SGML: In memory of William W. Tunnicliffe

- [Post by Harvey Bingham](#)
- [Post by Charles Goldfarb](#)
- Se also: [Bill Tunnicliffe](#) tribute in *Seybold Report on Publishing Systems*

```
Subject: In memory of William W. Tunnicliffe

Date: Thu, 12 Sep 1996 03:39:52 -0700

From: Harvey Bingham <hbingham@acm.org>

Newsgroup: comp.text.sgml
```

We remember with thanks one of the founders of SGML. Quoting from
Appendix A of The SGML Handbook, Goldfarb, pg 567, on the Generic Coding Concept.
[material copyright 1989, SGML Users Group]

'Historically, electronic manuscripts contained control codes or macros that
caused the document to be formatted in a particular way ("specific coding").
In contrast, generic coding, which began in the late 1960s, uses descriptive
tags (for example, "heading", rather than "format-17"). Many credit the start
of the generic coding movement to a presentation made by William Tunnicliffe,
chairman of the Graphic Communications Association (GCA) Composition Committee,
during a meeting at the Canadian Government Printing Office in September 1967:
his topic -- the separation of information content of documents from their
format.'

I remember Sharon Adler giving a tribute to Bill at the Techdoc meeting in
Boston in 1989. I believe that was the last time we thanked him for getting
us going.

Obituary, Boston Globe, Monday, September 16, 1996

William W. Tunnicliffe
Founded engineering firm: 74

William W. Tunnicliffe of Winchester, founder of the engineering firm
Tunnicliffe Associates, died Thursday at the Sudbury Nursing Center.
He was 74.

Mr. Tunnicliffe was born and raised in Washington, D.C.

He graduated from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1943 and Harvard in 1951, where he received a degree in engineering sciences and applied physics.

In between attending WPI and Harvard, Mr. Tunnicliffe enlisted in the US Navy, where he attained the rank of captain. He held that rank until 1982 in the Navy Reserves.

Mr. Tunnicliffe worked with Raytheon Co. and the Courier Citizen newspaper in Lowell before leaving to start Tunnicliffe Associates, a Winchester-based engineering firm he ran for 10 years before retiring.

He had lived in Winchester for 43 years.

He was a member and former chairman of the Printing Industries of America.

Mr. Tunnicliffe leaves two sons, Peter Tunnicliffe of Sudbury and William Tunnicliffe of Marina Del Ray, Calif.; two daughters, Virginia Thorstensen of Hampton Falls, N.H., and Elizabeth Tunnicliffe of Winchester; one sister, Evla Kervian of Fort Pierce, Fla.; and four grandchildren.

Funeral arangements are private. Burial will be in Wildwood Cemetery in Winchester.

--
Harvey Bingham
SGML and DSSSL application development consultant
Zero Essex Street, Lexington, MA 02173-4242, USA
voice   +1 617 862 6908
email   hbingham@acm.org
internet http://www.tiac.net/users/bingham

Subject: Re: In memory of William W. Tunnicliffe

Date: Thu, 19 Sep 1996 13:17:31 GMT

From: Charles@SGMLsource.com (Charles F. Goldfarb)

Newsgroup: comp.text.sgml

References: <3237E878.6AAC@acm.org>

Harvey,

Thanks for sharing this with us.

As you may know, Bill played even more of a role in the development of SGML thanthe History indicates. He was a constant source of encouragement to me during the GML years and he was an active member of the ANSI and ISO committees when we developed the SGML standrd

Bill was also the first chairman of WG8, at a time when SGML's opponents had our project so boxed-in politically that we couldn't even get it registered as a Working Draft of a standard. His diplomatic and negotiating skills in these adverse circumstances were formidable. Bill had to overcome all kinds of political and administrative barriers that were raised against us, which he did by charming votes from delegates and support from the administrative staff. He eventually got things to a point where the only barrier to balloting SGML as an official Working Draft standard was that the Secretariat staff couldn't get it mailed in time to meet the ISO deadline. Bill convinced them to do the job by subcontracting him (at no cost) to do all the photocopying and packing.

Later on , Bill was able to convince the Navy to adopt a mere Working Draft of SGML as a military standard, despite their policy that they could only adopt final standards. Bill satisfied the policy by first getting GCA to adopt the draft as an industry standard. The Navy then adopted the GCA standard. That Navy standard was the first step toward DoD's eventual adoption of SGML for CALS.

I've been trying to encourage Tommie Usdin and Joy Blake to make SGML '96 a celebration of the 20 years that led to the publication of the standard, as well as of the 10 years since. We never had the reason or the occasion to celebrate in '76 and '86, so '96 is the time to recognize those who contributed to the roots of SGML and those who developed it into its present form as an International Standard. Bill was in both those groups. It's a shame he can't be at the party in person; it's up to us to make sure that he is there in spirit.

--
Charles F. Goldfarb * Information Management Consulting * +1(408)867-5553
          13075 Paramount Drive * Saratoga CA 95070 * USA
   International Standards Editor * ISO 8879 SGML * ISO/IEC 10744 HyTime
 Prentice-Hall Series Editor * CFG Series on Open Information Management
--