ACE Awards Jim Williams Contributor of the Year: Steve Hageman

Suzanne Deffree - April 24, 2013

Good Karma. Pay it forward. Passing on the gift. Insert your favorite good-will description here, and it will describe this year's Jim Williams Contributor of the Year Award winner, Steve Hageman.

Hageman, as can be common, wandered into engineering as a child. "It all started about the fifth grade for some reason, like a lot of engineers my age," he says. "Something about the magic of pulling radio waves out of the air. I got the bug to build radios and started trying to find schematics and things to look at."

Steve Hageman is humbled and honored to receive an award named after the late Jim Williams.

That search led him to the local library and its magazine subscription to *Popular Electronics*. "I used to devour those," he recalls. "Writing really came out of that as payback. I thought it was something you had to do to pay back all those fun hours you spent reading about other people's projects."

Armed with a BSEE and EECS from Santa Clara University, Hageman went on to focus on analog/RF/embedded. His resume includes experience earned at companies including Agilent, CALEX, Hewlett-Packard, and Keithley Instruments. He started his own brand, Analog Home, in 2003, and describes it on his LinkedIn profile as "You provide the idea—I provide the Electronic Glue to make your product a reality."

As demonstrated in his popular EDN.com blog, The Practicing Instrumentation Engineer and the comments he posts across the Web site's various content using the screen name "LostInSpace2010," Hageman approaches his work with enthusiasm and an eagerness to share knowledge, much like the

award's namesake, [Jim Williams](#).

Williams, an engineer's engineer and analog great who passed away in June 2011, contributed to many electronics publications, including *EDN*, willing to teach anyone who wanted to learn. In 2012, UBM Tech, *EDN*'s parent company, renamed the annual ACE contributor of the year award after Williams to honor his legacy and his willingness to inspire.

Says a humble Hageman of the winning the Jim Williams award: "It's a huge, huge honor. Jim did everything in analog. A lot of us had the same loves for the same things, like Tektronix oscilloscopes. The first time you got a Tektronix oscilloscope—the first time you managed to talk the boss into buying you a nice Tektronix oscilloscope—we all still remember. Getting a service manual or going through the old HP journals, I know Jim did those things, too. In fact, I still have all those journals and go through them periodically, finding interesting things. Just that love of circuits that Jim had, to a certain extent I have that, too, and I know there are other engineers I work with that have the same love of those things."

Declining to look at it as "work," Hageman seems to get as much out of the action of contributing and commenting as a member of the engineering community as those who read his work and interact with him online do.

"It's a hobby. I get enjoyment out of it. It also helps me to learn," he says. "I'm not one of those guys who can just see something and remember it forever. Thinking about it and writing it down forces you to think about it sequentially and get all the steps in. It also helps to engrain it in my mind, so I learn from the process of writing, too."

Hageman, now an established engineer, still approaches engineering with the same curiosity he found as a kid in the library.

"It's the same thing since fifth grade. I just get interested in something, like a little project. Whether it comes to fruition or not, I think about the design process and what you have to know and how to put it together. That brings you down an alley and then down several other alleys before you get to the end," he says. "And somewhere along the way, you've collected quite a bit of information. It's like training, constantly training. Certainly you have to keep knowing skills and throwing away skills."

As to why Hageman has not gotten comfortable, settling in with the extensive knowledge he's amassed in his career thus far, and instead continually seeks new ways to grow, share, and learn through various avenues, including making contributions to technical Web sites and communities, he summed it up nicely: "You get bored, otherwise."

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