

Obituary

Joseph B. Walker

Joseph B. Walker, a Life Member and Fellow of the SMPTE, died August 1, in Las Vegas, Nev., at the age of 92. A member of the Motion Picture Hall of Fame, his many outstanding technical contributions to the film industry, especially in the area of cinematography, have been recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He received the Academy's first Gordon Sawyer Award in 1982, and won three nominations for cinematography.

Perhaps it was his association with the pioneer radio and electronics genius, Dr. Lee DeForest, beginning in 1910, that gave the young Walker a pioneering spirit of his own. He made history in 1911 by making the first wireless news report from an aviation meet to the Venice, Calif., *Vanguard*, using an apparatus of his own design. In 1912, Walker built the first wireless transmitters for airplanes and automobiles and established the first retail wireless store department. In 1913, he reported from the battlefronts of the

Mexican Revolution via wireless to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Walker taught himself the fundamentals of cinematography with a borrowed camera. His film career began in 1914 with some work on a picture about California missions. Shortly thereafter, he be-



gan shooting newsreels, documentaries, and industrial films. *Back to God's Country* (1919) was the first of more than 160 feature films he photographed.

The industry also came to know Walker the inventor during these years. His technical achievements include a variable diffusion system, a composite effects imbibition printing system, a makeup comparator meter, an aerial image device, and an electronic flashlight used to aid the blind. His most well-known invention was the Electra-Zoom Lens.

Walker's greatest fame came during his 24 years at Columbia Pictures Corp., where he photographed 17 of Frank Capra's 24 productions, including *Lost Horizon*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. With esteem and respect, the legendary film director said of Walker, "He was a genius in his work — a real genius. He was probably the best photographer we ever had. I helped *him* make pictures."

Walker, a member of the American Society of Cinematographers, is survived by his wife, Juanita, a daughter, Marjorie Walker, and two grandchildren.

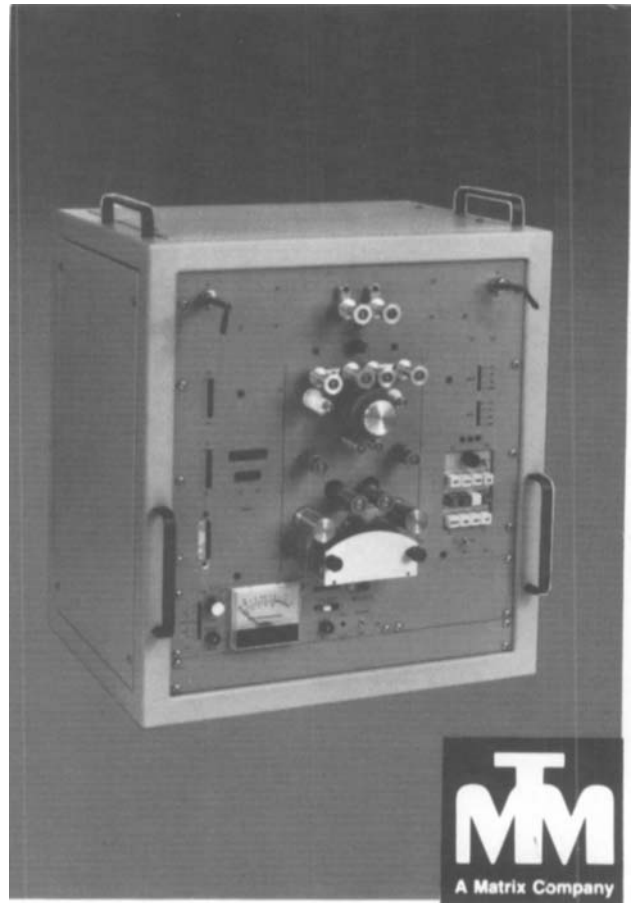
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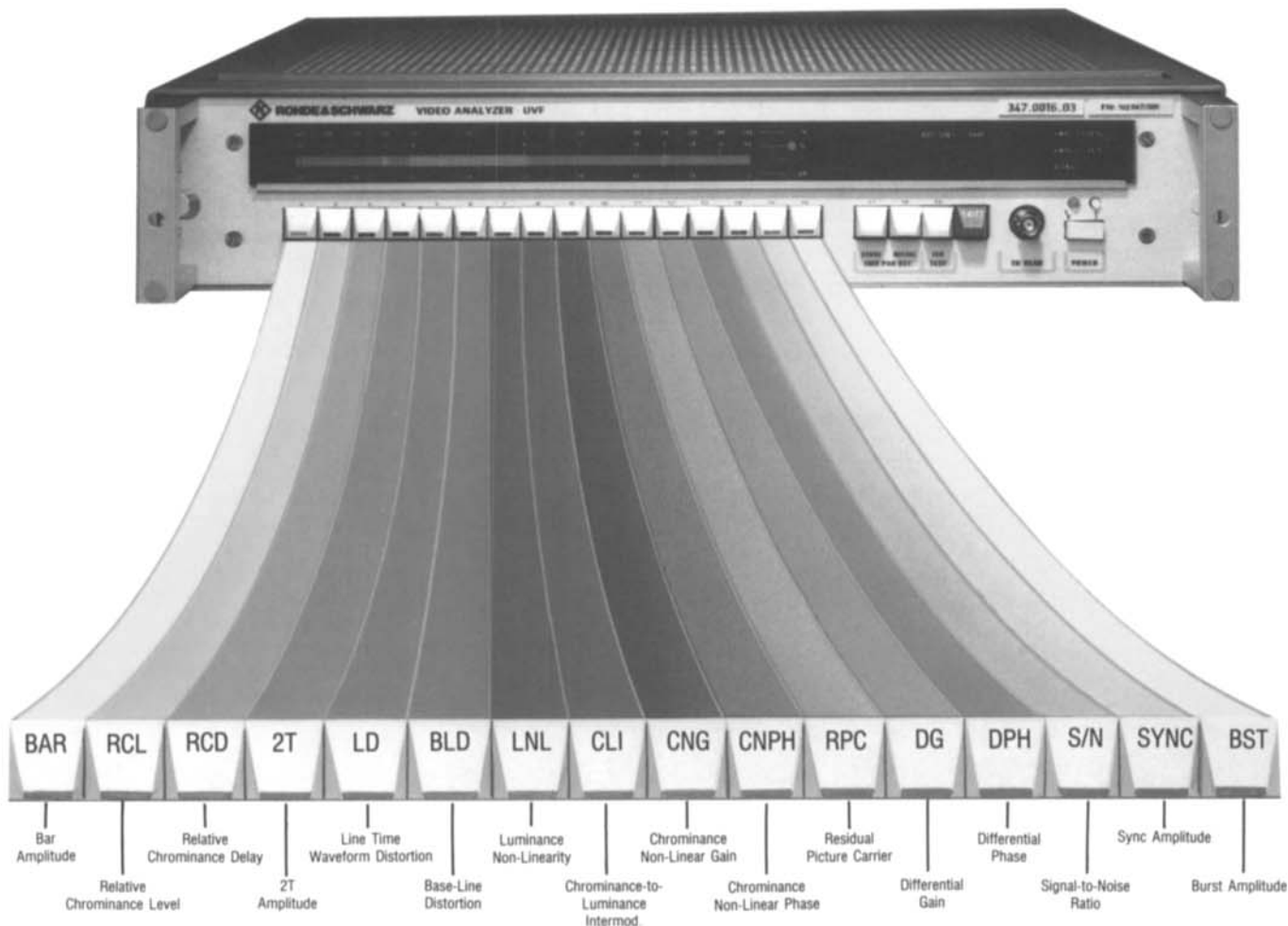
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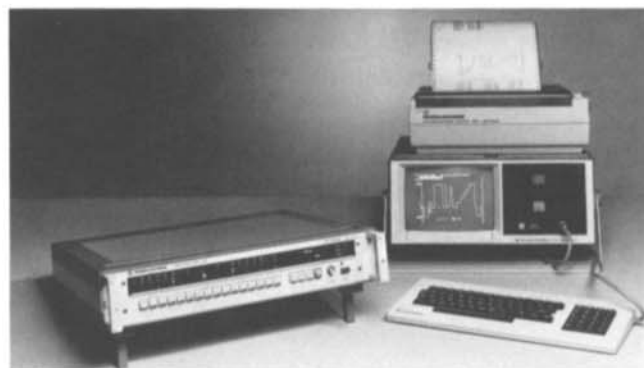
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