

## IN MEMORIAM

*Editor's Note: Upon the death of C. Robert Fine, the Journal received the following reminiscences from two of his friends and colleagues.*

It is with regret that I report to you the death of **C. Robert Fine**, charter member and fellow of the Audio Engineering Society, and chairman of the New York Section at the time of his death.

Bob Fine and his life were, in many ways, a history of the modern recording industry. He started in his teens in 1940 with Miller Film in New York City, then joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a specialist in radar. Upon returning to civilian life, he joined a young recording company in New York City, Majestic Records. Majestic started the postwar trend toward independent record labels. The founder of Majestic was a former mayor of the City of New York. From this position, he moved to Reeves Sound in New York and became chief engineer of that organization. Bob's work during these years also encompassed remote film projects in Africa, and he still had the time to record some startling LPs for Mercury Records—the Mercury Olympian Series which still are landmarks in recording archives.

Bob was an innovator, and in the early 50s, he was involved in the development of a multichannel recording and reproduction system called Perspecta-Sound. The system development coincided with the advent of wide-screen projection and Bob joined Arthur Loew (Loew's Inc.) to head up a special recording operation in New York dedicated to the production of MGM Perspecta Sound Films. He then founded Fine Sound in New York, and those studios became the birthplace of many of the early and vital stereo LP disks that featured a high degree of separation. These records, in many ways, helped materially speed the consumer interest and acceptance of stereo. From these efforts, he then pressed on and advocated the use of 35 mm magnetic tape for original recording, and produced many exciting and startling recordings that again grasped the imagina-



C. Robert Fine  
(1922–1982)

tion and enthusiasm of the record-buying public.

Because of Bob's involvement with film, he naturally turned his attention in the 70s to the field of audio and video and became a world traveler consulting in the design and building of studios compatible with requirements of both disciplines. At the time of his death, he was still actively involved in this area and brought his usual enthusiasm to it. He had been active in the AES New York Section in the last few years, and as this year's chairman had materially assisted in building a strong section.

In my last conversation with Bob, about five or six weeks ago, before the section planning meeting, he and I had about an hour to talk about the past and the future. It was a stimulating conversation. He had the rare ability to probe beyond today and look and listen ahead. It was this ability that allowed him to touch as many people and products in the audio field in his lifetime and to substantially assist in improving the technology and the art.

DONALD J. PLUNKETT

I first met **Bob Fine** in the late 1950s. I remember vividly the music recording studio in the grand ballroom of the Great Northern Hotel, with its glass mosaic ceiling and trappings from another era. On the penthouse floor, Bob had his mastering

and film-mixing facilities.

Bob was the complete engineer: mixer, recordist, designer, inventor and dreamer. He never stopped in his quest to make better recordings. When stereo and multitrack recording decreased the track width resulting in degradation of signal to noise, Bob went to 35-mm direct recording with its greater track width and better signal to noise. The result of this move was a series of super high-fidelity recordings. But this was typical of Bob, the use of an existing medium for better quality. In fact, just recently, with the use of video in film production, he came up with Vidi-Mag which uses 16-mm film machines to play and record helical video. The main feature of this system was to allow film houses to use their existing equipment in video postproduction. Here again he used an existing medium to perform a different task.

In the late 1960s Bob developed a process that would transmit video pictures over regular telephone lines and could be recorded and played back on a cheap twenty-five dollar audio cassette machine. Only a few months ago he participated in a SPARS conference in which he described a dc recording process to record SMPTE time code that would virtually eliminate cross talk to adjacent channels. One of the last AES meetings that he organized was held at my studio in New York. I was sorry that he could not attend but at this

point he was in the hospital.

I could go on and fill this journal with Bob's accomplishments, but I would rather write about the man. I always had great respect for him. He was a dear friend and I feel that his death is not only a loss to the industry he loved so well, but an even greater personal loss to myself. Bob Fine was one of the men who built this industry. He gave much more to it than he took from it. He was always concerned with the teaching of our craft to the new generation of engineers who would join our industry. He spent a great deal of his own time teaching others. Although he is physically gone, he lives on through the knowledge and love he gave us all.

ROBERT LIFTIN

We are saddened by the news that one of our elder members, **George W. Tillett**, died from injuries received in an automobile accident at Clearwater, Florida, on 1982 October 30. He was well known on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean mainly through his articles on audio. Tillett was born in 1913 in Norwich, England, and like so many of his period started work in a technical capacity as a test engineer (with Ultra Electric) and later developed a keen interest in music. A combination of work and leisure interests naturally led him into high fidelity retailing at the age of 23. By 1948, at age 35, he had acquired sufficient experience to join Pye Tele-



G. W. Tillett

communications as a design engineer for VHF projects. Three years later he transferred to Armstrong Wireless in London to become their chief engineer. From that point on his career was solidly welded to audio engineering. Throughout George's industrial career he moved quite rapidly from one firm to another, never staying more than a few years in any job. Over a period of 44 years he worked for fourteen different companies before finally "retiring" into full-time journalism.

After four years with Armstrong he became chief audio engineer at Decca, then on to Heathkit, England, and so to Rank Wharfedale—his last employment before emigrating to the

United States in the mid-sixties. Meanwhile George had started to write reviews on amplifiers for *Record News* and *Hi-Fi News*. This secondary activity, which he later claimed lost him many friends, eventually took over from other work and provided him with a livelihood for the rest of his life.

During the early period of his sojourn in the USA, George worked for Fisher Radio Corporation as chief engineer at the Milroy plant. He subsequently became chief engineer of Audio Dynamics Corporation in New Milford. It was in 1969 that he was offered the editorship of *Audio* magazine and moved into that post to take over from the legendary C. G. McProud who was then near retirement. His editorship lasted three and a half years. Afterward there was one more brief flirtation with industry at Epicure before he decided to call it a day and retire to Florida in 1974. He continued to write on a freelance basis for several magazines in the USA and Great Britain. Even at the time of his death, George was still a contributing editor at *Audio*.

After surviving major surgery for abdominal cancer only three years ago, it seems indeed cruel that he lost his life as a result of being struck by a car while crossing the street. He is survived by his second wife, Patricia, who was with him at the time of the accident.

RAYMOND E. COOKE, O.B.E.