

In Memoriam

PETER L. JENSEN

Peter L. Jensen, honorary member of the Audio Engineering Society, pioneer in the development of sound reproduction and co-inventor of the dynamic horn loudspeaker, died at the age of 73 on October 26 at his home in Western Springs, Illinois.

Of the many men who distinguished themselves in the early years of audio engineering, Peter Jensen was undoubtedly one of the most creative and productive. His inventions, experiments and sound systems were the heralds of today's high fidelity industry.

Jensen served his apprenticeship with Valdemar Poulsen in Copenhagen, Denmark where he was born. From 1903 to 1906 he assisted in the development of the Poulsen arc transmitter and in work on early magnetic recorders. While with Poulsen, he built a "wireless telephone" system, the first ship-to-shore electronic communications.

He was sent to San Francisco as a technician in 1909 to supervise the installation of a Poulsen arc transmitter at Poulsen Wireless and Federal Telegraph Corporation.

Then in 1911, together with Edwin Pridham, Jensen co-founded the Commercial Wireless and Development Company and the Magnavox Company. Pridham and Jensen had an unusual professional arrangement. They were co-chief engineers equally in charge of technical matters. In order not to confuse their subordinates with conflicting orders, Jensen and Pridham alternated in authority every month.

The outcome of their excellent relationship was the invention, in 1914, of the first dynamic horn loudspeaker which they called "the Magnavox." They then developed the first public address system—President Harding's inaugural address was heard over the earliest Magnavox M-1 loudspeaker in 1920.

As the "original" Magnavox Company grew, control left the hands of the founders and in 1925 Peter Jensen left the company after a disagreement with management over policy. This was a major turning point in the life of the inventor—for the founding of Jensen Radio Manufacturing Company in Oakland, California followed in 1927. This company played such an important part in Peter Jensen's life that it was truly an extension of himself as an individual. After a

successful year spent producing and developing moving coil dynamic loudspeakers, Jensen Radio moved to Chicago.

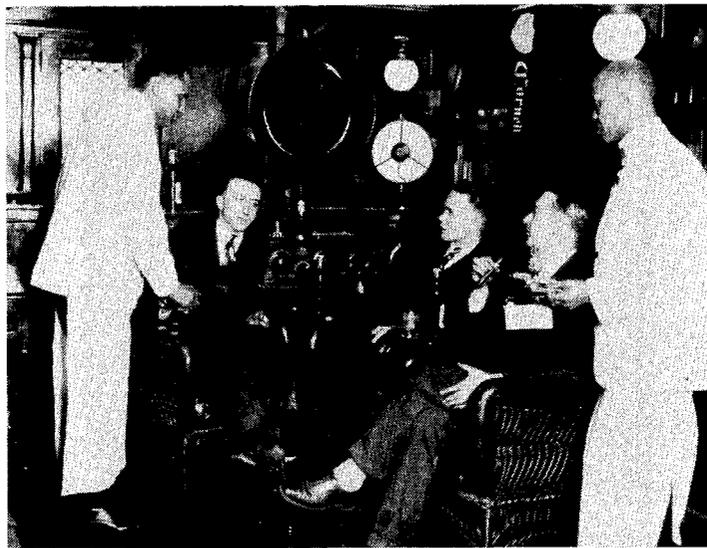
During the first two years Jensen was president and also acted as chief engineer. He continued for a decade as president. Between 1930 and 1940, Peter Jensen pioneered in high fidelity. Under his direction Jensen Radio, later Jensen Manufacturing, developed and produced the first multiple speaker system. As the high fidelity field grew more sophisticated, Peter Jensen's "golden ear" and remarkable subjective judgment were immeasurably valuable. Working together with Hugh Knowles, his chief engineer who handled the objective side of research, Jensen investigated loudspeaker behavior as far back as 1930. He explored all forms of distortion and made the first physical measurements of common distortion. This work led to the production of the famous "auditorium speaker" which had low transient and non-linear, inter-modulation distortion and was widely used for theatres and other high quality sound systems. Peter Jensen's special systems dominated the field during the thirties and for many years he was the only supplier of high quality multiple speaker systems.

In 1943 Peter Jensen left Jensen Manufacturing over a difference of opinion with those in financial control of the company. He founded Jensen Industries, manufacturers of phonograph components, where he remained as president and chairman of the board until his death. His son, Karl, now heads the company.

Although knighted by Denmark for his accomplishments, Peter Jensen was a United States citizen. He served as chief consultant to the United States War Production Board, radio and radar division, from 1943 to 1946. The Audio Engineering Society gave him an Honorary Membership at the West Coast Convention in 1955.

Peter Jensen was highly respected by his colleagues for his talent and integrity. He was a quiet, well-controlled man, in many ways typically Danish. His long-time associate, Hugh Knowles, remembers his gentle nature with this story. Jensen visited the plant at Jensen Radio one day just about closing time. He noticed a serious mishandling on the production line. The workers were getting ready to go home so he did not stop them. Instead he went back to his office sputtering and greatly excited. Turning to Knowles in his anger he said, "Remind me to get mad again in the morning!"

Peter L. Jensen is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.



Turn-of-century scene shows Jensen seated below his loudspeaker in "Radio Train" club car at first official test of radio phone on moving train.