



December 20, 2022

To the GraphicSchedule Community:

With sadness, I am writing to inform you that Ron Drake passed away unexpectedly on December 10, 2022. He was 71 years old.

During his 40+ year career Ron made an impact on many people in the construction industry. He was known as a trusted mentor, a brilliant construction manager, and a great innovator. In 2011 he offered me a job on his construction management team in Washington DC. I took that job and moved my family across the country because Ron's reputation preceded him. I wanted to learn his ways.

Ron's approach to each new project or pursuit was to study the job, identify its unique challenges, think about how it would actually be constructed, then find a way to communicate that information in layman's terms. Ron's tendency to roll up his sleeves and figure things out, combined with his excellent presentation skills, made him a formidable opponent in any project interview. He had a knack for winning signature projects even when competing against much larger/more established firms.

When I arrived in DC, Ron gave me my first assignment: convert the 1-page linear schedule that he had drawn in PowerPoint into a more robust tool that could be easily updated to illustrate the contractor's baseline schedule and monthly updates thereafter. Back then our options were to draw it by hand (and redraw it whenever the schedule changed) or purchase sophisticated software with a 400-page user manual, a steep learning curve, and an even steeper price tag. Then we had an idea:

What if we plot our entire project on an Excel chart where X=time and Y=location, then link that chart to the contractor's schedule data for easy updates whenever things change?

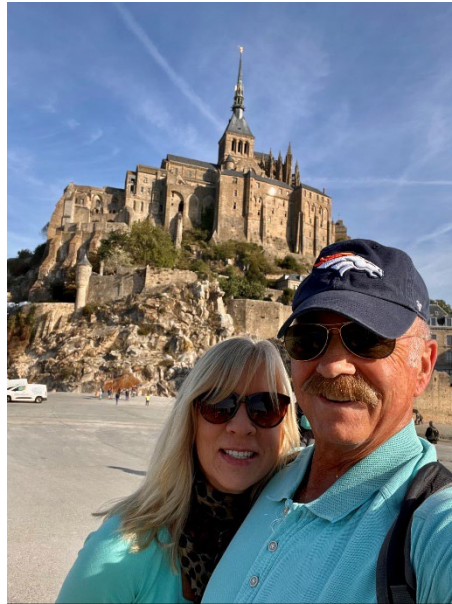
The use of an Excel chart worked beautifully, and this linear schedule quickly became the team's most-valuable project management tool. Monthly updates were generated in minutes, and the printouts became a fixture in cubicles and conference rooms everywhere – for designers, contractors, and construction managers alike.

Over the next few years we continued to refine our approach, and in 2015 we founded GraphicSchedule Inc. to develop an easy-to-use Excel application that the entire industry could benefit from. At that time Ron told me that his primary motivation for creating software was because he wanted to "leave the wood pile higher than he found it". Ron cared deeply about helping to advance the industry, and that's just the kind of guy he was.

GraphicSchedule is now used by leading contractors, owners, and consultants on major projects all around the US and abroad. I like to think that GraphicSchedule's main accomplishment is enabling many more people to follow in Ron's footsteps to communicate their projects more effectively. And that is a good thing, because we need more people like Ron in this world.

The other day I wrote a [brief post on LinkedIn](#) about Ron's passing. The comments from our friends and colleagues speak volumes about how he impacted their lives and careers. His employer COWI also posted an obituary [here](#). I would encourage you to visit these pages to get a sense of the man that Ron was.

My heart goes out to Ron's wife Susan and their two sons Lee and JB. Ron and Susan were married nearly 35 years, were best friends, traveled often, and did everything together. Ron was a very hard worker, but still managed to put his family first. One of the unique things that I always admired about Ron was the way that he included Susan in his work life. She has attended nearly all his tunneling and project controls conferences, team dinners and social events, and has also played a key role in keeping GraphicSchedule running smoothly. I think it's safe to say that if you knew Ron, you probably know Susan. Below is a photo of Ron and Susan celebrating Ron's 71st birthday in Mont Saint Michel, France on September 22.



Please keep Susan, Lee, and JB in your thoughts during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

James Wonneberg
Co-Founder
GraphicSchedule Inc.