



Barbara H. Lange

## It's a Small World, Indeed!

**Y**ou might have experienced this before. You are in a somewhat distant part of the world and find that the person sitting next to you on the plane is from your hometown, or went to your college, or knows your mom. Connections like these happen more often than we think. Recently, I was at the Berlin Tegel Airport waiting in line to board a plane. The gentleman behind me overheard me speaking about SMPTE. It turns out he worked in a television production in the San Francisco area and was in town to cover the Berlin marathon. I noticed that he was wearing a Pittsburgh Pirate baseball hat and just had to ask if he was from my (near) hometown. Not only was he from the Pittsburgh area, he also attended the same college as I did. Wow—what are the chances?

It gets even better. Washington and Jefferson College (W&J) is a small liberal arts college based in Washington, PA, about an hour south of Pittsburgh. I am a proud graduate of the school, where I double-majored in chemistry and German. For many young people, college is a time full of exploration in education and life, which was no different for me. It was a great time. Although I no longer spend time in a chemistry laboratory, W&J is where I learned the scientific



(L–R) John C. Knapp, W&J's newly appointed president; Barbara Lange; and Patricia A. Brletic, chemistry professor at W&J.

method that has defined the way I think and work and live.

Earlier this summer, I was quite surprised when I received a call from the college informing me that I had been selected to receive its Alumni Award for Achievement recognition. I was humbled by this recognition and honored to be considered, given the many worthy graduates of the school.

An even more surprising connection came later when I was sitting with my former chemistry advisor and award presenter, Dr. Pat Brletic, during the award ceremony and she told me that there were other SMPTE and W&J connections. Wanting to learn more, I did a quick *SMPTE Journal* search in

the digital library, when I returned home, and found an interesting Biographical Note,<sup>1</sup> highlighting Ken Mason's life and career. Mason served as an SMPTE president from 1975 to 1976 and studied at Washington and Jefferson College in the 1940s, earning a degree in chemistry. A startling coincidence!

The article provides a short, but comprehensive, account of Mason's life and his remarkable career with Kodak, including how he moved around the country with his family

<sup>1</sup>"Biographical Note, Kenneth M. Mason, An Uncomplicated But Un-eventful Life," *SMPTE J.*, 85(5):344–350, May 1976, [Online]. Available: <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=7240992>

while working for Kodak, also supporting local SMPTE Sections along the way. Serving the Society in numerous capacities over three decades, Mason was a Chicago Section chair, governor, conference vice president, finance vice president, executive vice president, and then, of course, president.

But that's not all. Mason and his wife had five sons who all attended W&J College. One went on to teach at the college in the English department. Another, John, followed in his father's footsteps, ultimately serving as an SMPTE president from 2001 to 2002.

Learning of my W&J connection with the Masons, I reached out to John to introduce myself. John is enjoying life in Hawaii and responded immediately and offered the following thoughts. "Ken Mason and I were past presidents of the SMPTE, and speaking for the both

of us it was an honor and privilege to serve. We have been the only father-son team to have served in the office as president, from the same company, Kodak, and from the same undergraduate college, W&J, as well. This is unique, but the entire history of the SMPTE has been unique. The Society brought order to the chaos of the early motion picture business and has provided unparalleled stability and quality to the media business ever since. Again, speaking for my dad, we wish the Society continued success going forward into its second century."

I am happy to learn of this surprising connection between the Masons and W&J, and their contribution to SMPTE's history as father and son. It is a small world, indeed!

Speaking of SMPTE connections and history, I am delighted to report the publication of our

expansive book commemorating 100 years of SMPTE and its influence on the motion imaging industry. This 400-page full-color, hard-cover compilation provides a comprehensive review of the motion picture industry and SMPTE highlights. Thanks to Editorial Director Phil Cianci, who ably shepherded the book through its various stages, including a few changes and unforeseen delays along the way. In a write-up on the book on page 28 in this issue of the *Journal*, Cianci notes that the plan to publish a single book quickly changed to include two additional. I hope you will enjoy this book as a great addition to your library. I also want to add a huge thanks to Dianne Purrier, our dedicated Managing Editor, for her calm leadership in bringing the books to fruition.

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