

Who was Grant Rule

Posted by Yves Hanouille on Tuesday, October 25th, 2011

This is the saddest of all Who Is that I am writing. Only a few weeks ago I met Grant for the first time in life. I had heard so many good things about him. I was delighted when I received his #Whols. Such a lovely man. Music, history, etc. He was also one of the few who gave me a lot of links. And if I felt we needed more diversity, just look at his list of next people to ask the questions.... Grant was proposed by his friend [Bob Marshall](#)

And then today I read on Facebook, and it was confirmed on LinkedIn, that Grant died in a sailing accident. I don't know what to say... I had planned to publish another Who Is today, I'm not sure I will still publish this. Here is the one of Grant.

What is something people usually don't know about you but has influenced you in who you are?

I was enrolled as a Wolf Cub at the age of 8, was a Scout, helped found possibly the first mixed-sex Venture Scout Unit in the UK, was a Cub Scout leader, an Assistant Scout Leader and a Venture Scout Leader. I believe I learnt more about team work and servant leadership from my mentors in the Scout Association than ever I have from the world of business.

It was through the Scout Movement that I became interested in the folk music of the British Isles. That encouraged me to participate in folk clubs, especially Croydon Folk Song Club, where I met [Susan Donaldson](#) (who was fool enough to marry me). My brother Keith, Sue, our eldest daughter Lyndsey, and I have for 24 years played in [our family folk band, Pig's Ear](#). We have 7 CDs available and run an [annual Folk Ale](#). I play the [Appalachian mountain dulcimer](#).

If you would not have been in IT, what would have become of you?

I would have become a lumberjack, tree surgeon or estate manager, as I planned to study Forestry at University. Fact is, I got into programming in 1972 via a holiday job, which in many ways I'm still doing. **I often wonder what I'll do when I grow up.**

What is your biggest challenge and why is it a good thing for you?

People are definitely the biggest and most interesting challenge. As is learning from them and attempting to communicate with them.

It seems to me that a technical solution or work-a-round can generally be found to most problems. But much technical effort is expended to address the wrong issues. People prefer to work on technical stuff because, I think, it is easier than understanding the real, underlying problems, which are nearly always people-related.

Why is it good for me? I suppose because people present a challenge that is forever mutating, that cannot be solved once-and-for-all, but which pulls us to strive to find better ways to help people explore, discover their issues and work together on solutions.

What drives you ?

Hmm. Dissatisfaction with the status quo, disgust at the dysfunctional nature of our socio-political-economic system, and a belief that everyone ought to contribute according to their means, and be supported according to their needs. Homo sapiens can achieve so much more. But we have yet to demonstrate that we can achieve a sustainable, fair, global system.

What is your biggest achievement?

My best achievement is to have shared, with Sue, in the upbringing of our daughters, Lyndsey and Helen.

Work-wise, I think I've made some minor contributions to structured programming, software measurement and lean systems thinking for software, but how worthy these are is for others to judge and say. I guess I am most proud of the work we've done on SMS' Lean & Agile Method for Improvement Teams (SLAMit) and Outcome-Based Agreements (OBA) for those using agile practices.

What is the last book you have read?

Well, I'm pretty sure it won't be the 'last book' I read, but the book I've completed most recently is Kenneth & William Hopper's book, ['The Puritan Gift'](#). This is a 'must read' for everyone interested in business management, politics and/or modern history (which ought to be everybody). It explains so much regarding how and why the human world dominated by western economic behaviours has got into its current state. And, importantly, gives clues on what we must do to move to an improved future state.

Since my teens I've been a big fan of science fiction, so it's worth saying I've just finished my monthly 'fix' of ['Analog Science Fiction and Fact' magazine](#). And then of course, there is my quarterly ['Dulcimer Player's News'](#). One thing I've noticed is that I get through fewer books nowadays, I think because I read more, shorter stuff on-line. Time spent on blogs and Twitter is time I'd previously have spent reading. I'm not sure I have a sustainable balance worked out yet.

What question do you think I should also ask and what is the answer?

I guess you could ask, "If, after looking at the world of software systems for 40 years, and analysing the current state, you think you have some solutions

worth modelling, what are you doing to get them tested, evaluated and implemented?”

And I'd respond, "As Deming observed, the performance of a system is mostly designed into the system, and is affected only a little by the individuals who crank the handles. Politicians, executives, managers and workers are all trapped in the system of work (which with a few exceptions is mostly dysfunctional and less effective than it might be). However, it is the explicit responsibility of politicians and executives – our leaders – to work upon the system of work to make it more effective (and thereby improve life for everyone). So much of my current activity is focused on engaging with those folk in leadership roles who can remove the impediments that obstruct the majority. Tom Gilb, Peter Leeson, Bob Marshall, Chris Woodward, Sue, myself, with some others, have formed Orchestrated Knowledge, an organisation that we intend to use as a platform to leverage proven know-how, to create synergy where we can, to assist leaders to reduce the waste of human creativity and improve outcomes for all stakeholders.

Who do you think I should ask next?

During my nearly 40 years in software, I've observed two problematic tendencies:

1) a predilection to continue along a course of action beyond the point where there is irrefutable evidence that that course is ineffective (and as Albert Einstein observed, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".) – making out everything is a 'project' is one example; the 'big design up front' approach to specification is another.

2) a focus on technical detail, programming language and tools, rather than on principles, methods, patterns and problem solving – which has infected education to the degree that I fear newly trained developers today are on the third (maybe the fourth) cycle of re-invention, simply because the history of software engineering seems to be ignored. This encourages the 'not invented here' syndrome. Yet even Sir Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants".

So while I can think of many current practitioners who it would be good for you to invite, I'd like you to engage with one or two of those I consider 'giants'. So I suggest:

- [Tom Gilb](#) (inventor of the 'Evo' method, arguably the first 'agile method') and/or his son, Kai Gilb;
- [Michael A Jackson](#) (inventor of Jackson Structured Programming, Jackson System Development, and Problem Frames);
- Stephen Parry (co-author with Sue Barlow and Mike Faulkner of the book, ['Sense and Respond'](#));

- [Stephen Mellor](#)
- [Neils Malotaux](#)
- [Steve McConnell](#)
- [Charles Symons](#)
- and of course, [William Hopper](#)

5 Responses to “Who was Grant Rule”

1. *Marion Rodgers* says:

[October 27, 2011 at 12:00](#)

Thank you for this article Yves

As just one friend amongst a huge circle of folk music friends I would just like to add a few words if I may although I fear I alone may not be able to do him justice to this side of his life.

Grant together with his amazing family have made a massive contribution to promote live Folk. Hundreds of people have enjoyed the annual Pig’s Ear Folk Ale which began a family birthday party and grew to a full weekend programme of concerts and camping fun. Also each year, Grant appeared at the Rochester Sweeps Festival hosting the Pig’s Ear stage on the High Street in all weathers.

There are so many other events and gigs which have been held over the years in which Grant played a central role and I would suggest people take a moment to look up Pig’s Ear Folk or their website on MySpace to get a feel for the richness of his talent and involvement in Folk Music.

My husband and I , along with so many artists are very grateful for the opportunities and encouragement Grant gave us and also for the personal friendship which we have enjoyed.

Grant and his family performed earlier this month at the Stag Theatre “The Song that is Sung Forever”. Grant’s life will ensure that this will happen.

Marion Rodgers

2. *Stephen Parry* says:

[December 19, 2011 at 14:10](#)

I lost a friend who was an inspiration and great intellect.

As we are approaching the holiday period I am reminded that we planned this time to collaborate on a new book outlining how Lean and Agile can create a very different type of technical infrastructure and operating model based on the intellect and

inventiveness of the engineers. Where engineers designed the role of the manager and that of the engineer. Who better to engineer engineering jobs?

I will complete the book based on his published work and his papers, while trying to imagine how he would have expressed himself in our new book.