You might have experienced this before. You are in a somewhat distant part of the world and find that the person sitting next to you on the plane is from your hometown, or went to your college, or knows your mom. Connections like these happen more often than we think. Recently, I was at the Berlin Tegel Airport waiting in line to board a plane. The gentleman behind me overheard me speaking about SMPTE. It turns out he worked in a television production in the San Francisco area and was in town to cover the Berlin marathon. I noticed that he was wearing a Pittsburgh Pirate baseball hat and just had to ask if he was from my (near) hometown. Not only was he from the Pittsburgh area, he also attended the same college as I did. Wow—what are the chances?

It gets even better. Washington and Jefferson College (W&J) is a small liberal arts college based in Washington, PA, about an hour south of Pittsburgh. I am a proud graduate of the school, where I double-majored in chemistry and German. For many young people, college is a time full of exploration in education and life, which was no different for me. It was a great time. Although I no longer spend time in a chemistry laboratory, W&J is where I learned the scientific method that has defined the way I think and work and live.

Earlier this summer, I was quite surprised when I received a call from the college informing me that I had been selected to receive its Alumni Award for Achievement recognition. I was humbled by this recognition and honored to be considered, given the many worthy graduates of the school.

An even more surprising connection came later when I was sitting with my former chemistry advisor and award presenter, Dr. Pat Brletic, during the award ceremony and she told me that there were other SMPTE and W&J connections. Wanting to learn more, I did a quick SMPTE Journal search in the digital library, when I returned home, and found an interesting Biographical Note, highlighting Ken Mason’s life and career. Mason served as an SMPTE president from 1975 to 1976 and studied at Washington and Jefferson College in the 1940s, earning a degree in chemistry. A startling coincidence!

The article provides a short, but comprehensive, account of Mason’s life and his remarkable career with Kodak, including how he moved around the country with his family.

—Barbara H. Lange

(L–R) John C. Knapp, W&J’s newly appointed president; Barbara Lange; and Patricia A. Brletic, chemistry professor at W&J.
while working for Kodak, also sup-
porting local SMPTE Sections
along the way. Serving the Society
in numerous capacities over three
decades, Mason was a Chicago
Section chair, governor, confer-
ence vice president, finance vice
president, executive vice president,
and then, of course, president.

But that’s not all. Mason and his
wife had five sons who all attended
W&J College. One went on to teach
at the college in the English depart-
ment. Another, John, followed in
his father’s footsteps, ultimately
serving as an SMPTE president
from 2001 to 2002.

Learning of my W&J connec-
tion with the Masons, I reached
out to John to introduce myself.
John is enjoying life in Hawaii and
responded immediately and offered
the following thoughts. “Ken Mason
and I were past presidents of the
SMPTE, and speaking for the both
of us it was an honor and privilege
to serve. We have been the only
father–son team to have served in
the office as president, from the
same company, Kodak, and from
the same undergraduate college,
W&J, as well. This is unique, but
the entire history of the SMPTE
has been unique. The Society
brought order to the chaos of the
early motion picture business and
has provided unparalleled stability
and quality to the media business
ever since. Again, speaking for my
dad, we wish the Society continued
success going forward into its
second century.”

I am happy to learn of this
surprising connection between the
Masons and W&J, and their con-
tribution to SMPTE’s history as father
and son. It is a small world, indeed!

Speaking of SMPTE connec-
tions and history, I am delighted
to report the publication of our
expansive book commemorating
100 years of SMPTE and its
influence on the motion imaging
industry. This 400-page full-color,
hard-cover compilation provides a
comprehensive review of the motion
picture industry and SMPTE
highlights. Thanks to Editorial
Director Phil Cianci, who ably
shepherded the book through its
various stages, including a few
changes and unforeseen delays
along the way. In a write-up on the
book on page 28 in this issue of the
Journal, Cianci notes that the plan
to publish a single book quickly
changed to include two additional.
I hope you will enjoy this book as
a great addition to your library.
I also want to add a huge thanks
to Dianne Purrier, our dedicated
Managing Editor, for her calm
leadership in bringing the books
to fruition.