



A Half-Century of Press Relations at ISSCC

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Preamble

Although the documentation of press-related activity at ISSCC over these 50 years is neither formal nor complete, there is a pervading sense, and some documentation, that the Press have played an important role.

Far from the least-significant of the peripheral evidence of this fact is the very early attachment of Lewis Winner (radio-commentator/print-journalist) to the Conference. In fact, his initial (speculative) assignment was to issue a Digest of summaries of all papers, and to organize public relations, generally. Then, with the success of the Digest, and the Conference as a whole, Lew's role expanded to more than a full-time job by 1978. As sole proprietor of this one-man-band, he orchestrated, conducted, and implemented Conference activities until his death in 1988. The Press was one of his more important instruments.

Since the time of his death, upon which his many roles were divided amongst a host of individuals, press relations was put in the hands of two others in succession, first of Jack Raper, from 1988 to 1993, and now, beginning in 1994, of Kenneth C. Smith, with the invaluable assistance of Laura Fujino for a long time, but most intensely since 1997.

While the obvious explicit role of ISSCC's Press-Relations activity has been to interest and inform members of the Press, who in turn would inform the technical and general public, there is some implicit sense that it was also intended as a means to less-direct other ends. Certainly these days, and for the last ten years, the strategy has been to target less-technical management through the influence of the financial Press. For it is such upper management who exert financial control over the essential life-line to ISSCC's success - the participation of volunteers, of authors, and of attendees - all of which depends on a positive corporate (financial) attitude. Thus, our goal has been to convince management that, even in hard times, ISSCC is where the action is, will be foretold, and will be demonstrated; In short, if informed early action leads to success, then ISSCC is where to invest!

The Very Early Years

Prior to 1958, there is little explicit evidence of Press-related activity associated with what was then known as the Transistor Conference. Its origins in a workshop whose intent was to facilitate technical-information exchange unfettered by corporate/legal restrictions, doubtless led to an ambivalence about publicity. However, the early growth rate of the meeting, from an attendance of 600+ in 1954 to 3300 in 1960, for example, provides evidence of an effective means of information distribution. But, at first, this was likely less formal, within the few corporations involved, and amongst their technical friends, all of whom were eager to obtain any available information, as interest in semiconductor circuits surged. As well, it was in 1957, when a recognition of the value of "openness" was demonstrated by the creation of the "Conference Record of Figures and Diagrams", that more-public promotion began, (see page S21).

Highlights of Press/Publicity Activity over the Latter Years

(With timescale set by reference to the associated Conference year):

- 1958** Lewis Winner is retained on speculation as publicist and Digest publisher
- 1958** A Press Room is set up in Houston Hall at the University of Pennsylvania, with two phones (at a cost of \$11)
- 1958** A Press luncheon at the Conference is initiated
- 1959** Lewis Winner accepts a permanent role at ISSCC (along with his corresponding roles at other Conferences)

- 1960** Mass mailing of 32,000 copies of pre-Conference publicity
- 1961** First Pre-Conference Press Luncheon held at Sardi's
- 1962** Conference announcements in English and German mailed to 123 journals
- 1964** At the New York Pre-Conference Press Luncheon at Sardi's, 5 publications agree to preview the entire (advance) program
- 1965** Lew Winner identifies 63 columns of post-Conference reporting by in the Press
- 1966** Voice of America requests, and is given, a list of overseas speakers
- 1967** "Electronic Design", and "Microwave" are allowed to view (but not copy) galley proofs of the Digest, to assist them in planning post-Conference publications
- 1967** The at-Conference Press Luncheon has grown to become a recognition luncheon for overseas speakers and award winners
- 1967** Use of cameras and tape recorders at the Evening Sessions becomes a big issue, resulting in a clamp-down
- 1971** Pre-publication becomes an acute problem with 3 or 4 papers apparently leaked to the Press prior to the Conference
- 1972** First-time appearance of Swedish press at the Conference (from "Electronic", Stockholm)
- 1973** "Electronic News" provides a 4-page report
- 1976** "Electronics" plans a 5-page post-Conference article
- 1978** Beatrice Winner, Lew's wife, traditionally in charge of Digest accuracy, passes on in 1977
- 1980** Lew Winner shows a 90-page scrapbook of Press clippings at the closing Executive-Committee meeting
- 1984** "Electronic Design" coverage runs to 23 pages
- 1985** Lew Winner participates in a telephone interview from London with the London Times
- 1988** Lew Winner passes on before the New York Pre-Conference Press-Review meeting; Jack Raper takes over the Press-Relations task
- 1990** In response to requests by the Press, the Pre-Conference Press Meeting is moved from the first Thursday of January to early in the first week of December
- 1989** A second Pre-Conference Press Meeting is inaugurated in San Francisco
- 1993** The last Pre-Conference Press Meeting is held at Sardi's
- 1993** Jack Raper retires as Press-Relations Chair, KC Smith takes over
- 1994** A formal bound book, the "Press Kit", is inaugurated. It has 120 pages, with the Advance Program as a back-cover insert.
- 1995** A Far-East Press Conference is inaugurated in Tokyo in early November
- 1995** The west-coast (San Francisco) Pre-Conference Press Meeting is moved to San Jose for one year due to a conference-timing conflict for regular Press attendees. In 1996, the west-coast Pre-Conference Press meeting is replaced for this and subsequent years, by a series of pre-arranged visits to Press in the San Francisco and the Bay area.
- 1997** The "Press Gallery", a display of ISSCC-related publications from around the world, is inaugurated. Located in the hallway leading to the Ballrooms at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel, it is intended to show attendees the breadth of world interest in ISSCC. Its concentration is both on publications following the previous Conference, as well as those appearing before and during the current one. Some material from even earlier Conferences is also presented.
- 2002** A CD including the Press Kit and Advance Program is inaugurated
- 2003** A Korean Press Conference is begun in Seoul in early November

Final Reflections of 50 Years

The Press have been, and continue to be, an important part of the Conference's success. Their influence has certainly contributed positively to the universal feeling of ISSCC's importance to the solid-state industry, and the cognate creativity it supports. Without the influence of the Press, a great many important individuals, both technical and financial, would be far less informed!

