

Verne

Verne de Hulce was born March 9, 1942. The Neurodiagnostics family lost him unexpectedly on Sept 3, 2009.

He always said he had a “normal” childhood. I personally don’t think there ever was anything “normal” about Verne, he was exceptional. Verne overcame disability. He told me one time his sister started calling him “what” because that was always his reply when someone spoke to him. He commented he was grateful to her for recognizing his deafness at an early age. Unsure if it was caused by injury or illness, he was always at the forefront of Audio-technology. He loved his gadgets. In order to converse with people, Verne read lips. Because of his concentration on the speaker, and his tendency to be close to you especially in a crowd, people would at times be uncomfortable. Verne, once he realized your discomfort, could put you at ease.

Verne didn’t really speak a lot about himself. For instance, most never knew he never finished High School; he was a National Science Fair winner, a pilot, a flight instructor, a college professor and an avid sailor.

His wife, June, told me he left school when he started working. He walked to the Science building at MSU at 15. He built research equipment for them, whatever they needed. When MSU agreed to enroll him in College, he was required to get his GED which he completed in 1964.

Verne received his PhD in Pharmacology and began research work with Dow Chemical in Midland MI. There, he was involved in animal research. He began to wonder if there was more to life. After developing an allergy to lab rats, he decided he might want to get into “people stuff. Next move, Chicago. Verne completed a 6-month Respiratory Therapy Program and after graduation, started working at Lansing General Hospital (now Ingham). He worked as an RT at Ingham, met June, developed the Neurodiagnostics Program and was lovingly called “the Incredible Hulce”. June told me because he didn’t like rejection, it took over a year for Verne to ask her out. They celebrated their 24th anniversary this past March.

Verne LOVED to teach. I asked him 2 very important questions the first time we met; or at least I thought they were important.

1. What was his PhD in? He answered, eyes twinkling, “Oh, some Pharmacology thing”. Then he asked me “Do you know what PhD means?” When I stated no, he said “PhD means Piled High and Deep”. That Verne, always turning things away from himself.
2. I then asked if he had received his PhD AFTER he received all of the other alphabet credentials after his name (RRT, R.EP T.,) and he told me “Oh no, I take these exams so I know what to teach the staff so they will pass the exams”.

I took my CNIM exam with Verne sitting behind me. Next to Verne was H.B. Calder (from Bio-tronic) and next to me was Martha Coyne. Verne was finished with his 250 question, 4 hour scheduled exam in 45 minutes. Talk about intimidating! I never asked his score, we all knew he passed

My 2 children met Verne once. I brought old EEG machines to him at Field’s Neurosciences Institute, where he was the Executive Administrator. Verne had a “cage” of rooms in the basement where he stored “other people’s junk”. He would take these items and utilize them in research labs he was affiliated with. Both of my children thought

he was “a mad scientist”. My oldest son said, “he has Albert Einstein hair” and they both wondered, why on Saturday when he wasn’t working, was he in a suit and tie. That was Verne.

At Field’s, he was involved in many projects; patient transportation, dementia, hearing evaluation, bicycle safety and education of the community and the healthcare professionals. I think one of his favorite things he worked on was his “low rider” van. He had a minivan “customized” to lower itself to the ground for easy boarding access to the elderly and infirmed. Yes, we had a demonstration.

At St Mary’s, he was involved with the Sleep lab, the Neurodiagnostics Lab, and a new found love—the O.R. He loved all those new gadgets. Much to the grumbling of the staff.

Verne NEVER said no if he was asked to lecture. He said that’s how he learned so much. He’d decide on a topic and then research it. Whether it be Instrumentation, Electrical Concepts or Prion disease, Verne covered the topic completely. I think there are many people who will never eat fast food burgers again.

He NEVER said no to MSET. He was instrumental in St Mary’s being a regular site for meetings, at little to no cost to the Society. He served as a Board member, Committee Member and President. I jokingly made him a “lifetime Board member and lifetime Chair of the By-laws Committee”. He graciously accepted and worked tirelessly.

He was a regular contributor to MSET, CSET, ASET and AAST. He was an author of numerous publications and co-author of as many. He had a way to make you want to do and be a better professional. His passion for education was contagious.