

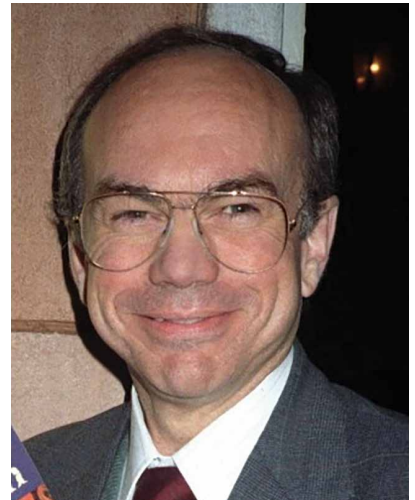
## Nelson Meacham

**N**elson Meacham passed away on 16 January from recurrent atypical meningioma. A second-generation Californian, Nelson's grandparents, Emma and Raleigh Jennings, moved to Southern California from Redwood City, MN, in 1910. His mother, Lois Jennings, married Norman Meacham, a talented professional musician who played multiple instruments, in 1936. Lois worked as a minister's secretary in the San Francisco Bay Area, where Nelson grew up. The Jennings grandparents started a favorite family tradition of summering at Lake Tahoe that Nelson loved.

Nelson was a curious child, who liked to figure out how things worked. He graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering in 1970. He wanted to work for Disney from a young age and accomplished his goal in 1976 joining Walter Elias Disney (WED) Enterprises, which later became Walt Disney Imagineering. Nelson spent over two decades doing progressively more complex work on theme park projects and traveled to share his expertise at Disney parks in Florida, Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong. He also led significant efforts in motion picture technology

at the Walt Disney Studios Sound Department and Disney Feature Animation. Nelson was a talented engineer and pioneer of motion picture digital sound, as well as a kind, gracious, and unassuming mentor and friend to many.

After a 32-year career, Nelson retired in 2008. He enjoyed meals with his close friends and partnered to build state-of-the-art movie and sound systems in their homes. Nelson also stayed in touch with his extended network of colleagues by actively participating in professional organizations, including the Audio Engineering Society, SMPTE (Life Fellow since 1977), and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (voting member, Sound Branch since 1982). He always had a seat at the LA Conservancy's "Last Remaining Seats" to delight in the films of the past. Nelson loved piano and organ music, attending concerts, and supporting the preservation of historic instruments. He volunteered at Walt Disney's Carolwood Barn and the LA Live Steamers Railroad Museum in Griffith Park and enjoyed, not only train technology, but driving Chevy's newest hybrid and electric cars.



In 2013, doctors discovered that Nelson had a genetic propensity for nonmalignant brain tumors. Approaching his medical condition like the engineer, Nelson was content as long as there was a plan of treatment. He courageously went on a difficult 10-year journey with multiple surgeries and other challenging treatments. He maintained his gentle disposition and optimism throughout, despite high levels of head pain, but recently succumbed to the illness.

Nelson is survived by his cousins—Wes Ashcraft, Jim Burns, Kathy Burns, and Maureen Burns—and an extended loving family.

## Robert G. Thomas

**B**ob Thomas passed away on 17 January at the age of 95. Bob lived most of his life in Chestnut Hill, PA, and

subsequently moved to a retirement community in Blue Bell, PA.

Many in the broadcast TV industry knew Bob from his numerous years at RCA as a system design engineer in the video tape recorder (VTR) division

and then at the ABC-TV network where he was director of technology and equipment planning. Bob's career spanned more than 30 years at RCA in Camden, NJ, and 10 years at the ABC Television network in New York City, NY. At

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ABC, Bob was not only a boss, but also a mentor, career advisor, and role model.

During his time at RCA, he designed video and pulse distribution equipment, video switchers, and then went on to the Electronic Recording Section designing signal systems for 2 in. Quad and 1 in. type C machines. Millions of hours of television programs were recorded on these machines that were made possible by Bob's circuit designs and the many other engineers of that era. Bob was a coinventor and received a patent

for the first dropout compensator that corrected for tape dropouts and was used on just about every professional VTR produced since the 1980s.

When Bob joined ABC in the mid-1980s, he guided many of the technology decisions during that time. He was instrumental in the evaluation of various tape formats such as Beta, M2, Type C1 in., D2, and the advent of super slo-mo. Bob developed the test plans and specified the multigeneration performance parameters needed to meet the requirements of the ABC production divisions. His knowledge of signal systems and videotape recording systems was invaluable to the lab engineers working alongside him as well as to the equipment manufacturers who would often take his feedback and make a better product not only for ABC but for the industry.

After Bob retired, he remained active in the industry and became

a trusted advisor to the Museum of Broadcast Technology. Bob's wealth of knowledge and VTR design expertise was a valuable resource to the engineers at the museum to help diagnose, repair, and restore RCA, Ampex Quad, and 1 in. machines that the museum acquired. Bob was proud to support the museum's efforts in order for them to keep machines functioning so that they could play back and recover thousands of hours of television programs recorded on those tape formats.

Bob served on many industry committees related to video recording and was named a SMPTE Fellow. He was also a lifelong amateur radio operator (call sign W3NE) and an authority and modeler of scale steam rail locomotives. Although W3NE has gone off the air, his work lives on in the Museum of Broadcast Technology.

Bob is survived by his wife Phyllis of 62 years.

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