

In Memoriam

Leo de Gar Kulka, AES fellow and former member of the Board of Governors, passed away on March 17 at the age of 77. Known as "the Baron," he was a legend in the audio industry and one of our great pioneers.

Leo was born in 1921 in what is now the Czech Republic. After studying engineering, he moved to Los Angeles in 1938. During World War II and Korea, he served in the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC), retiring with the rank of major.

Leo's wartime experiences with wire recorders and radio transmission sparked a lifelong passion for recording and music. In the early 1950s he became a staff engineer at Radio Recorders, the fabled Hollywood studio at 6000 Santa Monica Blvd.

In 1957 Leo founded International Sound, one of the first multitrack facilities in Hollywood. This studio located on Sunset at Western later became Sunwest. His Neumann mastering room was the first in town to feature a stereo cutting head. At International Sound, Leo recorded artists such as Frank Sinatra, Nat "King" Cole, Little Richard, Herb Alpert, Sam Cooke and Sonny Bono. Rumor has it that Cher worked there briefly as Leo's secretary.

In 1964 he moved to San Francisco and opened Golden State Recorders, one of the largest studios in northern California. With a Stephens 16-track recorder and a custom multitrack console he pioneered the "San Francisco Sound," recording artists such as Sly Stone, Grace Slick, Janis Joplin and Michael Bloomfield.

For more than 10 years Leo lectured in audio at San Francisco State University. In 1974 he organized and founded the College of Recording Arts, the first American school to provide practical business and technical education in the industry. Many of his graduates are now successful engineers, producers, and studio owners. In 1994 he closed the College of Recording Arts to devote his time to analog and digital mastering, specializing in the restora-



Leo de Gar Kulka

tion of vintage recordings.

The founder of the San Francisco Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), Leo served as its chairman for three terms. He headed the NARAS Institute, the educational arm of the society for two more years. As a member of the Audio Engineering Society since 1959, he served initially in Los Angeles, then as chairman of the San Francisco Section for several terms. He was elected governor of the AES and served as chairman of the 93rd Convention in San Francisco. In 1993 he was elected treasurer as well as chairman of the Finance Committee.

The baron was a flamboyant, unforgettable character. Tall and stout, with a *basso profundo* voice and a slight Czech accent, Leo had a commanding presence. His gleaming pate, twinkling eyes, neatly trimmed mustache, silk ascot, and colognes exuded an old world European charm. He was a jokester and an endearing raconteur. Sometimes he spoke with funny cartoon voices. He was known for witty little sayings such as "I'd rather be a has been than a never was." In his later years he would ruefully say: "It's getting to where I have more friends in the cemetery than I do in town." In his disc mastering class he would remind the students to "always clean the cutter head stylus with pith." Then he would wink and whisper "I'd better be

careful how I pronounce that word."

The Neumann disk mastering room at Golden State was Leo's pride and joy. In the 70s and 80s he continued to innovate, using the room to cut numerous "direct to disk" projects and a few binaural (dummy head) recordings for his Sonic Arts label.

Leo loved to experiment with new recording techniques, but he was a traditionalist at heart. He used a "back to basics" approach with his students. They would have to thoroughly understand the fundamentals of musical instruments, sound, and microphones before ever touching a limiter or equalizer. To the end, Leo waxed ecstatic over his Ampex model 200 (the first tape recorder produced in this country, some 40 years old). And he may have been the last living audio engineer to edit tape without a splicing block or a razor blade. He would lay a section of tape across his left hand, precisely lining it up with his thumb and finger, and using a small scissor, he made fast splices that always joined perfectly.

Leo was one of the greats in the industry. He will be missed, and his death will be mourned by many of us. He is survived by his wife, Pat, and daughter Lily.

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Allen Edwin Byers, founder and co-owner of Audio Rents, Inc., died 1997 December 16 of a stroke at Cedars Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, CA. He was 72 years old. Byers joined the AES in 1965.

Born in Connecticut and raised in White Plains, NY, Byers served with the Navy Radio Corps in the Pacific theater during World War II. After attending Columbia University, Byers sold sound equipment for a division of Western Electric. He later became president of Waveforms Instruments. Byers moved to Los Angeles to work with UREI when that firm purchased Waveforms.

In 1972, after having worked with

several other sound companies, Byers established Audio Rents, the first audio equipment rental company to specialize in music and the postproduction industries. Audio rents continues to be prominent in the equipment rental field.

Byers was an early member of the Audio Engineering Society, a member of the Hollywood Sapphire Group and a member of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles. He is survived by a son, John, and a brother, Donald.

Edward Tatnall Canby, one of the founders of the AES who later became a fellow, a choral director, teacher and writer, died on February 21 at his home in Cornwall, CT. He was 85 years old.

Canby wrote record reviews and a column covering a broad range of audio topics for *Audio* magazine for almost 50 years. His interests enabled him to work as a folklorist and advocate of electronic music.

Canby wrote annotations for recordings on the Nonesuch label and wrote record reviews for *Harper's* and *Saturday Review*. He also hosted a weekly radio program on WNYC for 20 years.

Born in New Haven, CT, in 1912, Canby graduated from Harvard University with a degree in music. During the 30s he joined the ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax on tours to collect folk music of Appalachia. He and Lomax made the first recordings of folk singer Jean Ritchie.

During the forties and fifties Canby taught music at Princeton University in New Jersey and Finch College in New York. The relationship between music and audio equipment fascinated him and prompted him to write a book, *The Saturday Review Home Book of Recorded Music and Sound Production*, published in 1952.

As a performer, Canby sang with the Canby Singers, a choir he founded in New York in the early 50s. Since his retirement in the 80s, he was an associate conductor of the choir.

He is survived by a brother, Courtland Canby of Leeds, MA.