

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HUGO GERNSBACK

Born in Luxembourg 100 years ago, Hugo Gernsback illuminated the publishing world as Edison lit up its dark cities!

□ 100 YEARS AGO, AUGUST 16, 1884 TO BE precise, Hugo Gernsback was born in Luxembourg. At the age of 19, he emigrated to the United States, and proceeded, in his own quiet way, to make some vast changes in the way we live, the way we think, and the way that things happen.

While he originally thought of himself as an inventor, he soon learned that there was a good deal more profit in importing electrical devices from Europe, for those in this country who were interested in experimenting with that relatively new field. To help forward that end, he wrote and prepared catalogs; and those catalogs became the forerunners of his first magazine, *Modern Electrics*, which first saw the light of day in April, 1908.

His influence was felt in many areas,

but one of the greatest areas of influence that he exerted, was in the field of science fiction. He coined the term *Scientifiction* and originated the science-fiction magazine. His own tales combined his wide knowledge of scientific principles with his vivid imagination, to produce short stories and novels that were fiction, but were founded on firm, scientific fact. How influential was he? To this day, when the science fiction fans have their annual conventions, and give out awards for noteworthy achievement, those awards are called *Hugo's*.

In 1925, he founded radio station WRNY. In 1928—yes, as early as that—station WRNY began transmitting television signals. These were transmitted on a daily basis, and those who were properly equipped could receive them; those who

were not, simply received jumbled noises.

Hugo Gernsback was not by any means a somber intellectual. He had a sense of humor that still makes you stop and wonder. He invented a character called *Mohammed Ulysses Socrates Fips*, an office boy who was an émigré from Mars. Some of his April-fool stories were so believable that in 1933 people actually tried (for example) to order a *pocketable radio* called the *Westingmouse*.

And he held over 80 patents.

On August 19, 1967, Hugo Gernsback passed away. To quote one admirer, "If Hugo Gernsback had stayed home, everything would have been different." Hugo Gernsback left his footprints in our sands of time, and we are grateful.

Happy birthday, Mr. G!



HUGO GERNSBACK was involved with a growing hobby, electronics experimenting, and is seen (lower-left) at his desk in the Experimenter Publishing Co. office in New York City about 1922. About 1909 he visited the DeForest wireless station (lower-right) atop the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In 1948 Hugo Gernsback (upper-right) celebrated the 20th anniversary of Radio-Electronics.

