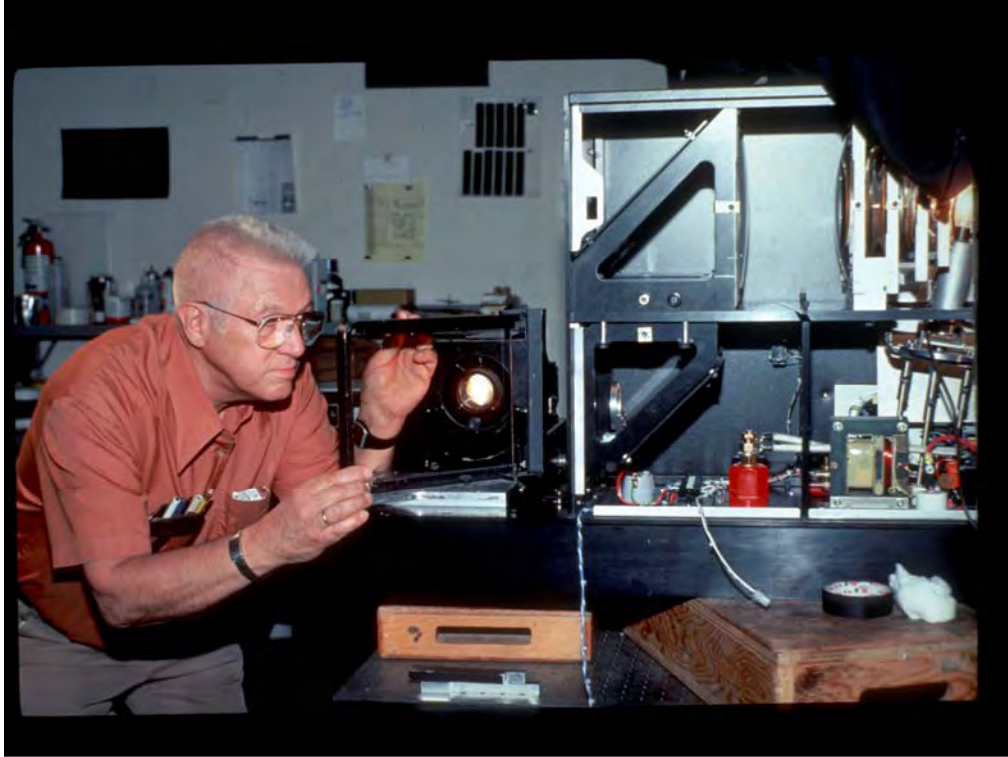




I'm quite amazed and deeply honoured to be selected for this Award. As I feel my efforts on behalf of our Society and our profession have been hugely influenced by my two principal mentors and exemplars, Lin Dunn and Don Trumbull, this recognition is as much due to them as to myself. Both were born just about a hundred years ago and lived into their nineties (which is quite astonishing given what a killer of a business this is.)



Don, of course, most well known as the father of Doug Trumbull but also known to a whole generation of FX people simply as “Pappy,” designed and built a legion of FX technology; a variety of front and rear screen projectors, much of the motion control camera systems particularly for “Star Wars” where he was the proto Obi Wan Kenobi. He taught innovative and elegant motion picture engineering and I’m delighted to share billing with him on some Awards and patents.



Lin, likewise a master teacher was still bubbling with new ideas right to the moment the curtain came down. It's truly fitting and appropriate for the VES to meet in this, the Lin Dunn Theatre. For, while we all recognize the heroic efforts, ten years ago, of Tom Atkin in spearheading the founding of this Society, it was Lin Dunn's absolute devotion to the arts and sciences of motion pictures and his utter conviction of the importance of visual effects to the art-form . . .



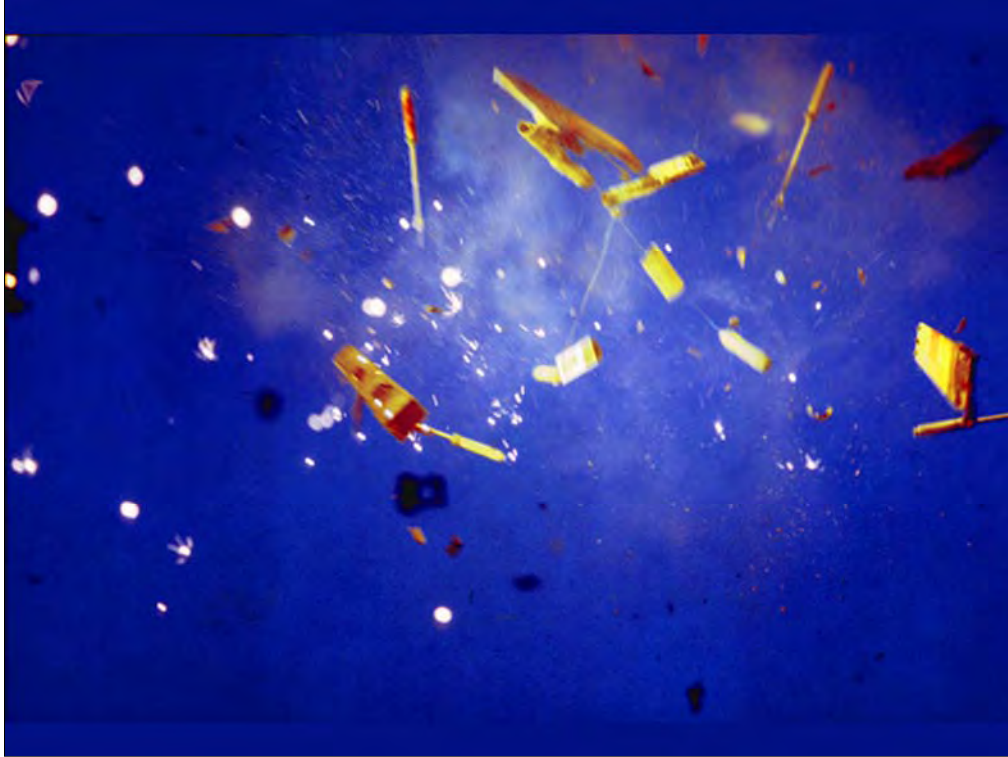
. . . that drove him to 'architect' us all from being seen as purveyors of optical trickery and deceit, into the recognition, as much by us as everyone else, that we're a real profession.



The strategy, that he laid out some two decades ago, and that several of us present here tonight participated in carrying out, called for, first; to establish a Branch for Visual Effects within the Academy, and then second; establish a Society of Visual Effects. The evidence of his convictions about these institutions is plain to see: Lin is the only Academy Governor to have represented two different branches; the Cinematographers Branch and the Visual Effects Branch; he was a President of the American Society of Cinematographers; and, long before he was made an Honorary Member of the Visual Effects Society, he was an Honorary Member of SMPTE. Which, by the way, meets every month right here in his theatre. Honorary members of such institutions, remember, live on in the rolls forever.

As a protege of both Don Trumbull and Lin Dunn, I've spent much of the last twenty years pursuing the goals of establishing Visual Effects as a Branch in the Academy and as a Society. But what's that all about? What's an Academy? Why a Society?

Because "society"; "community"; "culture"; is the medium, or "matrix" that connects and binds us all together and makes absolutely everything else possible. Like the air we all breath. What, before the advent of quantum physics, we called - the ether.



Early in the “Star Wars” research it was determined that, if we set off explosions in the airless vacuum of space, as called for in the script, the audience would see little and hear - nothing. Without the medium of air, you do not have the sight and sound of the fury we were trying to convey. . .



. . . So a major and essential “cheat” or “effect” of Star Wars was that we put an “atmosphere” in space in order to communicate a visceral comprehension. If you want your voice to be heard there has to be a medium to carry it or you have no voice. If you have no voice, you cannot be a part of the culture. Which means no cultural heritage, no past, no future, no life at all. Our societies, our Academies, our “community” are the medium or “glue” that holds us all together and connects us to our past and guides us toward our future. And, for our future to be better; we have to bring forward the very best of our past, that’s what heritage is all about.

There was once a proposal within this society to change the name to the “Digital Effects Society” to reflect the changing times, and perhaps to capitalize on the catchy term “digital.” (Lord knows I’ve done it.) I’m opposed to such a change in large part because it would serve to renounce our incredibly rich heritage. And, remember, the views I express are my own; not necessarily shared by anyone.



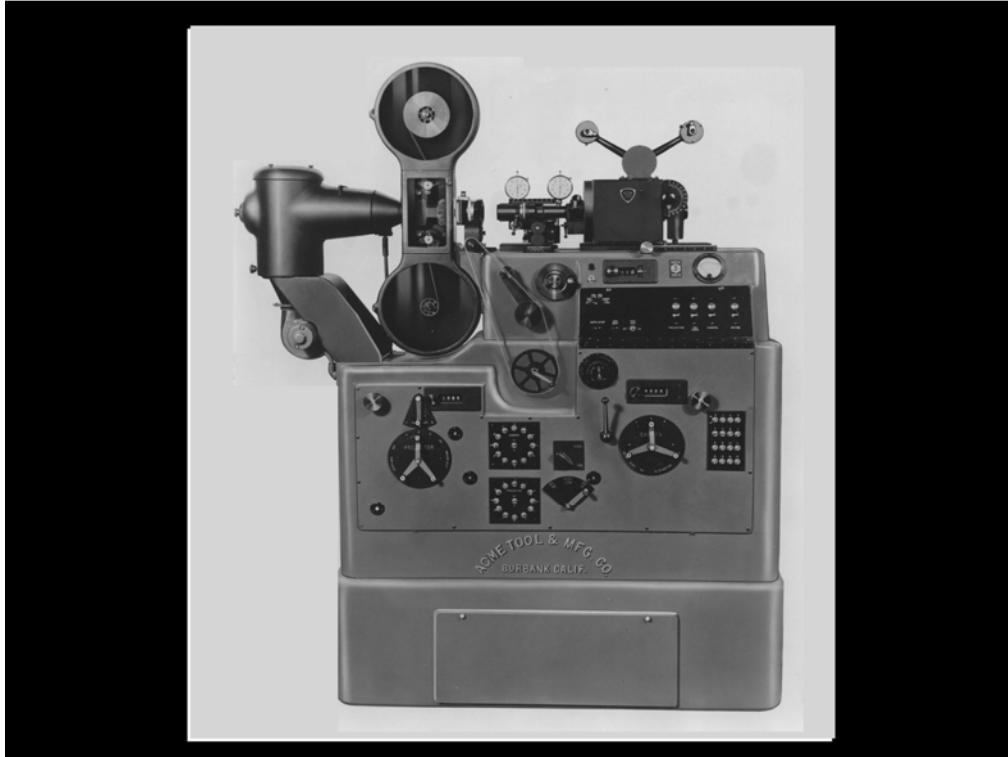
We are practitioners of an art far older even than the movies. The first lantern projection occurred in 1420. That was us. Two hundred years ago we were known for beguiling optical illusions. . .



. . . A hundred and fifty years ago, the magic lantern was the rage, and those of you who were here last night were treated to a tour de force demonstration of what an effect that is, with wipes, dissolves and composite imagery. The phantasmagoria was the birthplace of multi-media. . . .



. . . Some of the earliest efforts to produce motion pictures were designed by Louis Le Prince to be part of a giant panorama; a special effect. And, of course, the whole concept of movies, when they finally came, was a special effect. And when the motion picture process became routine, commoditized and was no longer quite so “special” we, . . .



that is to say, Lin, developed the optical printer and extended the frontiers of our profession still further.

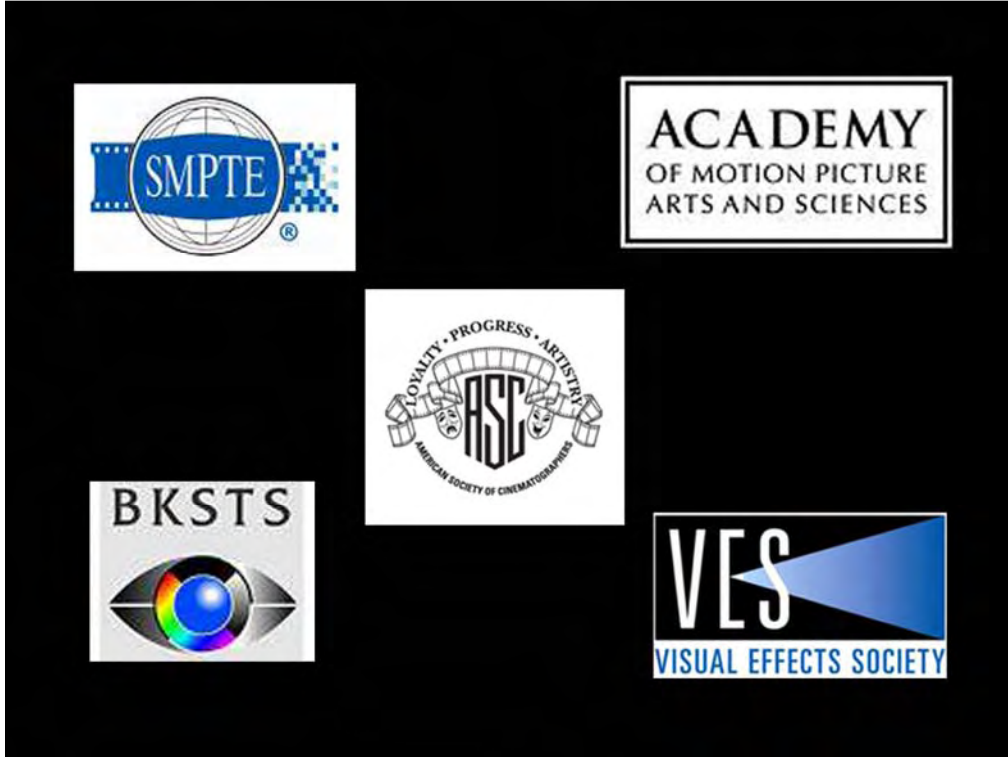
What is also clear from this brief historical sketch is that we have no place in particular that we can call home. We are a tribe whose origins are lost in the proverbial mists of time, a diaspora scattered across the globe like gypsies, endlessly traveling like the players in Shakespear's "Hamlet" who were admonished to, "Hold a mirror up to life." Except that in our case it's a Schuftan mirror - and we'll sometimes even bend it ! (We are like so many Flying Dutchmen, destined to sail around the world eternally until some producer genuinely professes to love us, so we can die in peace!).



For myself, it's now been fifty years. These are a couple of stills from the first effects film I was associated with, made far away in time and space, a student film called "Brief Armistice" produced at the London Film School in 1956. It was an anti-war film set in World War II. I played a Luftwaffe pilot, shot down over France who fetches up in a little French farmhouse with an invalid farmer and a shell shocked English "Tommy." They spend a few days in the farmhouse until they recover enough to return to the fray. Hence the title. This was a black and white 35mm. production with masses of miniature battlefield scenes, miniature aircraft and quite a bit of pyro work for which we had to create our own black powder from scratch to make our squibs.



The fact that we are a diaspora, without a home, is a central part of why we need a Society. Our tribe is of diverse nationalities, ethnicities, and religions, but our Society relates to our common bond as a profession, joins our voices so we can be heard as well as seen, and permits us, as a society, to use that voice to participate as a member of the larger family of Societies, . . .



. . . a family that includes the Academy hosting us tonight, as well as the SMPTE, the ASC the BKSTS, BAFTA and others. Within that family we participate in a great debate, when the occasion warrants, and a great chorus, when that occasion warrants.



Beyond that, the family sometimes pools its resources and its talents to study and learn and do research for the common good. Right here in this building is housed the, "Esmeralda" stage. (And this being the Academy, of course, it's the only stage in the industry with wall-to-wall carpet!) On this stage are conducted a variety of studies. Participating in these studies is an informal consortium of societies including this one, as well as the ASC and, particularly, the Academy Science and Technology Council.

As a relative newcomer on the scene, we're obviously a minor associate at present, but, over time, as we grow in stature and resources - and wisdom, we will hopefully assume a respectable place at the table, and in the debate, and make our voice heard in the chorus. And what such a chorus can achieve is considerable. . . .

Science & Technology Council

- **Public Programs and Education Subcommittee**
- **Technology History Subcommittee**
- **Advanced Technology Programs Subcommittee**
 - **Colorimetry for Digital Cinema**
 - **Stage Lighting Color Investigation**
 - **Film Stock Analysis**
 - **Digital Cinema Camera Survey**
 - **Image Interchange Framework**
 - **Digital Motion Picture Archival**
 - **Lamp Colorimetry Study**

. . . In the area of advanced technology, the Academy Council, the leading voice in this chorus, is studying the issues you see here, and Film Stock Analysis, a study which began life with the now defunct TCMPT, and was then taken up by the VES Technology Committee, which committee, by the way, . . .

“May you live in interesting times.”

- Ancient Chinese curse

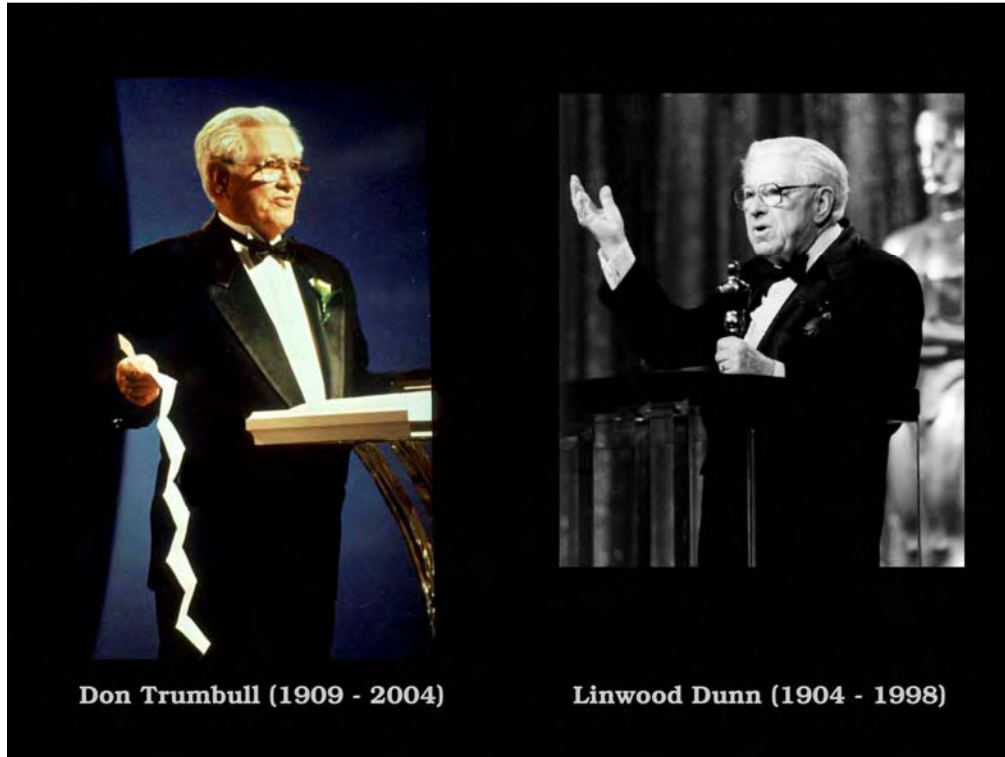
. . . There is an ancient Chinese curse that says, “May you live in interesting times.” Well, we’re now way past “interesting,” - we’re all the way to white-knuckle fascinating! . . .

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. . . A real killer problem the Council has resolved to tackle is the problem of Digital Archive. It's perfectly obvious that migration will fail because you only have to miss the migration bus one time and you're out, not to mention there will never be enough busses. A real solution has to be found and soon.

There are many such issues, with most of them calling out loud for the cooperation of the family of societies. At ten years old we're still a fledgling member of the family, fumbling to find our footing and preoccupied with issues like Awards Programs, but in time we will have to begin to shoulder some of these burdens also. And when I say the Society should bear the burden what I mean, of course, is that you should bear the burden, because any Society, any Academy, is no more than its Academicians.



Don Trumbull (1909 - 2004)

Linwood Dunn (1904 - 1998)

We are not members, by the way. You can be member of Costco, or Kaiser or a book club, but when the institution in question is an Academy, or an honorary professional Society such as this, then the correct term is - "Academician." And with that term comes a great deal more responsibility than you have as a Costco or Kaiser member. You are engaged in the pursuit of excellence and running a marathon until you drop. Which is what both Lin Dunn and Don Trumbull did. . . .



. . . So, to paraphrase an American president, "Ask not what your Society can do for you; ask what you can do for your Society."