

FRANCES RICE DARNE

Frances Violet Rice was born in New York, N.Y. on July 2, 1901. Her parents were Dr. Joseph M. Rice and Deborah Levinson Rice. She attended Germantown High School in Philadelphia, Pa. She entered Cornell University in September 1919 and was, in 1923, the first female to receive the Electrical Engineering degree from Cornell University. At Cornell she was very active as she was a member of the Dramatic Club, member and president of the Mandolin Club, member of the Womens' Glee Club, 4 year member and captain of the womens' basketball team, participant and manager of the womens' baseball team, and on the womens' track team. She was also a student member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. Her picture is in the 1923 Cornell yearbook.

After graduation Frances Rice spent 10 years as a secretary at the Travelers Insurance Company in Philadelphia. She became a member of the American Radio Relay League and had her own amateur radio station, W3AKB, in 1927. In 1937 she noted that she was interested in cryptography. In 1937 she took a position at RCA Laboratories, Camden, New Jersey as secretary and laboratory assistant to Dr. Vladimir K. Zworykin, one of television's pioneers.



On June 15, 1942, Frances Rice became a civilian Electronic Engineer for the Bureau of Ships of the US Navy. On September 8, 1945, she married Eppa Webster Darne. They did not have any children. In 1954, Frances Rice Darne was working under Walter Greer and she became the Navy Member and Chairman of the Working Group on Special Tubes of the Advisory Group on Electron Tubes of the Department of Defense. Shortly later she became the Navy Member of the Working Group on Tube Techniques.

In 1961, AGED became the Advisory Group on Electron Devices and Frances Darne became the Navy Member of the Working Group on Special Devices. Frances Darne was also a member of the Subcommittee on Indicator and Pickup Tubes of the Armed Services Electronics Technical Committee. By 1957, Frances Rice Darne was in Code 816, the Electron Tube Section of the Design Standards Branch (Code 815) under the Assistant Chief of Bureau for Electronics (Code 800) and was working in the Main Navy Building on Constitution at 18th Street. Reorganizations by 1965 changed her to Code 681A-1, Tubes and Semiconductors, in the Electronic Warfare and Parts Branch, still at the Main Navy Building. Frances visited many Navy and contractor laboratories who wanted sponsorship of display development by the Navy - and she was therefore well known in the display community. Many of the contracts which she sponsored resulted in advances in the state-of-the-art of displays.

Frances Rice Darne was a charter member of the Society for Information Display and was active in 1963, as a member of the steering committee, in forming the Washington Chapter of SID. She is listed in the January 1963 list of SID officers as the Recording Secretary-Treasurer of the Washington chapter. She died on December 21, 1965.

Frances R. Darne was posthumously made a Fellow of SID on March 31, 1966 at a SID Board of Directors meeting associated with a National Seminar in Santa Monica. The citation was "For contributions to the science of information displays, particularly in the standardization of cathode ray and scan converter tubes. Also for the initiation of scientific efforts for development of electron and CRT military specifications." The presentation was made by Ernest N. Storrs of the Federal Aviation Agency and was reported in the May/June 1966 "Information Display".

The Frances Rice Darne Memorial Award was created at the SID Board of Directors Meeting on October 17, 1966. The award was first presented in 1971 and has been made almost every subsequent year.

This report has been compiled with the help of:

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