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COMPANY PROFILE

Flow Electronics originally registered as a (Pty) Ltd company in 1971 with the aim of developing electronic devices for special applications. The two founding members, S. Stock and P. Wolf set out to exploit this market which was wide open at the time.

Wolf, who had worked for some one and a half years in South Africa as an Electronics Design Engineer for a British owned company specializing in electronic food (grain) sorting, had just embarked on developing an X-Ray based Electronic Diamond Recovery Machine. Once Flow Electronics began operations, development work on these new sorting machines was contracted out to the newly formed Flow Electronics (Pty) Ltd. Development work was done for a variety of industries of which the most significant areas were for military applications and electronic sorting.

Development work of electronic sorting machines became more and more dominant and Gunson Sortex S.A. became Flow Electronics' major customer. In 1973 Sortex made P. Wolf a very attractive offer to re-join their company as Chief Engineer.

Wolf joined Gunson "Sortex" but continued to run Flow Electronics on a part time basis. Around this time S. Stock sold his shares in the company to Wolf making Wolf the sole owner.

Although Wolf's main interest was with Electronic Ore Sorting, Flow Electronics received orders for small production runs and development projects from various other companies which supplied Armscor with specialized electronic equipment. It was from these "early days" that Flow Electronics became recognized as a reliable company, never missing a deadline and only supplying equipment of a very high standard.

It was only some 12 years later that Wolf once again started to devote his full attention to Flow Electronics leaving electronic ore sorting in the hands of E.L. Bateman. Flow Electronics, then a "four-man-strong" company, through Wolf, continued with consulting and development work in the sorting field for E.L. Bateman.

To put Flow Electronics on a strong and more diversified basis Wolf started to look at other markets. Late in 1985 the opportunity arose to install and commission an imported Toll Plaza System at Mariannhill.

Flow Electronics was awarded this contract and not only completed the job timeously but also sorted out some problems encountered with the imported Toll Collection Equipment.

Flow soon recognized the need for a reliable and an accurate Traffic Counting / Vehicle Classification System for use by the South African Toll Collection Authorities.

Flow developed a unique Piezo Electric Axle Detector (patented in 1988) as well as a complete Vehicle Classification System. Flow's AVC system has since become the standard for Automatic Vehicle Classification in South Africa.

In 1988 Flow, in partnership with Grinaker Process Controls, tendered for four Toll Plazas making up a total of 52 lanes. The tender was successful and the project executed to the clients total satisfaction.

Flow Electronics Toll Equipment business has been growing ever since! Today Flow's equipment is used in most South African Toll Plaza's. (refer to attached Project List).

Spin-offs from Flow's Piezo Technology have been orders for replacement of conventional (imported from Europe) contact treadles, enhancement of traffic counting stations (CTO) and parking control systems.

Through on-going development work, Flow perfected its Piezo Axle Detector Technology to the extent that it can now also be used for vehicle Weighing-In-Motion (WIM). Recently Flow developed a Hydraulic Piezo Axle Detector (H-PAD), SA Pat Appl 93/0384 refers. This latest addition to Flow's vehicle axle sensors is most suitable for pre-classification and WIM. So far five WIM stations have been sold to the DOT despite stiff competition by other manufacturers of vehicle weighing equipment.

Good aftersales service to the toll industry, has helped Flow to secure several medium term Toll Plaza maintenance contracts.

Flow's involvement in general electronic design and manufacture has been neglected over the past few years, in fact many valuable enquiries have had to be turned down due to the high work load from the traffic sector. However, long standing product lines continued to be manufactured over the years providing Flow with a further steady income.

Following the success of the Piezo Electric based Vehicle Classification Systems in South Africa, Flow looked overseas, only to find that most Toll Plaza's around the world still used outdated classification equipment that can be replaced with our system. Further, none of the "foreign" installations have the ability to supply information regarding vehicle mass - one of the big advantages of Flow Electronics' equipment.

Flow Electronics' market drive therefore, is directed towards exporting Classification Systems. The first export orders have already been secured. These installations will assist in penetrating the European, Asian and other markets. An American trial installation is scheduled for mid 1993 to serve as a demonstration base for the North American market.

After the successful completion of the Mariannhill Toll Plaza , Flow Electronics became the South African agent for Designa, one of the largest traffic control equipment manufacturers in Germany.

In 1991 Flow Electronics obtained an exclusive dealership licence for CSEE's Automatic Coin Collection Equipment (a leading French toll equipment manufacturer) and in 1992 obtained dealer status for Electromatic's products.

To further strengthen it's position as a turnkey toll equipment supplier, Flow obtained manufacturing rights from Prodesign to manufacture and supply their Toll Collection Computer (TCC) and associated equipment.

With these associations Flow is now in a position to offer the most advanced Toll Collection System comparable with the best in the world!

With Flow's turnover passing the 2,5 million Rand mark around 1989/1990 (and growing) several Companies (Group of Companies) offered to buy out Flow Electronics or purchase at least a major share in Flow.

Wolf realised that in order to realise the company's full potential, i.e. to enter the race for large turnkey contracts, to export Flow's products and to speed up various new product developments, meant increasing resources in all directions, financially, managerially and in production power.

However, Wolf was not prepared to pay the price that potential buyers asked for ... to give up control of Flow Electronics! It was when the opportunity arose in 1992 to form a new Company, in partnership with long standing business partner and friend, Mr Gunter Reimer, owner of Polar Air (Pty) Ltd, that Wolf decided to go ahead and expand the business and so Traftec (Pty) Ltd was started.

Traftec (Pty) Ltd., fully and unconditionally backed by its parent companies Polar Air and Flow Electronics, not only enjoys the combined financial strength, larger more sophisticated manufacturing facilities, but also larger manpower resources.

And all this without the introduction of the usual "red tape" commonly found in large organisations ,thus ensuring that Traftec can offer the same efficient service that Flow Electronics customers have become used to enjoy.

Although Flow's venture into the "Traffic Electronics" market has been very successful, Wolf's interest in the electronic sorting technology has never died. With Traftec having taken over much of the company's financing of Toll Contracts, the basis for business expansion was established and, finally in August 1992, the decision was made to add Electronic Sorting Equipment to Flow Electronics' product range.

A new Diamond Recovery Machine of revolutionary design caught the attention of many visitors at the Electra-Mining Exhibition '92. A sale for six machines was secured during the first week! Production started in mid 1993, certain designs were finalised and, in some cases, protected by patents. The first six electronic sorters left Flow's workshop on schedule in October 1993.

Flow's new Diamond Recovery Machine has quickly become a great success. The first ten machines were sold by the end 1993 and a further ten machines were put into production. Flow also added different models such as double stage and re-concentration machines to it's product range in order to satisfy market demands.

Within two years Flow Electronics sorting business grew into a business of its own.

As from December 1995 the diamond sorting business became known as FLOW SORT (PTY) LTD. a company fully committed and dedicated to stay ahead in diamond sorting technology.

Peter WOLF