

In Memoriam



Donald J. Plunkett
1924–2005

Donald J. Plunkett, a charter member of the Audio Engineering Society, past president, and its executive director for twenty years, died suddenly on July 15, 2005, at the age of 81.

I feel privileged to have known Don for many years, both professionally and as a close friend.

Born and raised in New York, Don developed a fascination for audio as a young man. One day he came across a Columbia Gramophone Cylinder machine in his grandparent's attic, and thus began his lifelong love affair with recording.

Don's background in audio, which eventually led to his involvement with the AES, included study and training with the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the RCA Institute in New York. He held a number of positions in both equipment manufacture and operations in association with audio pioneers such as Emory Cook. He was involved in the fledgling independent record industry in the days when it was regarded as a niche market, and the 78 rpm shellac disk was state-of-the-art. He was a recording engineer with the National Broadcasting Com-

pany (1943 until 1949) and with MGM Records (1949 to 1953). He was a studio director for Capitol Records East Cost facility (1954 to 1959).

Don had been chosen from among several candidates for the position, since he was already well known for his ability to manage people and conduct business with expertise. It was during that period that he hired me in 1955 as an engineer for Capitol. As early as 1955, we had a busy studio, doing work for Capitol projects and custom studio recording for outside clients. When a session ran overtime, it was typical for Don to pitch in to clear the recording studio and get set up

for the next scheduled client. We were a closely knit crew, we knew what needed to be done, and worked without concern for personal status to take care of our customers. Don frequently commented that his years at Capitol were a particularly happy time. Along with his ability as a hands-on manager, he also had a talent for making good decisions.

He subsequently became president of Fairchild Recording Equipment, Inc., a position he held from 1959 to 1967. One of his associates, Dick Burden, recalls, "Don was very much a people person, thus, his style of leadership and his ability to interface with all types of personalities made him outstanding." Later, when the Audio Engineering Society recruited him as its first executive director, these qualities would become important both in the operation and successful growth of the Society.

In January 1948, Don met Norman Pickering and Ted Lindenberg, who were part of the organizing committee for the Audio Engineering Society. He became a member of the committee and was involved in the formation of the Society in February of 1948.

He attended the first formal meeting of the AES in March. From that point on the AES moved ahead rapidly. From active participation in the New York Section he became, successively, a member of the Board of Governors, chairman of the Publications Policy Committee (1956), executive vice president (1958), and then president (1959).

Don received numerous AES honors throughout his more than fifty years of active service. He became a fellow of the AES in 1963, received its Bronze Medal in 1966, and in 1969 was elected secretary, a position he held until his appointment as executive director in 1974. In the ensuing years he worked closely with Joe Ooms and Titia Bakker at Philips, as well as Hermann Wilms to expand membership to Europe and establish the first European Convention. The hard work and dedication during these years established the AES in Europe and later in other areas of the world.

Don remained active in AES affairs far beyond its 50th Anniversary in 1998, attending international conventions, and serving as a good will ambassador and a valued advisor for audio professionals, young and old. At the 103rd AES Convention in 1997, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for extraordinary service to the AES. He retired as executive director in 1994, and continued as director of Convention Management until 1996. He maintained an active interest in the Society's activities and accomplishments while serving on various convention committees. An irreplaceable member of the professional audio community, he will be deeply missed by everyone who had the good fortune to know and work with him.

Alongside his ongoing achievements in the Society and the audio industry, Don was very much a family man.

The audio industry has lost a good and compassionate friend, one who loved his work, his family, and his many good friends.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Mary Elizabeth (Liz), his son, Christopher, his daughters Hilary ➤

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Jones, Libby Mastoloni, and Emily Fleischer, and four grandchildren.

Irv Joel

We were shocked to hear the sad news that our good friend Donald J. Plunkett passed away. Don was the driving force in the beginning of AES conventions in Europe: Cologne, Munich and Rotterdam (1971 to 1973). In 1974 we had the 47th Convention in Copenhagen, at which Don was present for the first time as AES secretary. At the end of 1974 he returned to Europe, where he fine tuned the collaboration between the UK Committee members and the continental functions for the 1975 London convention.

From then on the importance and size of the European conventions increased, expanding to Zurich, Paris, Hamburg, Brussels, Eindhoven, Montreux, Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam up to 1994.

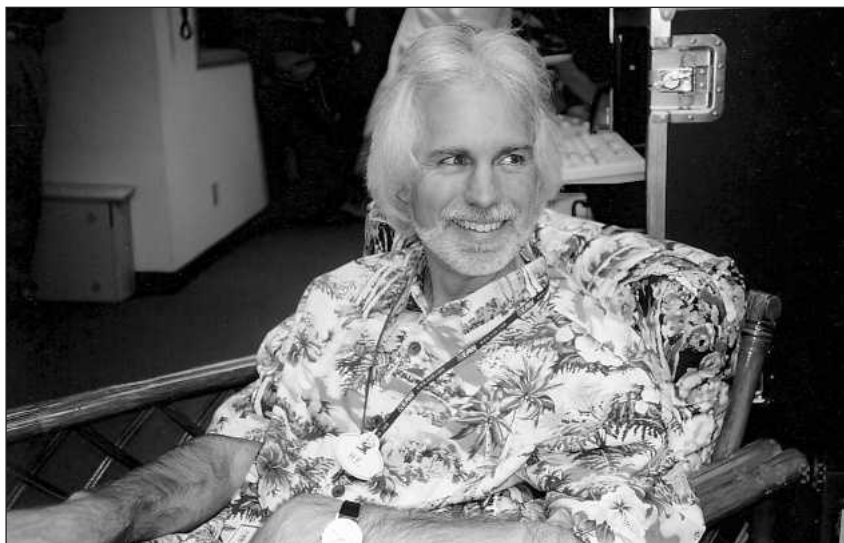
We will never forget Don's worldly wisdom, his quick perception, and his diplomatic skill, which helped organize and overcome many problems. We appreciated the excellent collaboration with Don as executive director over the 20 years from 1975 to 1994. His substantial contribution to the development of the AES in Europe.

We wish to express our gratitude and our heartfelt sympathy to his wife Liz, his son Chris, and three daughters, Hilary, Elizabeth, and Emily.

Titia K.S. Bakker, Benjamin Bernfeld, Reinhard O. Sahr and Herman A.O. Wilms.

Don really was the AES to many people. From its inception to its fiftieth birthday and beyond, he was there. He had an incredible memory for names and faces and could usually remember where he had met someone and what they had talked about. He was a quiet guiding hand and mentor to many, including myself, and will be sorely missed by his many friends and colleagues in the AES and in the audio industry.

Roger Furness



HF Crane
1955 – 2005

HF Crane, AES member, died on April 26, at his home after a long battle with cancer. Crane worked for Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale, CA.

Born in Montclair, CA, in 1955, Crane was educated in California where he studied theater and recording engineering.

Crane worked in Theme Park entertainment for most of his career. Starting in 1977 at Knott's Berry Farm, he was the manager of the sound department and was in charge of all sound systems in the live performance stages in the park, as well as running the recording studio. He joined W.E.D. in 1981 and designed the audio video system for WDW's Living Seas Pavilion.

In 1985, he was a partner at R. A. Gray, working on many projects around the country, such as the Gene Autry Museum in conjunction with Walt Disney Imagineering, Sea World in San Diego, and the Hershey Theme Park in Pennsylvania. In 1999, he returned to Walt Disney Imagineering, where he served in various leadership roles in the Audio Video Engineering Department including a short stint as chief engineer of the Sound Department. In 2003, he was promoted to technical video director, A/V Engineering, where he was

responsible for the development of the video server, which is used in the Disney Parks today.

Crane's skills were called upon in all of the Disney Parks, both domestic and international. Most recently, he provided A/V engineering efforts for WDW Soarin' over California, WDW Mickey's PhilharMagic, and for WDW Mission: Space. However, Crane was most proud to be the recording engineer in the Oval Office for the Hall of Presidents speeches for both President Bill Clinton and President George Bush. His great sense of humor under the pressure of tough project installations never failed to keep things in perspective.

Crane served on the executive committee of the Los Angeles Section. He is survived by his 14-year-old daughter Amanda, wife Marybeth, father W.J., sister Lez, and his first wife, Betsy Arns. The family requests that donations be sent to one of the charities listed below. (Please write "in memory of HF Crane" on the check.)

Restoration of the Fox Fullerton Theater, P. O. Box 6753, Fullerton, CA 92834.

Or his daughter's high school:

Santa Susana High School Performing Arts Center Team (PACT), 3570 Cochran Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063.