

Albert Grundy 1928–2012



The audio engineering community lost one of its founding members on July 2, 2012; Albert Grundy died of complications from leukemia at age 85.

Born in New York City, Al became interested in audio and electronics at an early age, frequenting the electronic surplus shops on Radio Row, which was later demolished to become the site of the World Trade Center. He received his B.S.E.E. degree from Columbia University in 1956, where he worked and studied with Cyril M. Harris at the Columbia Acoustic Research Lab until 1957. Their work included development and construction of a Gaussian filter real-time spectrum analyzer and a multichannel microphone phased array system.

As chief engineer of Tono A.G. Zurich and Phototek S.A. Geneva, he designed and constructed recording and mixing facilities and traveled throughout Europe recording much of the classical repertory in the two- and three-track formats of the day.

He returned to the U.S. in 1960 and founded International Electroacoustics. In addition to designing recording and mastering facilities, he represented and distributed Schalltechnik-Schoeps microphones and introduced a variety of European audio equipment to the United States, including the first EMT plates and Neumann stereo disc-cutting systems.

As the recording industry grew during the 1960's, Al saw a need to educate producers and engineers in the new technologies available, primarily multitrack recording. After conducting a series of successful workshops on the East and West Coasts, he founded the Institute of Audio Research in 1969, the first school in the U.S. dedicated to audio education. Al stressed the importance of understanding the electronics and physics of the recording process rather than the mere operation of equipment, and hundreds if not thousands of audio professionals have benefitted from his teaching in recording technology, systems design, and digital audio.

His extensive career and education experience gave him a unique status in

the AES. He joined the organization in 1949 and presented his first paper in 1958. His service to the Society includes New York Section chair in 1972, Eastern vice president in 1976–77, chair of the 74th Convention in New York in 1983, and president in 1983–84. He served as a session chair at numerous conventions, and was a member of the Education Committee since its inception. His professional activities were not limited to the AES; he was also a member of the Acoustical Society of America, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and the IEEE Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing Society.

His life-long dedication to audio certainly didn't end with his retirement from IAR. Having purchased a number of cutting systems during the industry transition from vinyl to CD, he returned to his first love, disc mastering. Undeniably the U.S. authority on the subject, International Cutterhead Services repaired, refurbished, and installed complete systems, and Al was a highly valued consultant to those involved in the vinyl resurgence in recent years. Always the educator, he gave lectures and demonstrations at AES conventions, reintroducing the technology to those who had grown up in the digital audio era.

A celebration of his life was held in New York on July 20, and the turnout illustrated how many lives and careers this man had influenced. As we reminisced there were several characteristics that everyone could agree with, echoed in numerous posts in the audio and disc-cutting forums on the Internet:

Al was always available. Whether a new student or seasoned professional, he always had the time to answer questions or explain concepts.

Al had a thorough understanding of audio and electronics, and his technical advice was absolute.

Al was always supportive. He was always happy to offer his advice if you asked for it, but never forced his opinions.

Al presented a positive attitude in all situations, no matter how difficult, and never had a bad word to say about anyone.

A friend and mentor for nearly 40 years, he taught me far more than the fundamentals of audio technology. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather; he and his wife Inez raised four wonderful children, now outstanding young adults, all of whom are involved in

education. A consummate professional and true gentleman, I valued his friendship above all others. It was a privilege to have known him.

Jim Jordan