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## DEC ex-staffers come back to Maynard for 50th anniversary

Mass High Tech: The Journal of New England Technology - June 8, 2007 by [Rebecca Fitzgerald](#) Mass High Tech  
Clock Tower Place in Maynard has been the site of continuous innovation since early in the history of the United States. Having produced various textiles for the Industrial Revolution, it saw the birth of another revolution almost a hundred years later -- the computer revolution spurred on by tenants such as Digital Equipment Corp., which established its headquarters there in 1957.

On May 24, hundreds of former DEC employees returned to the tech mecca to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the company's founding.

Clock Tower Place, also known as the Mill, is an undeniable part of Maynard, spreading across 45 acres, and is quite literally the heart of the town.

"The Mill was the heart and soul of the founding of Digital," said Nancy Kilty, a former marketing executive who worked for more than 31 years at the company.

DEC, too, was an undeniable force to the beginnings of the Information Age. There have been several reunions for the company's former employees, but with the company's silver anniversary, numbers were larger than anticipated, as 1,000 former employees attended, attesting to the company's historic value to the tech world.

"It's bittersweet," said Dan Kilgore, who worked for 11 years at Digital in the personnel department and is now director of recruiting at Getronics, the Dutch tech firm that acquired Wang Global in 1999. "It's nice to reconnect with friends. The downside is reliving and remembering something that is gone and that the world has moved on."

The company was co-founded in 1957 by Ken Olsen and Harlan Anderson in 8,600 square feet of leased space in the Mill. The company continued to expand and, in 1974, DEC bought the Mill, becoming its sole occupant. At the height of the company's market power, DEC employed more than 300,000 people. In 1998, DEC was bought by Compaq Inc., not long before Compaq itself was purchased by Hewlett-Packard Co. in 2002.

"It was a nurturing nest of high tech cultural revolution," said Kilgore. "The nature and culture that Ken Olsen built was atypical. It caught a generation of baby boomers and brought them into the business world."

The Mill continues to be a hotbed of technology companies, fostering the growth of companies like [Monster.com](#) and Tizor Inc. as well as new startups like Curt Schilling's gaming company, 38 Studios LLC. Former employees of DEC have moved on, spawning countless tech companies across the country.

"Digital and its founder, Ken Olsen, founded a company that was based on both individualism, entrepreneurship, and a duty to do what's right for the company, its customers and its shareholders," said Jack Mileski, who worked 25 years in marketing and business development and who is a reunion committee member. "Today, people that have left Digital carried that DNA into hundreds of companies -- as both entrepreneurs or employees of both small and large companies around the world."

That is certainly true of industry greats like Gordon Bell, who spent 23 years at DEC as principal architect and vice president of research and development and is now the senior researcher at Microsoft Corp.'s Media Presence Research Group. The late Henry Burkhardt III, began his career at DEC as a programmer before founding Data General Corp. and the Kendall Square Research Corp. Also, the late Allan Kotok, who spent 34 years with the company, developed Space Wars, which is considered the first video game in the market. He served many roles within the company, including technical director for product strategy and development groups in telecommunications, storage and the Internet.

Plans for a fall barbecue are under way, as is a September reunion for the company's European employees in Berlin.

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