

## In Memoriam

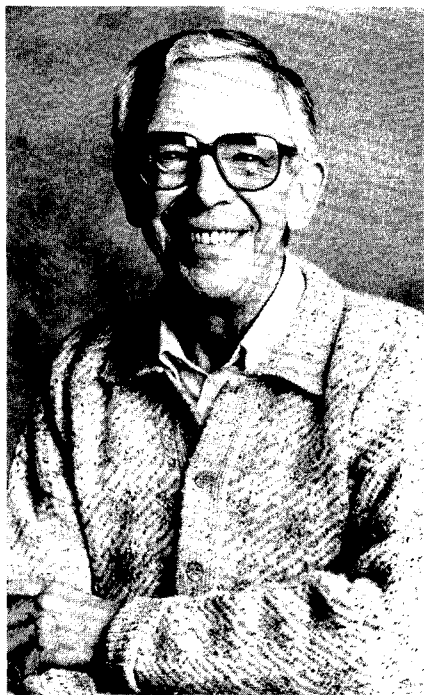
It was with a deep sense of loss that I learned of the death of **John George Frederick Bowers**, the founder and former chairman of B & W Loudspeakers Ltd. on 1987 December 20, after a short but courageously borne illness. He was 65 years of age.

John Bowers was born in 1922. During World War II he joined a specialist branch of the Royal Corps of Signals. After active service he studied at Brighton Technical College and qualified in Telecommunications Engineering. Then, with a wartime colleague, Roy Wilkins, he opened a retail shop in Worthing under the name of Bowers & Wilkins Ltd. specializing in radio, television, and later high-fidelity reproducing equipment. John Bowers was passionately interested in classical music and started experimenting in improving the performance of current loudspeakers. Convinced that he had a flair for loudspeaker design he retired from the retail business in 1966. Peter Hayward then joined him to start B & W Loudspeakers Ltd.

Fortunately at the rear of the shop were several garages that were modified to become the design, assembly, measurement, and dispatch areas of the new company. The first loudspeaker was designated the P1 and consisted of a wooden column 4 feet high with a 12-inch square cross section, one face carrying an EMI elliptical base and midrange unit, and near the top, two Celestion HF1300 high-frequency units. With the profits made from P1 John Bowers expanded his staff to five and purchased his first audio test apparatus, a Radiometer oscillator and pen recorder for £250; and every loudspeaker sold included its own calibration certificate.

It was at this stage that as a technical reviewer for *Gramophone* I was invited to Worthing to evaluate the prototype P2, and to meet John Bowers, a slim, modest gentleman, whose obvious enthusiasm, dedication, and technical knowledge greatly impressed me, and who was to become a lifelong friend.

P2 uses a construction similar to



J. G. F. Bowers  
(1922–1987)

*photograph/courtesy of Lord Snowdon*

P1, but used an EMI laminated glass cone elliptical bass unit and the revolutionary Ionophone high-frequency unit using ionized air as the diaphragm covering a frequency range from 500 to at least 50 000 Hz. While capable of outstanding reproduction it required a mains power supply to drive a high-frequency modulator which, operating in the lower television band, interfered with the picture, and in spite of elaborate screening was difficult to eliminate.

It was John Bowers' ambition to design a loudspeaker wholly built in house, and, therefore, he added to his staff Dennis Ward, former technical manager of EMI, where he specialized in loudspeaker units, and Ray Greenwood, from the technical side of Rank. The team headed by John Bowers also invited Kenneth Grange, now a world-renowned industrial designer, to advise on appearance and finishes.

Next came another landmark in B&W history, model DM70 with a large curved bass chamber above which was mounted an 11-module curved electrostatic treble radiator. As a result of many complimentary reviews exports began to rise. John first started his European and later his world travels to appoint distrib-

utors and to demonstrate at international exhibitions.

In 1972 a factory opened that included several anechoic chambers, a vast array of Bruel & Kjaer measurement equipment, and excellent facilities for an expanded research team. By the following year over 60% of production was exported and the company was awarded their first Queen's Award to Industry, and by 1978 exports increased to 90% of production. With sophisticated computers and direct contact with university departments, the research team investigated many aspects of loudspeaker performance and, in particular, phase linearity with the aid of laser interferometry. The second Queen's Award came in 1978 for export achievement. For demonstration purposes the company released a 12-inch vinyl stereo record of John Bowers' favorite classical extracts.

After three years of dedicated research the company shook the professional market in 1979 by releasing Model 801, which was quickly adopted by EMI, Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, and Philips as monitors in their classical recording studios. Although Britain was suffering from a trade recession,

B&W's sales continued to increase, and Robert Trunz was appointed as marketing director, thus releasing John Bowers from some of his world travels and allowing him to take a more active part in leading his research and development team. In 1982 the company acquired a purpose-built complex in Steyning, some 10 miles from the production units at Worthing. Here working under ideal conditions with the world's finest research and measurement equipment the team developed a range of active loudspeakers, power amplifiers, and the current range of Matrix cabinets that reduce cabinet coloration to a negligible quantity. In 1986 B&W sponsored a concert by Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music at the Royal Festival Hall in London and subsequently John Bowers released his first Compact Disc recorded by Decca.

For many years B&W has been a sustaining member of the AES, and Bowers encouraged his research and development staff to become members of the society. Throughout the world John Bowers made hundreds of friends who will share my grief with his early departure from this life. Always a perfectionist, whether in his love for the audio industry, for fast and elegant cares, or for his culinary skills, John will be sadly missed from the audio scene. A few years ago he was accepted in the Roman Catholic faith, and on January 19 a large international congregation attended a memorial service at Arundel Cathedral in Sussex, U.K.

JOHN GILBERT

It is with deep regret that we inform members that our colleague and friend **Lothar Schmidt** died in an airplane accident near Düsseldorf, F.R.G., 1988 February 8 at the age of 39. He was on his way to England to give talks on technical aspects of CD video when the accident occurred. His tragic and untimely death has deprived all his audio colleagues of a devoted, talented, and generous-spirited friend.

Lothar Schmidt began his career



L. Schmidt  
(1949–1988)

at PolyGram in 1973 as a member of the PolyGram Audio Engineering Department where he assisted at the birth of many technical innovations in the audio field. One of his earliest creations was the "Storemix" mixing desk automation system using real-time intertrack data storage on the multitrack tape (1974). In his 15 years of service in the audio world he was involved in many other technical advances including the development of an integrated multichannel bar-graph peak indicator (1977), a low-distortion electronic routing system for mixers (1978), and numerous engineering modifications to make the first commercially available digital equipment to be used for high-quality digital recordings at PolyGram (1981). More recently he was attached to the Herbert von Karajan team to focus his engineering skill on the complexities of synchronizing video to digital audio. Some remarkable results in the registration of historical musical events with von Karajan and the Berliner Philharmonic Orchestra were achieved.

Schmidt also helped to provide numerous technical solutions required by demanding recording engineers which added to the high technical quality of PolyGram record labels. He was deeply involved in the development of the Compact Disc and was a lively and active member

at various AES standardization meetings on digital and CD-related topics. During the many years I worked with Lothar his touching enthusiasm and interest in audio techniques never waned. Although his exuberant energy and outgoing personality led him to burn the candle at both ends, frequently regretting that each day held only 24 hours, he still found time to be a devoted family man who had a dedicated wife and three charming children.

He displayed an engaging nature during the more flamboyant technical discussions, arguing passionately but never losing the respect and affection of his colleagues. His individual way of approaching established procedures sometimes caused a refreshing stir. His seemingly infinite capacity to absorb new ideas led him, in spite of numerous interests, to learn the Dutch language so that he would be better able to communicate with his friends from The Netherlands.

Many of his ideas are still maturing, so we may never fully appreciate the extent of his contribution to tomorrow's recording technology. However, there will be much to remind us of him in future years. He will be sorely missed by friends and colleagues alike. I, especially, will miss you, Lothar.

ALEX BALSTER