
SMPTE Biographical Sketch

Herbert E. Farmer

SMPTE
Vice-President
for Educational
Affairs
1980-81



has done much to bring stature to a new academic discipline and an ever widening acceptance of film study as a rightful part of formal education.

Farmer has held a number of offices in the Society. He served three terms as Vice-President for Educational Affairs. He was elected SMPTE Secretary for the 1961-62 term, and served as Editorial Vice-President for three terms. He was elected Vice-President for Educational Affairs in 1966, and has served on the Board of Governors for 23 years.

In addition to his past duties, Farmer is currently serving on several committees. He is presently Chairman of the Educational Advisory Committee, a member of the Papers and Publications Advisory Committee, and of the Standards Committee.

His affiliations with organizations other than the SMPTE include the Audio Engineering Society, of which he is a Fellow. He is a Trustee and Secretary of the University Film Foundation, a former President of the University Film Association, and a Director of CINE (Council on International Nontheatrical Events).

Farmer is also very active in the field of international standards. For nine years he was U.S. Technical Advisor on the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) SC60C. He is currently Chairman of Subcommittee 60C, which deals with systems of audiovisual and electronic technology for information and communication. His work on the committee involves a great deal of travel to such places as Munich, Paris, Budapest, Prague, and other foreign cities. He is a representative of the SMPTE on two American National Standards Committees — PH22 (Motion Pictures) and PH7 (Audiovisual).

The Younger Generation

Farmer has a deep concern for the younger generation. "Those of us in my generation don't necessarily keep in touch with the younger generation," he said, adding, "I recognize the

Herbert E. Farmer, Professor of Cinema at the University of Southern California, is the SMPTE Vice-President for Educational Affairs.* He is known as one of the SMPTE pioneers, having joined the Society in 1943 and through the years consistently contributing to the advancement of the Society. Farmer joined the Society before the television era, when it was limited to Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE), but by 1950 the science and art of television had become an important interest of the Society, reflected in the change of its name to the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers. A few years ago, due largely to Farmer's efforts, the USC Cinema Division expanded into the present Division of Cinema-Television.

Farmer was graduated from the University of Southern California in 1942, and that same year he was appointed Lecturer in Cinema. His entire career has been with USC, with a three-year hiatus during World War II. In his undergraduate days he took an active part in the production of documentary movies related to the university. Shortly after matriculation

in 1938, he was one of the producers of a 16-mm monthly film release covering student activities entitled the *Trojan Newsreel*. He also filmed football coaching films for USC, and surgical motion pictures for a number of medical researchers. At the start of World War II, he taught Air Navigation in the Naval Flight Preparatory program at the University.

During World War II, he served in the U.S. Navy as Photographic Officer, with the rank of Lieutenant. In 1946 he returned to USC, where he was appointed Director of Audiovisual Services and Head of the Sound Department. He remained in that post until 1950, except for a leave of absence to the U.S. Air Force on Project Sandstone as Technical Consultant. He continued graduate work at USC, receiving his master's degree in 1954.

He was made a Fellow of the SMPTE in 1957. In 1976 he was awarded the Eastman Kodak Gold Medal for his role in the advancement of education for motion picture production. The citation accompanying the award noted that:

He has been a national and international leader in assembling and adapting the necessary instructional technology so each student can combine personal production experience with theory. This work and his efforts in standardization, his interests in film archives and his use of industry leaders as classroom teachers

* Herbert Farmer's term of office as Vice-President for Educational Affairs ended December 31, 1981. The newly elected Vice-President for Educational Affairs is Frederick M. Remley.

problems of communication between the generations because I am quite close to the students at the University. Unfortunately there is often a lack of understanding of the problems confronting the young and how their futures can be affected."

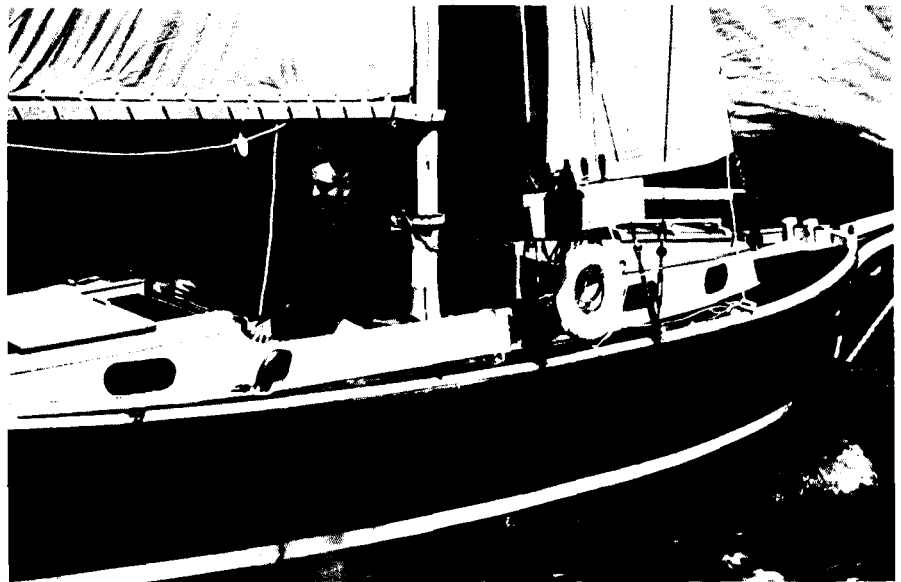
"At USC, at least, the students are so busy that 24 hours a day aren't enough. Many of them are working to earn money to stay in school. I am very concerned about the young people who are going to take our places all too soon. It is of the utmost importance that we help them with the education and supply the information that they must have."

Farmer feels that one desirable move would be to encourage the students to become a part of the regular SMPTE program. In Los Angeles they have a relationship with the industry, and people from the industry come to the classroom every day. Of course this is not possible in all parts of the country. In those areas the organization of Student Chapters would be helpful, but he feels that we should find a way to involve students and other young people in regular Society activities, where they would be a part of the regular SMPTE program. "These are difficult times we live in," he said, "and it is a privilege to help find ways to bring young people into the Society, for their benefit as well as for ours, to better equip them for taking their place in our rapidly changing industry."

Farmer's dedication to his students, to the SMPTE, and to the world of education has been strongly evident for more than 40 years.

SMPTE Activities

In looking back over the years, Farmer found it difficult to pinpoint any one contribution to the Society as being more outstanding than the rest. However, he recalled his service as SMPTE Secretary as having presented a real challenge. In that post, "I helped to organize the present SMPTE structure, because I became Secretary right after the present Constitution and Bylaws had just been approved." Changes were necessary almost immediately, and updating has been the watchword ever since. The terms as Governor were good training, along with serving as Conference Program Chairman for three Hollywood Conferences. Three terms as Editorial Vice-President provided good oppor-



Herb Farmer off the Los Angeles coast.

tunity to guide and help with the *JOURNAL*, the Conferences, and the other Society publications. The three terms as Educational Vice-President were perhaps the most trying, as education has not been too high on the list of priorities of many members of the Society and the industry.

Farmer's wife, Beatrice, has been a regular attendee at the annual conferences. She has been active in the spouses' programs at the conferences, and has frequently served on the committee organizing the event.

Favorite Activities

Farmer has retained his interest in the ocean and boats since his Navy days. For many years his favorite outdoor activity was sailing. "In the late 1950's three of us at the University purchased the hull of a 26-foot Navy Whaleboat made at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1942, and we proceeded to convert it into a sailboat. It was great fun and relaxation doing the design engineering and all of the work of changing and rebuilding the hull, adding a keel, finding and rebuilding an engine, constructing the mast, and even making the sails. It ended up a unique cutter rigged design with a center cockpit and cabins fore and aft, quite adequate for four — if they were good friends."

During the slightly over 20 years that Farmer and Russ McGregor, also of the USC Cinema-Television faculty, owned the boat, it provided many weekends of pleasant sailing and

pleasant visits to Catalina Island. However, the problems of maintenance assumed discouraging proportions, and in the summer of 1980 they found a buyer — an old gentleman who took kindly to the boat and wanted to live on it.

Advantages of Microcomputers

His latest enthusiasm is for microcomputers, which enable him to cope with the perennial shortage of time, and to keep ahead of the ever-increasing amount of detail. He has a minicomputer in his home which he uses for word-processing on his own papers and reports. He also uses it for "number crunching" in the financial planning and management of Cinema-Television, where he is Associate Chairman for Administration as well as a Professor.

"The minicomputer has been a godsend in carrying out my responsibilities as Treasurer of the USC Faculty Center," he said. "I have been able to set up a system for the Center which keeps us ahead of the game in spite of inflation and significant growth in membership. It pleases me that I am now being called upon by a number of other units of the University to help them cope with the same type of information indigestion." He praised the great usefulness and time-saving attributes of these small devices, which can nonetheless handle big jobs. "They never talk back," he noted, "and most of the time they do exactly what you tell them to do."