

## Chemical Engineer's radio work recognized with National Science Writing Award

**T**HE NATIONAL Association of Science Writers (NASW) has announced that Bill Hammack has won their 2002 *Science in Society Award* for his public radio work.

The award comes with \$1,000, a certificate, plus travel expenses to the Association's 2003 annual meeting.

This award is given annually to encourage and recognize outstanding investigative and interpretive science reporting in print and broadcast media.

### Science in Society Awards

The Science in Society Awards honors probing coverage that explains why an issue in the sciences matters to society. Bill won this year in the radio category.

The winner in the television category was WGBH/NOVA's program *Evolution*. The winner in the print category was Rick Weiss of the *Washington Post*.

Previous broadcast winners include PBS Television's *Frontline*, and CNN. Previous print winners include reporters from the *Wall Street Journal* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

### About the NASW

In 1934, a dozen pioneering science reporters established NASW at a meeting in New York. NASW was formally incorporated in 1955 with a charter to "foster the dissemination of accurate information regarding science through all media normally devoted to informing the public."

Over the years, its officers have included both freelancers and employees of most of the major newspapers, wire services, magazines, and broadcast outlets in the country. Above all, NASW fights for the free flow of science news.

### Bill's Radio Work

Bill's weekly radio series, "Engineering & Life", opens the world of engineering to the public by sharing the human stories behind all the seemingly simple stuff



Bill Hammack in the WILL-AM studios in Urbana Illinois. This year Bill's public radio pieces on engineering won the National Association of Science Writers "Service to Society Award." You can listen to Bill's commentaries at [www.engineerguy.com](http://www.engineerguy.com). You can get an audio CD of his pieces, plus a speech entitled "How Engineers &

around us -- coffee makers, screws, and plastic bottles. Each week he broadcasts a two and a half minute commentary telling these stories using a humanistic view of technology and engineering.

"Engineering and Life" is produced at WILL-AM 580 in Urbana, Illinois and distributed by Illinois Public Radio. It can also be heard at [www.engineerguy.com](http://www.engineerguy.com).

### Why did Bill create this series?

Bill felt there was a need to do something like this because the normal view people have of technology is that it's a force that overtakes us.

Bill rejects this view. "Technology reflects us and we should be more concerned with shaping it," he says, adding that "people think, mistakenly, that the programs are about how things work. But actually they are about a humanistic view of science, and how it affects us."

In addition, he was concerned about the "pipeline" problem the country faces. As a recent *Wall Street Journal* article [June 7, 2002] pointed out, graduation rates for engineering have declined from 80,000 in the mid-1980s to 60,000 in 1998.

Part of the problem is that students don't view engineering as a creative

profession. Bill's radio work helps young people see engineering design as stimulating and creative work.

Scientists Should Talk to the Public" by sending a request to Donna Sarver at [donna@engineerguy.com](mailto:donna@engineerguy.com). Bill is a professor in the Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He can be reached at [hammack@netbox.com](mailto:hammack@netbox.com)

### About Bill Hammack

Bill has a B.S. in chemical engineering from Michigan Technological University, and a M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He taught engineering at Carnegie Mellon University before returning to Illinois.

He has received a Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award, the ACS/Exxon "Fellowship for Solid State Chemistry," the American Institute of Chemical Engineers "Service to Society Award", and the American Society of Mechanical Engineering "Edwin F. Church Medal."

### Unique Role in Profession

Bill's focus, as a Professor of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, is exclusively on reaching out to the general public. This means his position is unique; in fact, there is none like it in any engineering college in the nation.

Also, he's created a General Education class taught to hundreds of students from such diverse disciplines as business, dance, and history. ■