Remembering Scarecrow' Founding Father – Tony Walker

Anthony Edward Walker, the founding father of Scarecrow Group, sadly passed away on the 6th of August 2023 at the age of 85.

The story of how Scarecrow began is an interesting one and goes back to the early 80s.

Fondly known as Tony, he started his career as a sound engineer, gaining an apprenticeship at EMI, spending several days a week at the famous Abbey Road recording studios in London.

By the mid 60s, Tony's entrepreneurial drive took over and he started his own business Millbank Electronics, this company evolved into one of the most highly regarded UK manufacturers of PA and voice alarm equipment, leading the industry with innovative technology.

In the 80s a huge fire at King's Cross railway station in London claimed the lives of many people; this along with other major incidents at the time such as the Hillsborough football stadium disaster, resulted in regulations being changed and emergency evacuation systems in all public places becoming mandatory.

Millbank were well positioned to serve this emerging market and Tony secured several large contracts during this period including one to supply and install a complete system for London's underground stations.

Being one of the first companies to pioneer digital audio systems, Tony was approached by the Operations Manager of Gatwick Airport to see if they would be able to convert some old tape recordings into a digital format and incorporate them into a commercial system, for use in their vehicles to scare birds from the airfield. Having a great fear of birds, the idea intrigued Tony and a small side business called Scarecrow was begun.

By the late 80s Millbank had grown to a substantial size with operations in Europe and North America, and it was at this time that Tony sold Millbank to an American consortium with the view of running a few smaller companies.

However, the aviation industry had different plans for Scarecrow and after the design and development of the first Scarecrow system, the Digiscare, business began to increase worldwide.

Tony worked closely with several industry leaders and ornithologists to develop the core systems we still sell to this day at Scarecrow.

I first met Tony through a chance encounter at a family BBQ, as a shy and troubled 16-year-old. Tony turned to me and said he could do with someone like me in his warehouse; that was nearly 23 years ago.

At the time Scarecrow had a small offering of products predominately being sold to airports and marinas. Over the next 10 years products were developed to serve the rural, urban and offshore markets, along with the introduction of an industry leading software solution for airports.

In January 2012, at the age of 75, Tony finally hung up his battered black briefcase and retired from Scarecrow, with myself and a colleague taking ownership of the company.

To this day I am still forever grateful to Tony for the belief and support he gave me in those early years of my working life.

Since then, the company has grown from strength to strength and remains one of the world's leading bird control suppliers to the aviation and offshore markets.

Tony was a very astute businessman, his passion for business and supporting his staff in whatever way he could, means that he passes on leaving a legacy that will continue through Scarecrow.

Lee Pannett, Managing Director
Scarecrow Group Limited