

# Obituary

## Ralph E. Lovell



Ralph E. Lovell, a Life Fellow of the Society, passed away on July 14, 2008 at the age of 92.

Lovell had a varied and fulfilling life, including several career changes, as indicated by the following biographical sketches.

At age 19, Lovell became an elementary school teacher and athletic coach, after only two years of college. However, the fascinating world of radio beckoned and Ralph yearned to be a radio announcer. A few years later, equipped with a B.S. in education from Northwestern University and an FCC First Class Radiotelephone license, Lovell was briefly employed as a “combo” man in Minnesota and West Virginia radio stations before advancing to a summer job at NBC-Chicago. There, he had the delightful experience of mixing sound for soap operas, symphony orchestras, and big-name dance bands.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and spent three years in technical schools studying electronics, motion picture photography, and motion picture sound recording. This was followed by a tour of duty in Germany, which included photographic coverage of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial and the Malmedy Massacre Trial.

At NBC-New York, Lovell became part of a post war team that developed the technique of kinescope recording of television programs. In Hollywood, in 1951, Lovell was a leader in developing the 35mm “Quick Kine,” which, for seven years provided three-hour time zone delay for West Coast release of live TV shows.

From 1950 to 1964, Lovell was very active in Hollywood Section and National SMPTE affairs. His offices included Chair, Hollywood Section (1961-1962), Board of Governors (1961-1964), and Board of Editors (1953-1969).

The highest honor in Lovell’s life came, when in 1953, he was elected a Fellow of the Society. In the early days of network television, a great void existed between the technologies of motion pictures and television. In numerous informal meetings and Hollywood Section meetings, Lovell tried to bridge the technology gap, assisting the technicians of one discipline in understanding and appreciating the principles of the other discipline.

From 1966 until his retirement in 1987, Lovell was employed as a technical writer at the Pacific Missile Test Center, Point Mugu, CA. During this period he became active in church and community affairs. In 1977 he received his second highest honor, a “Man of the Year” award from the Camarillo, California Chamber of Commerce for his work with poor people in the community.

His later years were filled with excitement and satisfaction in the development of a portable, low-cost Simultaneous Interpretation System—patterned after the United Nations multilingual interpretation system. He was privileged to travel to various cities in the U.S., acting as technician for the systems he had designed and built, while people from Russia, Germany, and Japan conversed with Americans about technical subjects of mutual interest.

Ralph’s family consisted of his wife Doris, who passed away in 1999; their daughter Judith Lovell Thompson; and son-in-law Michael Barr Thompson.