The first MMM Conferences – 1955 & 1956

Technology News from 1955 & 1956

- First pocket transistor radios available
- William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA
- First magnetic hard-disk drive (5 MB) introduced by IBM
- First B&W portable TV sets
- First transatlantic telephone cable
- Site of 1st MMM Conference
- First commercial videotape recorder available from Ampex
- First non-stick frying pans from Tefal

Notable Inventions

- Atomic clock (England)
- Hovercraft (England)
- LEGO brick toy (Denmark)
- Velcro (Switzerland)
- "Fish Fingers" (USA)
- Oral Polio vaccine (USA)

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Birth of the MMM Conference

At a meeting of the Subcommittee on Magnetics of the AIEE Committee on Basic Sciences held in New York on March 23, 1954, the chairman described the viewpoint of AIEE management with respect to program material in general. In their opinion, too much emphasis is being placed on scheduling material for presentation at the Winter Convention and not enough at the Spring and Fall meetings. It is management’s hope that this situation can be improved through better coordination of the various committees’ activities.

The proposal to hold a magnetics symposium separate from other AIEE functions was discussed in more detail. Expressed thoughts in favor of this proposal were:

1. One general magnetics symposium would avoid the necessity for attending a large number of separate meetings of various societies to keep abreast of new magnetics developments.
2. Industrial management is unwilling to send personnel to many meetings.
3. It would be possible to invite a larger number of societies such as AIME, ASM, ASTM, IRE, etc., to participate in the symposium.
4. Such a meeting would attract many more of the new people now in magnetics.

The following comments were advanced against the proposal:

1. The separate magnetics meeting would of course eliminate the customary winter meeting. This might not be desirable since the winter meeting gives electrical engineers in general a chance to learn of new things in magnetics.
2. The present type meeting held in conjunction with the established AIEE convention has a guaranteed audience; the size of the audience for a separate meeting is an unknown factor.
3. A weekend meeting preceding the regular AIEE convention might answer the purpose of a separate meeting and still retain the advantages of the usual convention meeting.

After a discussion of the various factors, the committee considered the following proposals:

1. To continue the regular AIEE type meeting.
2. To hold a separate meeting in a city such as Pittsburgh.
3. To hold a separate meeting in a resort area such as New Hampshire or the Poconos.

The Pittsburgh type separate meeting received the majority approval, the meeting to be a one year experimental meeting sometime in the Spring of 1955.

As a result of this discussion, the Chairman, Dr. Bozorth, asked Mr. Meiklejohn to discuss co-sponsorship with AIME and asked J. E. Goldman to obtain information on suitable meeting places and lodging in Pittsburgh. Mr. J.A. Osborn was asked to check the dates of other meetings scheduled in Pittsburgh in the Spring of 1955. Mr. Chegwidden was asked to discuss the idea with members of the IRE. Subsequently, A.C. Beiler was asked to take up the matter with the Pittsburgh section of the AIEE and the matter was discussed briefly with Dr. B.R. Teare, but since there were no formal meetings of the executive committee during the Summer months, no action by the Pittsburgh Section was taken at that time.

Meanwhile, tentative arrangements were made to hold the Conference in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh and the possibility of holding exhibits in this area was investigated.

Agreement to cooperate on such a Conference was obtained from the American Physical Society and the AIME. The local chairman of the [1955] Conference was asked to coordinate the arrangements.

It was agreed that a meeting with Mr. Gardner, Dr. Bozorth, and all of those so far indicating a willingness to work on the Conference should be held on November 18 to discuss plans already made and to formalize committee organization. This was carried out during the meeting on November 18 and at the next meeting of the executive committee of the Pittsburgh Section on November 24, 1954, the action taken earlier was ratified.

At the November 18 meeting, which was also attended by Mr. Rimbach who explained what we would do if given charge of the exhibits, it was agreed wise to shift the locale of the meeting from the Oakland district to downtown Pittsburgh. The William Penn Hotel seemed the most likely spot because of its facilities would permit technical meetings, exhibits, sleeping rooms, and meals in a single building.

Jeff Childress - 55th MMM Conference 2010