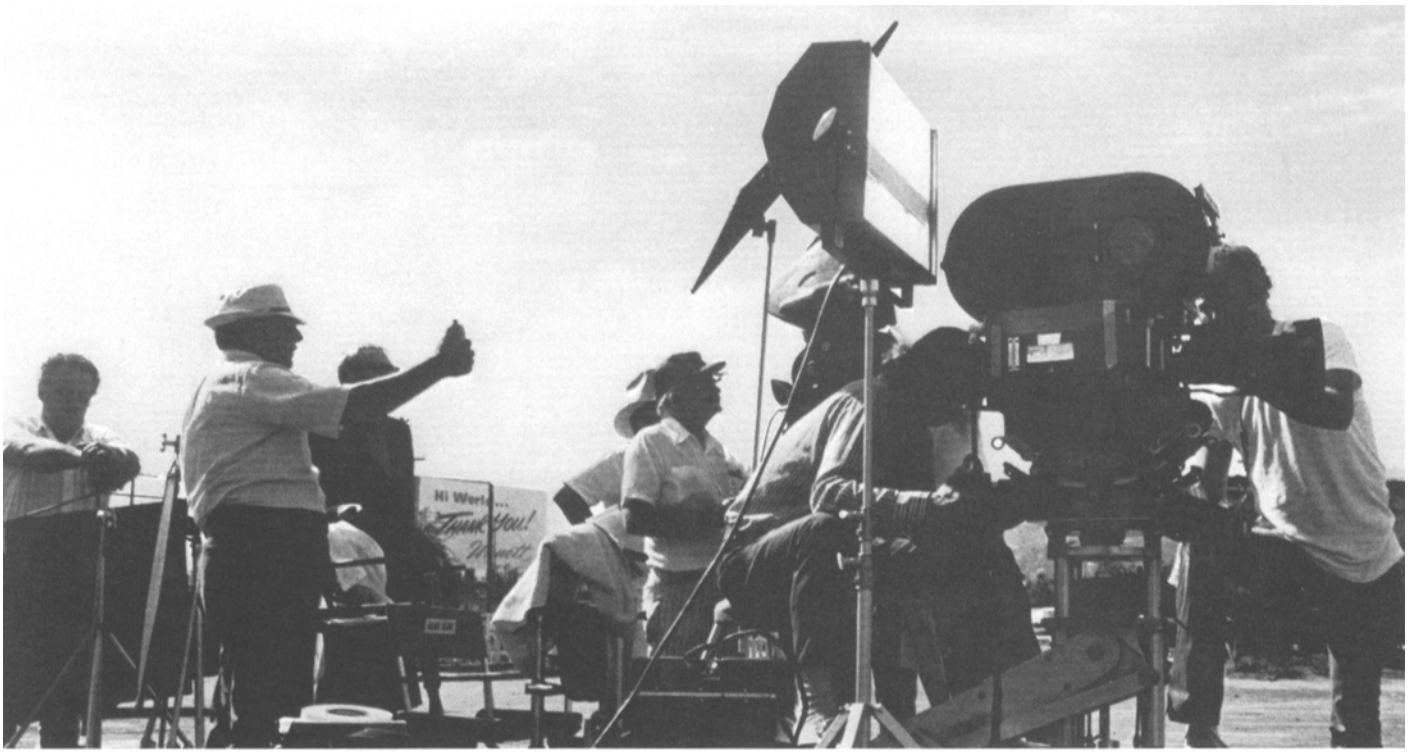
Immediately after he established Yokohama Cinema Co. he began introducing up-to-date motion-picture equipment from the United States and Europe to improve motion-picture technology in Japan. During the following 10 to 15 years he produced many educational films. He was awarded the Educational Ministry Award four times for his contributions to audio-visual education.

During World War II he produced training films for the Japanese Navy. In 1943 Yokohama Cinema Co. was destroyed by an air raid on Yokohama, but seven years later the company was reestablished as Yokohama Cinema Laboratories, Inc., specializing in 35mm and 16mm film processing; that same year the firm was established as an authorized Japanese film processing laboratory by the U. S. Information Agency. In 1957, among other innovations, he imported the Oxberry Optical Printer.

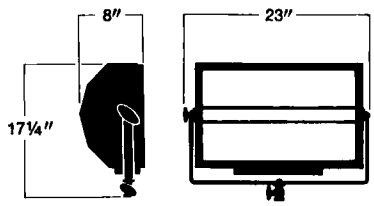
In 1962 he began studying 8mm sound and he succeeded in perfecting a recording and printing system for 8mm optical sound film. In 1965 he perfected a system for the production of super-8 optical sound film and the following year he installed the first Bell & Howell Model C Additive Color Printer in Japan.

Mini Soft-Lite

A new 2kW portable fill light from Berkey Colortran



Berkey Colortran's new Mini Soft-Lite, an ultra-light weight (8¼ lbs), portable fill light, uses two 1kW quartz lamps, each on its own switch. The Mini Soft-Lite is equipped with a new combo stud that fits ⅝″ studs or 1⅛″ females. It needs no assembly. Plug in its 25 foot feed cord and you're ready to shoot. Newly designed reflector provides shadowless high output light. 110 footcandles at 10 feet. Super soft output at a mini price. See your Berkey Colortran Dealer.



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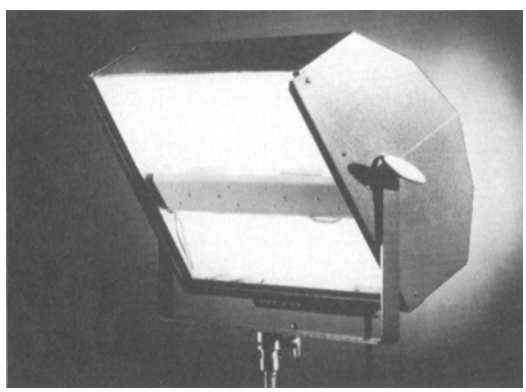

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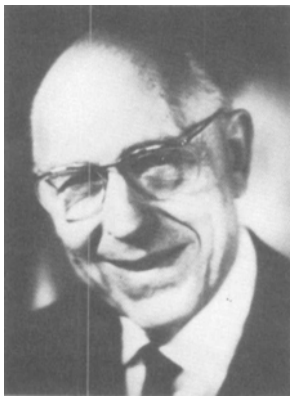
Honors that had accrued to him over the years, other than his having been made a Fellow of the SMPTE, include Honorary Membership in the Motion Picture and Television Engineering Society of Japan in recognition of his many contributions to the motion-picture industry, and the National Blue Medal Award, presented by the Japanese Government in recognition of his many contributions to audio-visual education and the upgrading of laboratory techniques in Japan.



Jean Vivié

Jean Vivié died in Paris on 25 September 1972 at the age of 68. He was one of the most renowned motion-picture technicians in France. He was also well known throughout the world because of the part he had taken in numerous organizations such as the Technical Commission of the French Motion Picture Industry, the International Association of Motion Picture Technical Societies (UNIATEC), AFNOR, and for his participation in the various congresses of ISO, UNIATEC, etc.

Jean Vivié was educated at the School of Mines, but he soon became interested in photography and motion pictures. As an amateur he made some very good films for the French Line, but he soon became a professional and started a series of publications. He created the periodical review *Measurements* and embarked upon a long-lasting work *History and Development of the Motion Picture* which is a genuine motion-picture encyclopedia. In 1954 he also wrote an extremely well documented work, *Motion Picture and Television in Color,* and a valuable guide for projectionists.

Jean Vivié taught at the School of Photography, today the Technical School of Photography and Motion Picture, and also at the Motion Picture Institute; thus a great many cameramen, sound technicians and TV technicians have learned their trade from him.

The services he rendered the motion-picture industry were many and varied. In 1941 he created the Motion Picture Technical Control, an organization which became essential in France during that particularly painful period. It made it possible for the French motion-picture technicians to get together and know each other better and also to prepare the reorganization of the industry when the country had been liberated. Thus the Technical Commission was created with Jean Vivié as a main figure, a commission which could work in full daylight immediately after the liberation. Shortly after, still with Jean Vivié as the central figure, the French Association of Motion Picture Engineers and Technicians, AFITEC, was founded, with the SMPTE as a model.

Jean Vivié was permanent secretary of the two organizations, CST and AFITEC; he organized all their technical meetings and when these two bodies, having contacted similar groups in other countries, brought about the founding of UNIATEC, Jean Vivié was again chosen as its permanent secretary. He, therefore, attended all the international conferences of UNIATEC.

The ISO conferences were familar to Jean Vivié. Already, before World War II, he had worked on standardization. In 1942, at the same time that he created the Motion Picture Technical Control, he organized the Office of Standardization of the French motion-picture industry, under the sponsorship of AFNOR, at a time when France was cut off from communications with the Anglo-Saxon countries and ISA. Thus, as soon as peace had been established and the reorganization of world standardization had started through ISO, France was able to present numerous standards ready to be proposed as international standards. Jean Vivié participated in the ISO conferences in New York in 1952, Stockholm 1955, Harrogate 1958, Garmisch 1962, Milan 1964 and Moscow 1967. Those among us who attended these conferences remember the important part he played in the discussions, always as the head of the French delegation, always defending the general interest of standardization.

Although it only concerned France, one of Jean Vivié's numerous activities was described in the *Journal* of July 1970, "The French Film Archives." As a matter of fact, a great amount of motion-picture "treasures" had been collected in France and shown to the public on various occasions, but in spite of the efforts of many competent people, for too long nothing had been done to ensure the preservation of the basic documents from which new release prints could be made. These irreplaceable documents would almost certainly have been destroyed because many of them, the oldest and most valuable, were still on nitrate base, not having been duplicated on safety film. The name of Jean Vivié will remain attached to this work of restoring valuable films to order and security, in order to give them the longest possible length of life, and to the Film Archives Storage Center at Bois d'Arcy near Paris, built by the French National Film Center.

Jean Vivié had received numerous medals in recognition of the services he had rendered in his various activities. He was a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, Officer of the Arts and Letters, Officer of the Order of National Merit and Officer of the Academy. He had been a member of this Society since 1946.

His contributions to the *Journal* (other than "The French Film Archives," which was translated by Pierre Mertz) include "Motion Pictures and Education in France" (also translated by Dr. Mertz) in the November 1969 issue of the *Journal,* "From Cinema to the Cinema Theater" (March 1966) and "Commemoration of the First Showing of the Lumière Cinématographe" (April 1971).—*Louis Didiee*

Richard J. Pietschmann, Jr.

Richard J. Pietschmann, Jr., pioneer sound technician for the film and television industries, died 28 March 1973 in Garden City, N.Y., at the age of 62.

Mr. Pietschmann helped to develop and perfect multichannel stereophonic sound for motion pictures, beginning in 1952 with *This Is Cinerama,* for which he received an Academy Award nomination. He was Director of Sound for the two other Cinerama films, *Cinerama Holiday* and *Seven Wonders of the World* and for *Windjammer* in Cinemiracle for Louis de Rochemont.

Richard J. Pietschmann, Jr., working in 1971 in San Francisco on Woody Allen's *Play It Again Sam.*

This Is Cinerama, on which he worked with Lowell Thomas and Michael Todd, was credited with injecting new life into the motion-picture industry and still holds the record for the longest-running feature picture. It featured the first wide screen and the first commercial application of stereophonic sound, which later revolutionized the record business.

Mr. Pietschmann spent some 30 years in the motion-picture industry, following in the footsteps of his father who worked with D. W. Griffith in early films.

In addition to his pioneering of stereophonic sound with Cinerama, Mr. Pietschmann was known for his music recording having worked with Pablo Casals, Andrés Segovia, Duke Ellington and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He recorded *Aida* at La Scala in Milan for *This Is Cinerama.*

Before joining Cinerama in 1951, Mr. Pietschmann worked for the RCA Motion Picture Division and for 20th Century-Fox Movietone News. In recent years he had concentrated on recording specials and documentaries for CBS Television, including *20th Century* and *21st Century* with Walter Cronkite. He was honored for his work on the Emmy-award-winning Eric Hoffer special for CBS in 1967. He also worked on *Mr. Justice Douglas* which was broadcast in 1972 and received significant notice. His last special for CBS was the acclaimed interview with Lyndon Johnson, broadcast earlier this year and filmed just a few days before the ex-President died.

Recent feature films on which Mr. Pietschmann had worked were Otto Preminger's *Such Good Friends* and Woody Allen's *Play It Again Sam*.

He had been a member of the Society since 1946. He was also a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Audio Engineering Society.

As a result of his achievements in the development of stereophonic sound as well as his work on *This Is Cinerama*, Mr. Pietschmann was frequently asked to deliver lectures on subjects within his field. The following excerpt from the introduction to a lecture on "Recording Stereophonic Sound for Motion Pictures," delivered before a group of SMPTE members in 1959 and found among his papers after his death, illustrates the continuing interest he had in the development of stereophonic sound:

"Stereophonic sound is not new. Demonstrations covering stereophonic sound made by Tell Telephone Labs in the early 1930s were outstanding. However, interest lagged for a long period of time even though Electrical Research Products, Inc., recorded several scenes in Hollywood using stereophonic techniques of recording and reproducing sound with substantial success. Subsequently, Walt Disney made a picture called *Fantasia* originally intended to be stereophonic but finally released as pseudo-stereophonic with cued switching to loudspeakers surrounding the audience in the theater.

"Further research in stereophonic sound lay practically dormant until a memorable day in September 1952 when the Cinerama production of Lowell Thomas's *This Is Cinerama* stirred the imagination of Broadway and Hollywood motion-picture people from coast to coast. This was the first serious attempt since the advent of sound pictures in 1928 to give the industry and the public a new concept of the art of motion-picture presentation."

Lester B. Isaac

Lester B. Isaac, International Representative of I.A.T.S.E., died 25 January 1973 in Greenwich, Conn.

A native of Washington, D.C., he became a member of Operators Local 224 in Washington in December 1916. He served as projectionist for Presidents Wilson and Harding. As the years went on he became a well-known engineer in the motion-picture industry. He was Chief Engineer for Loew's Theatres and was responsible for the installation of equipment for all of the Loew theaters throughout the world. He was also responsible for such historical events as the opening of *Gone With the Wind* in Atlanta.

When Cinerama made its appearance in the early fifties, Mr. Isaac was signed to a corporate contract naming him chief engineer. He was responsible for the installation of the Cinerama process throughout the United States and Canada. He held the post until 1960 when he was appointed I.A.T.S.E.'s International Representative.

He was an early member of the Society and at one time served on the Film Projection Practice Committee.

M. A. Fazalbhoy

M. A. Fazalbhoy, Chairman of the Board and Managing Director of Photophone Ltd., died 14 April 1973 at his home in Bombay, at the age of 70.

Akbar Seth, as he was respectfully and affectionately known in industry circles, was a pioneer of the Indian radio, electronics and film industries. His association with the Indian film industry started over 50 years ago when he joined his father's automobile and radio business. At that time, sound was yet to come to the Indian film industry, still in its infancy, with silent films the medium of entertainment. The first Indian "talkie" shown in Bombay was exhibited on equipment imported by Akbar Seth and his father, the late Abdulla Fazalbhoy. This marked the beginning of a new era of entertainment in India and the beginning of the Indian cinema as an industry.

Gentle in his manner, soft spoken and most respectful, Akbar Seth was a true friend of the film industry and of the individuals working in the industry. He took an active and personal interest in the equipping of film studios and cinemas and helped many producers and technicians to set themselves up in business.

Mr. Fazalbhoy had many interests in the film industry. In addition to importing equipment, the family established Film City, India's first commercial studio and laboratory, in the area presently used by Famous Cine Laboratory, Tardeo, Bombay.

In its day, the family's General Films was one of the leading film producers. Later, General Films and Sagar Movietone were merged and expanded into National Studios, the largest commercial studio and film producer of its time. Eventually, National Studios was sold to Western India Theatres, together with the Strand Cinema in which the Fazalbhoy family had a considerable interest.

Fazalbhoy Ltd. introduced Simplex Projectors, RCA Sound Systems and National Carbons in India and later combined with RCA Corp. to form Photophone Equipments Ltd., one of India's best known equipment companies.

Akbar Seth's pioneering activities continued; following his decision to manufacture Photophone Theatre Sound and Projection Equipment in India, Photophone Ltd., India's first full-scale modern manufacturing plant was established near Bombay's beautiful Powai Lake area. Equipments designed by RCA Corp. and Toshiba were produced, but since Akbar Seth believed strongly in the importance of indigenous technology, he encouraged the adapting and updating of the equipments through the efforts of local workers. When 3D, CinemaScope, 70mm and Vistarama were introduced, he made arrangements for all of the equipments to be manufactured in India and many Indian cinemas were thus equipped.

Realizing the importance of audio-visual education, Akbar Seth emphasized the production of 16mm sound projectors. At the time of his death, arrangements had been made for the production of super-8 projectors as well.

A strong believer in modern concepts of communication, he took keen interest in television and satellite communications. It may be noted here that India's first Earth Station for satellite communications, at Arvi, near Poona, and the second Earth Station, now under construction at Dehra Dun, have both been equipped by RCA Corp.

Akbar Seth traveled abroad extensively in behalf of Photophone equipments and he was well known and well liked internationally as well as in India. As a result of his efforts, Photophone projectors have been installed in various motion-picture threaters in Europe and in North and South America.

As a philanthropist, he made funds available to the needy through the Abdulla Fazalbhoy Charities Trust which was established by the family. One of the most important contributions to the city was the establishment of a blood bank in the Cama and Albless Hospital.

When Akbar Seth died, the film industry lost one of its pillars of strength and, in the truest sense, it lost a guide, philosopher and friend.—*H. Krishnan*