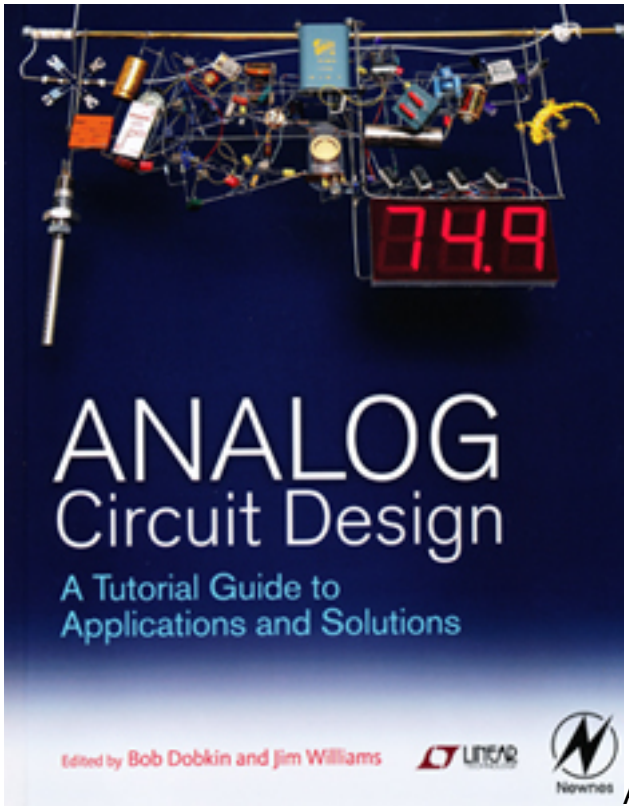
Jim Williams Remembered

Jon Titus, senior technical editor

Analog guru Jim Williams died in mid 2011, but his work lives on in circuits, magazine articles, books and photographs. Part of his lab lives on, too, in the exhibit, "An Analog Life: Remembering Jim Williams," at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA. This exhibit runs through April 15th, so if you plan to attend a show or conference in the area, or live nearby, take time to visit the museum and see this display that includes Jim's lab bench as he left it. For information, visit: http://www.computerhistory.org/highlights/analoglife/ [1]. (If you like the exhibit, let the museum know it should be on permanent display.)

According to John Hamburger, director of marketing communications at Linear Technology, movers who specialize in transporting delicate equipment built a special container for Jim's bench and also wrapped the bench in a type of "shrink wrap" to keep components and prototypes in place. You can see some photos of Jim's work area on the Web site noted above.

As an editor at EDN magazine from 1984 through 1993, I knew Jim and talked with him about his articles, which became classics among the magazine staff and readers. Often we joked with Jim about the burn spots on the face of his old lab scope and the "form" of some of his breadboards. He sure knew analog electronics and could explain circuits thoroughly and in a practical and useful fashion. Readers loved him.



About two years ago Jim had the idea for an encyclopedia-like collection of several volumes that would include everything he knew about power electronics. As luck would have it, he and Bob Dobkin (CTO at

Linear Technology) created a single-volume work, "Analog Circuit Design: A Tutorial Guide to Applications and Solutions," that covers a range of topics with good depth and lasting value.

Jim Williams contributed an Introduction in his usual style and he noted:

"*The topics presented are survivors of a selection process involving a number of disparate considerations. These include reader interest, suitability for publication, time and space constraints, and lasting tutorial value. Additionally, a 10-year useful lifetime for application notes is desired. This generally precludes narrowly-focused efforts. Topics are board, with a tutorial and design emphasis that (ideally) reflects the reader's long-term interest. ...it is significant that some of the material presented is still in high demand years after initial publication.*"

The application notes include the original information as well as Jim's somewhat-famous scope photos, probably taken with a Polaroid camera before the days – or in spite of – digital storage scopes. You can see the images in many of the photos in this wonderful volume. Anyone who works with analog electronics – and those who hope to – should own a copy of this book. It's a shame Jim isn't here to autograph our copies.

"Analog Circuit Design: A Tutorial Guide to Applications and Solutions," edited by Bob Dobkin and Jim Williams, Newnes-Elsevier, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-12-385185-7. List price: $US 84.95, Amazon.com: $US 67.17 [hardcover]. The Amazon page for this book includes a short Bob Dobkin video and introduction plus classic photos of Jim's lab area.

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http://www.ecnmag.com/articles/2012/02/jim-williams-remembered?qt-recent_content=0

Links:
[1] http://www.computerhistory.org/highlights/analoglife/