

# SMPTE ALMANAC



**By Michael Dolan**

*Sponsored by Television Broadcast Technology*

*In this column we provide interesting historical briefs from the Journal articles of days past. The purpose of this column 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.*

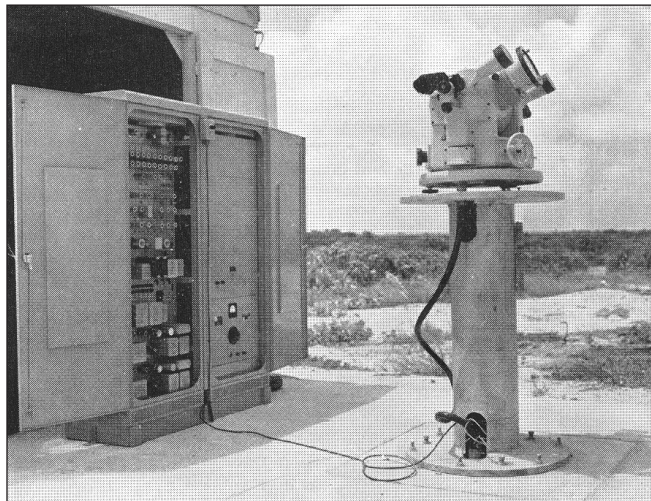
## 25 Years Ago in the Journal

The May 1980 *Journal* reported in "Progress Committee Report for 1979": "In television, the 1-in tape revolution is not complete; however, 1-in helical tape, be it C or B format, is here to stay...Digital television continues to be a subject of major interest. During 1979, three manufacturers of television videotape recorders demonstrated digital VTRs. At this point, it appears that it is no longer a question of "if" but, rather a question of "when" digital television will become a reality. The latter months of 1979 showed a surprising consolidation of opinion in Europe regarding the digital encoding format to be used for 625-line systems...it is expected that early in 1980, the EBU will settle upon a coding system...The ENG revolution of some years ago is now no longer a revolution but simply an accomplished fact...Digital video effects are also a fact of life...The sometimes not so friendly battle between film and tape has taken an abrupt turn as a result of an unexpected increase in the price of silver. While there is a lot to be said for "the film look" and while the acknowledged differences between film and tape usually requires a considered judgment be made to use one or the other or both to suit a particular need, the very rapid rise in the price of silver is a new factor that must have an impact on the film industry."

## 50 Years Ago in the Journal

The June 1955 *Journal* reported in "Motion-Picture Photography in Guided-Missile Research" by William A. Price and Ernest H. Ehling: "The performance of experimental guided missiles can be most effectively evaluated through use of the motion-picture type of instrumentation...numerous types of cameras are utilized for this purpose, including several specially modified high-speed and normal-speed motion-picture cameras...Documentary or historical footage is obtained by 16mm Bell & Howell and 35mm Mitchell cameras. Other Mitchell and Fastax high-speed cameras obtain time and motions studies of missile preflight and launching operations. Data on exhaust flame temperatures and propagation are obtained at the launching site by these cameras, which are usually linked electronically to the missile's operating sequence. Quantitative data are obtained through use of Bowen rib-

bon-frame (CZR-1), Clark ribbon-frame,...modified Hulcher 70mm cameras and Askania cinetheodolites. These record the momentary attitude and momentary positions of the missile...Position data thus determined (and this is the minimum system-limiting factor because the question "Where is the camera pointed?" must naturally be asked) now include the further accuracy limitations of these sighting and mounting systems."



*Askania Cine theodolite, Model Gtk-40, Site 1.2; at left is the mobile building and the timing rack.*

## 75 Years Ago in the Journal

The May 1930 *Journal* reported in "Report of the Theater Lighting Committee": "In a previous report, the Theater Lighting committee's preliminary survey of lighting conditions in theaters was described...It was first thought that it would be desirable to obtain data in a relatively large number of theaters, getting as complete information as possible, including phases not embraced in the preliminary survey, and a complete test outline was worked up...it appears that the more advisable procedure is the obtaining of illumination intensity and brightness measurements in a relatively small number of theaters, especially selected by the committee because of certain desirable and undesirable characteristics...several theaters in Rochester were visited and the lighting at each criticized. At these theaters a number of unsatisfactory conditions were noted, such as too abrupt changes in lighting intensity, excess of extraneous light on the screen, distracting light sources near the line of vision, screen surroundings, and front of theater too dark, etc...the worst conditions [were] obtained when a very light film, say an animated cartoon with a light transmission of 80 per cent, is viewed from a close distance with the surroundings very dark, such as black velvet with a brightness of 0.0002 millilambert."