

Reflections of SMPTE Past Presidents

By Carol King

A ship is only as good as its captain — and the same goes for our Society. The SMPTE has flourished in its 75 years as a result of strong leaders who were committed to the betterment of the Society and the expansion of its membership, and who have devoted themselves to establishing industry standards. As a tribute to these leaders, and to the SMPTE's 75th anniversary, the Journal invited Former Presidents to reflect on the Society, then and now.



Herbert Barnett

Herbert Barnett, 1953–1954 Presidential Term

Even before he joined the Society in 1941, Herbert Barnett had observed a multitude of changes within the industry and the SMPTE. "I was around for the advent of talking motion pictures, the early development of television, the introduction of color and various types of sound, the recording of sound on film by light valves, the beginning of magnetic recording, and the use of digital sound recording," he said.

During his term as SMPTE President, Barnett had a firsthand view of what he now refers to as "a great upheaval in the motion-picture industry." At that time, Cinerama, a widescreen three-projector process which he was associated with, created

major changes in the industry. "The development of Cinerama was a real turning point for the motion-picture industry. It gave rise to attempts by every major studio to come up with a similar system at a lower cost. This led to the creation of CinemaScope and raised interest in 3-D and stereo sound."

Ultimately, though, these developments created confusion as well as progress. "I spent most of my presidential term traveling to keep the exhibitors informed by updating them on these new technological procedures," he said. "However, these changes were for the good of the Society. Since World War II, the conventions had mainly featured television presentations. But in 1953, 3-D, wide-screen technologies, and stereo sound were also a part of the focus. This led to a growth in our overall membership."

In fact, it was during Barnett's tenure that the Society held its first equipment exhibit as part of its semi-annual conventions. "It was at the 1953 convention in Los Angeles that we held our first exhibit, which later became an important part of our conventions," he said. "Prior to that we had been happy to have 500 attendees. However, this convention attracted over 1000 people."

He complimented the Society on its 75 years of growth, especially in taking on membership throughout the world. "The Society has increased its activities in disseminating information and providing various views of what is occurring around the world," he said. "That's very important."

However, he feels that members will benefit to a greater degree if papers presented at the conferences recognize that the Society's membership is broad-based. "The industry has become sophisticated. In some cases, presentations are aimed at very specific areas that are not familiar to everyone," he said. "It would be more helpful if the authors could cover the basics and make their presentations more educational. If the information is more clearly defined, there may be a way to realize that a particular appli-

cation can be used elsewhere. For example, much of NASA's work has found use in other fields. This could also be the case within the SMPTE."



John W. Servies

John W. Servies, 1961–1962 Presidential Term

John W. Servies joined the Society in 1945, when it was the SMPE. "It was a tremendous change when, in 1949, we included television and changed the name to SMPTE," he said. "There were many who objected to it. But how fortunate it was that television was included as early as it was. Where would we be now if we covered only the motion-picture business?"

He noted that during his membership the Society, by way of the *Journal*, has helped him to keep up with new technologies. "When I entered the industry, only a few theaters were organized to handle sound films, and most of them played a large phonograph record in sync with the lip movements. Sound in film followed later. Then came 3-D, stereophonic sound, platter film transports systems, and digital sound. Each of these were reported and discussed in the *Journal*."

Servies added that Society membership and his presidency have provided him with great rewards. "Before I became an officer, I benefited by serving on the Theater Engineering Committee and later served as its chairman. Many current projectors were discussed there. When I became

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an officer, and later President, my stature in my company and in the industry was enhanced. I even got listed in *Who's Who*. That honor would not have been bestowed upon me without the SMPTE."

It was during his presidential term that the Society had its first meeting with the Soviet Union. "We held a conference in Canada that was visited by a delegation from the USSR," he said. "It was an outstanding event."

Servies' contributions to the Society did not begin and end with his presidency, however. It was during his term as Convention Vice-President that equipment exhibits were first held as part of the convention, and as Financial Vice-President he helped to create the Society's first employee pension program.

Although he has been retired for 23 years, he still has high regard for the Society. "I believe that in the future the Society will continue to serve the industries it represents and that it will grow and grow in its worldwide acceptance as an engineering and scientific organization. An example of this is its early incursion into the HDTV field," he said.



G. Carleton Hunt

G. Carleton Hunt, 1967–1968 Presidential Term

G. Carleton Hunt has been involved in the SMPTE since the early 1940s. He vividly recalls when the Society held its first equipment exhibit as part of the technical conference. This, he recalls, caused a storm of controversy.

"The great question was, Was the Society going to be a commercial organization or was it going to be a responsible technical organization?"

he said. "As you can see, the exhibits have remained and we do continue to be a great technical society."

Hunt's focus as an SMPTE member was mostly in the Society's business affairs. He helped to establish the reserve funds and worked on plans that have helped to keep the SMPTE in the nonprofit tax category.

During his presidential term, the SMPTE's relationship with the BKSTS and UNIATEC was established. As new SMPTE leaders take the helm, he says "it is rewarding to see that relationship has continued to blossom." Now retired, he was the president of Deluxe Labs, Inc., during his presidency and later served as the chairman of the board.



Kenneth M. Mason

Kenneth M. Mason, 1975–1976 Presidential Term

Since joining the Society in 1946, Kenneth M. Mason has been a vital part of the SMPTE. He served on the Society's Board of Governors as a Governor or officer from 1949 to 1980. During that period, he was involved with the origination of the SMPTE Winter Television Conference, the Emmy Award received by the SMPTE for the Television Time Code, and the purchase of the former SMPTE Headquarters in Scarsdale, N.Y.

In the early 1970s he played a key role in the expansion of the Society's international activities. "There were two factors that really helped to bring this about, both involving the active roles played by SMPTE presidents, particularly G. Carleton Hunt, Bill Holm, and later Bob Smith and myself," he said. "First was attendance at

the BKSTS International Conference held in London every other year, and the second was participation in UNIATEC.

"These activities enabled those from SMPTE to become much better acquainted with engineers and executives from around the world, and it let our foreign counterparts know that we at the SMPTE were very interested in their procedures and problems, and that we wanted to be involved," he said. "From 1973 to 1980, I attended the BKSTS conferences, giving the keynote address on two occasions. I also participated actively in UNIATEC and was a vice-president of their bureau. During that period, the international attendance at our own SMPTE conferences greatly increased."

As President, Mason took a strong interest in the Society's conference programs. In fact, it was during his term that the SMPTE national conferences were halved from two a year to one. "This was a major step and a decision that was made only after lengthy and careful consideration," he said. "Running two conferences a year had become a burden on the Society's resources and those of its exhibitors. Company sponsors were increasingly concerned about the costs and the loss of personnel time. There were also problems obtaining enough technical papers to fill up two weeks of programming twice a year.

"It was finally decided to start the one-conference-a-year policy in 1975 and to keep a close tab on expenses, availability of papers for the *Journal*, and quality of service to our members," he added. "Although this policy is not without its own minor problems, in conjunction with the annual television conference, the one-a-year national conference has proved to be efficient and practical."

"It was also during my term that the Fellows Luncheon was initiated to properly recognize Fellow membership and to induct new Fellows," he continued. "The first Fellows Luncheon was held in Los Angeles in 1975. The second luncheon was held in New York in 1976."

He noted that joining the SMPTE and participating in its activities has been one of the most important steps of his career. "There is nothing better for a young engineer or executive to do than to join the Society — and get active," he said. "It is a terrific way to

meet and know people, exchange ideas, discuss problems, and stimulate thinking.

"The future of the Society has never been brighter or more important," he continued. "No other organization has the expertise and talent to bridge the gaps among the types of imaging groups in both television and motion pictures. There remains an ever-increasing need for standardization with new technologies."

Mason, who spent 45 years at Eastman Kodak Co., retired in 1982 yet remains extremely active in the industry. From 1982 to 1988 he was chairman of the Intersociety Committee for the Enhancement of Theatrical Presentation. He is presently on the Board of Trustees of Washington and Jefferson College and the Board of Directors of Allied Film & Video. He is also a member of the board and a vice-president of the University Film and Video Foundation. When he can, he tries to work in a few holes of golf.



Robert M. Smith

Robert M. Smith, 1979–1980 Presidential Term

Robert M. Smith joined the Society in 1955. As President, he played an active part in furthering the SMPTE's role as an international standards organization.

"Shortly after I took office, the Society had the opportunity to be among the first technical delegations requested by our State Department to have a technical exchange with the motion-picture and television industries in the People's Republic of China," he said. "U.S. diplomatic relations were still being finalized in the early spring of 1979 when, through the cooperation

of a Society member and our State Department, plans were made for the SMPTE to meet with the heads of the motion-picture and television industries throughout the People's Republic of China.

"One of our primary objectives in this exchange was to encourage the members of the motion-picture and television industries there to work within the International Standards Organization (ISO)," he continued. "At that time, they had never attended an ISO meeting and were even adopting their own new formats, both in motion pictures and in television, that were not compatible with other accepted standards throughout the world. I am happy to say they attended the next ISO meeting as observers and became full members shortly thereafter."

Smith added that, after the Society's first technical exchange with the People's Republic of China, he received a rapid series of inquiries and invitations from representatives of both the television and motion-picture industries all over the world. Throughout 1979 and 1980, he visited with technical organizations in over 20 countries on four different continents, resulting in the establishment of close working relations with these organizations' engineering working committees, as well as strong industry relations with technicians, engineers, and administrators in the television and motion-picture industries.

It was also under Smith's leadership that the Society made the transition from hotels to convention centers for the annual conferences. "In 1980 a debate developed, which I supported, concerning the future growth of the Society's conferences. They were being limited by the space we had in the hotels being used for the conferences and the opportunity was present for major growth and financial revenue if we moved from these hotels to a conference center.

"The decision was made in 1980 to commit to conference centers in the future and since this has been put into effect, the Society has seen the benefit of this decision with greatly expanded annual conferences and equipment exhibits."

Smith closed his interview by summing up his feelings about the Society and his presidential term. "I consider being selected as President of the SMPTE to be the highlight of my busi-

ness career and, as I have often stated, it was very important and beneficial to me. It was like having the benefits of another college education. Joining and getting involved in the SMPTE was the best decision I ever made. I believe it would benefit every technician, engineer, and administrator in our industry to do the same."



Charles E. Anderson

Charles E. Anderson, 1981–1982 Presidential Term

Charles E. Anderson, a member of the original Ampex design team that developed the first practical magnetic videotape recorder, joined the Society in 1958. His election to President is of particular significance: he was the very first SMPTE President with a background in videotape rather than film.

"There has been a major shift in the Society from film to television, but that does *not* mean film is dead," he stressed. "Film is still a very, very important medium, but it is different than it was when the Society first began."

Before becoming President, he served four terms as Governor and a term as Executive Vice-President. "The Society has been tremendous to me," he said. "When I was first approached to be an officer of the Society, I was told that I'd make lifelong friends and lifelong enemies. This advice was so true; I have made lifelong friends. The SMPTE has provided me with great benefits, in a monetary sense and in a sense of fulfillment."

However, he has faced his share of battles. While serving as Governor, Anderson fought to cut the number of the Society's national conventions

from two a year to one a year. "I felt very strongly that we were overdoing it," he said. He obviously was not alone; in 1974 the last SMPTE biannual conventions were held.

As President, Anderson helped to expand the Society's international horizons. "I appointed the first two International Governors, Bengt Orhall of Sweden and John Barry of Australia, and that has really blossomed," he said. "All a President can do is plant a few seeds and hope they grow, and I'm proud to see that today we have a very functional international group."

His projection for the Society's future is bright. "There are building blocks from where we came from, and we are continuing to go forward. We will always be there to meet the challenges of new technologies.

"I do think the Society is going to continue to change," he added. "The personal computer has opened up something fabulous for all of us. I think we can help meld computer technology with television technology. Computers are now a part of television, and we have to stay on top of that."



Leonard F. Coleman

Leonard F. Coleman, 1983–1984 Presidential Term

Since he joined the SMPTE in 1961, Leonard F. Coleman has witnessed the reduction in the number of annual conferences per year, as well as more dramatic changes in the total conference structure.

"I see as a fact that the national conventions have undergone a transition to become considered as an important business event," he said. "Initially, the conferences were viewed as a social function. Now, with

the exhibits and displays, they have become more business-oriented."

Coleman said that he has also observed internal changes within the structure of the Society, including the addition of Directors of Film and Television who report to the Editorial and the Engineering Vice-Presidents.

As a member of the Society, he has held the positions of Vice-Chairman of the International Papers Committee, Governor of the Southwest Region, Sections Vice-President, and Financial Vice-President.

In 1979, as Sections Vice-President under the direction of the late Former President Bill Hedden, he helped to develop training programs for incoming section officers. "These sessions were designed to provide increased benefits to our members by strengthening the activities of the local sections," he said. The seminars instructed the local officers in the administration of the local sections and informed them about the help available from the SMPTE officers and Headquarters staff. "This later developed into training sessions for the national officers," he added.

During his term as President, Coleman engineered a change that is of significant interest because it affected the selection of all future SMPTE presidents. "Initially there was a nominating committee that alternated their selections for president between the West and East Coasts and between the motion-picture and television industries," he explained. "For example, if they picked someone from the East Coast with a motion-picture background one year, they chose a West Coast television person the next. I eliminated that process so now the concentration is strictly on the most qualified candidates."

Harold J. Eady, 1985–1986 Presidential Term

Harold J. Eady, who has been a member of the Society since 1960, is pleased to see that the SMPTE is taking advantage of new opportunities. "The biggest thing is that we are now a truly international society," he said. "We have been trying to accomplish that for years, back to the days of Bob Smith, but our efforts were thwarted by the Cold War. But as the Eastern Bloc has opened up, it has opened doors for the Society."



Harold J. Eady

He also has high regard for the tutorial programs that have been incorporated into the SMPTE conference programs. "This trend must continue. The tutorial programs make the conference more of a two-way interactive vehicle for the membership," he said. "It's similar to interactive video. It sparks debates, discussions, questions, and answers. A lot of the conference program can be highly technical and beyond the scope of many members. The membership is made up of a wide spectrum of engineers, executives, technicians, etc. Not everyone can benefit from the papers program."

Since joining the Society, Eady has recognized the importance of the individual sections that make up the SMPTE, and he feels that those efforts should continue. He was Chairman of the Toronto Section in 1971 and from 1982 to 1983 he served as SMPTE Sections Vice-President.

Before beginning his term as President, Eady was a part of the organization to establish the Presidential Advisory Council. "Not all the top industry executives become a part of the Board of Governors, and I felt there was a need for their input," he said. "When the Committee was established it was a memorable event and I am proud of that accomplishment."

As President of the SMPTE, Eady orchestrated the relocation of SMPTE Headquarters from Scarsdale, N.Y., to its current address in White Plains, N.Y.

Now semiretired and working as a consultant, Eady noted that even in this capacity the Society has served him well. "I would not have the consulting opportunities that I do if it weren't for the Society," he said. "What the Society has given me is tre-

mendous. It has allowed me to be groomed for success in business and has given me the opportunity for job enhancement and industry contacts. In addition, it has provided me immediate awareness of the latest technologies in both motion pictures and television."



M. Carlos Kennedy

M. Carlos Kennedy, 1987-1988 Presidential Term

Since he joined the Society in 1963, M. Carlos Kennedy has been very involved with the SMPTE standards-setting activities. In fact, it was during his term as President that the Society received an Emmy Award for setting the D-1 standards. "This was the most significant event of my term," he said. Of note, he was a member of the Working Group that produced those standards.

However, it was not his only achievement. During his presidency, Kennedy attended the first Beijing International TV Equipment Exhibition; represented the Society, with Richard Streeter, at an HDTV Production Symposium of the MPTEJ; spoke on behalf of the Society at the Broadcasting Technology Association's International Symposium on HDTV, also held in Japan; and led an SMPTE delegation into the USSR at the invitation of the Deputy Chairman of the State Committee of the USSR for Cinematography.

As a member of the Society, he has served on the Committee on Video Recording and Reproduction Technology, as well as the IEC SC60CB Recording Systems Committee, and was the Chairman of the SMPTE Working Group on Video Test Mate-

rials. He is now on the Working Group on High Definition Electronic Standards and the Committee on Television Recording and Reproduction.

Kennedy expects that in the long term there will be changes in the Society's standards-setting activities. "Television has become more dominant. This can be seen in the papers presented at the conferences as well as the types of products that are being displayed," he said. "Network engineering staffs are becoming less available for standards work. The owners of the stations have become more interested in the business end of the industry as opposed to the technological end.

"Television is becoming a mature industry, so now there is less of a need for network engineering staffs to do things. They allow the industry to do it for them," he continued. "In the future, television recording standards will no longer be created in the committee. They will be written by the industry. Fewer changes will be made during the standards procedure. There will ultimately be more documentation of technology than the creation of new standards. I see that as a major change."

In closing, he noted that, in spite of the changes the future may bring, SMPTE membership will always have its benefits. "When I was born, television was a curiosity. Now it has evolved into a major industry. I have also seen the development of VCRs, which were a real novelty at the time they first appeared. Computers now dominate technology, and signal processing is done digitally. In fact, the entire studio is becoming digital. You have to keep up with these changes. Keeping current is both a challenge and an opportunity, and the SMPTE helps its membership to do that."

Maurice L. French, 1989-1990 Presidential Term

Since joining the SMPTE in 1959, Maurice L. French has witnessed the embracement of television technology by the Society. "Initially, at many conferences, there was a great debate about the future of film with the advent of television, but we later saw that one did not replace the other. Instead, we saw them merge," he said.

"Now, there is a changing role because the Society has served a very



Maurice L. French

useful educational purpose through television's developing years," he noted. "The conferences provided a forum for the industry to participate in the debate of new technologies in both motion pictures and television, and in their integration."

As President of the SMPTE, French played a large part in developing the Society internationally. Since he took office, the Italian, Nordic, German, and Soviet Union Sections were inaugurated. Also, interest in forming a section was initiated in New Zealand, and a second SMPTE section was opened in Australia.

"We also have interest in forming new sections by members in Japan and France," he said. "I believe this is where the future of the Society lies. The SMPTE has to be international in scope because imaging is international in terms of providing exchange in programming. You can see the international scope of broadcasting just by the coverage of the recent war in the Middle East. The structure of the Society has to change to reflect the changing integration of technology."

It was also during French's presidential term that the SMPTE streamlined its standardization process. "Because of the rapid technological changes, it became essential that the Society review and speed up the standardization process," he said. "Otherwise, the process is not as effective as it could be. Credit has to go Engineering Vice-President Stan Baron and Director of Engineering Si Becker for accomplishing that task."

In looking toward the future, French stressed the importance of serving the new international SMPTE.