

# In Memoriam

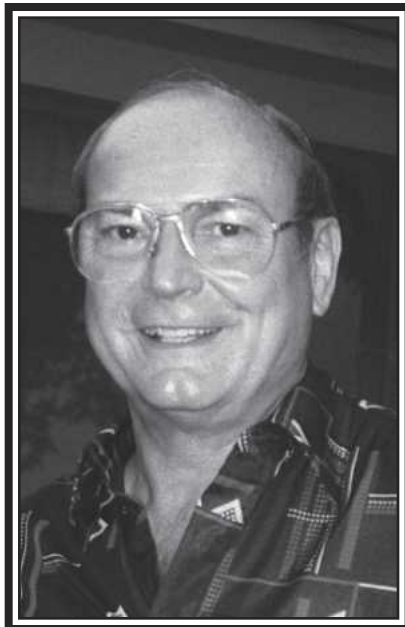
**P**eter Tappan, AES fellow, passed away March 15 due to complications from open-heart surgery last fall. He died peacefully in his home. He is survived by his wife, two children, and five grandchildren.

Born in 1928 in New York City, Tappan earned B.S. and M.S. degrees in physics in 1952 and 1958 from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He was employed by Motorola, Inc. in 1951 and later that year joined the physics department of what is now I.I.T. Research Institute, performing research in magnetic recording and electroacoustical devices.

Tappan enjoyed a long career as an acoustical consultant whose countless electronic sound reinforcement and playback systems are enjoyed around the world. They are used in venues as varied as O'Hare's Terminal 1 to Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Prior to his distinguished service at Kirkegaard & Associates as a principal consultant and vice president, he was an acoustical consultant with Bolt, Beranek and Newman. While there he consulted to Memorex for the "Is it Live or is it Memorex" commercial.

Among his *JAES* and convention papers was "Shattering Goblets with Amplified Singing" presented at the AES 46th Convention in 1973. Prior to his work at BBN, he was with Industrial Research Products, Inc, where he worked on miniature microphones, as well with Warwick Manufacturing Corporation.

He always thought "outside the box" when necessary. Just two of many examples are a very innovative design for 17th Church Christ Scientist in Chicago, where pew-mounted microphones are activated when a congregant wishes to speak and near-



Peter Tappan  
1928 – 2007

by pew-mounted loudspeakers are silenced to avoid feedback, as well as the first use of a horizontal line-source in a stage front lip for coverage of front seats at the Wisconsin Playboy Club Theater. The first of these two is in one of Peter's technical papers, coauthored with Robert Ancha, "Invisible Sound Reinforcement with 350 Microphones," published in *JAES*, vol. 18, no. 3, June 1970, pp. 309–314, and included in the AES's *Sound Reinforcement Anthology*, vol. 1–vol. 26.

As those who knew him will attest, there was a lot more to Tappan than just audio engineering. He was an accomplished magician, having won multiple awards from the International Brotherhood of Magicians, including the Order of Merlin. He often entertained in the Chicago area as well as at the famous Magic Castle in Los Angeles. He was always looking

for ways to merge new scientific knowledge with that of his skills in performing illusions.

David Copperfield and Lance Burton are among those who sought him out to discuss illusions he had created, such as his "floating quicksilver cube," which he would send to the theater's ceiling over the audience, and then call back to his waiting hand. He performed a close-up magic routine that included levitating a small doll when he passed his wedding ring over the doll. He would often comment that when he first observed a lady being levitated by Harry Blackstone, he was at the back of the balcony, and from that distance it looked the same as his miniature up close.

He once performed during an AES Awards Banquet, much to the delight of the audience, calling David Klepper from the audience to assist, arguably the perfect straight-man for Tappan's mischievous illusions. Phil Willmarth, a close friend and fellow magician, conducted a Broken Wand ceremony for Peter at his wake, with thirty magicians in attendance.

Tappan was vice president of the AES's Central Region, USA/Canada, in 1970 to 1971 and admissions chair of the AES. He was also a member of the Acoustical Society of America, past president of the Chicago Acoustical and Audio Group, past secretary of the executive committee of the Midwest Acoustics Conference, and past editor of the *IEEE Transactions on Audio*.

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