

## Remembering Acousticians

### Anutone pays tribute to Leo Beranek



Dr. Leo Leroy Beranek

Dr. Leo Leroy Beranek (14.9.1914-10.10.2016) was one of the founders of Bolt Beranek and Newman (the other two being Richard Bolt and Robert Newman), one of the most famous acoustical consulting firms of USA, that designed the UN General Assembly Hall in New York apart from many other global landmark buildings including concert halls at Lincoln Center and Tanglewood.

Leo was faculty at Harvard and MIT for three decades with acoustic work that became noise standards for public buildings and airports. His work on jet engine noise compelled airlines to add mufflers and change the way their planes took off thus bringing about a rare combination of acoustics and aviation. Apart from acoustics, Leo is famous for helping invent Arpanet for the US Defense Department which became forerunner to the internet as we know it today.

Leo's most successful book "Acoustics" (1954) remains a reference guide for the student and professional alike. It was one of the first books in the acoustics library at Anutone. I had the good fortune to meet him at the Joint Meet of ASA, EAA and DEGA in Berlin in 1999. He came across as extremely humble and witty but highly knowledgeable and willing to share it all.



Sandeep Mittal with Leo Beranek (third from left) at Berlin in 1999

## Anutone pays tribute to India's past acousticians

From three different regions of India we at Anutone pay tribute to three acousticians of India who are no longer with us but who did India proud when acoustics was an unknown subject and acousticians an unknown tribe among architects. Needless to mention, these acousticians also helped mentor Anutone during its formative years in the 1990s.

### Prof BS Ramakrishna



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In the south we had Prof BS Ramakrishna who, by virtue of residing in the same city as Anutone, Bangalore, became our true friend guide and philosopher. Prof Ramakrishna studied acoustics at MIT USA embarking by ship in 1949 and returning to India after a stint at Bell labs by aeroplane as he used to put it.

BSR was soft spoken but articulate when it came to acoustics and very technical. Till the very end he used to painstakingly draw and write every detail personally by hand and his drawings became reference artworks for budding acousticians. BSR was faculty at the famous Indian Institute of Science and HoD of the ECE department that pioneered acoustics research. My meets with him at his house or the British Library and lunch thereafter at Koshy's below will always be cherished.

### Burjor Mistry

For Mumbai it was Burjor Mistry who was well known for his excellence in cinema and auditorium design. Burjor Uncle, as the next gen used to call him, had an awesome eye for detail. His designing was very meticulous and integrative to all the components that make a cinema. For example, screen size and its material, the frame and mounting, the specifications exactly matching to the projection etc. Similarly for acoustics, every surface of the cinema or auditorium was carefully considered in an era when there was no acoustics modeling or instrumentation for measurement. The result was pristine optics and acoustics.

Long after he retired, Burjor Uncle retained his sharp tongue and booming voice lording it over his apartment and his wife but he was the man with the golden heart and the golden touch. Visits to his home was something I always looked forward to as I continue to do so for the equally famous Mistry if not more, Jal Mistry.

### Uma Shankar Bhargava

And finally from North, there was Bhargava Ji or USB Ji (as he was fondly called, much much ahead of times in terms of USB becoming a famous acronym now). USB's forte was auditorium design especially in the education sector and I vividly remember his pioneering work with Manavsthali School in New Delhi. Climbing above the ceiling onto the catwalks I was amazed at the elaborate setup in terms of fluorescent lighting and accessible paths for maintaining the ceiling and the services - airconditioning, lighting etc. His philosophy was simple .. acoustical, AV, lighting and spatial design is a legacy for the future and an auditorium needs to be well maintained for it to function well over years.

Soft spoken but supremely confident about his work that came from years of on field experience, expertise and insight, USB was always a delight to meet. We used to both call each other 'livewire', me for the acoustical products Anutone pioneered one after the other in those days and he for being at the forefront of cutting edge design.

Anutone continues to work with the best of acousticians in India and overseas that adds value to the building community especially architects and contractors.

**This special edition of Update has been written by our Managing Director, Sandeep Mittal.**

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