

## Robert J. Ross

**O**n 19 June 2022, the television industry saw the passing of an engineering icon, Robert J. Ross.

Ross had served as the senior vice president, East Coast Operations, CBS Broadcasting Inc., since October 1998 until his retirement in 2017, where he oversaw all East Coast Operations and Engineering for the CBS Television Network.

After graduating from Southern Maine Technical College, Ross joined RCA as a service technician, installing television cameras, telecines, and television systems around the globe. During one RCA business trip to South Africa, he met a British lady, Elizabeth Scavolo (Liz), who became his wife for over 44 years.

Ross worked for more than 45 years in all areas of broadcast engineering. In 1977, he joined Westinghouse Broadcasting as an engineer at WBZ-TV and continued with Westinghouse for 19 years working at WJZ-TV and KYW-TV. Before the CBS/Westinghouse merger, Ross was the vice president of engineering for Group W Television Stations and after the merger, was the vice president, operations and engineering, CBS Television Stations.

At CBS, Ross was responsible for the conversion of the CBS Television Network Broadcast Origination Center (BOC) to HD and then the construction of the Media Distribution Center (MDC) that provided HD distribution for the CBS and CW networks, as well as video-on-demand (VOD); the rebuild of the network's satellite



distribution system; the creation of the store and forward, "Pitch Blue" systems for domestic and international syndication distribution; the conversion from videotape to file-based digital distribution for both domestic and international syndication; the restoration of the Ed Sullivan Theater for "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert;" and the design and construction of three key production areas for CBS Sports, the "CBS Evening News," and "CBS This Morning."

In October 2009, Ross was elected to the class of the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame. During his acceptance speech, Ross reminded everyone in senior management to "hug their chief engineer" for all the hard work and long hours they spend keeping the stations on the air. Ross is the past chair of the Toolkit working group of the Media Security and Reliability Council (MSRC) under the Federal Communication

Commission Advisory Committee. He was also a Fellow of SMPTE, and a member of the Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBEs). In 2013, Ross was appointed president of the North American Broadcasters Association (NABA). In 2018, Ross received a Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS). He contributed to the standards process for the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) and various SMPTE engineering committees.

Ross had an Advanced Amateur Radio License and was a contributing author to a national magazine on consumer electronics. He was also a licensed private pilot and glider pilot. He volunteered his time and talents at the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) annual fly-in, *AirVenture*, in Oshkosh, WI, as a photo and video editor. After his retirement, Ross enjoyed working on his amateur radio "ham shack." He was on the board of directors for the Arizona Model Pilots Society (AMPS) and enjoyed building/flying radio-controlled model airplanes at his home in Cave Creek, AZ, as well as traveling around the country with his wife, Liz.

Ross is survived by his wife Elizabeth (Liz), mother-in-law Olive Scavolo, daughter Olivia, son Joseph, daughter-in-law Janine Ross, and sister Judith (Ross) Gordon, her husband Neil, and their children, Katie Ferullo and Alison Gordon.

—Robert P. Seidel

