

Michael McEwen remarks on Bob Plummer – February 15, 2017

Bob Plummer has retired - nobody really believes that but he has and says he likes it. His retirement makes me melancholy both professionally and personally, but he more than deserves it given a broadcasting career that spans more than half a century. And Karen finally gets her husband full time and the grandchildren get Bob as a surrogate nanny. Not bad!

Today we celebrate Bob's career and his enormous contributions to our industry by presenting him with the NABA International Achievement Award, which recognizes excellence and leadership in broadcasting both domestically and internationally.

In a career that began by building a ham radio as a kid in Seattle that the U.S. Navy thought was being operated by a spy, Bob set out to be an innovator and a contributor not only to the people and organizations he worked for, but also to the benefit of the wider industry he was a part of.

His early career included working in radio and public television, and like all of us who started as kids in the business, he learned it from the ground up. But as his career matured, Bob got serious about developing technologies that would have a profound impact on how people use television.

In 1990, he joined the David Sarnoff Research Center as the director of the Advanced Television Research Laboratory, where he headed major High Definition Television developments such as Advanced Compatible Television (ACTV), participated in Advanced Digital-High Definition Television (AD-HDTV) and directed DIRECTV compression. Prior to joining Sarnoff, Bob was vice president of Engineering for Fisher Broadcasting.

In November 1994, Bob joined DIRECTV as Director of Broadcast Systems Compression, and retired in 2008. Then he went on to have another 8 years as an industry consultant to Fox, retiring at the end of last year.

Bob has more awards, including two Technical Emmys, has sat on more industry Boards and participated in even more industry associations, than probably any five of us combined in this room. He also chaired FOBTv, a thankless job, but hey Bob, someone had to do it. He holds 27 U.S. patents

and during his career became an ITU-R specialist, obviously an atonement for his many sins.

Bob got involved with NABA in the mid nineties and has been both a Chair and Vice-Chair of our technical committee for much of that time. He also participated with the World Broadcasting Unions Technical Committee, became its Vice-Chair and, for the last two years, its Chair. He has set the bar high for participating in an Association that doesn't just depend on membership fees, but needs and wants the active and on-going participation by its members. That's how we get the job done.

He has travelled the world representing NABA and the WBU and has had a tremendous impact on building consensus about technologies, spectrum and broadcast operations. Bob not only worked for his employers, he worked and gave back to the industry as much and more than the industry gave him. At the end of the day we are a pretty small community that is fiercely competitive with one another at one level, but we need to cooperate and collaborate at another level. Bob is the epitome of that statement and acted accordingly to the benefit of us all.

A remarkable career, a remarkable man who will be missed by colleagues he loves and who love him in return. Congratulations Bob on your achievements.

February 15, 2017 – remarks by Michael McEwen (NABA Director-General) at the NABA Annual General Meeting in Washington, DC.