

In Memoriam

Angus McKenzie, AES fellow, died of cancer on January 14, in the UK. He was 72 years old.

Born in 1933 in Maida Vale, his family moved to various addresses in Hampstead and St. John's Wood. He was educated at St. Paul's School.

His interests developed along the lines of electronics, music, astronomy, mathematics, and chemistry. His parents soon found their house wired for sound, so that classical music could be fed into every room. From an early age Angus sight was a problem, and he lost the use of his right eye when he was 16. It was wrenching for him to have to give up chemistry, probably his main subject at that time. However, his interest in music and recording developed apace, and he enrolled at Imperial College studying for an electronics degree. Once more, because of vision problems, he was unable to complete the course of study.

In the 1950s, as a member of an Anglo/Hungarian cultural society, he went to help refugees at the time of the Hungarian Revolution. He was stationed at the border at Gussing, and witnessed many traumatic sights. He also helped in deciding which countries refugees should go to.

Returning home, he worked at a recording studio in the North End Road and soon opened Olympic Sound Studios near Baker Street. Early clients included Steve Race and Frankie Vaughan. In the recording of Josh McCrae's "Messing About on the River," the splashy water effects were Angus with a cup in a bucket of water, and a finger pulled sharply out of his cheek provided the "pop" for one of the first Birds Eye pea commercials. Using his studio premises, he founded the Cultural Society of the Disabled, running monthly social meetings or concerts, and obtaining discounts for members on electrical goods.

He married Fiona in 1959. His eye problems worsened, and he shortly

lost the sight in his left eye. He, nevertheless, became the first blind member of Mensa, via a specially designed test and also obtained his amateur radio license.

His children, Kirsty, Robert, and Margaret, were born in the 60s. In that same decade the studio closed on the termination of the lease on the building. Angus then opened Roundabout Records in St. John's Wood, and a second branch in Hendon. He was beginning to write articles in audio magazines and radio reviews for *Hi Fi News*; the latter turned into a regular monthly column. At first his comments were not entirely welcome within the BBC, but later they were viewed as constructive criticism, and he made friends within the BBC. He also made recordings at the house in Finchley and on location.

This recording side developed into testing and reviewing hi fi and amateur radio equipment, with a laboratory in the back of the house, and the employment of engineers. Many Tonmeister students from Surrey University spent their industrial year with Angus. Eventually Angus McKenzie Laboratories became the main hi fi testing laboratory for the publication *Hi-Fi Choice* and for the Consumers' Association. The house would fill up with tape recorders or amplifiers or whatever was being tested. He performed what may have been the only comparative testing of brands of audio cassettes. The company also made many commercially released recordings.

His resolve to use his skills to help equip other blind people to overcome the challenges of life led to the award of an MBE in 1979. He also became a fellow of both the Institute of Electronic Engineers and the Audio Engineering Society. He became skilled in the use of computers, using voice synthesis to read texts. He devised audio metering techniques in which the "display" was audible pitch.

Relaxation was amateur radio, and the rotating aerials over the house,

and the mast in the garden, could be seen from miles away. He transmitted on every band, and "George 3 Oscar Sierra Sierra" was a well-known call sign. He also enjoyed a wide range of scientific, astronomical, and railway magazines. He may have been the only blind member of the British Astronomical Association.

His marriage ended in 1989, and with typical dedication Angus threw himself into the acquisition of new skills. He mastered Braille, learned to cook, and tackled long cane mobility. When he was deemed sufficiently able to go out alone, he qualified for a guide dog, and Simon, a Golden Retriever, came to live with him. Angus became a well-known speaker and fund raiser for Guide Dogs, first with Simon and then with his successor, Ward.

With his knowledge of audio engineering, he became involved in the technical aspects of talking books for the blind. Carrying on his determination that the visually impaired should not be at a disadvantage, in 1994 he produced a cassette guide to the London Underground, using sound clues to help blind people negotiate the baffling maze of tunnels, platforms, and escalators. This was available free of charge to all blind people across the capital.

In recent years Angus greatly valued the fellowship found in Freemasonry, in the 8040 Radio Fraternity Lodge, and in the Old Pauline Lodge. He was also an active member of Rotary, The Hampstead Scientific Society, British Astronomical Society, Radio Society of Great Britain, and the RNIB.

Angus' family, now including granddaughters Sarah and Emma, and friends, have been saddened by the sudden onset last spring of the cancer that overwhelmed him. He will be remembered and missed by very many people who have known him through his various activities.

—Fiona McKenzie with additions by Kenneth Gundry, long-time friend.