



IEEE Group on

# Engineering Writing and Speech

## NEWSLETTER

W.B. Dennen, Editor, Grey & Rogers, Inc.  
12 South 12th Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Vol. 13

AUGUST 1970

No. 2

### MC GAHEY TRIES HARDER

Bob McGahey is being forced to try harder now that he's number 2. Number 2 man in EWS, that is. Bob became group vice-chairman after the AdCom meeting in March. He is manager of technical publicity for Westinghouse Electric in Pittsburgh.

Of course, we also have a new number 1. Lou Cole, information systems supervisor at Bell Telephone Labs in Murray Hill (N.J.), was chosen chairman to succeed George Schindler. He's the kind of guy who will make sure Bob and everyone else try harder.

### SEIDEMAN TO ADCOM

One of Lou's first acts was to appoint Irv Seideman to the AdCom to fill the vacancy left by Elliot Miller's resignation. Irv is technical publications administrator at RCA's Astro-Electronics Division, Hightstown, N.J., and is editor of the EWS TRANSACTIONS. If anyone has a rousing paper, or filler material for that matter, please send it to Irv. Papers may be slanted toward either the total IEEE membership or engineers involved in engineering writing (technical communications, if you prefer). Send material to I.M. Seideman, RCA Astro-Electronics, P.O. Box 800, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

### NEVER TOO EARLY

Wes Field has been named chairman of the nominating committee which will select candidates for the six AdCom slots open to election early next year. Too early, for that sort of thing? Wes doesn't think so if his committee is to be thorough in its search for new blood. If anyone has a strong candidate in mind, please contact Wes at RCA, H Building, Hightstown, N. J. Deadline is September 15. And don't be bashful about offering your own services.

### WE'RE MODEST BUT . . .

We're also a mite proud of our success at the March International Convention. J.H. Schumacher, IEEE secretary, has passed us the word on how attendees rated our session, "There's Another Way to Get Your Message Across." On a scale of 1 (excellent) to 4 (poor), we rated 1.3 - one of the top scores at the Conventions. Ours was one of four concurrent sessions; we drew 251 persons, the second largest audience of the four. Seventy-three percent of the attendees returned the "feedback" forms, an excellent score compared with a Convention norm of about 60%. Our program's success was due, in large measure, to Bob McGahey, Session Organizer and George Schindler, Session Chairman.

### ELEANOR ADVANCES

Yes, it's true: Eleanor McElwee has been named Manager, Solid State Power Devices Commercial Engineering, for RCA's Solid State Division in Somerville, N.J. More power (solid state or otherwise) to you Eleanor. If your new title is typical of RCA's semantic obfuscations, perhaps one of your managerial goals could be the development of simple, descriptive job titles. Eleanor, incidentally, is a senior member of IEEE and has been a staunch EWS advocate for some time (she asked us not to say how long).

### GOOD LORD, ANOTHER CHANGE

Lou Cole has named Walt Dennen to be editor of the NEWSLETTER. At least for a couple of issues. The job seems to offer less security than riding point for General Custer against the Sioux. If you have any info or comments for the NEWSLETTER, please send them to Walt (his address is on page 1). Or send to IEEE headquarters or any AdCom member. Hopefully, the material will get to Walt. More important, we don't want to miss anything because someone doesn't know where to send the information.

## OUR NATIONAL ROAD COMPANY. .

will be playing in Chicago at NEC in October. Two one acters will be staged by "Paddy" Lufkin. The first, "The Fatal Abstract," is a repeat of the smash production at the March International Convention. Jim is currently scripting the secondplay, "Not Invented Here."

## HELP!

IEEE has asked our help. To revise the booklet, "Techniques for Better Talks," and to develop definitions and standards (particularly those applicable to EWS interests). Volunteers should contact Lou Cole at Bell Labs, or through IEEE headquarters.



## WHAT IS THEIR FUTURE?

Scientific and technical journals, we mean. George Schindler is developing an EWS meeting concerned with the journal's future. The subject is certainly germane to EWS activities and concerns. Commercial publishing houses seem to publish technical material at a continuing profit, while professional societies publish journals at ever-increasing losses. Perhaps we will help develop solutions. We'll pass along more information as soon as we have it.

## HE PRACTICES WHAT HE PREACHES

C.W. Farr, assistant to the vice president - administration at The MITRE Corporation sent the following letter:

"This will suggest to your readers a universal formula for writing letters.

"The formula is:

- first paragraph—State the *purpose*.
- second paragraph—Deliver the *message*.

-third paragraph—Add necessary *details*.

-fourth paragraph—Ask for *action*.

"Letters structured in this way are:

- easy to write,
- easy to read,
- brief.

"This formula works for business and personal correspondence.

"Try it!"



## A VOTE FOR FLESCH

Wes Eckles, senior member in the Beaumont (Texas) Section and active in Section affairs since 1958, sent us a reminder that too many of us over-look Rudolf Flesch's THE ART OF PLAIN TALK and THE ART OF PLAIN WRITING. Flesch has a simple formula that helps measure the clarity of our message. Short sentences, few affixes and many personal references help cut message noise. All we need do is count the three items, plug the numbers into the formula, and calculate how difficult our speech or writing is to understand. Most significantly, we measure from the standpoint of the listener or reader, not the author. And that's where so much of our troubles lie. Moreover, the formula approach should appeal to engineers.

## MISCELLANY

Lou Cole has volunteered the services of all AdCom members (including himself) to help authors who seek advice on presenting their papers at the 1971 International Convention. . . Ed Grazda will represent EWS at the TAB meeting during WESCON in August. . . Dick Johnson is hunting for an EWS member to serve on the American National Standard Committee's Group Y-15, Preferred Practice for the Preparation of Graphs, Charts, etc. . . . Dick also needs a member to evaluate the usefulness in EWS-related fields of entries in the IEEE list of key words for information retrieval indexing — contact Dick directly (J.R. Johnson, Bell Telephone Labs, 1H119, Whippany, N.J. 07981) . . . Bob Woelfle reports our membership continues to hover around 2,000.

## NOWHERE, MAYBE?

Carl Olson, of Westinghouse Electric's Industry & Defense Products group, has responded to Bob Woelfle's comments on EWS' purpose and function in our last NEWSLETTER (March 1970.) Carl says:

"In reply to "Where Do We Go From Here", EWS Newsletter, *undated* but recent.

"Is the IEEE Group Structure the proper organizational form for EWS? Most Groups seek out only a portion of IEEE's membership to better concentrate on a limited scope.

"EWS, however, attempts to serve across the broad field of total IEEE

membership with publications distributed to less than 2 percent of IEEE membership and with presentations at a few meetings and conferences.

"If your aims are to serve professional writers perhaps the best organization is STWP, and EWS should be abolished. If your aims are to help EE's communicate effectively a better solution is needed, and I suggest EWS AdCom consider:

1. More tutorial papers written for the breadth of IEEE membership.
2. Abandonment of *Transactions* in favor of *Spectrum* for publication of tutorial articles (suggest a monthly one or two pager).

3. More participation in conferences and meetings.

4. Restructuring EWS (tutorial activities) as something other than a Group.

"Perhaps there is still justification for a Group devoted to the electrical engineering content of such things as computerized typesetting, etc., but I feel these interests are completely separate from the needs of Joe Average (IEEE member)."

---

## OR MANY PLACES, PERHAPS

The June AdCom meeting featured many comments on where and how EWS is or should be heading. If 13 persons can espouse such diverse opinions, what must the divergence be in the total membership?

Herb Michaelson says that EWS should work to improve the technical aspects — both personal (writing and speaking) and impersonal (printing and transmitting) — of engineering communications. Don't focus as tutors on human factors or on process details. Rather, disseminate ideas — stress techniques as elevating procedures, discuss new methods and improvements in old methods, expose ways of transferring information effectively and efficiently. We should have a sharpening and enriching, rather than tutorial, function. Yet, he admits that because of individual backgrounds, talents and needs, what is new, profitable and exciting for some may be old or inapplicable for others.

Jim Lippke pushes for five functions: publish TRANSACTIONS emphasizing basic skills and new techniques; present technical sessions at conventions; offer special seminars; prepare special publications such as handbooks, bibliographies, etc., and sponsor local chapters.

Irv Seideman sees publication as the prime function (Ed. Note: Irv is TRANSACTIONS editor so he may be slightly biased). Articles should include surveys and reviews, tutorial papers on basic skills, and discussions on interfacing areas between techniques of writing/speaking/printing and such allied fields as graphics, programming, phototype setting, etc. Like Lippke, he wants more minor publications to support IEEE members.

Bob McGahey amends Irv's list to include sophisticated papers on new developments to show the significance of the techniques for engineers rather than for professional communicators.

## A BIT DIFFERENT?

Our tone is somewhat different from that in past issues. We hope it induced you to read the entire issue. And enjoy it a little more. We don't expect to be inundated with either cheers or catcalls, but if you have any suggestions or comments, let us know. We, in turn, will strive to turn out issues more frequently. That shouldn't be too difficult since the AdCom meets about eight times a year; we can at least report how AdCom is spending our dues.

---

## WHICH LEADS US TO ONE FINAL POINT

Have you paid *your* dues? Or conned a cohort into joining EWS? Most of our income goes into TRANSACTIONS. With more members, we can publish more often.



# NEWSLETTER

THE INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERS

Group on

## Engineering Writing and Speech

345 EAST 47th STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. POSTAGE  
**P A I D**  
New York, N. Y.  
Permit No. 8021

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

---

1265198 M  
L M COLE JR  
ROOM IE 238  
BELL TEL LABS  
NEW PROVIDENCE

654 \*

NJ 07974