

An Uncanny Coincidence

by

George Denton



I'll take you back to 1989.

We had launched the very successful "Starbreaker" range of domestic circuit breakers and were about to launch its big brother, "Polestar".

At that time, I was Northern Regional Sales Manager based in Tootal Grove, Manchester, having taken over from that gentleman of the industry, Ray Grace.

The product needed a suitable launch pad in the area where we could invite wholesalers, specifiers, and consultants, from Lancashire, Yorkshire and The Midlands. I didn't want to book a room in a hotel, or somewhere similar. To my mind, the only place to present the product was The Jodrell Bank Observatory.

To this end, I went along to see the manager, a lady called Eden Carruthers. She cringed when I said I wanted to hire the place for a day. She said it wasn't their policy to hire rooms for commercial purposes, they only allowed school parties to do that. I pointed out they were missing out on a possible source of income, from other companies, but she was insistent. I said, "Surely there must be a way to get over this problem without offending anyone?" She said there was, but we would need to be registered as a friend of Jodrell Bank. My heart skipped a beat. "How do we do that?" I asked. "Maybe donate a piece of equipment to the observatory," she replied.

"Right," I said, "What do you need?" Imagine my surprise when she said, "Well I know our education dept. would

like a Pole Star demonstration unit." I thought she was pulling my leg and she had heard the name of OUR product somewhere, but she hadn't. Their unit was to simulate a pendulum above the North Pole.

Head Office were happy to go along with the idea, so I set about organising the event. I felt the only place to show our presentation was on the dome of the planetarium, but I was told the film they used was 64mm. I then had a word with Allan Preston, to whom nothing was impossible, and he produced the goods.

The invites went out and the take up was incredible. We ended up presenting to over 300 delegates.

By this time, Ms. Carruthers had warmed to the idea and offered to supply handsets to everyone, giving them an opportunity to say where they wanted to travel to on the dome, by pressing a button for Mars, Venus, or the Moon. This would be shown prior to our presentation. Everyone pressed a button, and just to let you know, Mars won, so we all 'landed' on this inhospitable planet.

Then came our show.

The presentation on the dome was breathtaking and ex- customers I meet today, still talk about it.

Our Managing Director, Gerry Fisk, presented the Polestar demonstration unit to the Astronomer Royal and Director of Jodrell Bank, Sir Francis Graham Smith. To complete the coincidence, speaking to Sir Francis later, I found we both enjoyed the same birthday, April 25th. It was an extraordinary, enjoyable day and all our guests left with a Polestar catalogue under their arm and stars in their eyes.



The End