



OBITUARIES

Theodore Richards Conant, the documentary filmmaker and technology consultant, died on Wednesday, 14 October 2015, at home in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was 89 years old.

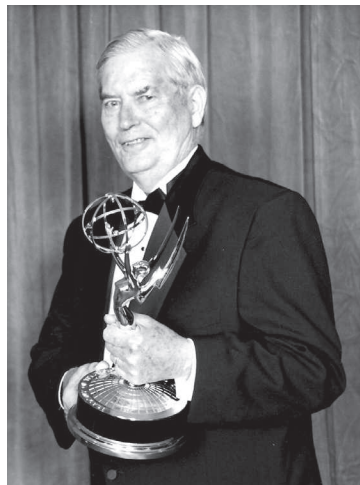
Conant developed an early interest in radio and was an avid ham radio operator as a teenager. While still a student at the Putney School in Vermont, he made his first short film with the help of the pioneer American filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty, who made the first successful documentary, "Nanook of the North." During World War II, Conant was recruited by the merchant marines at the age of 17—despite flunking the physical—because of the dire need of skilled radio officers. After the war, he remained in Asia for a year and developed a lifelong interest in the culture, history, and nascent film history of Korea.

When he finally returned home from the war, he learned Flaherty was working on *The Louisiana Story* and secured a position on the film crew. After graduating from Swarthmore College in 1951 with an honors degree in Economics, he returned to Asia to make a United Nations funded documentary about the plight of ordinary civilians during the Korean War. Drawing on footage taken during that period, he went on to make a number of documentaries. The most important,

Children in Crisis, which portrayed the devastating effects of the long conflict on Korean children, won the award for best documentary film at the Berlin Film Festival in 1955.

During the 1960s, Conant went on to become a guest director of the National Film Board in Montreal, Canada, and later joined WGBH Educational Foundation in Boston, MA. Later, he worked as a technology consultant with Peter C. Goldmark at CBS Laboratories in Stamford, Conn., and James D. Wolfensohn at Schroders investment bank in New York.

Conant was the son of James Bryant Conant, the President of Harvard University and administrative director of the Manhattan Project. His mother, Grace Richards Conant, was the daughter of Theodore William Richards, who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1914. He is survived by his wife, Ellen, and two children, James and Jennet, and one grandson.



Richard S. O'Brien

Richard S. O'Brien, a career CBS Television employee, died 29 March 2015. He was 97. O'Brien played a large role in postwar television's technical development and authored a number of articles on this topic. He was a Life Fellow SMPTE member and a recipient of the Society's David Sarnoff Gold Medal award.

O'Brien was born 19 July 1917 and received his electrical engineering degree from

the University of California in 1939. He followed up his undergraduate degree with graduate studies at Stanford University. As related by O'Brien, it was during this time at Stanford that he was first employed in the very new field of television engineering. O'Brien had been working on a part-time basis at a San Francisco radio station while studying at Stanford, and late in the 1939 fall term was approached by the engineering department's Fred Terman, who asked if he was interested in working on a special project at a Los Angeles experimental television operation (Don Lee's W6XAO) during the December academic break. O'Brien accepted the job and soon found himself working with the station's director of engineering, Harry Lubcke, to provide the first-ever television broadcast of the annual New Year's Day Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif. Despite some rather serious obstacles (difficulty in relaying video from Pasadena to the Los Angeles station, bad weather, and insensitive camera pickup tubes) the special event coverage was a success. (Lubcke published an article about the project in the July, 1940 SMPE Journal, crediting young O'Brien with helping to make the broadcast possible.)

O'Brien joined the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) organization after WWII and was instrumental in establishing the basics of staging and lighting practices for both monochrome and color television production. He was honored for his contributions in this area with the Sarnoff Gold Medal. His responsibilities at CBS included systems engineering and design for a number of the network's facilities, including the CBS Television City plant in Los Angeles, CA. O'Brien was also responsible for same-day television broadcast coverage of the 2 June 1953 London coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. (To better understand the significance of this accomplishment, it should be noted that in 1953 telephone calls between Europe and North America were accomplished by shortwave radio links as there were no voice-grade undersea cables, much less fiber or satellite communication links.) The coverage project proved to be a resounding success. O'Brien recalled it in detail in a paper published in the January 2004 SMPTE Motion Imaging Journal. He retired as CBS Television's vice president of engineering in 1982.

In addition to the Sarnoff Gold Medal, O'Brien was recipient of a 1992 Emmy award for Lifetime Achievement and was awarded the SMPTE Journal Award in 1957 for his contributions in the area of television studio practices. He served on the SMPTE Board of Governors from 1964 to 1978 and was elected the Society's first vice president of television affairs. O'Brien was a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), a Life Fellow of the Audio Engineering Society (AES), and an honorary member of the Eta Kappa Nu and Sigma Xi fraternities. He was also an avid woodworker, amateur radio operator, and boating enthusiast.

O'Brien is survived by his wife, Marjorie, and a daughter, Karen and her husband, Mark Ozemba. He was predeceased by a son, Frederick O'Brien. —James E. O'Neal