

Alvin Cooperman Remembered

After working for Lee and J.J. Schubert in the theater since he was 16 years old, Alvin Cooperman, who died last August at the age of 83, got his first job in television: as NBC's production manager for the *Texaco Star Theater*, starring Milton Berle. Reminiscing in *Television Quarterly* about his first day on the set, Cooperman wrote that Berle pointed at him and asked, "Who are you?" "I'm Alvin Cooperman, the NBC production manager." Milton puffed on his cigar. "I hope you're better than the idiot we had last season, kid." Equally inauspicious was Cooperman's first program: because Berle refused to rehearse with props, he flooded the set during a shower scene, which ultimately became a blessing in disguise: "I was a celebrity in the office because the water disaster was what everyone was talking about," Cooperman wrote in *Television Quarterly*. "After all, I came from the theater."

And back to the theater he went. Gerald Schoenfeld, chairman of the Shubert Organization, lured Cooperman away from television to become the company's booker. The job involved poring over hundreds of scripts and buying the rights to those he considered best and matching them with the 22 theaters the company then had in New York and elsewhere. During the past half-century Cooperman was president of Madison Square Garden productions, establishing the MSG Network to carry Garden events, making it the first regional sports network in North America. He was also vice-president of special programs for NBC-TV, where he won Emmy, Christopher and Peabody awards. He held many other important posts, but, in Mr. Schoenfeld's estimate, "he had a good, winning way of dealing with creative people. He had good taste. These are the essential ingredients." Along with Walter Cronkite, Skitch Henderson, Sidney Lumet, Neil Simon and David Susskind, he was one of the original founding members of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences more than 50 years ago.

Alvin Cooperman's contributions to television and the theater are a precious legacy. He will be sorely missed. —Ed.



Alvin Cooperman (left) with Milton Berle
in 1951