

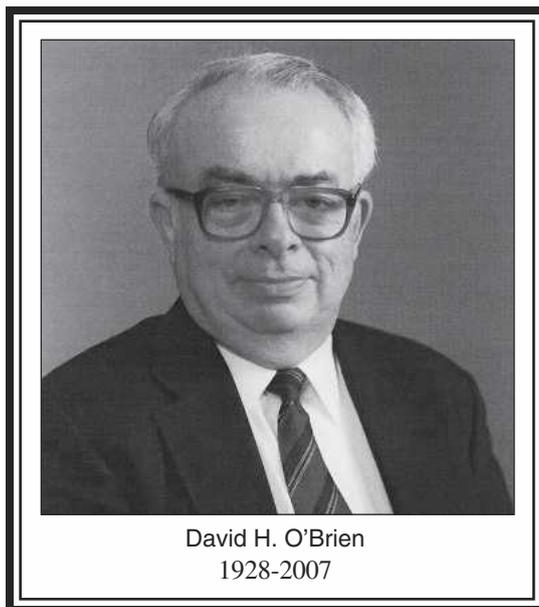
In Memoriam

David H. O'Brien, AES life member, of Vestal, NY, died January 9, 2007 at the age of 78. He was born in Worthington, Ohio, and graduated from Ohio State University. He served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps.

For many years he had an interest in audio and in 1949 joined the Audio Engineering Society. He wrote an article titled, "A Simple Preamplifier and Tone-Control Unit" that was published in *Audio Engineering* in November of 1951. He started the first, exclusively hi-fi component store in Columbus, Ohio, with a partner, Ed Anderson. It opened in February 1954 and was called Anderson Hi Fi Center. The store was later sold and renamed Stereo Lab. He was in the business for 3½ years before joining Bell Sound in Columbus. At his new job with Bell, Dave worked in the sales department, wrote manuals, and was a consultant to the advertising manager. He also made some design improvements at his home lab.

In 1962, he left Bell and joined McIntosh Laboratory where he worked for 38 years until his retirement in 1999. Dave will be remembered for the famous McIntosh Laboratory Amplifier Clinics where he evaluated customer amplifiers throughout the United States and Canada for nearly 30 years. He handled and tested over 250,000 pieces of high-fidelity equipment and personally conversed with more than 500,000 individual high-fidelity equipment owners. He flew well over a million air miles, with most of those miles including more than 600 pounds of clinic gear in cases as airline baggage. He was a positive role model of integrity, professionalism, attention to detail, with a firm commitment to engineering principles.

Dave spent not only days but weeks at a time away from home with only a few days off. He remained a bachelor



and devoted most of his life and time to the McIntosh clinic program. The clinic program was a substantial factor in maintaining the McIntosh reputation in both good and lean times throughout the years. The clinics were also very useful because they provided feedback to the factory on how the McIntosh equipment was holding up after being in service. Many engineering improvements were made as a result of this information. They also provided valuable input about the competition.

Most of the clinics were held in dealers' stores. Each amplifier was checked for power output, frequency response, and harmonic distortion from 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz. Popularity of the clinics resulted in more than 100 pieces of equipment that customers brought into a store each day, which provided a challenge Dave enjoyed.

Dave was certainly a showman; he was driven by the customers and how they reacted to his antics of testing and repairing amplifiers. He could almost look at a unit and feel what was wrong; tubes, bias diodes, whatever, he made it look like magic, all the while continuing his dialogue about the McIntosh low distortion and power output in excess of the rated

power. The clinics were free, and he would gladly bring all McIntosh units up to specifications at no charge.

The all-time record clinic turnout was 775 units at Pecar Electronics in Detroit in November of 1972. It was conducted over a three-day period. There were three factory test setups and Pecar had two test benches of its own testing at the same time.

After the clinics were discontinued in 1991, Dave put his great talents to use by writing owner manuals for new McIntosh equipment.

In June 1999, he officially retired and went online, where he received many e-mails from

McIntosh customers who remembered him at the McIntosh clinics. They voiced appreciation for all the work he had done for so many years and also for the generosity of the company in restoring their McIntosh equipment to almost-new condition at no charge. He wrote a book, *The McIntosh Clinics 1962-1991*, which recounted the entire clinic history and included many anecdotes and photographs.

Dave's interests included travel, photography, spending time with family and friends, and collecting music and books. Besides his large collection of CDs, he also had many tapes and records and was also a great fan of Disney and Mickey Mouse. He liked to use the latest cameras and took many photographs in his travels and around the lab.

Another great joy of Dave's was his 1962 Corvette. Part of his special treatment for his prized possession was driving it only in good weather in the summertime. He knew how to enjoy his life and his work. He is survived by his brother, Donald K. O'Brien, his nieces and nephews, Gary N. O'Brien, Daniel K. O'Brien, Nancy O. Williamson, and Kathryn O. Vasant.

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