

Frank Nelson, Senior Trustee of AFTRA P&W Plan, dies

Frank Nelson, a towering presence within AFTRA since the union's inception, and the man who successfully introduced a mandate on the floor of the 1954 AFTRA Convention to establish the first pension and welfare plan for freelance performers in the broadcasting industry, died September 12 at his home in Hollywood, after a long battle with cancer. Mr. Nelson, who was 75, had remained active professionally and in the affairs of the union, which he helped to found nearly 50 years ago, until the end.

At the time of his death, Mr. Nelson was serving as an active member of both the AFTRA National Board and the Board of the union's Los Angeles Local, and as AFTRA's senior Pension and Welfare Trustee, a post he had held since the plan's inception in 1956 when radio shows, radio commercials and transcriptions came under the plan.

He had been president of the Los Angeles Local for seven and a half years and was AFTRA's National President from 1954 to 1957.

In 1958 Mr. Nelson was awarded the union's highest honor — the George Heller Memorial Gold Card. At the presentation he was called "a living legend of our union — a walking encyclopedia and book of knowledge of all things AFTRA — highly respected on both sides of any negotiating table."

His professional credits read like the history of radio and television: his many featured appearances include the *Burns and Allen*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Bing Crosby*, *Eddie Cantor* programs; *Lux Radio Theatre*, the *Rudy Vallee*, *Bob Hope*, *Red Skelton*, *Abbott and Costello*, *Bob Burns*, *Eve Arden Shows*, and, for 38 years, he was a charter member of Jack Benny's radio and television family.

"Frank Nelson fought fiercely for the things he believed in and he believed in AFTRA with a vengeance," said National President Frank Maxwell. "His pervasive knowledge of his union . . . and his devotion to the welfare of his fellow members will leave its stamp on AFTRA for as long as the union lasts."

John Hall, AFTRA National Executive Secretary, declared that "Frank was one of a kind . . . tough and smart and brilliantly articulate and, without restraint, he spent all of these formidable talents in the service of AFTRA, which he loved so much and for so long."

In Mr. Nelson's memory, the New York Local has authorized an annual expenditure toward the establishment of a Scholarship Award in his name, to be administered through the AFTRA Memorial Foundation.

Mr. Nelson is survived by his wife, actress and fellow-AFTRAn Veola Vonn, by a son, Doug, a daughter, Bonnie Esther, a granddaughter and a great-grandson.

Funeral services were private, and a memorial service was held on September 27 at Forest Lawn Hills in Hollywood. The family has requested that any contributions in his memory be made to the AFTRA Sick and Benefit Fund, of which he was so much a part.



Frank Nelson.

Longtime AFTRAn Walter Brooke dies

A memorial service was held last September 5 for longtime AFTRAn Walter Brooke, 71, who died of emphysema on August 20 in Los Angeles. Mr. Brooke — radio, television, stage and screen actor — had been an active member of AFTRA over the years, serving on both the Los Angeles Local and National Boards.

A native New Yorker, he began his career in the theatre, appearing with such stars as Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Tallulah Bankhead, Basil Rathbone and Geraldine Fitzgerald. He was seen in numerous motion pictures during his long career, including *Executive Suite*, *North Dallas Forty*, *Omen II*, *Stir Crazy* and *Jagged Edge*, but is probably best remembered as the man who sagely whispered "Plastics!" to Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*. His appearances in more than 500 television shows include the current TV series, *Cagney & Lacey*, *Simon & Simon* and *Knots Landing*.

Mr. Brooke will be missed by his many friends in the profession, and in the union he served so well and for so long.