

Phil Crosby Receives Top Technical Honor



Tektronix CEO Jerry Meyer congratulates Phil Crosby during Friday's Technical Achievement Awards Banquet at the Portland Art Museum.

This issue of Tekweek is devoted to the 1998 Tektronix Technical Achievement Awards presented last week. Our lead article is on the winner of this year's Howard Vollum Award, with Phil Crosby interviewed by Tekweek writer Rick Moss. Inside, you'll learn about this year's winners of the prestigious President's Award, Manufacturing Technology Leadership Awards, and Software Process Leadership Award. On Page 4 is a listing of current patent and significant technical achievement holders.

Thirty-eight-year Tektronix Veteran Recognized For His Pioneering Work Shaping the Television Industry

Phil Crosby, a 38-year Tektronix veteran, noted digital television expert, prolific innovator and inventor, skilled mentor, and long-time wearer of wild Hawaiian shirts, is the recipient of the 1998 Howard Vollum Award.

Named after the company's co-founder, the award is the highest technical achievement at Tektronix. It honors Howard Vollum's legacy by recognizing individuals whose contributions clearly exemplify engineering excellence and leadership. Award-winning achievement extends over several years and reflects products or processes significant in the marketplace and to the company's growth.

"This year's award winner is known throughout Tektronix as a critical thinker with the ability to quickly address the true crux of a design problem," said CEO Jerry Meyer at last Friday's Technical Achievement Awards banquet at the Portland Art Museum. "One of the most respected engineering minds in the company, Phil is also one of the most unpretentious — working well with everyone from the newest to the most experienced engineers. Skilled at mentoring engineers through difficult problems, he contributes ideas and constructive suggestions that result in improved design review processes, with the engineer's enthusiasm intact.

"His creativity is not limited to his work. You know it takes a creative mind to find his signature wild shirts. And his unconventional wardrobe is as much a part of his character as his gracious nature," Jerry said of Phil. "When he identifies a technology as key to Tektronix' future, his industry acumen is consistently on the money. Our winner has a long history of helping to define television, including how we view television in our homes."

Early Interest in Tektronix

Phil's interest in electronics began early in life — at about nine years of age — recalls the Portland native. By age 14, thanks to a Tektronix instruction manual a friend

gave him, he had already decided on his career and where he would pursue it.

"I was given a manual for the Tektronix 514AD oscilloscope, studied it for about two weeks and was very impressed with the clarity of thought that the designs represented," recalls Phil. "From that experience, I concluded Tektronix was where I wanted to work so I could be around people who think about things like that."

In 1957, when Phil was 16 and a student at Portland's Wilson High, he was hired by the company as an intern. He continued at Tektronix over the next few years as he worked his way through Portland State.

"I was actually doing engineering work for Tektronix as a student and even got a product out the door — the 529 waveform monitor — that shipped a few months before I received my college degree," Phil says.

He went on to design many of the company's early TV signal analysis products that improved color quality, making color TV viable in the marketplace. As a champion of the company's first digital TV test equipment, the 1980 answer system, which later was succeeded by the VM700, he contributed to the development of an Emmy Award-winning product.

Changing Television History

"He continues to shape our world today," said Jerry in announcing the award. "A key contributor to the digital technology that helped set HDTV standards, Phil is well respected in the TV industry. In fact, the U.S. Industrial Consortium for HDTV has credited him as someone who changed the history of digital television in the United States.

"An example of an employee who makes a sustained and significant technical contribution, his estimated impact on sales has been greater than one billion dollars over his career," Jerry noted.

"He has helped Tektronix gain dominance in two major technologies: digital video signal analysis and oscilloscopes."

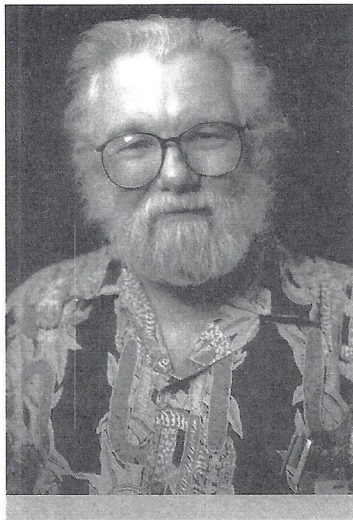
Phil, now a VND principal engineer who calls himself "the Old Video Guy," continues to work with HDTV and MPEG2 video, and also works with high-speed optical telecommunications. He has earned 25 patents over his career and currently has three more in the works.

Making People Cheery

His wild shirt days began a decade or so ago, during a period a layoffs and low morale.

"I saw a guy come to work wearing a Hawaiian shirt and said it was one of the most interestingly distasteful shirts I had ever seen," Phil says. "After a short stint co-sponsoring a 'distasteful shirt contest,'

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I started thinking about it and decided in the winter here, when it's all gray and dismal, it doesn't make sense to wear dismal clothes.

So I started wearing those shirts to lighten things up and make people a little more cheery. I still wear them today most of the time — unless customers are visiting.”

But Phil is serious about his work, typically putting in 50 or more hours on the Beaverton campus each week, plus additional time at home. He's also known for his skill at mentoring engineers through difficult problems.

“Mentoring is the way one stays current,” he says. “We have a flow of talented younger people that have been working perhaps in areas that I'm not familiar with. So I have the opportunity to help them with problems in the areas that need my kind of input, and I can almost always find something of value that I'm able to learn from them.”

Crossing the Generations

“I certainly appreciate the recognition that comes with the Vollum award, and I hope that through this honor I can help people understand the value of mentoring to stay current,” Phil comments. “I can't think of any industry that has grown as extensively and reliably as electronics over the last 50 years, and staying on the edge of that technology is something that requires you to work closely with others and encourage the flow of ideas among people.

“You can't stay current if you're a loner, and our more seasoned people need to remember that we can gain a lot by interacting with the newer folks and continuing to grow technically through them,” Phil says. “We need to keep a

strong cross-generational interchange going.”

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