SMPTE ALMANAC

By Michael Dolan

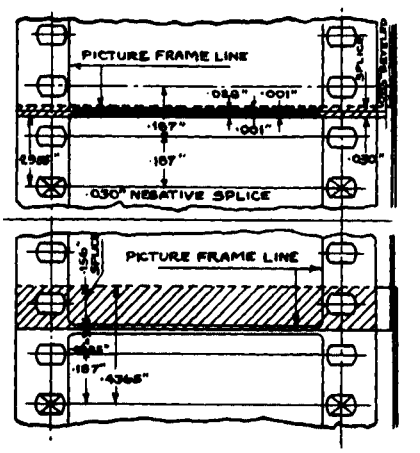
This column presents interesting historical briefs from Journal articles of days past. Its purpose is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on the Society's history, how far we have come in the industry, and (sometimes) how some things never change. This is not meant to be an authoritative reference, and no attempt is made to correct any past errors or omissions of the Journal. We simply hope you enjoy the material.

25 Years Ago in the Journal

The September 1976 Journal reported an article on *Metric Conversion*: "With the approval, on 23 December 1975, of the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, the United States took another step along an extended path from the use of the customary (American) system of units to the use of modern metric system, the International System of Units (SI). We are reminded in the second section of the Act that it has been legal to use measurements in this country ever since 28 June 1866...[and] that the United States was one of the 17 countries which, on 20 May 1875 in Paris, signed the Treaty of the Meter...one man's guess is as good as another's of the rate at which conversion will take place...[but] it long has been the Society's practice to use soft conversion by including dimensions in both customary and SI units in its Standards....For the first time in United States history, it seem likely that, within the foreseeable future, our customary system of units will be replaced by a metric system of units (SI).....It is unthinkable that such effort should fail."

50 Years Ago in the Journal

The September 1951 Journal reported: "At the March meeting of the Atlantic Coast Section of the SMPTE, Paul Terry of Terrytoons, New Rochelle, N.Y., showed a film describing the making of animated cartoons at his studios ....A brief history of animation was presented....The Stone Age genius who drew the Wild Boar of Altamira in Spain 20,000 years ago, suggested the motion of a running beast by drawing wiggly lines by its legs, exactly as the comic-strip artist renders it today....The Egyptian Goddess Isis was painted on each of 110 columns on a temple in 1600 B.C. Each figure was in a progressively changed position so that a dashing charioteer passing by enjoyed an illusion of motion...the first conscious attempt at comical drawings suggesting motion was by a German named Athanasius Kircher who devised the first magic lantern...done in two projections of still drawings...in 1640....In 1824, Peter Roget discovered a vital principle of sight...that the eye tends to retain an image it has just seen....He built a spinning top that had a bird on one side and cage on the other. When the top spun, the bird seemed to be in the cage.....William Lincoln patented a device called the Zoetrope in 1867, and this marked the introduction of animated cartoons into this country....The common "flipper book" was introduced in 1868....The first experimental cartoon was created by a newspaper artist named James Stuart Blocton, encouraged by Thomas A. Edison....To Winsor McCay, another newspaper artist, goes credit for the animated cartoon in the form in which it appears today."

75 Years Ago in the Journal

The September 1926 issue reported in an article by S. E. Sheppard and S. S. Sweet with a *Note on the Strength of Splices*: "...it appeared worthwhile to us in view of the importance of the matter to make a little more intensified study of what might be termed the mechanics of splicing. The actual operations have frequently been discussed; they are essentially: (A) Scraping (B) Application of cement (C) Alignment or placing (D) Drying. The tests applied and discussed in this note were, first, direct tensile strength tests on the dynamometer previously described, secondly, actual wear and tear tests on projection machines. The tensile strength tests measure only the goodness of the splice considered simply as a joint or weld but give no information as to its registration or fitness. These factors as well as the strength are tested in projection trials. Fig. 1 shows the proposed S.M.P.E. dimensions for film splices."