How vintageTEK came into being

by: Paul Thompson

The Grand Opening of the vintageTEK Museum of Tektronix oscilloscopes and related instruments was held the weekend of September 16 to 18, 2012. This grand opening was announced in an article in the Oregonian on September 17 and described in the November 2012 issue of the Tek Retirees Newsletter. There are now over 400 individual instruments on display at the museum, ranging from the 511 oscilloscope to the 11000 series instruments. The museum exists largely through the efforts of Stan Griffiths and Ed Sinclair.

Here is a bit of history as to how vintageTEK came into being:

Stan Griffiths was first hired into Tektronix in 1960 as a calibration engineer, where his job was to calibrate oscilloscopes right off the production line, occasionally requiring minor repairs on the instruments to permit them to meet standard specifications. After a couple of years as a calibration engineer, he was transferred to field maintenance service in Beaverton and then spent two years as a field maintenance engineer at two different Tektronix field offices in the Los Angeles area. In 1966, he resigned from Tek, and he and another scope maintenance colleague formed Mobile Scope, a company offering on-site maintenance of scopes. In 1970, Mobile Scope fell on bad times, and Stan reapplied for employment with Tektronix and was offered a job as field engineer in Boston. After three years in the Boston area he transferred back to Beaverton where he ultimately became a field engineer for spectrum analyzers and other frequency domain instrumentation covering customers in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

The first glimmering of what ultimately led to the founding of the vintageTEK occurred one day when Stan was calling on one of the labs at the University of Washington. He noted a non-working

Tektronix oscilloscope being used as a door stop. He asked about it and was told that this was one of about 20 non-working scopes that needed repairs but were held up because of the cost of maintenance at the Tektronix repair station. This played right into the hand of Stan who had developed a high degree of competence in the repair of non-working Tek scopes during his early years at Tektronix. Stan made them a deal: he would repair and calibrate one scope for them, at no charge, if they would give him three of the other non-workers. They accepted, and Stan repeated the offer until he owned about 15 non-working but generally, for himself, easily repairable scopes.

That got him started collecting used Tektronix scopes and other Tektronix instruments. At one point at an estate sale he bought 300 oscilloscopes for $800. His reputation as a scope collector spread, and soon there were other individuals and organizations who had unused and/or non working scopes in their possession and who were glad to have Stan take them off their hands. In the February 2002 issue of the Tek Retiree News is an article in Stan's own words where he estimated that he then had about 1150 instruments. He states in the article, "More arrive here than leave. I am not anxiously looking for more instruments; I do not have the space. Even though my storage space is at a premium, I can always find enough room to save old Tek instruments from the landfill." He also talks at that time about the possibility of setting up and running a museum of old Tektronix instruments.

Enter Ed Sinclair: Ed joined Tektronix in 1968 as a Field Engineer trainee. After finishing FE training, he was assigned as a Field Engineer to the Alhambra field office. In 1972 he was promoted to Tektronix Account Manager for the US Army where he was stationed at the Cherry Hill, NJ, field office. In 1977 he took a position in Beaverton as Accessories Business Unit Marketing Manager until 1983 when he resigned from Tek. In 1987 he

returned to Tek as a consultant and implemented the Mobile Calibration service which provided customer on-site site calibration on Tektronix products and on other companies products as well.

He had heard of Stan's collection of Tek used instruments for a number of years; he finally viewed it in 2008, and "was awash with memories of my days as a Field Engineer." Almost immediately he and Stan set about to establish vintageTEK as a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable museum. vintageTEK was formed and registered with the state of Oregon and the IRS in 2008. Initially the primary purpose of the museum was to raise money to obtain property and build a suitable building for the museum.

After announcing the museum and beginning to raise funds, more than 900 instruments were donated or lent to vintageTEK by other folks, largely other Tektronix ex-employees. At present, less than two dozen of the instruments on display in the museum are on loan from Stan or others -- the rest are owned by vintageTEK.

VintageTEK is presently located in a strip mall at 4620A SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Road under an extremely attractive lease provided by the owner, Gary Hoselton, who is also a former Tektronix employee. A major current goal of vintageTek is to get enough financial support through donations and grants to build a more suitable location for the museum, and to develop and eventually operate a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education program through the museum. If you are not acquainted with STEM, look up "STEM training" on the internet.