

# In Memory of Robert William Milne

**BSc PhD CEng FBCS CITP EurIng FRSE Hon DTech**

**13 July 1956 – 05 June 2005**



**Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh**

**20 June 2005**

**11.30am**

To many people, Rob was an expert. He led, inspired and befriended many of the people he met. In the software world, he was an international expert on artificial intelligence, one who bridged the divide between academia and the commercial software community with his continued involvement in new research; in the academic world, he was an expert systems practitioner who broke away and set up his own business and proved that while it wasn't easy it can be done successfully; to his staff, Rob was an expert fixer, closing the deals, finding ways through the tough times; in the mountaineering world, Rob was a seasoned mountaineer, ice climber and author.

## Order of Service

Welcome : Di Williams

Resume of Rob's Life : Di Williams

"The Measure of a Man" : Rosemary Milne

## Tributes

Father : Dick Milne

AI Community : Prof Alan Bundy

Family Friend : Bill Taylor

Software Industry : Ian Ritchie

Intelligent Applications : Charlie Nicol

"Dark Lochnagar" : Alex Milne

## Final Tribute

Mountaineering Community : Rab Anderson

2 Minutes Silence

Psalm 23 : The Lord Is My Shepherd

Blessing : Di Williams

*The congregation is invited to a reception at  
AIAI, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Appleton Tower  
Crichton Street off George Square*

## Robert William Milne

Born in Montana Rob and his family moved to Colorado when he was ten, where he attended Bear Creek High School and was an active member of the Eagle Scouts and the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) where he learnt to parachute.

He started climbing in the Colorado and Yosemite mountains in his teens, laying down new climb routes and was a member of the Arapahoe mountain rescue team.



According to his friend and fellow student Charles Freeman, Rob was already a climbing legend at 19 and had had his picture on the cover of Appalachia magazine twice in a row for his first winter end-to-end of the Long Trail and new winter first ascent routes on Mt. Katahdin, Maine.

Rob was awarded a US Army scholarship to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he graduated in 1978. In his spare moments between lectures he taught the Rock Climbing class. After graduating from MIT Rob came to study at the School of Informatics in Edinburgh where he completed a PhD in 1983. In 1981 he married his wife Val.

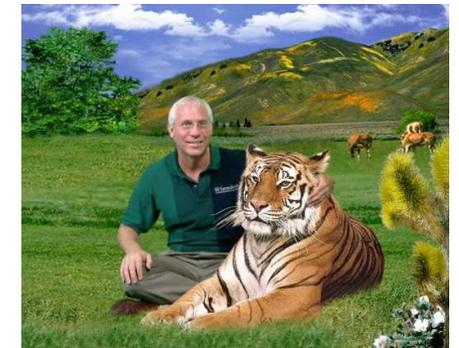


After his PhD, Rob and Val then returned to the States where Rob served four years in the US forces, firstly as a First Lieutenant in Georgia and then teaching at the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, Ohio, where Rob was also a member of the local volunteer fire and Ambulance service, taking great delight in zooming around on callout nights with his own portable emergency services siren.

Rob's son Alex was born in 1984 and the family moved to Washington where Rob completed his army service as an army Captain and Chief AI Scientist on the staff of the Pentagon. In 1986 the Milnes returned to Scotland where their daughter Rosemary was born.



At this time Rob set up his own company, Intelligent Applications Ltd in Livingston at the heart of what by then had become Silicon Glen. The reversal of the initials AI for artificial intelligence into IA for Intelligent Applications summed up, for his colleagues in both the academic and business worlds, his message of the importance of applying research discoveries. He led the development of Intelligent Applications' key product, Tiger, a knowledge-based gas turbine condition monitoring system since its inception and was responsible for its commercialisation, which is now on a global scale.



Rob's company's innovation and success has been recognised with the Queen's Award for Technology, the DTI Manufacturing Intelligence Competition; the Small Firms Merit Award; the IT Europe Award; and the Small Firms Access to Europe Competition Export Award. In 2001, Intelligent Applications was bought up by a major gas turbine company, and Rob became managing director of Sermatech Intelligent Applications.



Throughout this time he was one of the most active people in Europe involved in AI societies and promoting the subject. His work had both commercial and academic aspects. He engaged strongly with Scottish educational institutions via visiting and honorary posts and was on a range of industrial exploitation committees to assist



universities in maintaining their relevance to industry. He also provided tutorials and seminars on a regular basis at the major international conferences in his subject, and still found time to publish the results of his work in traditional academic journals and conferences.



Rob stood out as one of the most engaged people in Scotland in the AI and general



software engineering field in terms of his service to the community. This was sustained over many years through organisations such as the British Computer Society Artificial Intelligence Group, IEE, and the European Coordinating Committee of all European AI societies, of which he was chair for a period. Rob was for



many years an office holder for the BCS AI Group and one of the principal organizers of its annual conference. Rob led the

bid to bring IJCAI, the foremost international AI conference, to Scotland in 2005 and was the chairman of the local arrangements committee.



**Elbrus with Alex**



**Kilimanjaro with Rosemary**

In 2003, Rob was given Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (Scotland's National Academy) in recognition of his work in applied artificial intelligence and for his efforts in giving leadership to European AI society activities.



Rob had many other interests and activities. He assisted with the Pony Club and was an accomplished speaker. Rob published books on mountaineering and



was a senior figure in the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Mountaineering recharged Rob's batteries. Many a weekend was spent bagging

another Munro or capturing another Corbett, and those who worked with him were used to his regular expeditions to all points of the globe where he would carefully combine a conference on the finer points of artificial intelligence with a couple of days on the beach to top up his tan and a stiff climb up some daunting peak.





In April 2005 Rob set out to complete a challenge that he began as a PhD student. He sought to climb Mt. Everest, the last objective for his climbs of the highest peaks on all continents. Rob died just short of the summit in the early hours of 5th June 2005 Nepal Time. Tragically, those high starlit ice fields on the summit of Everest will now be Rob's last resting place, perhaps fitting for a guy who had always found challenge and respite in the world's high places.

