Four New Names Inducted Into the Wireless Hall of Fame

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SAN JOSE—The Wireless History Foundation (WHF) Tuesday celebrated 30 years of wireless, while honoring four individuals with a place in the wireless hall of fame. The event attracted a considerable constituency from the wireless industry, including the CEOs of Sprint, AT&T Mobility and Verizon.

Kris Rinne, inductee into the 2013 Wireless Hall of Fame, receives her award from Ralph de la Vega, President and CEO of AT&T Mobility.

Set up in the sparkling ballroom of the Fairmont Hotel, the ceremony took place on the eve of CTIA's final standalone MobileCon. The show will be combined with CTIA's spring show Super Mobility event next September in Las Vegas.

Ericsson executive Angel Ruiz led the room in a lively song before the WHF set about honoring Senator Mark Warner, Craig Farill, Kris Rinne and George Schmitt. All the inductees received warm introductions followed by video interviews.

Due to the ongoing budgetary crisis in Washington, Senator Warner chose not to attend the event and had his friend and former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal Gerald McGowen accept the award on his behalf.

Warner, a Democratic senator for Virginia since 2009, started brokering deals for carriers in the early days of wireless and went on to raise money for many different wireless ventures. In 1989, he formed Columbia Capital, a venture capital firm, and co-founded FleetCall, which would become Nextel.

Farill, who was welcomed onstage by Telcom Ventures CEO and fellow HoF inductee Raj Singh, shared his optimism after more than thirty years in the industry. Now serving as CTO for FirstNet, Farill has served as CTO for PacTell, AirTouch and UK Vodafone while pioneering CDMA technology and founding the CDMA Development Group in 1993. He also founded Kodiak Networks, a wireless infrastructure company focused on instant group communication tech like push-to-talk over cellular.

Following an introduction from AT&T Mobility CEO Ralph de la Vega, Rinne accepted her award. Rinne, now the senior vice president of network technologies for AT&T Labs, has also served as CTO for Cingular, vice president of technology strategy for SBC Wireless and managing director of operations for Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems. In her roles with 4G Americas and ATIS, Rinne helped make 3GPP as an industry standard.

George Schmitt, currently chairman at xG Technology and CEO at MB Technology Holdings, received the award in the pioneer category. Schmitt built the first digital wireless network on GSM, built the world's first CDMA network in South Korea and went onto to build and operate a large PCS network in the U.S. He has served as CEO of PrimeCo, the first in the U.S. with CDMA service. He is the first American to lead the global GSM association.

The WHF's annual festivities, as usual, drew an impressive cross section of the wireless industry, from representatives for T-Mobile USA, Qualcomm and Google, to small startups.

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