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## A Real Innovator

At one of my first RFID standards meetings, in Antwerp, Belgium, in early 1999, I sat next to a man who introduced himself as chairman of the International Standards Organization's RFID committee. Alan Haberman had silver hair and a beard that would have matched if it weren't stained yellow from nicotine. When he spoke, he did so with passion and authority, and everybody listened. At times, his

thunderous cough drowned all discussion. After one coughing storm, he slumped forward and seemed to stop breathing. Unsure what to do, I offered his lifeless body a glass of water. Suddenly, he sat up, thanked me and took a sip.



Alan Haberman, right, at a 2003 Auto-ID Center board meeting.

Alan brought his vision, energy and wisdom to a second revolution. During meetings, he was loud, enthusiastic and impatient. He would cuss, and he would smoke, and we would wait patiently while he coughed. His Mad Men-era manners risked getting us in trouble, so we instituted behavior guidelines he called the “anti-Haberman rules.” When his health flagged, around 2001, he kicked his cigarette habit and came to meetings with an oxygen tank. Within months, Alan had recovered, and his beard sparkled with silver. By this time, the RFID revolution he had inspired was well under way.

Alan, who died on June 12, at age 81, of heart and lung disease, also had a profound impact on my world. Thanks to him, I immigrated to the United States, where I found a home and built a family and career. I miss Alan. I wish I could offer him a glass of water and bring him back again now.

*Kevin Ashton was cofounder and executive director of the Auto-ID Center.*



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