

## Howard Vollum and Building 50

From 'An Anthology – dedicated to Howard Vollum, a man of quiet genius'

### Pretty Proud, Too

I'll never forget when the Tech Center was new. I was then an export specialist in Export Marketing and we were all so proud of our new building. One summer evening I'd worked late, but had brought my camera to take pictures. The parking lot was all but deserted. I kept backing up in the road, completely absorbed in getting as much of the building as possible in the picture. Suddenly I sensed someone near. Turning around, there was Howard patiently backing his car slowly away from me as I moved back in his path. I hastily apologized, saying, "Oh, Howard, I'm so sorry! Why didn't you blow your horn?" He smiled gently and said, "Go ahead, take your time. I'm pretty proud of it too, you know."

*Claire Woodside  
formerly Senior Export Specialist*

### High-Paid Operator

I entered the rear elevator of Building 50 on the second floor heading toward the 5th floor cafeteria. Howard was there in the crowded elevator and asked each person entering which floor they wanted. He then pushed the appropriate button. When Howard got off at the 4th floor, he turned and said, "You are all on your own now." A voice from the back said, "That is the highest paid elevator operator I ever saw." Howard said with a smile, "Yes, but I own the elevator," turned, and walked away.

*Bob Bechtold*

### No Perks

I'll always remember Howard as a rather quiet, down-to-earth person. Never wanted to be called "Mr. Vollum," just "Howard." He never wanted his own parking spot, just anywhere in the parking lot was OK for him. One day in the 70s, I saw him out in the parking lot looking for his car. He had forgotten where he parked it.

He was just a super person who took time from his busy schedule to congratulate his employees on their 10th, 20th, and 25th anniversaries at Tek.

*Harvey Gjesdal  
Mechanical Engineer*

## A Fast Learner

Late one afternoon, I found Larry Bowman walking down the hall in Building 50 looking very tired and dejected. I commented that he looked like he had been run through the wringer. His response was that in a sense he had. He had just been with Howard for a couple of hours talking about the IC facility we had in Building 50.

As the meeting opened, Howard was the student asking questions and learning about ICs. As he learned, he asked more in-depth questions and by the end of the session he was the teacher leading Larry into the intricacies of IC physics.

Larry said no one had ever learned so fast and with such a depth of understanding. Whereas he went in as the expert, Howard gleaned all the knowledge Larry had and then had him wondering if he understood IC physics at all.

*Deane E. Kidd  
New Product Introductions*

## No Help Needed

Leaving Building 50 one evening, I came across a car in the parking lot with a pair of legs sticking out. They were clad in good pants, obviously part of a suit. Seeking to offer assistance, I declared my intentions in a loud voice. Out from under the car came Howard. Indeed, he had a suit on. He politely refused my assistance, stating that he was wiring a loose muffler back on in order to have it repaired. With a cheerful, "Good night!", he disappeared back under the car.

*Hal Smith  
Contamination Control Engineering, FSS*

## No Ham Radio

I felt that Howard considered himself a very ordinary human being, in spite of his brilliance. I was privileged to be seated beside him at the 10th anniversary luncheon I attended. In the course of our conversation, he inquired about my hobbies, and I replied that one was amateur radio. I asked if he'd ever been interested in "hamming." I was surprised, amused, and, most of all, left with an even greater admiration for him because of his candid answer: "Yes, my father-in-law was a ham, but I could never get that code." It was such a startling confession for such an important, highly intelligent man to make. My last impression was seeing him, after his health was failing, trudging slowly from far out in the parking lot toward the back of Building 50. Even then, it was obvious that he expected no special parking privilege. He was a great, thoughtful, "common man."

*Margaret C. Byrd  
formerly ECB Design, Portables*

## The Back Row

When I worked in Building 50, employees whined because they would have to walk from the far end of the parking lot. At that time, Howard had come back from a sick spell. He never reserved a parking place close to the building, and he would sometimes walk from the very back row to get in. He deserved more than he gave himself and gave us more than we deserved.

*Eva Bowlen  
formerly Inner Layer Technology,  
Forest Grove*

## Help Yourself

Howard was a common sight wandering around the various buildings, mingling with engineers, exchanging ideas—a very pleasant individual with time for anyone who stopped him. My wife can remember back to the early 60s, when most corporate functions were in the Sunset Plant on U.S. 26. Howard was referred to there, affectionately, as “Uncle Howie.”

I recall in the mid 70s in Building 50, where I worked at the time, when most of the “engineering stock” was kept in little boxes on shelves up and down the 3rd floor center hallway. People from other buildings came over regularly to help themselves to Building 50’s stock from these shelves. A quick means of identification was if someone was peering through the stock with a coat or jacket on.

One day I noticed someone rummaging through the capacitor section with a scruffy-looking old jacket on. I approached this person to see if I could “help” him; immediately I noticed that it was Howard. He said he was working on his organ at home, and needed some parts to repair it. I told him they were basically his parts anyway, so... help yourself.

*(Unsigned)*

## Howard Sat Here

Howard didn’t have a special parking place. One day an employee saw him wandering around in the parking lot near Building 50. The employee was concerned and asked him if he needed help. Howard couldn’t remember where he had parked his car, so this person offered to help him look. Howard got into the man’s small pickup and they drove up and down the parking lanes and found Howard’s car. Thereupon, the employee put a sign on the seat of his car saying, “Howard sat here.”

*Cathy Fleury  
Retiree*