



Fabian Bachrach

Hugo Gernsback

1884-1967

HUGO GERNSBACK, Editor-in-Chief of *RADIO-ELECTRONICS*, writer, publisher, educator, inventor and prophet, died August 19 in New York City. His age was 83.

Born in Luxembourg August 16, 1884, Gernsback received an electrical engineering education at the Technikum in Bingen, Germany. He came to the United States in 1904 to exploit an invention—an improved dry battery. A year later he started the *Electro Importing Co.*, the world's first radio supply house.

In 1906 Gernsback founded *Modern Electrics*, the first of a long series of radio and technical magazines. He sold it in 1912, and after a series of combinations, it became one of the ancestors of today's *Popular Science*. He immediately started a larger magazine, the *Electrical Experimenter* (which became *Science and Invention* in 1921). In 1919 he

established a purely radio magazine, *Radio Amateur News*. It became *Radio News* in 1920 and still exists as *Electronics World*.

When *Radio News* passed into other hands, Gernsback founded a new magazine, *Radio-Craft* (now *RADIO-ELECTRONICS*). It first appeared on the stands in July, 1929. Other magazines were *Television* (1929) and *Television News* (1932-33). He also published numbers of other technical, bio-medical and aviation magazines. In 1926 he established the world's first science-fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories* (still in existence). He is known as the father of modern science fiction.

Always a champion of the radio enthusiast, whether amateur, experimenter or professional, Gernsback's crusading for the rights of the early

HUGO GERNSBACK: We were unable to report Hugo Gernsback's death in the last Bulletin since it occurred as we were going to press. Considerable thought was given how to write an accurate account of his life in this issue. Mr. Gernsback was recognized by most radio historians as the world's foremost pioneer radio publisher. The solution came easy: Mr. Harvey Gernsback, Publisher, gave permission to use copy from *RADIO-ELECTRONICS* magazine of which Hugo Gernsback was Editor-in-Chief.

While on the subject, we would like to comment on several letters received from members concerning the small notice, if any, given to his death in big radio magazines and trade journals. It provoked quite a few snickers among the pro's and those in the engineering field even though they were not historians or necessarily Gernsback admirers. Could it have been complete ignorance on the part of fly-by-night Editors whose names will soon be forgotten --- or, are they just jealous of a man whose publications have been read for the past 60 yrs. ?

"hams" caused the American Radio Relay League to refer to him at one time as the Father of Amateur Radio. His Wireless League of America, founded in 1909, was an early amateur group. He encouraged and sponsored the engineers' association that later became the Institute of Radio Engineers (now IEEE) and tried to establish a radio service technicians' organization, the Official Radio Service Men's Association (ORSMA).

As inventor, Gernsback obtained some 80 patents, including one on the compression-type capacitor (the principle used in trimmers) and the use of bone conduction as an aid to hearing.

Best known to the general public as a prophet, Gernsback's most striking prediction was the description of radar, which appeared in the *Modern Electrics* serial "Ralph 124C 41+." In the same story he predicted space travel, microfilm, two-way television, germicidal rays, tape

recording (with quarter-inch tape!), night baseball, artificial silk and wool, and fluorescent lights.

He was the author of three books, *The Wireless Telephone* (1908), *Radio for All* (1922) and *Ralph 124C 41+*, which appeared in book form in 1925. A second edition was published in 1950 and a paperback edition was put out by Crest Books in 1958. A Russian translation was published in 1964.

In 1928, his radio station, WRNY in New York City, was the first to broadcast television on a regular schedule. The miniature pictures were not considered entertainment quality even in that day, but were faithfully received by more than 2,000 amateur viewers.

He leaves four children, Madelon of Rome, Italy; M. Harvey of New York (publisher of RADIO-ELECTRONICS); Mrs. Tina Baer of New York and Mrs. Jocelyn Neichin of Monsey, N.Y., seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALLMENTS

Ralph 124C 41+ living in New York in the year 2060 while in conversation with a friend at his Telephot, an instrument enabling one to see at a distance, is cut off from his friend and by mistake is connected with a young lady in Switzerland, thus making her acquaintance by Telephot.

The weather engineers in Switzerland who control the weather decided to strike against the Government and turned on the high depression of their Meteoro-Towers, thereby snowing in a large district. An avalanche threatens to sweep away the house in which the young Swiss lady, Miss 212B 423, lives and she appeals to the great American inventor, Ralph 124C 41+, to save her, which he promptly does by melting the avalanche by directed wireless energy from his New York laboratory.

The inventor on the same afternoon is given an ovation by distance, in which the Telephot plays a great part. Afterwards he reads a "newspaper," the size of a postage stamp, and "writes" a lecture by means of the Menograph, an instrument by means of which words are made to appear on a paper tape by impulses from the brain acting on the apparatus. During the night his head is connected electrically to the Hypnobioscope, an instrument by means of which words and sentences are transmitted directly to the brain while one sleeps, in such a manner that everything can be remembered the next morning.

SYNOPSIS FOR A CHAPTER IN HUGO GERNSBACK'S STORY "RALPH 124C 41+

copied from the July, 1911 issue of MODERN ELECTRONICS magazine. The story appeared in serial form in 1911 and 1912. It was later published as a book.