
OBITUARY

Victor H. Allen

Victor H. Allen, who was Editor of this *Journal* from 1949 until his retirement from the Society in 1975, died October 31, 1982, at Northern Westchester Hospital after a six-weeks' illness. He was 72 years old.

When the Society's officers and governors awarded him, at his retirement, the highest distinction the Society has to offer, Honorary Membership, they were recognizing not only his extraordinary performance as Editor, but what lay behind it: the total dedication and drive he had put into making the *Journal* the best professional publication in its field, one enhancing the Society's technical reputation throughout the world. During his long editorship the *Journal* grew from the modest 6 × 9-in. publication started back in 1930 to its present dimensions and format and gained its reputation as one of the leading technological journals in the world. For this, the Society has indeed to be grateful to Vic Allen.

As those who worked with him know, and as readers may suspect from the quality of the product, Vic Allen lived and breathed the *Journal* days, nights, and



Victor H. Allen at work

weekends, and was never satisfied until the material in it had been checked, rechecked, honed, and polished to a degree of technical excellence he felt to be worthy. Together with the late Dr. Pierre Mertz, for twenty years Chairman of the Board of Editors — and, as an engineer of superlative accomplishment, a man very much after Vic's heart — he worked incessantly at improving and maintaining the quality of the *Journal* to meet the high standards he demanded.

Those who worked with him, either on the staff or as authors, will always remember his wise counsel, his cheerfulness, his energy, his wry humor, and his tireless worrying at a problem until it was solved. Countless authors with technical equipment vastly superior to their literary skills would find themselves being almost painlessly led into the ways of expressing their thoughts with clarity. Nor was his help available only in the writing: his interest in scientific matters and his own knowledge

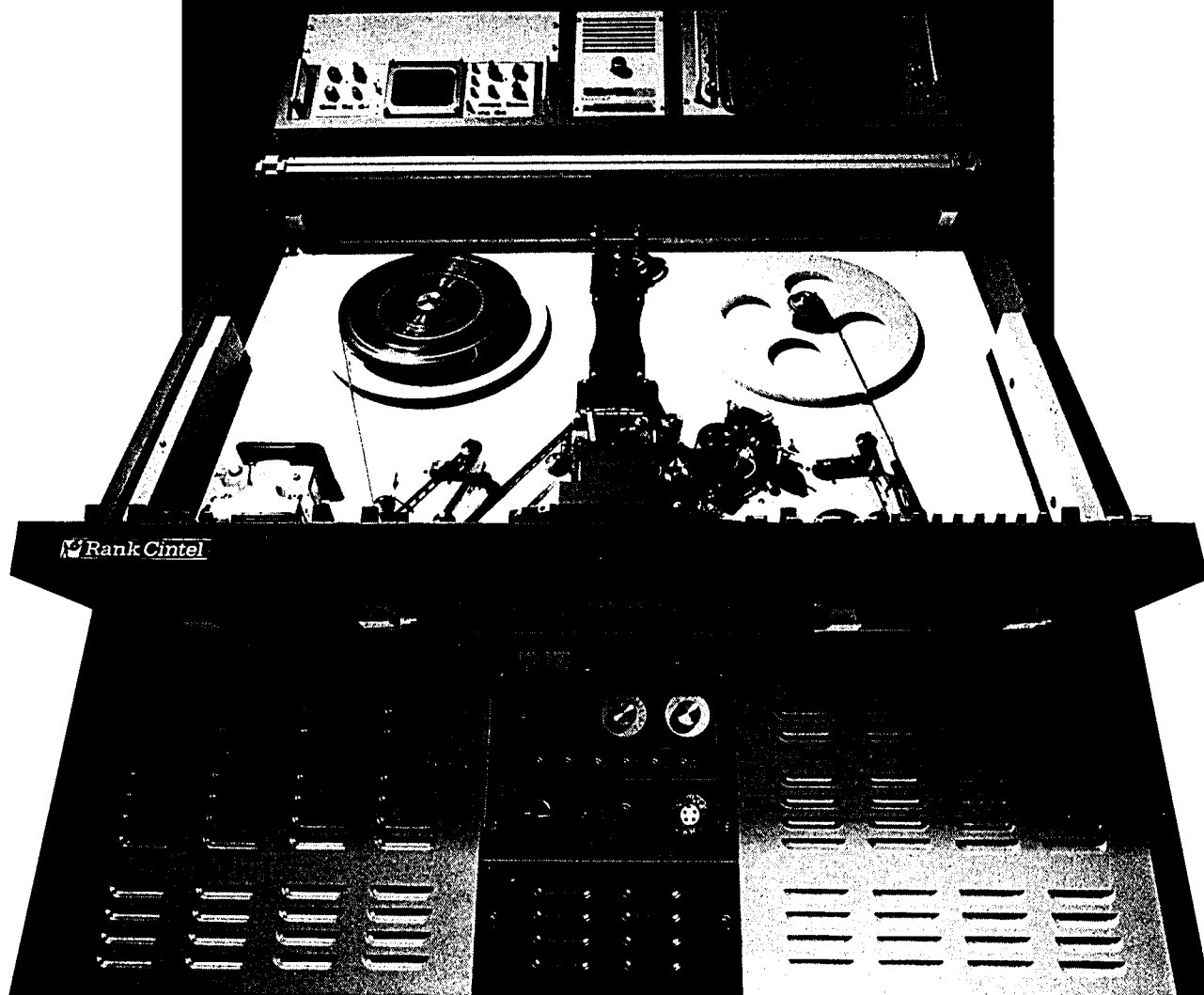
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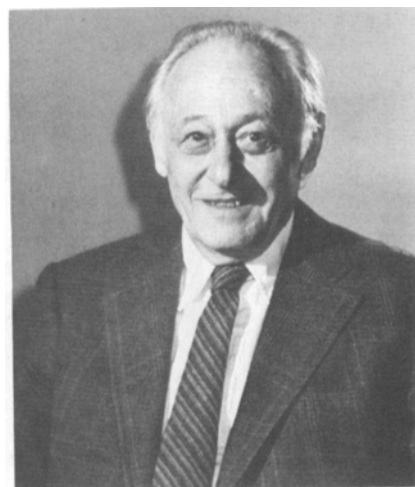
acquired over the years often enabled him to catch errors and make improvements in the technical content.

Intellectual honesty, shrewd understanding, a devotion to the practice of good English — combined with a characteristic smattering of more rustic turns of speech left over from his farm and seafaring days — were qualities Vic had gathered from a lifetime of experience both rich and varied.

His beginnings were in the farmlands of northern New York State, near Lake Ontario, where he tended the family farm until the urge for wider prospects sent him off to see the world. He saw it in a variety of places, some of them described in his own special style in the June 1975 *Journal* at the time of his retirement: as ward a

tendant at St. Lawrence State Hospital for the Insane, as worker in a paper factory, as lunchroom cook. Then, "to see the world beyond the hills and the river paper mills," he spent three years as a merchant seaman, "firing an oil burner with firetube boilers and turbine to Antwerp, or firing with coal watertube boilers and compound engine to Green Bay; more glamorous, oiling an upright Worthington diesel on trips to China, Australia, and India."

Home from the sea, Vic decided it was time to gather some more formal education and enrolled at Antioch College. "Always something new: One had to learn that the nice 92-element high-school chemistry was too simple, perhaps that chemistry was physics when candidates for the B.A. at Antioch College were required to absorb a



Victor H. Allen

year of 'Matter and Energy.' Soon even for the layman it was nuclear physics . . . So the world of journals and books about science and technology came as the call of the non-wild of society." Given his strong intellectual curiosity, the academic experience was not much more than a gloss on the continuing process of self-education from his farm days to the end of his life. He was constantly fascinated by new developments in the technology of publishing, his chosen career, and later in the broader field of scientific developments affecting human society.

In 1938 he became editor of the *Journal of the American Waterworks Association*. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II he joined Interscience Publishers, Inc., as production manager. He then came to SMPTE (SMPE then) in 1949. Through his work on the *Journal* and the various books published by the Society he soon earned the respect of the engineering community and, in collaboration with contributing authors, raised the *Journal* to its present stature, an eminence recognized by engineers in the motion-picture and television technologies all over the world.

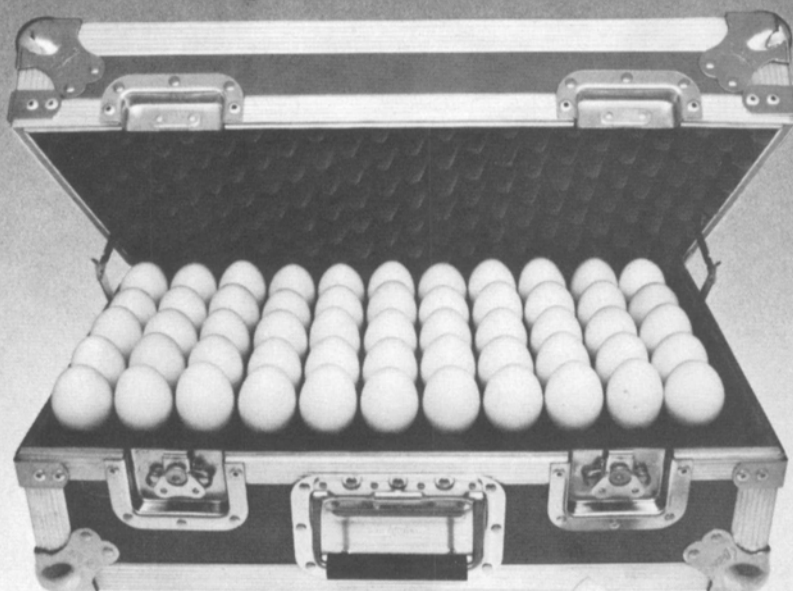
At the 27th International Exhibition of Cinema Arts at the Venice Biennale he received the Silver Lion of St. Mark Award for the *Journal's* technical excellence. In 1973 the British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society honored him by electing him to Honorary Fellowship in their Society. The conferring of Honorary Membership by the SMPTE, on his retirement, was the final accolade in a long and distinguished career.

During his tenure as Editor Vic Allen typified all that was best in the Society's work; in so doing he made a major contribution to its growth and effectiveness, a contribution for which the Society must be ever grateful.

He is survived by wife, the former Jennie Hoerber, whom he married in 1939; two sons, Peter and Andrew, a granddaughter, Jessica, one brother and two sisters.

— Denis A. Courtney

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