



Paul L. Wolff

May 31, 1956 - August 8, 2024

Retired automotive executive and lawyer Paul L. Wolff, of Highland, Mich., died at his home on August 9, 2024. He was 68 years old.

Wolff focused his 30-year career in the tax departments of three major U.S. corporations. He had particular expertise in federal tax planning, employee benefits and executive compensation, and federal audits.

Friends and colleagues remember him with fondness.

Former colleague and longtime friend Manny Reyes, of Plymouth, Mich., remembers seeing Wolff walking into General Motors Corporation on his first day of work in 1979 on crutches; he'd injured his ankle in a car accident.

"We shared an office and hit it off," said Reyes, 72, who dined with Wolff at least once a month, most recently the week before he died. "I'm almost embarrassed to say this, but he always said I was kind of his mentor because I had a few years on him."

In addition to regarding Wolff as the "kind of guy you'd want your sister to marry," Reyes remembered his friend as the kind of boss that most people only wish for. This was later in his career when he was at Chrysler Corporation—where he retired on his birthday, May 31, in 2011 as vice

president - taxation and chief tax counsel.

“He always looked after and took care of the people he worked with,” Reyes said. “They knew he had their back.”

Pat Lemke, 50, also of Highland, met “Uncle Paulie” Wolff in 1993 through a nephew of Paul’s late wife, Kathy Wolff. Their bond strengthened when Lemke and his wife moved to Highland in 2002 while Kathy and Paul were building a house on White Lake that they and their daughter, Adrienne, would make their home. The Lemkes subsequently had two children, and the families became more than neighbors, regularly attending the other’s family functions.

“We can’t pick our (blood) families, but our friends are the family we get to pick,” Lemke said. “He was a hybrid between an uncle and a dad for me because my dad passed away.”

Inspired by Lemke, Wolff prepared the annual tax returns on a pro bono basis for the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 130. The lodge is associated with the Ferndale Police Department, where Lemke was an officer until 2023.

Wolff also prepared returns at the Accounting Aid Society and volunteered his tax expertise at Focus:HOPE after retiring.

He was promoted to the vice presidency at Chrysler in 2001, after starting as a tax representative in the tax department of the company in 1983 when its headquarters were in Highland Park, Mich. His office moved with the company to Auburn Hills when it relocated.

Prior to joining Chrysler, Wolff worked at the Bendix Corporation in Southfield, Mich., from 1981-1983. He began his tax career at GM in Detroit in 1979, leaving after two years for Bendix.

Wolff held a master's of law degree in taxation from Wayne State University Law School, which was conferred in 1992; a juris doctor degree from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law (1983); and a bachelor's degree of business administration in accounting from the Detroit Institute of Technology (1979).

He was a dedicated family man, and hosted many gatherings at his waterfront home for relatives, neighbors and friends, including an annual Super Bowl party that he hosted for many years. He was also an avid Detroit Pistons fan and held season tickets when the team played at The Palace of Auburn Hills. In his retirement, Wolff enjoyed travel to warm-weather resorts. After Adrienne Wolff and her husband, Doug Burke, started a farm in Central Lake, Mich., Wolff enjoyed traveling Up North to visit and help out with chores.

Adrienne Wolff said her dad liked to “pay it forward” by footing the bill for a customer in front of him in the grocery store checkout line, or at restaurants. He was widely known as a generous host, whether at his home or while eating out.

Wolff was preceded in death by his wife, Kathy (Renaud) Wolff, and parents Delmar and Dorothy Wolff.

In addition to Adrienne and son-in-law Doug, Wolff is survived by his brothers Mike, Joe (Mary), and Charlie Wolff; sisters Diane Gracher, Ilene Wolff (Jim Dulzo), Paula (Murl) Behnke, and Christine (Steve) Cronin; a loving extended family including aunts and many cousins, nieces and nephews; many longtime friends and neighbors; and pets Wally and Stanley. He had a special bond with his twin sister Paula.

Arrangements are being handled by the Wasik Funeral Home in Warren, Mich.
A memorial celebration is pending, with a date yet to be set.

Tribute Wall

BE

“ I first met Paul during the process of the DaimlerChrysler merger in 1997 as head of one of the tax groups at Chrysler. I was immediately impressed by his professional knowledge. We quickly discovered that he was also calm, fair, always willing to help and friendly. And so, he was very quickly regarded as a Gentleman within the German group. Therefore, in Germany, we were very happy that Paul was promoted to Vice President and appointed as Head of Tax of Chrysler Group and Nafta, a job he did excellently. He encouraged and challenged his employees to achieve top performance, the working atmosphere was excellent and he was highly respected by his employees. Even after the de-merger in 2007 we remained friends. Paul retired a little earlier than me and he came to my Farewell Lunch on my last business trip to Michigan in November 2017.

I remember when we had a post-merger meeting in the UK, Paul and his colleagues visited us at our English home on the White Cliffs of Dover and I was able to show them the area where we lived. When I first came to Auburn Hills with my wife Lesley and our then 4-year-old son Alex for a 2-year assignment in the fall of 2001, he helped us to settle in. For example, he took our son on a trick-or-treat tour in his subdivision on Halloween, a tradition that was not so common in Germany or England over 20 years ago. Our son really enjoyed it. We also went to see the Detroit Pistons together, at the Palace of Auburn Hills back then. Our son has been a Pistons fan ever since. Paul also showed my wife where the great shopping malls in the area were, which neither I nor my bank account really appreciated! 24/7, shopping in Germany was totally unknown at that time which increased the damage to our bank account even more.

I am really glad that I had the privilege of working with such a great person as Paul over many years. My wife Lesley, our son Alex and I have fond memories of the time we spent together and we will miss him very much.

Bernd, Lesley and Alex

Bernd - September 01, 2024 at 12:04 PM

IW

Your comments mean so much. Thank you. Ilene Wolff

Ilene Wolff - September 30, 2024 at 03:42 PM

JW

*Paul always said he realiy enjoyed working with the "German Group".
Joe Wolff*

joe wolff - October 06, 2024 at 07:45 AM

MB

Glenn and I are so very sorry to hear of your loss. Paul was a terrific human being with a heart of gold. We are grateful we knew him and blessed to see him at Mary's birthday party in August. Your family is in our thoughts and prayers. Paul will be greatly missed, love, Glenn & Mary Baske

Mary Baske - October 17, 2024 at 03:11 PM

MB

I apologize. We saw Paul in July at Marys party. Nice visit there.

Mary Baske - October 17, 2024 at 03:26 PM