

Inside Story

Roger Anthoine: A man of many parts

Celebrating the 90th birthday of *CERN Courier's* first editor.

I must have first met Roger Anthoine in 1979, when I was physical-sciences editor of *New Scientist*, he was in charge of public relations at CERN, and the organization was celebrating its 25th anniversary. Now, as he celebrates his 90th birthday, I realize what a privilege it is to have come to know him a little better during my time as editor of *CERN Courier*.

Back in 1979, Brian Southworth led the editorial team of *CERN Courier*, which also included Gordon Fraser and Henri-Luc Felder. Little did I realize then that like much of public relations at CERN, the *Courier* – a source of information that I valued highly in my role at *New Scientist* – had begun with Roger. He had been hired by CERN 20 years previously, expressly to start an internal publication for what in those early days was fewer than 900 staff. The publication was the vision of the then director-general, Cornelis Bakker. Roger, a Belgian with degrees in engineering and journalism, was in many ways the ideal person for the task. With no knowledge of the arcane world of particle physics, he could put himself in the position of the non-physicist staff members who wanted to find out in the simplest terms what their laboratory was doing.

He had to begin from square one, securing funding, deciding on the format, frequency and distribution, finding a printer and, last but not least, choosing a name – *CERN Courier* in English, *Courrier CERN* in French. The name, and much else of the magazine today, still bears Roger's imprint. The budget allocated was sufficiently low from the start to oblige him to seek additional support from advertising – an unusual strategy for a “house” magazine. The content, he recalled in the article he wrote at the time of the *Courier's* 50th anniversary, was perhaps the easiest issue to decide upon (*CERN Courier* July/August 2009 p23). There was plenty happening at the laboratory, with its first small accelerator, the Synchrocyclotron, already running, and the Proton Synchrotron (PS) – the flagship of the



A special small edition of *CERN Courier* wished the magazine's first editor “Bonne anniversaire” for his 90th birthday.

era – about to start up. It was an appropriate time for the monthly magazine to start, with the first issue appearing in August 1959.

Unfortunately, Roger soon had his hands full for rather tragic reasons. John MacCabe, head of CERN's small Public Information Office, died suddenly in April 1960 at the age of 45, and Roger immediately found himself in charge of other public-relations activities, including VIP visits and the press office. It was difficult to edit the magazine, even if only 12 pages long, as well as do his former superior's job. So, the *Courier* went into “hibernation” before re-emerging with a new-style cover under a new editor – Alec Hester – in January 1962.

Roger was to spend the next 25 years working in public relations in its widest sense. During this time he introduced much of what was to become familiar at CERN: the first in-house guides to explain the wonders of the organization to visitors, then mainly on Saturdays; the comic strips by Georges Boixader first published in the *Tribune de Genève* in 1978; the naming of CERN's streets; the production of films at CERN... He also had the opportunity to meet many

of the iconic figures in both particle physics and politics – including, perhaps most surprisingly, Che Guevara, who in 1964 visited CERN as Cuba's minister of industry.

After 27 years at CERN, Roger retired in 1986. He had served under seven directors-general, from Bakker who first employed him, up to Herwig Schopper, who thanked him at his retirement ceremony. Now at the age of 90, he has been retired for longer than he was at CERN, but he has kept up his contact with the press in the region, returning to his roots as a journalist by writing for local newspapers about CERN's activities. He has also been able to spend more time on his first love – aviation. A pilot since 1944, it is only recently that he lost the right to fly solo, for health reasons. His flying provided CERN with some historic aerial photos. In January 1963, after a three-day blizzard, Roger took to the skies above the laboratory at the controls of a Piper Super Cub, in temperatures of around -25°C , to take pictures of the snow-covered landscape, with one ungloved hand on his Rolleiflex 6 × 6 cm camera (*CERN Courier* October 2004 p55.) During retirement, with time to apply his writing talents to his interest in historical aspects of aviation, he has published books in French and in English. After I eventually stepped into his shoes in 2003, our conversations often turned to the British Royal Air Force, in which my father served during the Second World War.

Roger started *CERN Courier* with an initial print run of 1000, and by the time he had to put it on hold, little more than a year later, the number had already risen to 3000. Now, some 21,000 copies are printed 10 times a year. From the start it had excited interest beyond CERN, and today serves a worldwide community, having been rebranded in 1974 with the subtitle “International Journal of High-Energy Physics” (*CERN Courier* December 2014 p28).

Much of what Roger introduced remains reflected in the magazine today. So, reader, as you enjoy this issue (as indeed I hope you do), join with me, and all of those who worked with Roger at CERN, in wishing him “Bonne anniversaire et une superbe 91^{ème} année”.

● Christine Sutton. CERN.