

Reminiscences of Mike Tennant

“What’s the formula for the resonant frequency of a Parallel Tuned Circuit?” This question was posed to me by Mike on flight EK2 way back in 2002 on our way to Dubai. And this was a typical conversation, too. Being the same age, Mike and I, remember the same things from our background and training as electronic engineers – me for the Merchant Navy, him for the Royal Air Force. We’d often stray into discussing the best way to test for the HT on the anode of an 807 valve, or how to measure the current flow through the heater circuit of a KTW61. All irrelevant stuff, you might think – nothing to do with today’s microprocessor world: it was proper engineering back then, with AVO8s, soldering irons and circuit diagrams.

If you had to say one thing about Mike, it would be his insatiable curiosity about pretty well everything. Which meant that he had an opinion about pretty well everything as well. His interests ranged widely – there was almost no area where he hadn’t enjoyed some previous experiences, and this all informed his path through life. He was seldom seen without his camera and was always photographing items of interest – not just the Tavcom stand at an exhibition, but any passing fancy, which would stimulate conversation later.

Tavcom was of course his passion. He was meticulous about the company’s presentation, progression and development. Many is the conversation – nay, sometimes argument – that we had about which way the business would grow, especially in the Middle East. With little or no experience in that region, he was understandably reluctant to make any firm financial commitments to an area which he was somewhat suspicious of, at least until he saw the results of attending exhibitions in the various capitals of the region. Having seen how to do business professionally in the UAE, it was full steam ahead with Mike’s typical commitment to making things happen, and before long, contracts were signed, courses were sold, and soon the sky was filled with Tavcom instructors flying back and forth.

Mike was a person who regarded the morning as a waste of time if he hadn’t had at least twelve good ideas before breakfast. I well remember sitting with him in the departure lounge at Heathrow en route to Dublin, with him ignoring my reminders that the flight had been called and that we should get a move on, while he furiously scribbled another 6 ideas down. During the flight, we went through his list, and jointly removed about 90% as being either fanciful, impractical, unaffordable or just plain bonkers. That still left two or three which he thought worth exploring further.

I first met Mike and Paul at IFSEC way back in 1997 at the NEC. We chatted about the company, its move into the uncharted waters of the world of IP, and what I might be able to bring to the party, and we left it at that, having handed over my business card. Several months later, he called requesting a meeting to move things on, and this led rapidly to a warm and close relationship over the next 20-odd years. His word was his bond – I never had a written contract – and he never queried a single invoice, insisting on payment in 2 weeks from the date of the invoice. It was this

straightforward attitude – fully reciprocated from my side – which contributed to the pleasure of the relationship.

He embraced distance learning from the start, encouraging me to develop several on-line courses, both full length at BTEC levels 3 and 5, and shorter so-called 'Bite sized courses', and was childishly delighted when sales of these courses took off. "It all goes to help out the pensions" he remarked one day.

Mike really enjoyed the networking at IFSEC, and came alive when meeting friends and business acquaintances over the three-day exhibition. He was unhappy at the move to the EXCEL centre in London, and was always grumpy about the travel time across London when we stayed at the Victory Services Club. I remember him saying with increasing force "I can't understand why people put up with this" whilst strap hanging on the Underground or the DLR, but as soon as we entered the hallowed halls and arrived at the stand, he became the usual inquisitive cheerful Mike, always with an eye for detail and ready to muck in and move furniture if necessary.

In short, Mike was one of a very rare breed – a thorough gentleman of the old school, holding to old fashioned values of loyalty, honesty and fidelity. He bore his final years of illness with fortitude, and I miss him greatly.

Oh, and by the way, "it's $1/2\pi\sqrt{LC}$, Mike".

Peter Mason

