



Edward Lee Volker

October 29, 1939 - December 25, 2020

Volker, Edward L., December 25, 2020 age 81 of Plymouth, passed peacefully on December 25, 2020 at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia. He was born October 29, 1939 in Flint, MI. Beloved husband of Lynne for 60 years. Loving father of David (Lisa) and Danielle. Very proud grandfather of Jessica, Jenelle, Alex, and Nick, and great grandfather (granddad) and kindred spirit of Hunter. Dear brother of Gary and sister Janet (deceased) Ed will be greatly missed by his much loved nieces and nephews. Ed was not only an anchor for the entire family, he was also a mentor, father figure, confident and friend to many at Ford Motor Company. He was an avid golfer, voracious reader and brilliant card player. A Memorial Gathering will be held at a later date. Donations can be made to Doctors without Borders USA, P.O. Box 5030, Hagerstown, MD 21741-5030 or Blood-N-Fire Ministries of Muncie, IN established by Ed's niece and her husband. Arrangements entrusted to Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home. To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on this web page.

Family Obituary:

Ed Volker was the Ultimate Ford Heavy Trucker

He came to Ford Motor Company in 1971, after leaving GM in 1966 (a story for another time) and a stint at Midland Ross. His extremely diverse background at Ford began as a Steering/Suspension Design Engineer. After a development assignment at Engineering Staff, Ed returned as the Group Leader of the Steering/Suspension team. Ed then became the Manager of the Engineering Services Department. His next assignment was as the Dealer Special Order (DSO) Manager at the Kentucky Truck Plant (KTP). Ed will be remembered most for his outstanding leadership as Program Manager of the HN-80 Program. A position he accepted when Bill Ford personally reached him by phone in the "wilds" of the Upper Peninsula (U.P), while Ed was vacationing. He led the team in achieving multiple industry-leading features including (but not limited to):

All New Clean-Sheet-of-Paper Vehicle Line-up of Five Models

Best in Class Engine Cooling

Industry Leading Chassis Ride

Best-In-Class Human Factors

Steel & Aluminum Cab using common tooling

Ed led the team in using processes that were as innovative as the resulting product including early involvement of the Customers, Dealers, KTP, Service Providers, and Suppliers. The program had a total of over 7000 new tooled parts (NTP) which exceeded the rest of Ford Motor Programs combined for two consecutive years. Ed led the team in bringing the HN-80 Program home on time and under-budget with only a small fraction of the personnel and budget allocated to light vehicle projects. All who worked on the HN-80 Program will remember Ed's Team Motto: "Fix the Problem – Not the Blame". They will also have vivid memories of Ed holding up the "No Whining" sign during report-out meetings. Despite the stress he always made it fun.

During the groundbreaking achievement of the HN-80 program, Ed rose to the position of Heavy Truck Vehicle Line Director. He then endured pressure to retire from an upper management individual who did not have a full grasp or appreciation of the team's accomplishments nor of Ed's extraordinary and exceptional performance. Ed's commitment and perseverance won out. He did not retire. When Ed drove the Job#1 truck off the end of the assembly line at KTP, Sales & Marketing introduced him to the press as the "Father of the HN-80" – a well-deserved description.

Ford then needed the manufacturing space of KTP for Light Trucks and decided to sell the Heavy Truck Business. Ed coordinated the sale & transfer to Freightliner. He stayed to the end, making sure everyone at Ford was treated fairly and taken care of in the best way possible. The grateful team appreciated him being "The Last Heavy Trucker Standing." He was then appointed the head of Global Testing Operations responsible for all Ford Product Development Testing World-Wide. His vast experience equipped Ed well in handling this important responsibility in his final role before retiring on his timetable. ELV is respected and loved by the hundreds of individuals that worked for and with him. Ed will be deeply missed but his legacy will live on through those he mentored as they pass on what they have learned from Ed's leadership and example.

Contributors: Jerry Hubbell, Tom Baughman, Ken Timmer and Dave Honiss

Comments



“ I found an old Christmas card from Ed and Lynne. We had lost touch. I googled his name the other day and was shocked when I found the obituary. I knew Ed from back in his early GM days. The obituary reflects what I knew of Ed's character and personality. My best to Lynne and the family

Bruce Smith - March 06 at 12:11 PM



“ Very sad to hear of Ed's passing. Even though he is gone, I know Lynne and all the family members will have fond memories that will live on forever. I concur with Jerry Hubbell's and Dale Darkowski's comments on Ed's leadership during the Ford Heavy Truck HN80 Program. Many new vehicle programs just consist of making changes to an existing model, but many engineers look forward to working on a program where the vehicle is totally new and starts with sketches and assumptions and is followed through the complete design and incorporation phase to the first vehicle coming off the production line. That was the case with the multimillion-dollar HN80 Program that Ed oversaw; a major endeavor with many problems to solve along the way. I always credited Ed with the ability to put everyone at ease and in a good frame of mind after the many intense meetings that were required to resolve design and timing issues. I know Ed loved to read and I think one of his favorite places to read was in a boat in the middle of a lake. On my many trips to visit my son in Marquette, I often thought of turning down the road to Au Train Lake to see if I could spot Ed on the lake basking in the sun and reading a favorite book.
Jim Kudej

Jim Kudej - January 23 at 05:03 PM



“ Here is a tribute to a wonderful friend, leader and person. Please add this to his loving tribute to Ed Volker from Karen and Dale Darkowski

A Tribute to Ed Volker

Karen and I were very, very sad to hear about our good friend Ed Volker's passing on Christmas Day.

Ed was a dear friend and a tremendous leader for everyone that knew him, especially the HN 80 Team.

In can honestly say that in my 53 years, working in Body Engineering and Heavy Truck, at Ford, that I never met or worked with, or for, a person like Ed. He had all of the ingredients that made him a truly a unique special person. He was a GREAT/high energy leader, fantastic visionary, innovative and “out of the box” engineer and protector of our turf

--BUT—

Most important, Ed was a compassionate, high energy person who treated our whole HN80 team like his family away from home. He was a great friend and a great leader. The days were never dull or boring. Design reviews were intense, but, yet fun, respectful and a friendly environment for all. You never had to be concerned about giving Ed good news and sometimes a bit of bad news. Bad news was always treated with constructive, respectful and positive input.

You could always tell when Ed was a little concerned when he would take off those glasses and roll those eyes ☐

Finally Ed and Jerry Hubbell were the perfect A Team for our intense program. Through their efforts we were able to deliver this very challenging complex program on time and with quality as a team !!

Finally, I have to say that Ed will truly be missed as a leader, but, most importantly a great friend !!!

Rest in peace, Ed, and may God bless Lynne and your beautiful family. We will always keep them in our prayers.

Sincerely, Dale Darkowski

Dale Darkowski - January 19 at 09:04 AM



“ I called him Sir. It seemed like the only logical option. After all, he looked like a cross between pro football player Alex Karras and the drummer for Cheap Trick, Bun E. Carlos. He really intimidated me. But I was marrying his son, so I had to call him something. "Mr. Volker" was too formal, "Ed" was too casual, and any form of "Dad" was simply not even to be thought of. So "Sir" it was.

I think it greatly amused him, but since he always played his cards close to the vest, it was hard to tell. I can tell you that birthday cards and Christmas gift tags were always signed "Lynne and Sir." Over the years, whenever he'd telephone and announce, "Hello-o, it's Sir," I thought I could hear the smile in his voice. I don't think I ever heard him really belly-laugh or guffaw--it simply wasn't his style--but I always enjoyed hearing his wry chuckle and I was always immensely pleased if I instigated it. We shared the same snarky, sarcastic sense of humor, you see. We both also suffered from an insufficient tolerance for stupidity. In fact, as the years went by I was astonished to discover that we had quite a few things in common, not the least of which was our love for Dave.

Now Sir has moved on. He left us at Christmas, which I believe was just another bit of meticulous planning on his part, since he knew it was the only time of the year when his granddaughter Alex and his grandson Nick would be home visiting us. They were able to say a final farewell. Never again will I hear "Hello-o" on the telephone. There won't be any more birthday cards or Christmas gift tags signed "Sir" in his familiar handwriting. But I catch echoes of him whenever Nick calls home. Nick, who does not waste words, who plays his cards close to the vest, who has an insufficient tolerance for stupidity, and who possesses the driest, most sarcastic sense of humor. Wherever he is now, I think Sir looks at his grandson and smiles. Maybe he even chuckles. Godspeed, Sir.

Lisa Volker - January 10 at 07:57 PM



“ We will never again have as trusted and loved a teacher, advisor, father figure, mentor, confidant, and above all, friend, as Ed. The impact he had on the individuals close to him eclipses all else. He shaped and guided so many, all of whom are now left with this terrible void, yet remain better people for having known and loved him. We will never forget Ed.

Rick Mozier - January 07 at 06:53 PM



“ Silver Bullet Story

Ed did not have experience in dealing with the Design Center but, as Program Manager for the HN-80 Vehicle Program, was responsible for deciding between ascetic desires of the Stylist (make that Designers) and the other program commitments. After multiple meetings on the same subject, Ed commented to me "They just will not accept No for an answer. They just keep charging - like a rhinoceros. I need a "Silver Bullet" to get them to stop." So the program kept a Silver Bullet around as a reminder that Ed was the "firewall" in achieving the program objectives - a role Ed performed flawlessly.

Jerry Hubbell - January 06 at 04:23 PM



“ Ed, was truly the Ultimate Ford Heavy Trucker, that is a rare compliment from a sales and marketing guy! When a sales guy needed help we knew we could call Ed for help and get it.

John Merrifield, General Sales and Marketing Manager, Ford Truck (retired)

john Merrifield - January 05 at 09:25 AM



“ What do I say about Grandpa? He was the rock of our family. I always looked up to him. He had the best, most sarcastic one-liners. He was fun to play golf and cards with. Every time I said goodbye after a visit, he would kiss me and tell me to drive safely. When I got my first "real job" he sent me a copy of his Rules For Life, which is framed in my home. I will take them with me no matter where I live or what job I have. Just knowing he was at home watching golf or John Wayne movies made me feel more secure in the world. And I will miss him so much.

Alex Volker - January 04 at 05:05 PM