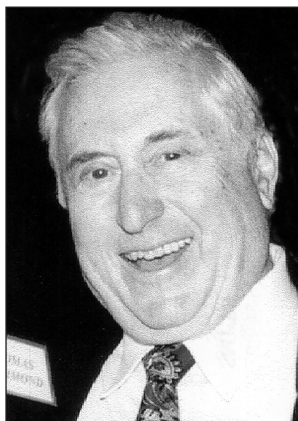


# Obituaries

## Albert Abramson

Television historian and life-long SMPTE member, Albert Abramson, who died in Las Vegas on December 24, 2003, of heart failure, was among the most important chroniclers of the technical development of the medium. Abramson authored a number of landmark articles and books on the subject, including "The History of Television, 1880-1941," (McFarland, 1987), "The History of Television, 1941-2000," (McFarland, 2003), and "Zworykin, Pioneer of Television," (University of Illinois Press, 1995).



Abramson was born on June 9, 1922, in Chicago and grew up in Los Angeles. After serving in the Army Air Force during World War II, where he learned electronics, he earned an undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California film school. He then spent 36 years in Los Angeles at the CBS Network's Television City as a video engineer, video editor, cameraman, and sound technician. He worked on a variety of network programs, including the live "Art Linkletter Show" in 1952, one of the first programs to originate from Television City.

Abramson held two patents, one for a 3-D television system that did not require the use of special glasses and the other for a super-bright television projector.

In 1987, he left CBS to pursue full-time historical research and writing, which he had been doing part-time for 30 years. With his delightful sense of humor and generosity, he was always willing to share his extensive knowledge of television's development with other researchers. He consulted on several high-profile projects, including a TV-history documentary series for the Public Broadcasting Service. His support of the Ampex Museum of Magnetic Recording, a collection now at Stanford University, was instrumental in ensuring the accuracy of that exhibit.

Long attracted to the complex story of television's technical development, Abramson published his first article on the history of television recording methods in the *SMPTE Journal*, in 1954. This expanded into his first book, "Electronic Motion Pictures" (University of California Press, 1955; reprinted in 1974 by Arno Press). In text, diagrams, and photos, he documented the rise of electronic television, including early attempts to record video. The book predicted the development decades later of the digital video projection systems now being installed in theaters around the world.

In his research work, Abramson interviewed many of television's most important pioneers, including Vladimir Zworykin and Albert Rose of RCA, Manfred von Ardenne in Germany, D. C. Birkinshaw of the BBC, and Charles Ginsburg and Ray Dolby of Ampex. Drawing on these and

many other interviews, as well as extensive archival and secondary research, Abramson wrote TV-history articles for many publications, including the *SMPTE Journal*, on the development and improvement of TV recording methods, as well as three important biographical papers on Zworykin (July 1981), mechanical TV pioneer and SMPTE founder C. Francis Jenkins (February 1986), and cathode-ray-tube pioneer Philo Farnsworth (November 1992).

Abramson's Zworykin paper formed the core of his extensively annotated and widely praised biography on the inventor. In all of his historical documentation, Abramson maintained a careful balance in considering and comparing the conflicting claims of "industry firsts" by a variety of individuals and companies. His historical work is widely recognized for its accuracy and thoroughness, and Abramson has often been cited as one of the most important chroniclers of the technology that played such an important role in the last half of 20th Century society and culture.

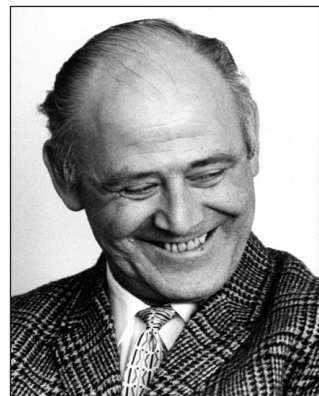
Through his tenacious research, Abramson amassed the seminal collection of papers, texts, photos, and recorded interviews on the history of TV technology, which the family plans to donate to a university that promises to make the Abramson Collection available to scholars and journalists, and to the public.

Abramson was also a contributor on the SMPTE Board of Editors until his death. He is survived by his wife Arlene, son Jay, and daughter Susie, all of Las Vegas, NV.

## Chester Beachell

Longtime SMPTE Fellow Chester Beachell has passed away, at age 83.

Beachell began his career with the National Film Board as a sound transmission engineer in 1949 and within a few years received the Civil Service Award for Contribution to Technical Progress. In 1969, he became interested in and was certified a NASDS diver and became active in underwater sound recording and photography and the development of wide-range and specified hydrophones.



Beachell's interest in Orca, led to the development of equipment to follow and record Orca vocalizations at night, and a number of expeditions, including diving in Alaska and Arctic. He was involved in the first color live television to the CBC National Network from 40 ft under the Arctic ice at Resolute Bay. Beachell consulted in the designing of underwater housing for color video cameras and later in his career was involved in underwater recording and photography with the Canadian Forces in the Atlantic and an archaeological dive site in the British Gun Ship Sapphire. His technical developments include a multicam system for Canadian Showcase film, 3-D oscillograms, and 3-D stereo motion picture camera setups, to name a few.

Beachell was the 1980 recipient of the SMPTE John Grierson International Gold Medal Award.

## Rolf von Kaldenberg

The German Section of SMPTE has announced, that longtime SMPTE member and co-founder of the Section, Rolf von Kaldenberg, passed away on November 17, 2003, at age 63.

Kaldenberg started his career in the research labs of Telefunken in Germany, which at the time, were busy with the development of the PAL color TV system. He set up his own business in 1984, working as a TV consultant and freelance journalist.

A SMPTE member since 1975, Kaldenberg was one of the two co-founders of the German SMPTE Section in 1990. Since that time he, served several terms as Chair, Secretary, and Officer of the Section. Between 1992 and 1998 he organized and chaired four well-attended European SMPTE Conferences, which he initiated.

## Charles Mesak

Charles Mesak, a Life Member of the Society, has passed away at age 86. Mesak had been a member for almost 50 years.

## Ed H. Zwaneveld

It is with great sadness that SMPTE has learned of the sudden passing of Ed Zwaneveld on January 8, 2004, at his home in Montreal, Canada, at the age of 64. Zwaneveld had undertaken a new challenge by starting the consulting firm Innovaide following his retirement from the National Film Board of Canada where he had been the head of technical research and development since 1983. Zwaneveld was a fellow of the SMPTE. He chaired numerous award committees over the years and was himself the recipient of the Technicolor/ Herbert T. Kalmus Gold Medal Award for Out-

standing Achievement in Color Motion Picture Engineering in 1994.

In 1992, he was also awarded the Samuel L. Warner Memorial Medal Award for Meritorious Achievement in Sound Motion Picture Engineering. He was actively involved in a number of SMPTE engineering committees including serving as chairman of the working group on archival storage to magnetic media

used in television recording. Zwaneveld was well known and respected throughout the international film and television community. In 1994 he received the Primetime Emmy Creative Arts Engineering Award for Outstanding Achievement in Engineering Development from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. In 1999, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him with an Academy Award for Technical Achievement, and in 2002, the Germanic Film Industry's most prestigious award—the Oskar-Messter Medal—was given to him at the FKFG Annual Conference in Zürich, Switzerland, for his outstanding contributions in film technology and specially his initiatives and scientific achievements related to the protection and archiving of imaging media.

Zwaneveld enjoyed communicating his knowledge and was known for his ingenious and innovative way of dealing with complex technical concepts. He has written numerous papers; many have been published in the *SMPTE Journal* as well as other publications.



## SMPTE Standards Subscription Service

The Society provides a Standards Subscription Service to assist firms, libraries, and individuals in establishing and maintaining a complete and current file of approved American National Standards, SMPTE Recommended Practices, and SMPTE Engineering Guidelines in the motion picture, television, and video magnetic recording fields. Through this service, the Society makes automatic distribution to standards subscribers of all new and revised standards, recommended practices, and guidelines that are approved during the calendar year in these fields. Documents are also available either in printed form or on CD-ROM.

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