

## Bill Hammack

## IEEE Recognizes Engineer for Public Radio Work

THE IEEE-USA HAS ANNOUNCED THAT BILL HAMMACK IS the recipient of their 2004 Award for Distinguished Literary Contributions Furthering the Public Understanding of the Profession. The Award consists of an engraved plaque and will be presented in Atlanta at the IEEE Meeting in March. The award was given for Bill's public radio work over the last four years. The award "recognizes outstanding journalistic efforts that lead to a better public understanding of the contributions of engineering professionals to the enhancement and expansion of the social, economic, and cultural aspects of life."

The most recent winner of the award is Jon Katz of *Wired* magazine and *Rolling Stone*. Past winners include Richard Harris and David Kestenbaum, NPR science correspondents; Eugene Ferguson, author of *Engineering and the Mind's Eye*; Jon PalFREMAN, producer for the PBS programs *Nova* and *Frontline*; G. Pascal Zachary of the *Wall Street Journal*; and Whitfield Diffie, inventor of public key cryptography.

#### About the IEEE

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) is a non-profit, technical professional association of more than 380,000 individual members in 150 countries. Through its members, the IEEE is a leading authority in technical areas ranging from computer engineering, biomedical technology and telecommunications, to electric power, aerospace and consumer electronics, among others.

#### 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 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.

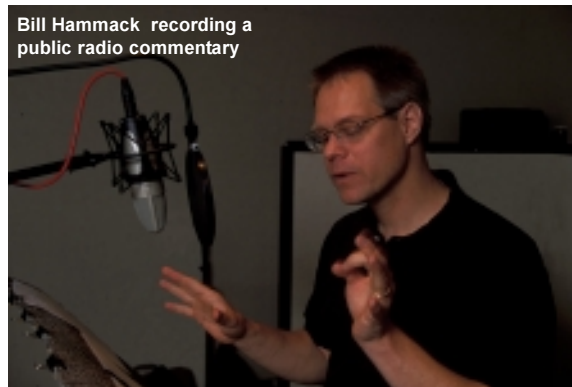
"Engineering and Life" is produced at WILL-AM 580 in Urbana, Illinois and distributed by Illinois Public Radio. His work has appeared on Public Radio International's highly rated *Marketplace*; it can also be heard at [www.engineerguy.com](http://www.engineerguy.com). His pieces also appear regularly on the Australian Broadcasting

Corporation radio network during Robyn Williams' *Science Show*.

#### 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



Bill Hammack recording a public radio commentary

J. Dexter/LAS News

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 a recent speech at the National Press Club, Bill spelled out the need for technological literacy: "Scientific and technological literacy impacts the ability of our citizens to make informed decisions, and it creates technology savvy workers who ensure America's long term economic health."

#### 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, where his research work earned a Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award and the ACS/Exxon Fellowship for Solid State Chemistry. He returned to Illinois in December 1997 to pioneer a new role for an engineering professor.

#### Recognition of Public Radio Work

His public radio work has earned seven national awards. Most recently the American Chemical Society's *Grady-Stack Award*. Previous winners of this award include Isaac Asimov, Don Herbert ("Mr. Wizard"), Pulitzer Prize winners Ronald Kotulak, Jon Franklin, and Malcolm Browne, plus reporters from the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and National Public Radio.

His work has also been recognized by The American Institute of Chemical Engineers *Service to Society Award*; and the American Society of Mechanical Engineering's *Edwin F. Church Medal*.

Past winners of this ASME award include Kenneth Roe, former president of ASME;

Woodie Flowers, developer of MIT's renowned course "Introduction to Design"; and Dean Kamen, inventor most recently of the "Segway", a gyroscope-stabilized scooter.

He has received The National Association of Science Writers *Science-in-Society Award*. Previous winners include WGBH/NOVA's program *Evolution*, PBS Television's *Frontline*, CNN, and reporters from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In addition, Bill has received the National Federation of Community Broadcasters *Silver Reel for National News & Commentary*; and the American Society for Engineering Education's *President's Award*.

#### Unique Role in Profession

Bill's focus, as a Professor of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering at the University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign, 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. He is the only engineering professor tenured for his outreach work.

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