

## Steve Teller's History of the First Wednesday in December

In 1995 when I was in Castle Rock, Colorado, working with SBS/HCI (now SES) or DirecTV—which shared the old SBS site where we tested DirecTV 1 and 2—I got a call from Chris Mahle.

Chris apologized and told me that he and Vasilis Riginos would be retired before I got back. He added, “And after you return, you’ll need to head to Jakarta.”

Not long after, Ron Johnson called. He was a little panicked about them leaving.

Some time after I returned from Jakarta, Ron told me he wanted to have an informal get-together with the group. He didn’t want to lose touch with Chris and Vasilis—they’d been such a big part of our lives.

Whenever the Transponders group had visitors, we always took them to [Roy's Place](#) in Gaithersburg. It was casual, full of character, and famous for its long list of wild and wonderful sandwiches. Definitely not one of those formal, sit-down spots we often went to with (as Ron liked to say) “the suits.” He wanted a place for regular folks. So that’s where he decided we’d hold our little Christmas-style gathering.

The problem with Christmas parties is that everyone has them—usually on weekends or Fridays—so we picked the middle of the week instead. We started around 6:30 p.m., right after work, so nobody had to rush home first.

I can’t say for sure who made it to the first one, but the regulars included Fred Sidel, Fred Riger, Jim Bezzelli, François Assal, Pei Shen, Peggy Cline, Mary Hoff, Chaim Zaks, Marco Urcuyo, Jeff Sanders, Cal Cotner, Alby Williams, Bob Gruner, David Lee, Steve Struharik, Lloyd Blackman, Yung Soo Lee, Derk Vanderloo, Ron Johnson, Joe Bruno, Steve Teller, Vasilis Riginos, and Chris Mahle—plus a few others I’m sure I’m forgetting. If I missed you, sorry... memory only goes so far!

After a few years at Roy’s Place, someone asked, “So, when’s the next one?” I said, “That’s it—from now on, we’re calling it The First Wednesday in December.”

Roy’s Place sadly closed in 2013, but they opened up one last time just for The First Wednesday in December. The next year, in 2014, we met at [The Golden Bull](#). The food was great, but it was a little too formal—the exact kind of thing Ron didn’t want. In 2015, we found [Woodside Deli](#), which, like Roy’s Place, had a fun menu full of creative sandwiches. At first, they didn’t serve alcohol, but don’t worry, they do now.