

THE
MID
YEARS

1930 to 1960 - A Summary by Lynn Wetherill

Members of the Pittsfield transformer engineering organization have traditionally played an active role in technical affairs, particularly in the AIEE, the society which preceded the present IEEE. The Pittsfield Section AIEE had a large and active membership and supported an extensive program of technical meetings. An unusual outgrowth of this activity came in the form of a popular lecture series.

In the thirties, before television, lectures on science, travel, literature, etc., were quite in demand and the AIEE popular lecture series regularly filled the largest auditorium in the city. When demand still exceeded available seating capacity, arrangements were made to repeat the lectures the next day for the high school students. Chairmen of the Pittsfield Section during the development of the popular lecture series included Karl McEachron, Howard Kline, Locke Burnham, Vincent Montsinger, William Cooney, and Aram Boyajian. One result of the popular series was that the Pittsfield Section AIEE prospered and accumulated a considerable financial reserve which was sufficient to cover the expense of the technical meetings for which there was no admission charge.

Many of the transformer engineers presented technical papers at national meetings of the AIEE. In the early thirties it was decided that something should be done about improving the quality of the papers; particularly of the oral presentations. After much discussion, arrangements were made to have a contest between the Pittsfield Section and the Schenectady Section. Two meetings were to be held, one in each city. Each Section was to field three contestants at each meeting. Entry was to be limited to AIEE members, not more than thirty years old, who had not previously presented a technical paper. Each contestant was permitted to select his own subject and was allowed ten minutes for the oral presentation. Both written papers and oral presentations were evaluated by a panel of judges representing the Schenectady and Pittsfield Sections. Individual prizes were offered but the greatest interest centered on the team performance.

Arrangements were made for Professor Garrison of Amherst College to come to Pittsfield one day each week during the two months preceding the contest. Professor Garrison coached the candidates and assisted in selecting the team of six to represent Pittsfield. Thus considerable benefit was realized by many more people than just the six candidates finally selected. Prize winners coming readily to memory include Wes Morrill, Dick Kaufman, and Wen Fielding. Whatever the reason may be, Pittsfield succeeded in winning most of the contests.

After the contest meetings became well established, some of the older AIEE members became concerned about their own performance as compared to that of veterans of the contest. Even the candidates who did not make the team were showing the benefit of coaching by Professor Garrison. When sufficient interest developed, Professor Garrison was persuaded to spend a full day in Pittsfield each week presenting a course in public speaking to interested members of the organization.

In later years, the Lynn Section of the AIEE sought to join in the contest. The format was then changed to include a meeting in each of the three cities with each of the three sections providing two contestants for each meeting. This arrangement continued until the whole program was discontinued with the advent of World War II.

December 1931

Frank Buck talked on his favorite subject, which is "Capturing Wild Animals". Over 1300 attended this lecture.

January 1932

William C. White captivated an audience of 1100 with his talk on "Russia".

March 1932

An attendance of 1450 was realized when Major Thomas Coulson expounded on "Famous Women Spies".

April 1932

Prof. S. R. Williams of Amherst presented the technical subject "Magnetism" to 110 attendees.

December 1932

Dr. Cecilia H. Payne of the Howard Observatory spoke on "High Voltage Stars" and the recent developments in astrophysics on chemical composition and physical behavior of the matter composing the stars.

March 1933

"Experiences of a Gang Buster" was presented by Capt. C. W. Willemie to 1100 in attendance.

December 1933

"N. I. R. A. - A New Deal in an Old Game" was presented by John T. Flynn to 1050 in attendance.

January 1934

Lowell Thomas presented his "Adventures on the Air and Around the World". Over 1600 attended.

March 1934

"Russia As It Is" was presented by Julian Bryan to 1450 attendees.

May 1934

A souvenir consisting of a metal ash tray with the AIEE emblem will be used at a banquet and priced at 18¢ each.

November 1934

L. H. H. Morrow presented "Tennessee Valley Authority Project" to 290 at a technical session.

November 1934

An executive committee meeting included discussion about action to take on AT&T stock due to governmental action against AT&T which would reduce the dividend from \$9.00 to \$7.00 a share.

March 1935

1300 attended "An Evening With The Stars" presented by B. R. Barimgardt.

November 1935

A National AIEE Committee has been appointed to plan the celebration of the "Stanley" Golden Jubilee - the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Establishment of Alternating Current Systems in America.

January 1936

Count Byron De Prorok made a presentation on "Ethiopia". 1500 attended.

February 1936

K. B. McEachron, Chief of Lightning Research at G. E. in Pittsfield spoke on "Recent Lightning Research and It's Applications".

March 1936

The Pittsfield section held a ceremony to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Alternating Current System in America.

August 1936

The financial statement for the year ending August 1, 1936 showed the sections net worth at \$10,814.06.

November 1936

Amelia Earhart talked on "Adventures in the Air". More than 1500 attended at the High School Auditorium.

March 1937

Capt. John D. Craig captivated 1500 with his "Experiences While Producing Adventure - Thrill Movies".

August 1937

Mr. P. A. Tamburello indicated that he would be willing to serve as our committee of one on Public Relations and Legal Affairs and is now investigating the possibility of the section obtaining exemption from Massachusetts Income Tax payments.

February 1938

A resume of "Vacuum Tube Theory" and a presentation of "Electronic Industrial Control Applications" was made by Mr. D. E. Chambers and E. D. McArthur of Schenectady.

February 1938

2000 people heard a presentation by Cndr. W. E. Mullan, U. S. Navy on "Submarine Construction and Operation". Mr. E. K. Kane was the presiding officer.

March 1938

The Schenectady and Pittsfield Sections of AIEE held a speakers competition for the E. S. Lee trophy. The competition was held in the Stanley Club auditorium. Three speakers from each section gave oral presentations and were judged for oral as well as written presentations.

November 1938

About 125 turned out to hear Prof. G. B. Snyder talk on "Hydroponics - Growing Plants Without Soil".

December 1938

The Berkshire Section agreed to pay \$250.00 for the Chesney portrait to be done and loaned to and hung in The Stanley Club, but remain the property of the section.

January 1939

Julian Bryan gave a talk on "Inside Nazi Germany" to 1350 attendees at the high school auditorium.

February 1939

"Prospecting For Petroleum" was attended by 90 at a technical session presented by Dr. W. A. Gruse.

April 5, 1939

Letter from the Stanley Club to AIEE Chairman.

Subject - Mr. C. C. Chesney portrait.

- First, the ownership of the portrait shall continue to rest with the Pittsfield Section of the AIEE.
- Second, the portrait shall remain in the custody of the Stanley Club as long as the Stanley Club provides adequate housing and care, and a suitable place for hanging.

December 1939

Mr. C. A. Read, chairman, reported that Popular Lecture tickets no's 1687 and 1699 held at the Berkshire Atheneum for sale had been stolen.

April 1940

"Color Photography" was presented to about 200 by Dr. Arthur C. Hardy of MIT.

November 1940

Mr. DeBlieux reported that the Stanley Club will provide \$1.00 dinners including gratis served at each AIEE dinner. Main dishes include Roast Rib of Beef, Veal, Lamb, Baked Ham, Roast Loin of Pork, etc.

December 1940

Dr. D. P. Mitchell spoke on "The Cyclotron - Kettler in Charge" at a technical session.

March 1941

Howard Higgins presented "Among The Spirits - An Expose of Spiritualism".

November 1941

Margaret Bourke-White the eminent photographer and author spoke on "Lenses Behind The News".

December 1941

London Air Raid films of 1940 were shown at the Stanley Club auditorium with 75 in attendance.

January 1942

1200 people attended a lecture - demonstration of mechanical - electronic artificial creation of speech.

February 1942

A two session presentation by Nicol Smith on the "Burma Road" was attended by 1350 at the main meeting and 1050 attending at the high school.

April 1942

"Adventures in Color with American Birds" was presented by Cleveland P. Grant.

November 1942

Stanley Johnson, the war reporter, presented "Battle of the Coral Sea" to 1450 present.

May 1943

Dr. K. Blodgett presented a technical paper on "Interference Colors Reflected by Thin Films".

December 1943

Robert St. John, war correspondent, spoke to 1300 attendees on "The World at War".

January 1944

Colonel Carlos Romulo presented "Phillipines: War in the Pacific."

March 1944

Fifteenth annual prize paper competition planned.

April 1944

Jule Mannix presented Wild Life Movies plus Travel and Adventure.

November 1944

Paul Schubert, radio commentator and author, presented "War at Sea" to 1400 attendees.

March 1945

A movie-illustrated lecture on "Fun With Birds" was presented in the High School Auditorium by Laurel Reynolds.

November 1945

Atomic Power. Mr. R. P. Johnson of the G. E. Research Lab. gave an interesting survey of the problems encountered in releasing atomic energy in modern warfare.

November 1945

Mr. Gregor Ziemer's lecture on "Re-Education of Germany" was well received. His statement of America's responsibility in post war Germany and his suggestion for meeting them stirred up considerable discussion.

December 1945

Commander Donald B. McMillan presented "Greenland - New Empire of the North" to 1400.

1945/1946

The Prize Paper Competition becomes a three section Schenectady, Lynn and Pittsfield participation.

February 1946

Charles Mountford presented colored movies in his talk on "Australia's Stone-Age Men".

June 1946

The executive committee voted to increase the price of tickets for the Popular Lectures to \$2.00 including tax.

November 1946

Brig. General Roger M. Ramey the Army Air Force Commander of the World's Only Atom - Bombing Organization talked on "Air Power in the Atomic Age".

January 1947

Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy noted explorer for the American Museum of Natural History spoke on "Gates of the Antarctic" at the High School auditorium.

March 1947

There was a move afoot to have mandatory registration of engineers.

April 1947

Mr. William A. Lydgate, editor of the Gallup Poll, came to the Pittsfield High School to present a program on "What America Thinks - A Report on Domestic Problems".

December 1947

Dr. J. O. Perrine, Assistant VP of AT&T spoke to a crowd of 1210 (210 AIEE members) on "Radar and Micro-Waves".

February 1948

Dr. H. M. Rozendaal, GE Research Lab, made a presentation on "Atomic Power in Medical Research".

March 1949

Due to deficits in the past two years discussion was held on whether to discontinue the Popular Lectures.

September 1949

The series of five popular lectures during the 1948-49 season, although yielding a combined attendance of 4350 (Nov - 1000, Jan - 850, Feb - 900, Mar - 650, Apr - 950) showed a loss for the year of \$1095.35.

March 1950

Prof. D. C. Grahame spoke on "The Hydrogen Bomb".

March 1950

A Testimonial Banquet was held in honor of Dr. K. B. McEachron, recipient of the Edison Medal and Manager of Engineering of the Pittsfield Works of the G. E. Co.

June 1950

Income from the 75 shares of AT&T stock was \$167.75 per quarter.

November 1950

"Research of the Sun" by Prof. Giorgi Abetti of the University of Florence, Italy. Presiding officer of the meeting was Pier A. Abetti.

September 1951

Plans were made to continue section operations in case the GE Pittsfield Works is closed by labor troubles.

March 1953

Certificates were presented to Messrs. G. Camilli, G. S. Gorden and R. E. Plump for winning first place in the 1951-1952 New England District AIEE Prize Paper Contest. Second place certificates were awarded to Messrs. W. J. Degnan, A. H. Rohlf and J. H. Hagenguth.

April 1953

Six technical papers were presented by the younger members.

September 1953

Discussion was held on rekindling the Popular Lecture series.

November 1953

Discussions were held on what to do for the 50th anniversary of the Pittsfield Section on March 25, 1954.

April 1954

John G. Anderson spoke on "Lightning Effects on Power Systems - Application of Lightning Arresters".

May 1954

Two shares of AT&T stock were donated to the Karl B. McEachron Memorial Foundation during this year.

June 1954

Robert C. Sprague addressed the section on "Turning More Engineers into Better Citizens".

December 1954

B. A. Cogbill was awarded the Fellow Grade.

February 1955

Dr. P. A. Abetti gave a talk on "Models, Analogs and Similitudes in Electrical Engineering.

March 1955

George Bulgarelli presented "Instrumentation in Modern Weather Forecasting".

June 1955

The Vermont subsection was setup and operated as a going concern this year.

August 1955

It was decided to ask other local technical societies to a smoker meeting. The AIEE section would stand the entire cost. The cost was estimated as about 60¢ per person with maybe 200 attending.

January 1956

Institute members were enlightened about "The Mighty Midget" featuring the properties and applications of the transistor, photo-transistor and the solar battery.

March 1956

An AIEE Tri-Sectional competition was held between the Lynn, Pittsfield and Schenectady sections with R. F. Powers chairman of the oral and written competition.

August 1956

The Berkshire Section sent \$150 to Vermont subsection for operating expenses.

September 1956

A joint smoker type meeting of MSPE, PGEEA, ASME, ASCE, IRE and AIEE heard Chuck Savage of GE Corporate Headquarters speak on "The Challenge and Oportunities of Professional Societies".

November 1956

"Missile Guidance - Steel Nerves, Steel Muscle" was a topic of great interest.

April 1957

The April meeting was on "Conversion of Solar Energy Through Photosynthesis".

April 1957

A speaker competition was held where five talks were given by the Younger Members Competition Team.

May 1957

Vermont Subsection held a symposium on "Digital Computers and their Application to Power System Problems".

May 1957

The executive committee voted unanimously that when the Northeastern District is split into two districts, Pittsfield would prefer to be included with the New York Section.

November 1957

First prize in the District Paper Competition went to T. W. Liao, W. A. Keen and D. R. Powell for their paper "Relationships of Corona and Radio Influences on Transmission Lines, Part I".

May 1958

The Pittsfield Section had four Technical Groups: Power, Science and Electronics, Industry and Instrumentation.

June 1958

Eugene B. Canfield talked on "Inertial Guidance System for Ballistic Missiles".

September 1958

The meeting subject was "The Dawn of the Age of Space Flight".

January 1959

The meeting featured a demonstration of Direct Distance Telephone Dialing.

April 1959

Vermont subsection of AIEE sends recommendation to its members "that the Vermont Subsection of AIEE take immediate steps to become a Section.

June 1959

Mr. Green reported on the visit to the Vermont subsection meeting. He and Mr. VanLund reported the subsection was enthusiastically moving toward section status.

The financial statement showed the net worth of the Pittsfield Section at \$22,452.14 including the 252 shares of AT&T stock.

November 1959

A field trip to the Rowe Atomic Energy Plant was arranged by B. V. Giegerich.

February 1960

Dr. Willy Ley spoke to a group of 320 joint society members during Engineers Week on "The Conquest of Space".

July 1960

Mr. Francis Lawrence Woods and Mr. Alanson V. Welch were transferred to the grade of fellow in AIEE.

October 1960

C. J. McMillen arranged for a presentation "Spy In The Sky" by Dr. J. A. Mauro.

BERKSHIRE EAGLE
FEBRUARY 17, 1968

"ENGINEERS"

GE ORDNANCE HIRES
FIRST LADY ENGINEER

The General Electric Co. Ordnance Department had found something new to celebrate for the observance of National Engineers Week.

The department took the occasion to announce that it has hired its first woman engineer in the 26-year history of the local defense plant.

Miss Judy Baar will join the department Feb. 26 as an automatic test equipment engineer. A native of Brooklyn N.Y., she graduated last month from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn where she majored in system synthesis evaluation.