With all my Love . . .
—Mai

This album has been created for you, Volker, to celebrate your retirement. It was lovingly assembled by your family, friends and employees.

We all had a different idea of what to include in this album, so we decided upon a chronological timeline to record how greatness began, and to highlight some of your accomplishments, outstanding achievements and memorable moments, including employee's remembrances and family stories and photos.

As you progress with your retirement and carry on with your travels and adventures, enjoying your leisure time, look back throughout the years and be proud of your past.

You are a true visionary in every sense of the word, and have touched the lives of so many people. You will always be remembered for your kindness, generosity, determination and leadership. Although you will be sorely missed, we can all rest assured that the legacy you created will remain a strong presence in the business world, and more importantly, in our thoughts.

—Karen and Sloan

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Mai Dolch – The driving force in the creation of this book

The Working Team
(Sloan Sawyer, Laurie Hicks, and Karen Herrera)
What is . . .

the measure of a man?

Is it his accomplishments?

Is it his friends?

Is it his loves?

Is it his material worth?

Is it how he's seen in other's eyes?

Is it the mark he's left on those around him?

Yes, all that, and more sculpted together, perfected the visionary, and his legacy will be his stamp on time.
FRÖH ÜBT SICH WAS EIN MEISTER WERDEN WILL!

Volker, as you come to a new stage in your life, I want to wish you the best of luck and I hope that your “golden years” turn out to be as exciting and rewarding as your professional life has been. Embarking on a new phase of your life, with all new plans and new goals, this might be the best time to reflect and remember how it all started. With justified pride, you can look back on almost four spectacularly successful decades during which you have worked to make your name an admired and respected force in your profession.

Be assured that none of us in the family are surprised at your fantastic success. We knew you well as a young boy, teenager, college student, and we had seen very early "the writing on the wall" – or in your case: "the wiring on the bedstead" – as I will explain. You are a great example of that rare breed of entrepreneur, i.e. a man who makes his way using initiative, ingenuity, and unafraid of risks. So let me take you back in time to remind you how these ingredients have been part of who you are from a very early age.

During the very difficult last months of W.W.II, when the world of our parents had fallen apart, Mutti, our mother, had to leave Strasbourg, the city where you were born. With her five small children in tow, ranging in ages from twelve to less than two years, she set out to reach Sinsheim where MÍrchen, our grandmother, lived. It was a long, arduous 100 mile trek, mainly on foot, only taking along as much as she and the children could carry. You, Volker, were the youngest of her brood. Managing to catch an occasional ride on a hay-wagon for the children, she stopped on farms along the way to work.

On one of those farms, Volker, you demonstrated probably for the first time, some of your ingenuity and technical skill.
In addition to the scarcity of food, there must have been a great shortage of any kind of farm supplies. Looking back, I wouldn’t be surprised if that farmer was not almost as poor as we were then. While left unattended for a while, you spied a box of large nails and a hammer – and the budding engineer knew just what to do. By the time the family found you, you had proudly hammered all the nails into the floor of the farm house. The way I remember the story, making family history, is not shock about the ruined floor – but, heaven forbid – the nails were ruined.

Of course, there also seems to be a family story that some farmer during that time was so taken with you that he offered Mutti a large ham in exchange for you. Could it have been that same farmer who recognized your potential while he pondered the crooked nails? Although I doubt that at the time, Mutti could muster much appreciation for your skills, she nevertheless would tell that story for many years with obvious pride in her youngest son.

A short decade later, Mutti was still coping with your engineering talents. We were living at Hagmeier Platz. The bed you slept in was of the iron pipe-frame type. You had set up many contraptions on and around your bed. Remember – you had built a walky-talky with which you communicated with a friend in a neighboring house. That was the time an exasperated Mutti announced to the family that she would no longer clean, or in anyway get close to your bed. Your bed was covered with a mass of tangled wires and switches, and she was NOT going to get electrocuted cleaning house! Dein erster ‘Kabel-Salat!’

Also early, you realized that merely tinkering was not enough and the need to make some money was a necessary part of life. Perhaps it was the first of your many brilliant ideas when you decided to improve your finances, undaunted by the risk of incurring sibling wrath, you got busy selling pictures of your sisters to their prospective suitors. It could not have made you rich, but it was a start!

This early testing of your mettle culminated into the successful man you are today! Hoping that these childhood memories will put a smile in your heart, we all wish you The Very Best!
Volker joined a traditional German university fraternity, while attending engineering school in Frankfurt. These fraternities practice century old traditions like fencing with razor sharp sabers, only partially protected, honing bravery and discipline. Volker was their leader for three semesters and always in the midst of action.
Volker Dolch Takes Business to U.S.
In 1976, Volker set up his own company called Dolch Logic Analyzers in Germany. Sales tripled during 1979 to 1980 making it the fastest growing Manufacturing Company of test and measurement equipment. In order for the European Company to play a role in the world markets, he opened up a U.S. based company, Dolch Logic Instruments, Inc. in San Jose, California. In 1981, Dolch Logic Instruments was the first to launch a 48-channel logic analyzer.

Volker has a keen sense of the market and his technical expertise has put his company among the top three in Europe.
More than anything else it has been, or might become, Dolch Computer Systems is the eternal expression of one man’s unwavering vision, extended over a period of more than two decades. It is not exactly clear when the idea first germinated, but Volker clearly demonstrated the major principle behind the success of the computer company at the Wescon electronic exhibition in Anaheim in 1982. At a well attended press conference, he unveiled ATLAS, (Adaptive Test and Logic Analysis System), the world’s first computer platform with slots for high-performance instrumentation modules. This man, who had been the first to implement a microprocessor in a logic analyzer, had seen the problem from a whole new angle. “You don’t bring the computer to the instrument, you bring the instrument to the computer.”

The innovation did not go without notice in the electronic press. ATLAS was featured in many magazines and prominently on the cover of Electronics Magazine. Some editors remarked how interesting it was that a small company came to market first with the computer plug-in notion. They indicated that they would have expected one of the industry giants such as Hewlett Packard or Tektronix to have made the first move. The articles were very complimentary. Little did they know, in those days prior to the IBM PC, that ATLAS truly portended the future of all modular hardware functionality.

ATLAS was built using the Zilog Z-80 microprocessor and the Digital Research CPM operating system, a combination that was clearly the choice at the time for nearly all technologically driven companies. It provided the needed power and performance for high-end products at reasonable development and acquisition costs. Non-the-less, the development of ATLAS was difficult and expensive, and Dolch Logic Instruments, Volker’s first company, became highly invested in its success. Unfortunately for the company, a group of IBM people down in Boca Raton was quietly working on a project that would upset the status quo and firmly set the direction of computing for all the years ahead. Tasked to come up with a commercially viable PC in 18 months, they could have just as easily selected the Z-80 and CPM combination, but circumstances and chance events led them to a combination of an Intel processor and the Microsoft DOS operating system. When the IBM PC was introduced, the days of the Z-80 and CPM were numbered. The death knell was truly sounded with the advent of the IBM compatible PC and the introduction of the Compaq portable. Companies such as Osbourne and Commodore, offering computers with CPM running on a Z-80, crashed overnight. Wildly successful in the early going of the PC boom, they faded quickly in the face of the acceptance of DOS as the defacto standard. Of course, ATLAS faced the same forces, and became increasingly difficult to sell to a reluctant market.

As bitter as the experience must have been for Volker, the second piece of the vision that was to ensure success for Dolch Computers was firmly planted in his mind, forged in a fiery furnace as it were. From then on, he would see the instrumentation platform riding only on commercially available, and widely
distributed computer components. Any technology developed by his company would be in the packaging and implementation. Major changes or shifts in technology or the market would not have a violent impact on the company. In the mid 80’s he saw this clearly as the future for Dolch Logic and indeed for all successful hardware implementation in the PC. Unfortunately for Dolch Logic, the investors could not see the vision and Volker was forced to move on. As can be the case, the future success of Volker Dolch and Dolch Computer Systems was born out of the most abject of circumstances.

When Dolch Logic was sold back to the investors, Volker decided to stay in the United States and Dolch American Instruments was born. Because finances were scarce and money tight, the original business plan was for the company to be the U.S. distributor for test equipment offered by German and Japanese instrument makers. In this manner, the company could represent Dolch Logic and others, turning a cash flow quickly to help establish the young new startup. It was anticipated that the company would also design and produce some instrument products of its own. However it was not long afterwards that one could see Volker walking around and tinkering with a bulky Taiwanese portable with a number of open slots. When asked, he would say it was the new Dolch COBRA, which stood for Computer Based Resource and Analysis System, or something like that. Chided by a number of detractors for starting “just another computer company,” Volker remained undaunted and pressed ahead with ever increasing determination. The computer division was born, and eventually the company was to begin doing business as Dolch Computer Systems.

The first few years for Dolch Computers were extremely difficult. The market was slow to adopt the concept of an instrumentation platform built upon widely available PC components. Companies either continued to build in microprocessors, or they designed and built their own custom platforms. Dolch Computers didn’t achieve solid profitably for almost 3 years. Invoices had to be hand carried to the factor’s office every Friday evening, and payroll was always hard to meet. Then one day, the company nestled a barn burning 386 processor into the then dubbed PAC, Portable Add-in Computer, and took it to PC Magazine. The rest is history as they say. The editors were highly impressed by the performance and wrote about the company and the product in the most glowing terms. When the magazine hit the streets, the company was to get a boost that put the really hard times behind them. Volker said that you could tell that the magazines were distributed from the east coast to the west coast over a period of a few days by the burst of phone calls that came in as the magazines were delivered.

Over the years since the PC Magazine article, the Dolch PAC, and later the FlexPAC became the standard platform for nearly all the high-end producers of high-end, high-performance instrumentation, even for the mighty Hewlett Packard. They learned that they could not economically keep up with the technology by designing and building their own instrumentation computer platforms. A surprising circumstance to some people, given the fact that companies such as HP are in the computer business, but not to Volker Dolch who had clearly seen past the problem so many years before. This aspect of the vision was also borne out in the lack of success of FieldWorks, a knowledgeable, well funded startup with the potential of being Dolch’s most serious competitor. Building themselves into a technological corner by designing their own computer system, they were never able to make more money than they spent.
By his own words, Volker has had to revisit his original vision many times over. There was always pressure from one faction or another for the company to develop its own computer technology. Difficulties in sourcing and supply seemed to wade in at the most inopportune of times. Yet he never wavered. He has clung to the notion that high-end instrumentation would be plugged in to a rugged portable platform that was populated with widely accepted and widely available computer technology. On the day in 1996 when the sale of Dolch Computers to Siegel-Robert was completed, Volker was asked if he felt the success justified him to his father. He said no, that he had done that by graduating from college. He went on to say that he felt justified to his original investors in Dolch Logic who could not see the future of his vision. He then pulled out an artist’s drawing of a slotted portable he had presented to them those many years earlier. It was not merely a 2 dimensional drawing, but rather the embodiment of a man’s dream, his vision and his courage. Indeed, it was nothing less than the entire sum and substance of Dolch Computer Systems.

—Written by Ken Pine

The Diesel Prize Award Ceremony:
The Diesel Prize is named after the famed inventor Rudolf Diesel, who conceived a widely used combustion engine. The prize is awarded every year in a number of technical categories after these inventions have proved to be a significant contribution to society. This prize is regarded as the highest honor for technical innovations in Germany. Volker got the 1984 prize in the field of information technology, for his groundbreaking work and various innovations that led to the UPC bar code scanning system, globally used today in the retail and food industry.
This story is much better acted out than told, but . . .

Back in 1982 or so, when I worked with Volker at Dolch Logic Instruments, we used to get part of our product from our office in Germany. On one occasion, I was in Receiving when Volker intercepted a prototype of a brand-new logic analyzer from GmbH. Volker was noticeably excited over getting the unit and couldn’t wait to open the package, which he commenced to do, using nothing but his bare hands. I guess a certain German shipping clerk had done a superlative job of packaging, because Volker was totally baffled by it. Try as he might, he could not even faze the multiple layers of what must have been bulletproof tape. A delightful flurry of German and American curse words flowed loudly and freely from our fearless leader as he struggled futilely with the now thoroughly battered box.

Of course, we had all learned to take these outbursts in stride, but here’s the part that tickled me: Right in the middle of Volker’s thrashings, he stood up, looked at me calmly, and with every trace of anger gone, asked me if I had a knife. I offered him one and he thanked me graciously and went immediately back to work on the box with all the fury and determination that had left him just seconds before. No power on earth could have stopped Volker from opening that box, which he eventually did.

Oh, and the unit inside was remarkably intact and worked perfectly - testimony for rugged German engineering, no doubt.

Here’s another story

Many years ago, Volker joined us for a farewell luncheon for a Dolch employee. We went to a Vietnamese restaurant on this occasion, which, incidentally, took place some time before Volker met Mai. At one point, Volker, ever-interested in linguistics, picked up the bi-lingual menu and began to read aloud the part that was written in Vietnamese. I looked at my own menu and started reading silently along with him. Now to me he seemed to be doing a very good job, pronouncing all the words about the same as I would. But the Vietnamese employees within earshot of Volker were completely cracking up. With every dish that Volker pronounced, the Vietnamese crowd would laugh with glee.

It probably wasn’t until Volker met Mai that he found out how important tone inflection is when pronouncing Vietnamese words. Change the tone and get a completely different meaning.

I often wondered whether Volker, while trying to say “spring roll” in Vietnamese was actually saying “your brother eats rocks.”

—Ed Ferranti
Volker and Mai – Late 90’s in their house in Fremont
I have many memories of working with Volker and it is hard to write about only one. In addition to memories, I learned a lot from Volker over the years. In the early days of working for Volker, he had the uncanny ability to find the weak link in any project I did for him. You know, the part you cut corners on. He made me work hard to eliminate the weak areas in my work and that helped me do my job better.

I sincerely appreciate his support over the years. One of my fondest memories took place around 1993 when a new reseller in Atlanta gave us a large order for about 10 PAC systems. At the time, this was a substantial order and we were all very excited about it. When evaluating the reseller’s financial strength, I felt he did not qualify for extended payment terms and I told him he would have to pay for the units on delivery (C.O.D.). We used to call this a reseller with "not enough meat on the bones."

When it was time to deliver the units, the reseller put the order on hold because he did not have the money. He waited several weeks until about a week before the end of the quarter, and then said we would have to ship them on open terms if we wanted the business in the current year. Naturally, there was a difference of opinion between myself and the head of sales because they wanted to make the shipment. I did too, but I wanted to make sure we got paid. When we took the issue to Volker for a decision he agreed that we should not ship if there was a chance of not getting paid. He gave me his support, even though it meant losing a significant amount of revenue in the current year.

Well, although we had those units in inventory for a while we knew eventually we’d sell them to someone. In early February, we received a phone call from the City of Atlanta Fire Department. They told us they had been trying to buy 10 PAC systems through a reseller in the Atlanta area and were getting nowhere with him. He had promised the units in December, then in January and now said he didn’t know if he would ever be able to ship them. They asked to buy the units directly from us and we accommodated them. We ended up making a sale at about 20% higher than the deal we turned down with the reseller, and we ended up saving the City of Atlanta some money as well.

I’ve told this story to many people. I believe this type of support over the years helped to strengthen the foundation of the Company. I believe that Volker instilled a corporate philosophy of considering the long-term effect of our current actions. This approach also brought stability to the Company.

Volker, thank you for helping me to become a tough but fair businessman and thank you for all the support you’ve given over the years. I feel privileged to have been able to be by your side as you built such a successful organization. I would not have wanted to spend the last 11 years anywhere else.

—Jim Ciardella

February 22, 2001
Many of us have still remembered the celebration with champagne & seafood when our monthly goal hit 300K. In rewarding for the hard work, all employees were invited to deep-sea fishing. The old days of Dolch Computer Systems on O’toole are over. We have stepped to another stage in the industrial market. Our goal is tenfold within 10 years. Thanks to Volker’s lead, we call that success.

Another Dolch tradition is that people come to work for Dolch, leave in searching for opportunities to move up, then come back. Dolch has always welcomed old faces. They are KP, MW, PD, LT and HH. Just to name a few. A nice working environment attracted people back as well as kept people to stay. HV, PT, EF, JC, JJ, SS, DC, LC, KV & HN are few of the long-timers. Can you recognize these names, Volker?

Now, time for you to leave the company where you have spent parts of your life, I wish you the best for your coming years. Remember that we are still counting on you in building up your company.

—HN

On my first year with the company I remember the first time of the company picnic. I remember Mr. Dolch rented a fishing boat down in Santa Cruz. I remember there were a total of about twelve people on that boat. I thought it was so thoughtful and nice of him to do that. It was a fun day, although I am a lousy fisherman it seems like everyone else caught the big one’s. I caught a couple of small ones. I always wonder when he was going to rent one out and take us fishing again. That day I will always remember, to me it has always been such a special day. I will miss him deeply in our company meetings. He always made us laugh, he has such a sense of humor. Especially when Mai was with him in the company meetings. We heard of quite a lot of things he has done for us through the grapevine and also from his wife Mai. I got like a knot in my stomach once when on a Cinco de Mayo celebration he mention he was going to have an operation. I was really very worried about you Volker, anyway I am so glad that’s all behind. And you came out ok.

I am the kind of guy that can’t say much sometimes when I talk. Mr. Dolch, I admire you and want to wish you the best in your retirement. We are definitely going to miss you very much. It’s been great knowing you. Take care of yourself and I hope we can see you and Mai around once in a while.

Will miss you sincerely, from the bottom of my heart best wishes!

—Ephraim Apolinar

P.S. TAKE THE MONEY AND RUNNNNNNNNNN!
A Brief Memoir of Volker

I have always been amazed at Volker’s facility with language. I suppose I should not be surprised given that he was born in Germany, educated in part in England, started companies in America, married the lovely Mai from Viet Nam, and now has a home in Mexico. Nevertheless, it has been very interesting to work with Volker and to marvel at his use of language for the six years that I have known him.

He is a master of technical engineering language of course, but also of marketing. I have seen him wow audiences of all kinds. He can be downright poetic when he talks about the marriage of German engineering and American know-how. On an instant notice, he can turn a phrase describing some newfound attribute of a Dolch portable.

Remarkably, for a non-native speaker, Volker relishes the use of American idioms and colloquialisms—some of which occasionally get a little better in the translation. I have enjoyed Volker talking about “moving the ball down the field,” “getting on the same page of the playbook” and “throwing a Hail Mary.” But he also likes less well-known phrases like “get some wood behind the arrow,” “put more arrows in our quiver” and the one I’m still not sure if I understand, “aim low and shoot high,” or was it “aim high and shoot low?” Then there are the ones that come over from Germany like “jump for the sausage on a string.” And, then there are the ones that he may have unintentionally improved: “a blessing in disguise” can also be “a blessing in the sky.”

Volker’s good spirits and creative mind have made Dolch a fun place to work. I will miss many things but I think I will miss Volker’s way with words more than anything.

—Don Wilson

As you know, Dolch Computers celebrates Cinco De Mayo with a catered lunch and live Mariachis. Well, for the first four years that I worked there Volker would pronounce Cinco De Mayo as Chingo D'Mayo. You can tell that it was one of his favorite holidays by the way he would light up every time he mentioned the luncheon. I'm sure it was because of the delicious food and also because he like saying Cinco De Mayo or in his case, Chingo D'Mayo. For four years every time he said Chingo D'Mayo all of the Spanish speaking employees (or at least the ones with a sense of humor) would start to laugh. He must've thought we were laughing because of his German accent. Until one year a new employee (one with no sense of humor) explained to him, that it was pronounced Cinco and not Chingo. However, she never did tell him that Chingo means the “F” word in Spanish. I told him that part.

—Rich Aragon
This story is during the Mach Design Phase. A wonderful product, way before it’s time. Volker’s ideas were as usual fantastic, but the technology of the day had not caught up to be able to produce his vision. This made for long hours and sometimes trying times for the whole project team, including Volker who had much more riding on this, as we were still privately held back then, and money didn’t grow on trees! Many nights were spent way after 2 AM trying to get the details down, the documentation complete to order more prototypes, samples, coffee, you name it! Now the stage has been set. As we all know, we all need to blow off some steam, and Volker was a little more prone than others, especially during this time. One morning while the manual environmental chamber (Volker) began testing the MACH chassis’s for tolerance defects (throwing the chassis’s against the wall repeatedly, whilst sputtering German idioms), an enterprising young employee created the “VolkerMeter!!” The “VolkerMeter” was a cardboard square with a circle and an arrow that spun. The circle was partitioned with German phrases that increased in their intensity! The arrow would be manipulated to accurately gauge the appropriate Mood Setting, which could also be used to calculate the appropriate distance settings!!
Translations:
1) Guten Morgen (Good Morning): Distance Meter: None- it’s going to be a wonderful day!

2) Macht Es Geschäftsinn zu nicht machen (It doesn’t make business sense to…): Distance Meter: None, unless it was your idea, if so, think about who you can blame.

3) Wer gemacht jene Entscheidung (Who made that decision?): Distance Meter: None, again, if you didn’t make that decision, AND someone else cannot blame you for that decision.

4) Gebrochenem Stuck crap (Broken piece of crap): Distance Meter: 3 cubicles, suggested 5 with access to an exit door, or women’s bathroom.

5) Das der dumme Idiot Ist…?! (Who’s the stupid idiot…?!): Distance Meter: depends, if you are close enough to hear the words, Duck and Cover, pay particular attention to things that could drop on you, or ricochet off your walls, especially if they look like they could be part of a computer. If another employee seeks asylum, verify they weren’t the answer to #’s 2, 3 or caused #4 above before granting. For those who hear bangs and muffled words, women’s bathroom, behind Roach Coach, under your car, and yes, I can’t stress the importance of the women’s bathroom; all are acceptable fallout shelters! Do not under any circumstances follow running employees, they could be the #5!

Eventually, sometime after the copy machine incident, Volker did calm down and the human environmental chamber was replaced with a machine!! ■

—Sloan Sawyer

The United Nations Of Dolch
Sometimes leaders do little things or set precedence that means the world to others. I recall 5 years ago when I first joined Dolch, it was at the All Employee Meeting when Volker introduced me along with other new employees. I remember him mentioning his desire to grow our flag collection in the cafeteria, and to make sure that all first generation natives of other nations are represented. This incident in itself had shown me the value, respect and recognition that Dolch represented by it’s top man caring for it’s employees. This had made Dolch a melting pot, for people from all around the world, blending and working together in harmony & peace. It’s incredible to say that our cafeteria now carries more than 20 flags representing employees from more than 20 different nations around the globe. Thanks to Volker for giving us such a great honor! ■

—Yasser H. Abusalih
I have many stories and fond memories to remember since I began work here at Dolch Computer Systems and even before at Dolch Logic Instruments. In the beginning DLI was not too solid, I got laid off three times! After that, I thought I won’t be coming back to work for Dolch! Then, one day, while I was at home with my daughters, Hai Nguyen called my husband at work (M.A.D. Computers) and asked if I wanted to work about 6 hours per day (32 hours per week) to repair Logic Analyzers. Being practical, I asked about my salary, he told me he could pay me same as last time. Seeing an opportunity, I asked for more. Being the businessman he is, he said: “now, we’re just a start-up a company, I cannot pay anymore.” I was out of work for a year and a half, and wanted to bring in some more income for my family (Jennifer, second daughter, was ten months old at the time), so I agreed. I was happy to accept the job, that was in April of ’87, then I became a full-time employee in July ’87. And I have worked here ever since…

First Story: looking back at times passed, what I remember the most, was the incident that happened when I was cleaning the anti-glare shield and assembled the display screen. It was about 14 years ago, we did not have a fancy workbench with an air compressor to blow the dust away. We were using the airflow from a spray can. One Friday evening, I cleaned the screen pretty good, sweated for hours… But when Volker stopped by and checked the screen. He saw some dust inside, between the screen and the anti-glare. “Oh no,” he was yelling and screaming in German. I was nervous and scared like a wet cat, and I prayed, hoping he wasn’t serious.

Second Story: One day I saw a Vietnamese magazine inside Volker’s Volkswagon’s backseat. I wondered who was reading it. Maybe Hai Nguyen had left it there. Then one day, he brought “banh cuon” to the lunch table. I thought, “Wow, he knows Vietnamese foods!” I was kind of surprised. He smiled and told me “I have a Vietnamese girlfriend who bought me this food.” I wondered who was this girlfriend(?)...

Third Story: One time, Volker handed me an Anniversary check. We happily hugged and I realized that I had just hugged a millionaire!! I told Mike Merid. He has remembered since then and still teases me about it!!

Fourth Story: One time, Volker drove Paula Nelson, Hai Nguyen, Ed Ferranti, and me to the restaurant on Bowers in his Oldsmobile. He left the parking lot and wanted to change over to the left lane. He rolled down the window, waved his hands, and kindly smiled to the car next to him. He then told us: “this is the way you change lanes”

Fifth Story: Wow, one morning we went on a company fishing trip. Volker was leading us from the Milpitas parking lot to Santa Cruz by freeway 17. He drove the Porsche fast, so we followed at a high rate of speed. Then my husband got scared, and we could not follow him anymore.

All these stories, I will surely never forget you! I will miss you and Mai a lot. I wish you all the best, good health, happiness forever. Enjoy sailing and traveling for your retirement time!

—Hien Vo
In doing industrial design, I have worked with many CEOs and owners of companies. I have sat across
the table from many passionate people with crazy ideas. Volker is by far the one I enjoyed working with
the most. Volker is very good at making his ideas happen; some more successful than others, but enough
of them became Product to make Dolch a profitable company. Volker doesn’t like the process of “Design-
by-Committee” and often reminds me that for him, “Design at Dolch” is not a democratic process. For
me, designing with Volker is an incentive of working at Dolch.

The person who introduced me to Volker, told me the day before I met him, that I would be meeting this
very temperamental German dude. I was told that Volker gets excited like a little kid when he is happy
and jumps up and down when he is mad, followed by a flow of mysterious German words (which you
don’t learn from school) when he is really upset.

What I will remember Volker for will not be from a particular instance or
story, but by his many colorful work behaviors:

The first week I was at Dolch, I witnessed Volker tossing an aluminum bezel
across the room and stomping on it a few times because it was not to his
liking. I thought at the time “What have I got myself into?”

Volker would have spirited closed-door discussions so loud that you could
hear his every word throughout the workplace.

His tone deepens and his face tenses up when he is displeased. If you don’t
say something right at that very moment, to defuse the situation, you will get
an ear full of those mysterious German words, which continues as he walks
away.

Many times, Volker would come over and make me feel stupid by offering a better solution to a problem I
thought I had solved. He would walk away like he clearly enjoyed it, but acted like it was no big deal,
that he does it all the time.

Don’t let Volker’s Electrical Engineering background fool you, he is much more than that. I am absolutely
convinced that his studies must have included minors in Industrial Design, Graphics, Mechanical
Engineering, as well as Marketing. About the only thing he lacks at times is tactfulness, even though he is
going better lately.

Volker is very hands-on when it comes to product development. He is inspired by action, not just words.
Volker can be unorthodox and unengineering-like when he is convinced that something will work. Volker
has personally made things fit that nobody thought possible. I have heard stories about the old days, that
the use of a hammer was part of Volker’s approved form of “Precision German Engineering.”

I wonder if Volker is starting yet another company ....

—John Tipo Hui
Industrial Design
When I first started to work here at Dolch back in 1997, I remember hearing stories from others about Volker’s anger and temperament. The anecdotes of Volker kicking and screaming around the office, definitely intimidated many people. But here I am now (nearly four years later), and I can sincerely say, that Volker has been nothing but a demonstration of graciousness, kindness, and supportiveness. To illustrate this point, I’d like to use the example of Volker working (for several months) on an extremely slow and outdated desktop PC, and never complaining to the IT Department that he deserved a much faster computer. I only found out indirectly, sometime later, that Volker’s office PC was in need of an overhaul. So I went to his office to inform him of the upgrade and he was absolutely grateful and relieved, telling me that he didn’t want to notify me sooner because he felt “I was too busy, and didn’t want to be a bother.” If this exhibition of behavior is what people call “bad temperament,” then I can deal with it any day.

Also, as I have come to know his lovely wife Mai, I can get a strong idea through Volker, about how much she has been an immensely positive and inspirational force in his life (both personally and professionally). It is truly a blessing that the two of them have the ability to complement each other so well.

I’ve always looked forward to Volker’s witty participation in the monthly employee meetings. I can’t remember a meeting which lacked his motivational speeches or famous line: “There’s more seats up front. Don’t be shy…”

In closing, I’d just like to reiterate my admiration for Volker’s ability to be creative, intelligent, and a strong leader during all types of industry “ups and downs.” It is these qualities that have allowed Dolch to remain prosperous.

—Best Wishes,

Mike Merid

1/30/2001 Volker:
Congratulations on your retirement. What I most remember about you is how much of a Forty Niner fan you are, and I’ll never forget the football tickets you gave me and my son to see a playoff game the Niners’ had against the Chicago Bears.

Thanks to your kind-heartedness and El Nino, I was able to share something I love, Football with my son. It was like that commercial... priceless.

Thank you and good luck in your retirement.

—Ruben Romero

Territory Manager 1993-1999

P.S. If you ever have a problem with having too many tickets again, I can be reached at rubenrom@paicbell.net.
MR. DOLCH

It was 13th of July 1995, I was sitting across from Mr. Dolch at the round table in his office, and interviewing. I was expecting a dictatorial entrepreneur with rigid set of rules and expectations. I rather met a polite businessman with a smile.

One bit of advice given to me, from various sources, was to stay clear of Mr. Dolch when he is upset as he, presumably, is not at the best of his behavior in that moment of time. I have been here for almost six years now and I have never seen him that way. In my interactions, he always listened to reasons and decided in the best interest of the company.

I remember one of the picnics at Lake Elizabeth Park, he himself presented the balloons to my kids, showing his consideration and generosity towards my family like that of his own.

Mr. Dolch, a smart individual who not only accomplished enough for himself, but established a legacy to be cherished by hundreds of individuals and families for generations to come. I wish him well in his life after Dolch. Mr. Dolch may not be physically here, but he always will remain the soul of Dolch and will be in the hearts of us all.

—Nazakat Ali

A Man of Passion

Volker, when I first joined Dolch, I was amazed at your involvement in all the departments. You would move around and inspire each department. It was like electricity. I loved that atmosphere. You have brought me so many pleasurable memories and here is one that makes me smile.

It seemed you had a sixth sense. You always knew when something was in the works. You would pop into my cube and ruffle around any exposed paperwork, or look at the computer screen. My orders (from the people I reported to) were to hide anything I was working on. This was because we had a lot to do and if you saw something that you didn’t like, then that project came to a halt until we gave you something that you could approve. I remember Ken saying, “Volker, we’re never going to make our deadline.” Apparently it was an important deadline because you said, “OK, OK, just do it and don’t let me see it.”

I loved your enthusiasm in the Marketing department and I am going to miss you very much.

—Best for you and Mai on your sailing adventures
Laurie Hicks
Volker Dolch – My Most Unforgettable Moment

The memory goes back a long time and some parts are a little hazy, but I do clearly recall meeting Volker for the first time at a Wescon show. What is not clear to me is whether it was 1975, 76, or 77. The shows have a way of running together after a while. Yet I remember that meeting as though it was yesterday. He was standing in the EH Research booth behind a Dolch 20Mhz logic analyzer. I remember being impressed by the screen display and the color-coded logic clips. I had already become impressed with the company through its advertising and literature. It always had a certain look to it. I also remember how charming I thought the man was. Little did I know at the time that such a large part of my life would be taken up in a close working relationship with him.

I first went to work for Volker at Dolch Logic in 1982. I left in 1984, only to join with him again at the beginning of Dolch American Instruments in 1987. Leaving again in 1989, I was to return to Dolch Computer Systems in 1990, first as a consultant and then as a full time employee. I was to again leave the company in 1996. Looking at history, I guess it was so I could make another return in 1998. Never have two men had more chances to make or avoid a business relationship.

In all the years that I have known Volker, I have multitudes, of unforgettable moments, some good and some less good than others. People who have known us over that time know that we have had our share of successes, and more than our share of conflicts. One might spend time and effort on figuring out who might have been right or wrong, but in the end, it couldn’t possibly matter. It suffices to say that any conflict was in the nature of the participants. In any regard, of all the unforgettable memories, one became deeply burned into my psyche and comes easily to mind as the most unforgettable.

In was in early 1996 when Volker and I were going through what was arguably our most difficult time with each other. I was the VP of Marketing at the time, and Volker was sure that he had made a mistake placing me in that role. For some weeks, even stretching into months, we had almost daily confrontations relating to this issue. I got very down emotionally and it began to show on my face and in my attitude. One morning in his office he confronted me.

He said that it didn’t matter what I thought about or said to him. He said that I could kick dirt on Volker Dolch, but I couldn’t, as an officer of the company and a manager of people, go around looking forlorn and beaten down. I am not sure he said forlorn, but I know that was what he meant. When he said it, he was so composed and so clearly calling on deep rational wisdom, that I forgot any anger I might have felt, and absorbed the advice deep in my soul. It is not an exaggeration to say that it was as though God had sent him to me at that exact moment. I truly needed to know what he was saying. I immediately understood the idea and its wider application. I began to live a different life from that moment on. I learned in an instant that circumstances are not the determining factors in how I felt or responded to others. I knew that I could feel up and positive no matter what was going on around me. I had seen him do that for years and in a few words he was able to convey the importance of it to me in a way that I could accept and embrace it.
I have been in close contact with Volker for a quite a number of years. I have learned more than anyone can imagine from the man, but nothing has meant as much to me as those few moments in his office in 1996. It changed my life for the better and continues to work in me to this day. As he prepares to sail off to the ends of the earth, I am making my way in the world without him close by. I miss him, but know that my life will be better for having known him. For that, I say thank you Volker. ■

—Ken Pine

Jim C. may remember this one. Lata and I were in Jim’s office when Volker came in holding a rubber covered aluminum chassis. You could tell that he was upset and he asked Lata how much we paid for the part. He then proceeded to rip apart the rubber that was molded to the chassis while spouting “Volkerisms” in his own trademark manner. His face was turning red with veins popping as he continued to demonstrate the deficiencies of the part by actually tearing the thin aluminum chassis. It was at this point that I began to think that perhaps Volker should cut back on the expresso.

After this demonstration, he calmed down (as he usually does), listened to Lata’s nervous explanations, retired to his office satisfied that he had proven his point and left us with the mangled assembly. ■

—Good Luck and Best Wishes,
Greg Fong

I remember the day I met Volker’s nephews. Mai came by with three young, handsome, and very polite boys, introducing me as Steve Austin. They started laughin’ and gigglin’, and I knew why... they had met Stone Cold himself, live and in the flesh.

I showed them some of my famous moves – even the Stone Cold Stunner. We went online and looked at some facts and things of different wrestlers, and then we printed some pictures of The Rock and their favorite wrestler, a very fortunate Dolch employee.. ■

—Stone Cold Steve Austin.
After a few months, when I first started at Dolch as a temporary, I knew that I wanted to be hired and hung on until I was (a year). I knew that I liked the work, the people I worked with, and the smallness of the company; the culture of Dolch. This was a conflict for me at first. I was leery because of several bad experiences with small companies. I had vowed not to work at small companies again! And I wanted to work closer to home (don’t we all). Of course when I say a small company, I’m referring to the number of employees, not Dolch financially or its big reputation as a leader in rugged portables.

Never say never! I wanted to work here. I hadn’t worked at many technology companies previously where the founder and CEO would take a morning stroll through the building and you actually knew what he looked like in person, he even talked to the employees saying hello as he walked by. And, he was a hands-on CEO, he was often headed towards marketing, sales or engineering, keeping an eye on the designs marketing and engineering were producing. Actually, he initiated them. I had to remember that I had also learned from those bad experiences (with small companies) that the culture and nature of the employees came from the top down and I realized that I enjoyed working at Dolch! For me, enjoying co-workers and the place you work at is as important (if not more) as money.

There was not an invisible brick wall between employees and Volker Dolch, especially at the company meeting where he would be encouraging people to sit nearer to him, in the front. Having the participation of the CEO was motivating, especially when he turned out to be someone likable. There certainly have been changes and will be more at this company, but Dolch’s culture has been set by Volker and remains. He will be missed!

—Cherri Nelson  
Marketing Support Specialist

Dear Volker and Mai,

On behalf of the team in the North, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you Volker for your support to the Canadian Operations and what you have done for us from the get go. Quite vivid in my memory, is my attraction to the entrepreneurial savvy that I saw during our initial meeting at the restaurant, which forever is etched in my mind.

I thank you and think quite often of all the advise you had given me during your trip to Canada but most of all, Don Wilson and I appreciate your contribution to a less confusing Dolch monetary policy – "bucks and mooses".

My wife Ghada, the kids and I would be honored to have you as our guests should you and Mai happen to trek or sail to "moose land."

—All the best,  
Mike Kadri
Volker
It has been over five years since I joined the company. I do remember that on my 3rd day of work I heard a very loud angry voice coming from the big corner office. The door was open and I could hear Volker sounding upset while talking to one of the employees. I uttered to myself...good grief, what a place to be. I think I made a mistake. At the time it made me feel uncomfortable especially being a new employee, however, someone told me to ignore such scene instead said, get use to —it’s a natural way of him to easily blow up when he gets upset and it does not last very long.

More years gone by and things had mellowed down for Volker. And of course, I am still here. He is a very nice man and very caring for his employees. During the monthly meeting he can be serious but also have a sense of humor. I kind of admire his open door policy, as made easier to work with all levels of management. It is a pleasure to be part of a multi-culture environment. I will not forget the bad times and good times over the past years in which Volker had always been supportive of the different company festivities. I do know Volker, that you will be sailing a lot and hope that one day you can come and join us again to celebrate one of our company events. You know you will be missed.

I wish Volker and Mai happiness for their wonderful retirement. Do remember that when dreams take flight, happiness follows them. All the best to your retiring years.

—Always,
Beth Durana

Spoken from the Vlahov family
I have known you for just over five years. It has been a pleasure knowing you and your family. When my children were small, they would sometimes come to work with me on the weekends. They’d always want to know where “the big guy” sits. They would stand in the doorway of your office and tell me “I am going to run this company someday.” A few years back, we had a “Take our Children to work day” here at Dolch. In the morning orientation meeting, you asked the children about their plans for the future. My son Alex raised his hand and said “When my dad retires I am going to come run your company.” You politely asked Alex “What does your dad do?” Alex quickly responded “He works in materials.” With a grin, you responded “Smart kid... and I hope someday you do run my company.”

—John Vlahov
"The American Dream"
As I was growing up, my parents of immigrant parents told me to work hard, save my pennies and I would be successful, for America was the land of ultimate possibility. My grandparents left the European countries of their heritage to find an opportunity for a better life. They were convinced if they had a purposeful vision and unyielding dedication they would find success. These were entrepreneurs. They ran hotels, danced on broadway and founded music schools. They all believed they would be successful and in so doing achieved what they envisioned.

Since I met Volker Dolch, I was always impressed with his strength of purpose, his dedication and vision. He has epitomized the spirit of the American Dream. He has achieved the dream of the entrepreneur, starting with little in the way of investment to build a market leading company whose value was so clearly recognized it fetched a handsome premium.

Volker sets an example for all who dream to experience the rush that only success can bring. I congratulate him and wish him well as he enjoys the fruits of a marvelous achievement. ■

—Well done Volker!
Don McCook

The first production sample of the molded rear cover for the new MACH computer had just arrived. (Long overdue) the industrial designer, (Barry Wingate) a mechanical engineer (Tim Wells) and myself delivered it to Volker in his office. He placed the part on the desk in front of him. We three stood there waiting for his opinion.

The sample part was not perfect, many obvious defects, and much room for improvement. Volker looked down at the part, his face reddened. He started slow, regular hissing intakes of breath. We expected the mother of all temper outburst to erupt at any moment. Volker raised his head, a long pause and then said, “Why are you all standing there looking at me? Now you have spoiled my fun. I was getting ready to enjoy myself.” ■

—Jack Froelich
Volker in action with his unique management style of expressing his opinion with delicate German language (late 80’s in Milpitas)

Some Events at Dolch
Trade shows in the US and in Germany

Cinco de Mayo and company picnic
In 1990, Volker went on vacation to Club Med in Sonoma, Mexico with his wife to release the stress and pressure of being an entrepreneur. There he explored the new career as a Broadway show dancer. It seemed to be a lot of fun but it didn't satisfy his creative mind so he returned to the high tech world.
Sixteen years ago, in a bookstore, I met a good-looking man, a little bit chubby, I thought I could change that. Two and half years later I married him. He promised soon to slow down, retire and take me cruising. Well, instead of that, he started a new enterprise, giving birth to a company name Dolch Computer Systems in 1987. I joined him there shortly afterward. I was very involved with the company and became too busy to think about going cruising. A couple of years later, the company was well established. I thought about going cruising again and how I could make it happen. I thought of a plan.

We went to a boat show at the Cow Palace in 1995 and ended up buying the Queen of the show, a beautiful 43-ft sloop. The following year we went to a boat show in Jack London Square to look for a dinghy. We came back with a 40ft express cruiser. Our first trip to Decker Island in the Delta took us only 4 hours. It was very fast but noisy. I could see he really enjoyed the power and the speed of the boat. I liked it too but could do without the noise. As the great problem solver he came up with a perfect solution. He told me "there is a boat called a catamaran that provides the speed, the power and also the joy of sailing all at the same time. I thought to myself "the more toys he has, the more time he will take off from work to play, the sooner he will get hooked cruising. Two years later, our 56ft catamaran, Dolce Vita, means "Sweet Life" arrived in San Francisco from the manufacturer in French. Dolce Vita became our weekend get away. When we were in the boat I could see he got more interested in sailing and spending less time on his computer. My plan was working. I threw out my last bait, a big one, by surprising him at Christmas with the purchase of a house right over the water in Belvedere. Since then, he started checking out the world atlas, reading many cruising guides, and plotting his course toward new horizons. Here is the Captain of the Dolce Vita, Volker Dolch.

—Mai Dolch

At the age of 57 Volker changes his career from being the Hi Tech Executive to becoming the full time "Marinaro" looking after his own yacht.

"Dolce Vita" is now the love of his life. He dressed her up with the latest equipments and is ready for a new adventure to unknown destinations.
**Biographic Notes**

Volker Dolch was born in Strasbourg, France – the fifth child in the family – in 1944. In his early childhood, he exhibited the signs of his interest and talents in the electronics field. He started tinkering with radios, and built his own radio transmitter at the age of ten.

After completing an apprenticeship as a Radio and TV Technician, he left home at age 17. He held several jobs before being admitted to the Engineering School of Frankfurt University.

1968 Graduated at the top of his class.

1969 Worked for an Aerospace Company – designed airborne instrumentation and computer control systems

1970 Joined Scanner, Inc. as a Design Engineer

1972 Became Chief Scientist – author of 16 patents relating to the Universal Product Code, globally used in the retail industry

1973 Installed the world's first automated supermarket in Huntington Beach, CA

1974 Started an engineering consulting business, assisting companies to implement micro computers

1976 While running his consulting business, he designed and developed a logic analyzer, a relatively new product in the electronics field – Dolch Logic Instruments was formed

1984 Received the Diesel Prize – Germany’s most prestigious engineering honor – for invention of the Universal Product Code (UPC)

1987 Sold DLI to BMW and founded Dolch Computer Systems, Inc. – the leading supplier of rugged and powerful portable computers with slots

**Hobbies:**

Reading historic and science,
Sailing, fishing and tinkering with new technology

**Goal to accomplish:** Circumnavigate the world on his own yacht.