

The Story of the 'Tower of Light' and 'The Enjoyment of Electricity'

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The "Tower of Light," above, is one of the most popular pavilions at the N. Y. World's Fair. The average daily attendance is 17,000, but on many days as many as 25,000 people have gone through the building's chambers.

ON Sept. 25, 1962, ground was broken for the Electric Power & Light Exhibit at the New York World's Fair. Those present at that ceremony included, among others, Fair President Robert Moses; John Edison Sloane, grandson of the great pioneer of our industry; Edwin Vennard, Managing Director of Edison Electric Institute, and myself. At that time it was difficult to imagine that this marshland could be transformed into a dazzling city of great exhibition structures and tree-lined boulevards. Hardly any of the hundreds of pavilions had reached the construction stage.

19 Months for Fair Construction

Nineteen months later, almost to the day, finishing touches were being made on the great array of giant pavilions, and the grounds were being spruced up in readiness for the April 22, 1964, opening of the New York World's Fair.

The decision of our industry to take part in this Fair was made in September, 1960. In launching the great undertaking, Mr. Moses stated, "The World's Fair of today is not only a place to exhibit and see the finest and most modern and significant products of the imagination and skill of all nations, but a forum in which national ambition and ideologies are combined and fully exploited and promoted." It was evident that no such exposition would be complete without the participation of the electric utility industry, and we took our first step by selecting and leasing an excellent site adjacent to the Pool of Industry and on the corner of two of the principal streets.

It was clear that our participation would have to be more than a token gesture — that it presented an opportunity to tell the story of the industry to many millions of people and to build the image of the industry in the mind of the American public. Of course, we are not strangers to this business of fairs and exhibits. Our companies throughout the country have for years been key contributors to the success of expositions at the local, county, state, national and even international levels. It was obvious from the beginning, however, that the New York Fair would be the greatest of all time and that any exhibitor must be prepared to compete with new levels of glamor, imagination and fantasy if he expected to attract the visitor into his pavilion.

Story Developed

Our next step was to develop our story, and here we leaned heavily on Ed Vennard and the public relations people in EEI member companies to determine what elements of our business should be stressed in the show presentation. Our problem was to select those factors which the producers thought could most readily be

conveyed in an interesting and entertaining manner and within a period of time we could expect visitors to give to our exhibit — about 30 minutes.

Our show designers and producers, Robinson-Capsis-Stern Associates, Inc., of New York were the designers and producers of the successful theme show at the Seattle World's Fair and have been responsible for a number of outstanding exposition productions throughout the world. In the end, they have, I think, developed a presentation designed to impress on our audience that we are friendly, competent and dependable people to do business with — and have communicated some key facts about our industry.

The architects of our really beautiful building are Synergetics, Inc., of Raleigh, N. C. This vital young organization, founded by the famous Buckminster Fuller, has designed many advanced and unusual structures throughout the United States and is involved with several other major buildings at this Fair.



Robert Moses, left, President of the World's Fair Corp., and Ernest R. Acker, President of Electric Power & Light Exhibit, Inc., discuss the industry's "Tower of Light" pavilion at the ground-breaking ceremonies.

From the beginning, we were convinced that our building must be imaginative, modern in its concept and must tie in with one of the principal aspects of our business — light. The "Tower of Light" building, with its vaulting triangular prisms mounting to a spectacular beam of light, carries out this concept and expresses what Alfred Stern calls "the soaring verticality of light." Anodized aluminum panels supported by tubular steel framing form the prisms which at night are bathed in ever-changing, multicolored lights cascading upward toward the central open core of the building from which our 12-billion candlepower beam of light shoots miles into the sky.

Architectural Triumph of Fair

The completed pavilion has been described even by more traditional architects as one of the architectural triumphs of the Fair — and I feel we have contributed an exciting new type of structure to modern exposition design.

At this Fair we have adopted the philosophy that it will be necessary to entertain the visitor in order to inform him. We will be speaking, for the most part, to American families who have come to Flushing Meadow in a festive mood and we are convinced that we must satisfy their quest for pleasure if we are to impress them with a better understanding of our industry.

Our exhibit, therefore, is a show in the true sense of the word. It is a musical presentation with a score of 11 individual songs. The tunes are integrated into a lively script, just as you would hear in a Broadway musical. The music was composed by a brilliant young Broadway composer, Claibe Richardson. The famed orchestrator, Robert Russell Bennett, whom we retained as our musical director, has described the music as the most delightful and original he has ever scored for an industrial presentation.

In preparing the script for the show, Robinson-Caplan-Stern stressed two elements as essential to our story — the progressive technical competence of the industry and its dedication to free enterprise. Within the framework of these two themes they have introduced specific elements of our business, such as the transmission and distribution of power, research, industrial and commercial utilization, rural electrification, and electricity in the home.

Rotund, Light-Bulb Character

They conceived a rotund, light-bulb character called Uncle Ben, reminiscent of an earlier Ben named Franklin. Uncle Ben is a three-dimensional, fully automated, electrically controlled figure, as are the other members of the all-electric cast.

Another character was developed to serve as Uncle Ben's constant companion — "Sam the Eagle" — who finds Uncle Ben's philosophical approach to the industry story in need of factual support, which he volunteers throughout the show. New characters emerged:

a kangaroo whose hop symbolizes the mounting cost of living; a flock of cheerful "kilowatt birds" to symbolize the services, the enterprise and economy of the investor-owned electric utility industry; some delightful barnyard animals — a languorous cow who finds that electric milkers are ever so much more pleasant than "Farmer Brown's icy hands"; two premium piglets who go to market sooner because they eat all day and night thanks to electric illumination; and three chickens, grateful for their electric incubators and brooders; a penguin, proud of the accomplishments of electric air conditioning; a polar bear who understands that electric air conditioning is made to order for hibernation; and a mermaid who realizes that electric air conditioning means you can control the humidity as well as the temperature and thus achieve an ideal climate.

As our show developed, we felt that we needed some expert assistance in determining its public acceptance and appeal and, therefore, we called upon Opinion Research Corp. of Princeton, N. J., to pre-test the presentation with a number of groups of various age levels and different social and economic backgrounds. This research indicated that our main objectives were being communicated and showed us in what respects the script could be improved. Over-all, the show was well received, and we went forward with increased confidence in its ultimate effectiveness.

For Both Adults and Children

The final cast of delightful characters, combined with a lively script and lilting musical score, tells our somewhat technological story in a way that both adults and children can enjoy and comprehend.

Here, in brief, is a high-spot tour of the Tower of Light pavilion. The visitor enters the building via a moving speed ramp. He steps on to an electrically powered rotating ring which takes him through seven theater chambers. In the first chamber, he experiences a spectacle of light and sound that we call "The Overture of Light." At the conclusion of this colorful introduction he meets Uncle Ben, who descends on the audience in a giant balloon which resembles a light bulb. Sam the Eagle accompanies Uncle Ben, and it is also in this first chamber that we meet a boy and girl — George and Betsy — projected on film, who introduce a romantic aspect to the show.

The turntable revolves the audience to the next chamber where Uncle Ben and Sam tell the story of how power capacities are determined by and follow the population densities of America. Realizing that the subject might be somewhat heavy, Uncle Ben treats the audience to "The Chorus of the Copper Cables," a lilting treatment of electrical generation, transmission, and distribution.

Theatrical effects like this help us tell the story of electric power in industry, on the farm, and in the home — and of research. In the farm scene, for instance, a "gorgeous" cow sings about the advantages



Directors of Electric Power & Light Exhibit, Inc., inspect a special display on the industry's participation in the N. Y. World's Fair, during the 1963 Convention in Denver. From left are: Ernest R. Acker, President of EP&LE; Beeman Fisher, Texas Electric Service Co.; Harold Quinton, Southern California Edison Co.; Harlee Branch, Jr., The Southern Co.; and W. H. Sammis, Ohio Edison Co.

of electricity she enjoys. Next, the piglets have something to sing about in a delightful musical number called "The Happy Hams." Three chickens are depicted in a lavish barn facility that resembles a restaurant.

One scene is "Hometown, USA" on the 4th of July. Here Uncle Ben tells the townspeople of the blessings of our country and the advantages we enjoy under the free enterprise system. The scene is climaxed by a spectacular fireworks display which is, naturally, all electric. There is also a magnificent Christmas scene in our show.

These are just a few highlights of *The Enjoyment of Electricity* — the appropriate title of our exhibit presentation.

It took only 19 months for our building and show to be transformed from a concept to reality. As president of the corporation set up by the investor-owned electric utility industry to handle this project, I have been intimately involved through the conceptual planning, design, construction and production stages and finally have the satisfaction of seeing a completed pavilion of

which the industry can be justly proud. As an engineer, I have had some experience with building during the past 15 years, and I have administered my share of projects involving the planning, construction and operation of many types of gas and electric facilities. My experience with this project, however, has been absolutely unique, not only because of the advanced type of building construction involved, but also because of my participation in the development of the industry's story and my exposure to the keen minds of the designers, writers, composer and artists who have built an entertaining production to put that story across. The experience has been extremely rewarding, and I am satisfied we have a show that will draw the crowd and justify the investment in the whole project.

There are 194 performances a day to delight our audience. This schedule will continue for the 180 days the Fair is open in 1964 and will resume again in April, 1965, for another 180-day period. Our hopeful estimate is that from 6 to 9 million people will visit us at the Fair and spend 30 minutes enjoying themselves and absorbing the message of our industry.