



Gilbert A. Briggs

Gilbert A. Briggs died on January 11, 1978, at his home near Ilkley Moor in Yorkshire, at the age of 88. He was a true audio pioneer and an international figure.

It is difficult to summarize his long and varied life in a few sentences for he had three distinctly different careers. During his early life he travelled the world as a textile merchant operating from his native Bradford, but when this business collapsed during the depression, he turned his attention to the manufacture of hand-built loudspeakers. This interest eventually resulted in the foundation of Wharfedale Wireless Works in 1933 and the establishment of a brand name which was to become an international symbol for high quality and musicality. Some time later Briggs began a literary career, writing and publishing his own books from the Wharfedale base. Over a period of some 20 years from 1948 he published more than 20 books on

audio topics as varied as pianos, amplifiers, loudspeakers, antennae, musical instruments, and hearing. He even published a book of puzzles, and though he wrote a book on migraine headaches from which he suffered during his early life, he was dissuaded from publishing it by friends who thought him too adventurous.

GAB, as he was affectionately known by his colleagues, was a considerable amateur pianist and perhaps his greatest contribution to audio was his understanding of the relationship between music and high fidelity. This, combined with his great interest in the English language and powerful writing style, gave him a unique combination of talents which he exploited to the full in his books and many articles, but perhaps most forcefully, in the series of live versus recorded demonstrations and lectures of musical reproduction, which he gave in the Royal Festival Hall, London, Carnegie Hall, New

York, and numerous other concert halls throughout the world. His witty commentary and superb timing at these events are still remembered with great affection.

A member of the Audio Engineering Society from its earliest days, Briggs took an almost Churchillian view of transatlantic affairs. He was awarded Honorary Membership in 1975—a recognition which gave him much pleasure.

Throughout his life he remained a Yorkshireman and never lived outside his native county, nor lost his North-country accent. His powerful personality left its mark on everyone he met. His integrity, straight speaking, and straight dealing were his hallmark, as were his personal charm, gentleness, and real humor. He not only earned respect as a fine human being but he also commands a prominent place in the history of audio.

RAYMOND E. COOKE