

# President's Convention Address

By EARL I. SPONABLE

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

**T**HIS CONVENTION brings back some old memories. The TRANSACTIONS of the Society record that we had a previous convention here just about this time twenty-three years ago. We met at Whiteface Inn, located about three miles northwest of here on Lake Placid. The Society members apparently liked this environment, for a second convention was held at Whiteface Inn the following year. Since that time, we have been oscillating between New York and Hollywood, with a stopover now and then at Chicago and Washington.

Our first meeting here was also my first as an Active Member of the Society. I was just a neophyte in the business at that time. I presented a paper entitled "Some Technical Aspects of the Movietone." That meeting in 1927 was practically at the beginning of commercial sound-on-film motion pictures.

Reading a bit in the TRANSACTIONS of that year is rather fascinating. Here is the first paragraph of the Progress Report:

"Thomas A. Edison, when quizzed on his eightieth birthday as to the future of motion pictures, replied, 'Onward and upward.' He struck the keynote of the industry. One need not stretch the imagination far to paint a picture of the future in which sound synchronization, television, and stereoscopic principles are combined to give super entertainment and service. Some day we may sit at home and see a great play, enacted in a magnificent theater in a distant city, and hear the words of the actors and the musical accompaniment."

This passage, written twenty-three years ago, predicted accurately the home television of today. The prophecy seems well on the way to fulfillment.

Again, the TRANSACTIONS of that time listed 232 members of the Society. We now have 3,300. Then there were six Standing Committees: two of these, "Standards and Nomenclature," and "Theater-Lighting," dealt with engineering problems; while the other four (Papers, Membership, Publicity and Advertising) handled administrative matters. Today we have some 20 Engineering and 17 Administrative Committees, as well as the Headquarters Staff of eleven regular employees. The two-a-year TRANSACTIONS have long since been superseded by our monthly JOURNAL, which is recognized everywhere as the engineering record of the motion picture business.

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Anyone so honored as to be elected President of this Society wishes most fervently to pass the job on to his successor with the feeling that the Society has prospered under his guidance. I am proud to have served you during two most significant years in the Society's history. These two years have seen great challenges in our industry — competition from new forms of entertainment — increased production costs — the threat of another war — an inflationary national economy — and all the problems attendant on such far-reaching circumstances. We have come through these two years, on the whole, very well indeed. Let me review some of the high points.

One of the accomplishments to which we may point with pride is the publication of a number of extremely useful documents. These will, I hope, mark the beginning of an ever-increasing effort to make more generally available the scientific and technical advances resulting from the work of our membership. These documents include a guide to "Films in Television"; a reprint of a 30-page JOURNAL article on "Theater Television Today"; three volumes on high-speed photography; a tabulation of characteristics of color film sound tracks; a report on the basic principles of color sensitometry; and a reference file on 35-mm sound heads. All of these are in addition to the regular monthly JOURNAL. For the last two years the Editors have not found it possible to keep the number of JOURNAL pages within the authorized budget because of the substantially larger volume of valuable contributions.

A change of the Society's name to include the words "and Television," together with a revised constitution and bylaws, was approved by the membership during this two-year period. This change has resulted in a substantial gain in membership from the ranks of television engineers. Increased interest has been shown in television projects, standards and contributions to the JOURNAL of timely papers on television subjects. The current convention program reflects our augmented television activities.

Theater television, although still limited in scope, has become a reality. The Theater Television Committee has contributed largely to the general interest now being shown in this new medium, and this committee has also been responsible for coordinating the related interests of exhibitors, equipment manufacturers and the common carriers. Film is now a permanent part of television, and many of the motion picture standards developed by the Society have been adopted by the broadcasters. Several unique problems which appeared were referred to our Engineering Committees, and an outstanding example of the practical help provided by such committee work is the Televi-

sion Test Targets now available on both 16- and 35-mm film, currently being used in almost every television station.

Other test films, some supplied jointly by the Society and the Motion Picture Research Council, are coming into wider use than ever before. Recently a Test Film Quality Control Committee has been appointed to insure that the level of technical accuracy required by the published specifications shall be maintained.

Thirteen New American Standards affecting motion pictures have been formally adopted during the past two years, bringing the total to 60. Today 20 engineering committees are actively working on over 40 different projects.

It is, of course, quite impossible to record adequately here all the assistance given me by the members of the Society; I cannot let the opportunity pass, however, without mentioning the active and loyal support of Boyce Nemece and the rest of the Administrative Staff without which the work of the Society would be rather ineffective. Fred Bowditch has ably organized the engineering activities of the committees; and Bill Kunzmann be praised: I have been relieved of all worries about conventions. To all the rest, my sincerest thanks, and I am sure you will each continue to help my successor as wholeheartedly as you have helped me.

So much for the past; what of the future? We want more members, particularly from the television field. We are grateful for the sustaining support we have received, but we must have more if we are to carry on and expand to supply the services required in our field. We need to enlarge the JOURNAL to serve better both television and motion pictures. These problems are always with us, but the organization and running of our national conventions is becoming more difficult and complex as the Society becomes larger and the interests of its members more varied. I wonder whether the national conventions should be replaced by regional ones, with more emphasis on technical and less on social activities, or whether we would not do well, perhaps, to give up completely, in the near future, the two National Conventions a year and plan instead to hold only one National Meeting with the Local Sections taking more of the load in supplying forums for our speakers and papers for publication. This would constitute a major policy change — please think about it and give your new Board of Governors the benefit of your opinions. With your continued support, Edison's words "Onward and upward" will still be the motto of the Society and of the motion picture and television industries, as we look confidently toward the future.