

MEMORIALS

MEMORIES OF BOB MILNE

IMAGE | JUNE 28, 2011 | WALT JUNG | 9 COMMENTS

The post below was originally prepared as a stand-alone piece, but has grown in context with numerous comments from Bob Milne's fellow editors and other friends. [Be sure to scroll down and read all of these comments!](#)



Bob Milne was an *Electronic Design* editor for more than 20 years. He was one blessed with not only great technical skills, but also a wonderful persona. He was born Mar 22, 1940 and passed away Feb 14, 2011.

When I received news a few months ago of Bob's passing, I wrote up a piece similar to what is below, and passed it on to *ED* columnist Bob Pease and the *Electronic Design* editors. Now with the more recent passing of Bob Pease (see the related posting here), it seems all the more important that Bob Milne (who in fact edited Pease's columns) be honored. [Bob Pease also had some very good things to say about Bob Milne, on Milne's *ED* retirement.](#)

With regard to Bob Milne, I'd go so far to say that he was an *engineer's editor*. He was always wary of publishing rules, but also well tuned into the technical side, especially the analog art. And, he knew what would fly and what wouldn't. Always fun to work with.

My personal association with Bob began around 1990, when I visited the *Electronic Design* New Jersey offices while with Linear Technology. With mutual interests in analog, audio, and computers, Bob and I simply hit it off from the start. It was to be a happy working rapport that lasted until Bob retired fully from *Electronic Design*, around 2005.

During those years, we worked together many times. He taught me a lot about magazine technical publishing, especially during 1997-1998, when I was doing the "Walt's Tools and Tips" column, while with Analog Devices. Bob was primarily responsible for my opportunity to do such a column, and for this I will always be grateful. He was very good at honing a wordy manuscript

down to size, while minimally impacting technical content. We had great fun doing that series, and I valued that relationship and our continued friendship after his retirement.

Our friend Bob deserves honor for the good work he did for so long and so well. He'll be missed here; as well I'm sure in other analog-savvy places.

Walt Jung

9 THOUGHTS ON "MEMORIES OF BOB MILNE"



Debra Schiff

JULY 29, 2011 AT 8:52 AM

I knew Bob Milne from 1996 – 1998, when I was copy editor, then copy chief at ED. He was a good boss and a good friend. Patrick Mannion reminded me of his cigar-chomping, doorway-leaning ways. I will always remember him fondly.



Roger Engelke Jr.

AUGUST 3, 2011 AT 1:03 PM

I knew Bob since 1989, when I first started as copy editor at Electronic Design, and had kept a close friendship ever since. At the onset, I wondered "Who is this guy with the cigar?", considering his desk and cubicle had papers and magazines strewn all over the place, along with other many other curiosities (later, when he got an office, the curiosities grew by leaps and bounds, including a cardboard coffin, rubber leg tucked under his desk, and a blow-dart gun). I quickly learned he was the go-to guy for any questions regarding analog electronics (he was still on, albeit with some disdain, a learning curve on the digital front).

We had many friendly battles—English vs. technical—over the years regarding editing of application and Ideas for Design articles. He'd say "I'll give you that one, but I need this one," concerning my proposed changes. Often, the review of my edited versions of articles lasted over an hour. It turned into my greatest learning experience bar none.

Another great memory was the genesis of Pease Porridge (Bob Pease, another tremendous loss). Bob handed me a 5.25-in. floppy disk (!) of Pease's proposed first column, and he said "Just read it; don't change anything." I went back to him after reading it and said "What am I supposed to do with this? This is incomprehensible." Bob said "Engineers talk like this; they'll

love it. Let's get Bob on the phone and see how we can hammer it out." We eventually did, of course, and thus the Pease Porridge was born. Once again, Bob was right on the money, and is one of the magazine's greatest successes. I could go on about the never-seen "3-Cup Bra" column, but I digress.

As Walt said perfectly, Bob was the engineer's editor. He took pains to make sure that what the engineer was saying in his/her article got across, and that it stayed on point. He was the technical backbone of ED for many years, yet he generally flew under the radar because he preferred it that way.

We kept in close contact once he left the ED offices, and subsequently retired. After I left ED, we talked even more about anything and everything. One fact that I think is important to bring out, is he cared deeply about those who were his friends. He helped me and countless others in numerous ways, and NEVER wanted anything in return. Bob truly personifies "he would give his shirt off his back."

I miss Bob a lot, but I have LOTS of good memories to cherish. Anyone who knew him was the better for it.



John Novellino

AUGUST 3, 2011 AT 1:04 PM

I was very sorry to hear of Bob's death. I worked at Microwaves & RF magazine from 1982 to 1986 at what was then Hayden Publishing. Bob was already at Electronic Design magazine, but I didn't get to know him until I switched to ED in 1986.

Bob was covering test and measurement topics at the time. He eventually started working more with CAE/CAD and then became managing editor. The timing is a little hazy after all these years (two years?), but I took over T&M coverage from Bob, and he was a great help in getting me started in the field. I remember going to several trade shows with him where he introduced me to the key players and let me get my first hands-on demonstrations of the leading edge equipment of the day. Even after I was "on my own," Bob was always available and happy to answer questions of not only a technical nature but of a "who's who" nature. (I don't think there was anyone in electronics publishing who knew more about the people in the test business.) Of course, I wasn't the only one who was helped by Bob. He enjoyed answering questions from any new hire, many of whom were much younger than I.

Bob was a collector of sorts. He amassed quite a collection of old test instruments, and was

fond of buying stuff from catalogs, some of it pretty strange. I don't think he ever used the blow gun in anger, although I do seem to remember a few small pinholes in the walls of his office. He was a character of sorts, also. I've never seen anyone go through so many cigars without lighting up a single one—at least not in the office. It did get a little messy sometimes when he had to snip off the wet end.

Last but not least, thanks, Walt, for setting up this page to remember Bob Milne.



Lisa Maliniak

AUGUST 5, 2011 AT 11:47 AM

I had a unique relationship with Bob Milne in that I took over his job at Electronic Design magazine when he was promoted to being a manager. Back in the 1980s, Bob was the CAE/CAD editor, and I was asked to take that position when he moved up. It was a bit daunting – how could I fill the shoes of this editor with such a sharp mind and unique style?

But the good news was that Bob wasn't leaving the magazine, so he was there to mentor me through a pretty rough period. In fact, his office was right next to mine. And he helped me tremendously as I evolved into the renamed "EDA" editor. We had many great conversations, and shared the common trait of procrastination. So we would often commiserate. He was always there with some encouraging words or a great angle I could take on a story.

Bob had a naturally inquisitive and technical mind. He loved to know how things worked, and he often told me how he would take radios apart when he was a kid so he could explore their inner workings. Once I told him how a colony of small ants had built their nest inside my electric alarm clock, and how in disgust I bagged up the clock and threw it in the garbage. He seemed surprised, and told me he would have taken a different approach – he would have disassembled the clock so he could uncover exactly how the ants built this nest. That's how his mind worked.

But aside from our professional relationship, I also considered Bob my friend. For a large and gruff-looking guy, he had a surprisingly soft heart. He also had a great sense of humor. I continued to keep in touch with him after he had retired, but we had unfortunately fallen out of touch in the past few years.

Nonetheless, I will miss him.



David Maliniak

AUGUST 5, 2011 AT 4:11 PM

This morning, to my surprise, an email arrived from Walt Jung, who wanted to alert me to the tribute he'd posted here to Bob Milne.

When I joined Electronic Design in 1986, one of the first people I met was Milne. In those days, Bob was the test and measurement editor. Bob once worked as a field engineer for Fluke in New Jersey and had a huge collection of vintage test equipment, stuff from Ballantine, National, RCA, Triplett, and so on, along with Hickok tube testers and RCA tube caddies full of tubes. Bob and I used to go to local hamfests together; he'd come home with more old receivers and test gear, more tubes, and more tube caddies. He would be thrilled when he found a tube caddy in decent shape, as they were getting harder and harder to come across anymore. Sadly, he lost almost all of that beautiful gear when his basement flooded literally to the ceiling.

Bob Milne wasn't the guy who landed Bob Pease as an Electronic Design columnist (the late Frank Goodenough coaxed Pease over from EDN), but Milne was tasked with "handling" Pease and overseeing the editing process on his columns. They developed a strong working relationship and fast friendship (Pease had his own thoughts about Milne). I remember how Pease used to send Milne fat envelopes full of disks with columns, printouts of letters for "Bob's Mailbox," books, magazines, etc. Every envelope from Pease was addressed to Milne with a different middle initial: "Bob Q. Milne," "Bob X. Milne," and so on. This was an inside joke between them.

Bob saw his work with Bob Pease and other analog greats like Walt, Jim Williams, and Jerry Graeme as the highlight of his career. Those men were his heroes. He was endlessly proud of their work and of his role in bringing their columns and articles to Electronic Design's audience.

In the early 1990s, I began evolving a long-standing interest in shortwave listening into an interest in Amateur Radio, eventually earning an Extra-class ticket. Bob Milne, who had a collection of shortwave receivers himself, was enormously helpful to me in my career as a ham and QRP homebrewer. He would patiently help me troubleshoot local oscillators and homebrewed mixers that I couldn't get going and lent me all sorts of bits of gear and test equipment. I've still got some stuff of his (sorry about that, Bob!) out in the station. He was generous to a fault with his time. Being a bit of a procrastinator, he'd always prefer fooling around with ham gear or circuits to doing actual work.

I could go on a lot longer, because Bob was a unique man. He really loved the electronics industry and the people who comprised it. And he really loved Electronic Design and what it stood for. He was a good friend to my wife Lisa and me. We miss him.



Walt Jung

SEPTEMBER 2, 2011 AT 4:01 PM

Steve Scrupski emailed me with the comments below on Bob Milne.

Thoughts about Bob Milne

Steve Scrupski

I had the pleasure of working with Bob Milne at Electronic Design for more than 20 years. They were tumultuous years for the editors of Electronic Design, going through two acquisitions by other companies, with all the pressures and changes involved, and twice having to prove our worth to our new bosses. But Bob was one of the steady guys that helped us survive.

Thinking back, what impressed me most about Bob was his sense of fairness and his insistence on doing things the right way. I believe that many of his concerns about the magazine stemmed from his concern for the people on the staff. If something was happening that he thought was unfair or if he saw problems in our editorial operations, he had no hesitation in speaking up and letting you know about it. I know this well, because as chief editor, many times I had to deal with the issues he had so forthrightly raised. Bob called 'em like he saw 'em, and even if you didn't agree with him, you had to respect that basic honesty.

When it came to evaluating new test instruments, you couldn't fool him. I recall being told by a product PR person that the visit to Electronic Design to introduce a new test instrument was the acid test for their presentation. If they could get past Bob Milne, they were home free for the rest of their trip. Bob would ask all the pertinent (and possibly impertinent) questions that had to be answered for us to determine how much coverage was merited in the pages of Electronic Design. But sitting on the sidelines and watching Bob in action, I could see the respect for Bob's knowledge among the visiting company representatives .

Frank Goodenough made the first contact to bring Bob Pease into Electronic Design's pages, but it was Bob Milne who managed Pease's column and fine-tuned it into the outstanding series that it turned out to be. Pease and Milne—a perfect match. They seemed to share the same sense of humor and they spoke the same language—engineering. Now those three giants of analog technology reporting in electronics publications, Frank Goodenough, Bob Pease, and Bob Milne, have passed

on. But what a legacy they left!

I think that Bob would most want to be remembered for his two finest characteristics—honesty and forthrightness. And that's how I will remember him.



Roger Allan

SEPTEMBER 11, 2011 AT 3:42 PM

Remembering Bob Milne
a dear lifelong friend and close colleague

Roger Allan

It is safe to say that *no one* knew Bob Milne as well as I did. We grew up together, since we were in our teens to the day he passed away. We worked together, lived near each other, and he was treated as a member of my immediate family. We also socialized together, and shared secrets as well as other things few people knew about.

Here was a self-taught man— one who was brilliant, humorous, a great teacher, a close confidante, and one with many other admirable qualities. When he studied a technical topic, particularly electronics and computers, he learned it “to a Tee” He was also a loner, a quality many of his friends may not have known, sharing some of his secrets with very few people.

I first met Bob through my late younger brother Jaser, who worked with him at a NYC battery company, Yardney Electric. At that time during the mid 1950s, he had just come up from Florida. My late older brother Omar and I then owned a radio/TV/appliance repair shop on Atlantic Ave in Brooklyn, NYC. We needed a bench man who could do repairs and we were impressed with Bob's technical knowledge, so we hired him immediately. He even resided for many years at the home of my late brother's in laws, which was just around the corner from the store.

Later, Bob and I also worked together at Axel Electronics, an electronics firm in Jamaica, Queens, NYC, designing RF filters and pulse-forming networks for radar systems. The interesting thing about our relationship during this time was that I (then a night student at NYU School of Engineering & Science) learned more about filter design from Bob, a man with no formal college education, than I had at the school where I eventually obtained a BEE!

We had many memorable moments, socializing, double dating (I was not married at the time), going on fun trips together, bowling together, attending parties, etc. I vividly remember one

trip where we went skiing in upstate New York. Bob went over a ski mogul and landed incorrectly, snapping his knee joint. The Ski Patrol first aid team brought him down from the mountain and put him in a cast. While he was laid out in the back seat with this cast I drove him home to Brooklyn, NYC (where we lived near each other), taking him on arrival directly to Coney Island Hospital where he was properly treated.

Bob and I kept in constant touch with each other after he moved to Jamaica, Queens, NY while I still lived in Brooklyn. After I got married and had children, he helped us move our furniture from my rented apartment in Brooklyn to the new home that we purchased (and still reside in) in Edison, NJ. I am grateful for his helping us.

Years later on, I knew Bob worked for Fluke Instruments as an applications engineer, and wanted a different career. It was then that I brought I him to *Electronic Design's* attention as Test & Measurement Editor, where he eventually worked under me during my tenure there as Executive Editor, and Bob my Managing Editor.

Bob knew his instruments and analog technology, down to a science. He was a joy to have on hand when analog and instrument company representatives came to visit our office.

Bob was also strongly opinionated. While working together, he made sure you understood him, despite any differences of opinions. From my perspective, Bob grew more isolated and lonely as time went on. Nevertheless, we still maintained our good relationship.

In summary, all I can say is that Bob was a great person to associate with. May he rest in peace.



Lucinda Mattera

SEPTEMBER 15, 2011 AT 7:44 PM

A big guy with outsized talent to match

Bob Milne was a bear of a man—large, burly, and rather rumped looking. However, his appearance (complete with a grizzled shaggy full beard and thick long hair in need of a trim) belied the intelligence and warmth of the person. He did not have formal university degrees; rather he possessed something far more worthwhile: an innate intelligence coupled with uncanny insight and the ability for penetrating analysis.

Over the passing of three decades, I had the privilege of building a relationship with Bob that

evolved into a caring friendship. It started when, as Editor-in-Chief of *Electronic Design*, I took a chance by hiring him to be the Technology Editor who covered instruments for the magazine. Roger Allan, who was already on staff, recommended his long-time friend for the open position. But I wondered how good Bob's writing skills were? Could he handle the deep technologies of test and measurement? What sort of impression would he make with the Big Guns like Hewlett-Packard, Tektronix, and Fluke? And what about the smaller yet prestigious instrument houses, like LeCroy and B&K Precision? Would he be a flop or a phenom?

Well, as you probably surmise, Bob was sensational on all counts. It turns out he was a terrific writer with a natural gift of expression. Plus he hit the ball out of the park when it came to establishing relationships and a dialogue with the test and measurement industry. He talked their talk, he walked their walk. I heard nothing but rave reviews about this new "kid" on the block. And Bob was happy, too. He had finally found a career he could embrace and enjoy.

During this period, we would have lengthy conversations about the industry, the magazine, and the technology. His honesty and openness were always welcome. I invariably gained new perspective from the revelations he shared. Bob was a special guy with a unique viewpoint and a gift for communicating. It wasn't easy for him—he had to work hard to produce the written results he wanted. The pain of writing was palpable; he tended to miss deadlines, keeping everyone on edge throughout the process. In the end, Bob always came through (albeit belatedly), his reporting was first-rate, his perspective was invaluable, and his natural writing skills were evident.

Bob's principal penchant and talent was to teach himself, then help or teach others. Whenever the office had to deal with new computer hardware or new publishing or production software, he faithfully became the Go-To Guy. He made it his business to learn all about the new system—how to work with it and how it works. Then, whenever anyone had a problem, he would readily step up to help solve it. He was always happy to help, good at explaining things, and very patient throughout the whole process.

When I returned to *Electronic Design* at the end of 2000, it was (ironically) to fill the job Bob was leaving to work part-time from his family home in Florida. At the time, he would continue to handle the regular columns by Robert Pease and also prepare contributed technical articles for publication. During those years, for editorial meetings, Bob would "attend" via speakerphone from over 1,000 miles away. He would listen intently then speak up to make a valuable contribution. That was amazing and tough. I don't know how he did it, but then he always participated and contributed to the fullest extent.

Through his last decade, Bob and I became good friends, albeit via long distance by exchanging frequent emails and occasional phone calls. Most especially, I would look to him for computer advice and understanding. I felt a sense of security because I had Bob in my corner. I had no doubt he would be able to address the problem right off the top of his head, or research it to find a viable solution. He really loved talking about computers and sharing his knowledge.

Shoot, I miss Bob and our long meandering conversations that would provide gems of his savvy along with plenty of laughs. Oops, almost forgot to mention he had a terrific sense of humor. Bet he has both Bob Pease and Jim Williams whooping it up, maybe even rolling in the aisles. For sure, this talented trio must be bent over a testbench crowded with instruments and thingamabobs trying to figure out how to make that definitive elusive measurement. Farewell, Bob, you made a mighty impression and lots of friends.



Walt Jung

SEPTEMBER 16, 2011 AT 2:26 PM

Some Summary Comments on 'Memories of Bob Milne'

Walt Jung

First, let me thank Debra Schiff, Roger Engelke Jr., John Novellino, Lisa and David Maliniak, as well as Steve Scrupski, Roger Allan, and Lucinda Mattera. All of them have shared illuminating comments on their associations with Bob Milne. Each of these people have (or had) backgrounds as Electronic Design editors, and at various points their careers overlapped with our friend Bob.

It is interesting to read how interacting with Bob Milne left such indelible impressions with all of them. Debra Schiff and Patrick Mannion recall the cigar chomping, but also the friendly helpfulness so characteristic of Bob. As does Lisa Maliniak, later on.

Roger Engelke recalls the initial days of Bob Pease's column, "Pease Porridge", which was destined to become a classic feature of the magazine. Steve Scrupski recalls the early legwork of the late Frank Goodenough in getting Pease to Electronic Design, just to make it all possible. And then Bob Milne took over, with editing the Pease "input". Anyone who ever got a letter from Pease can appreciate what a task it must have been to make such chaos into readable magazine content, and it is good to see this brought out. Bob Pease was the originator of course, but Bob Milne was the smoother/shaper for those columns. Bob Pease was/is well known as a colorful character, but Bob Milne was also (just not as

visible).

John Novellino recalls Bob Milne's expertise around test gear, which is also noted by Steve Scrupski, David Maliniak, and Lucinda Mattera. David's recalling of that horrible New Jersey flood that took away Bob's basement of test gear emphasizes how dedicated Bob was to electronic instruments. What a devastating loss that must have been to him!

I much appreciated David's mentioning Bob's work with "analog greats" – not just because he included me, but because it brought back memories of working with Bob on not just my own column, but the shaping of several Electronic Design Analog Special issues in which I was fortunate to participate. Bob's insights and understanding of the industry and those who made it tick did a lot to make those issues really special.

Roger Allan has offered a lengthy and personal tribute to our friend Bob, one which brings out many of his qualities independent of those as an editor. With a lot of the same personal notations, Lucinda Mattera offers us an illuminating narrative, extending from Bob's first 1983 hire at Electronic Design, then through his final tenure. And oh, the many rich insights into Bob's human nature she does bring out! I should note here that in the process of getting together this Bob Milne memorial, Lucinda also contributed many suggestions on bringing together these various tributes to Bob.

All of this is very much appreciated here. So, my thanks to each and every one of you, for so honoring our friend Bob Milne.

Somehow, I just know that Bob is up there, smiling down on all of this.

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED.