

Obituary: Tom Jacobs 1928 – 2019

We were very sorry to hear of the death of our colleague, Tom Jacobs, who until very recently served on the management committee of the Retired Members' Section of the IOP in the London and South East region. Tom was 90 years old and had recently suffered a serious stroke.

There is said to be an old Chinese curse: 'May you live in interesting times.' Born Thomas Stoltenhoff in Berlin in 1928, it was clearly Tom's fate to 'live in interesting times.' At the age of nine, he found himself alone with a single suitcase and no word of English on a train bound for Dover from where he somehow found a home among good people and an English education. Tom sometimes spoke of his interest in Physics stemming from an early childhood experience in his old family home in Berlin set on the side of a lake. When lying on his bed on a sunny day, he could see boats on the lake outside projected onto the ceiling through a small hole in the shutters of his window. Why was the image upside down? That was the question of a budding physicist.

Tom started his professional career in the Mullard Research Laboratories in Redhill in 1953 working on the early days of colour TV. Five years later he went to run the Technical Services Department in central London. He then became the Director of Mullard's Instrumentation and Control Division. Among other things, the division was responsible for ferrite ring computer memories, power semi-conductors, telephony products and modules for Roberts Radios.

He left Mullard in 1974 and became a management consultant for Mackintosh Consultants for several years, but feeling that his hands-on business experience was becoming stale, he took up an offer in 1980 from the Inner London Education Authority to study for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and so at the age of 52 he went back to college to learn how to teach. Thus, he became a teacher, then a lecturer in physics until he retired in 1996. After that he taught plumbing and electrical technology at the local adult community college until he finally retired in 2004. After that Tom and his wife Joyce were free of the school year's regime so were able to spend a lot of time travelling and sailing in their boats.

Tom was a very enthusiastic and productive member of REMS contributing much to our programme of events. Among the events he organised for us in the years he served, were:

- Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill House on Wednesday 13 June 2018;
- Walpole's Treasures return to Strawberry Hill on Thursday 10 January 2019 (with George Freeman);
- The Cartoon Museum & The Courtauld Gallery's exhibition of Soutine's work, on Thursday 23 November 2017
- Stained glass, some physics and a great steam engine on Saturday October the 15th 2016, the second time this event was offered;
- Outing to the Historic Naval Dockyard at Chatham on Thursday 8 Sept 2016;

Tom's last event was to be a day of physics and astronomy at Birmingham University on 9 May 2019. Sadly this went ahead without him, but his contribution was gratefully acknowledged by all who were present.

Tony Colclough

5 May 2019