



The Monterey Bay Muddler

RIP LESTER TOCKERMON 1947 - 2022



Lester passed away peacefully in his sleep on 6JUN2022, just 9 days shy of his 75th birthday.



From the Desk of Mr. Conneau-it-all;

Dear Members;

We have lost a major personality from our midst. On June 6, 2022 (D-Day) Lester Tockerman passed away in his sleep. Lester went a happy man who was deeply loved and well cared for.

I love to build models ever since I built my first Flying Tiger airplane when I was 6 or 7' and have been a plastic nerd ever since. I would regularly check out the hobby shops in Carmel, Monterey, Pacific Grove and Seaside.

It was while poking and snooping around Hobbies Unlimited under the care of Ricky Yokogawa that I would inspect the display case that housed the finished examples of my contemporaries who were clearly way out of my league. One such masterpiece was a Sherman Tank (body by Fisher) the most widely employed medium tank of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marine Corps and most of our allies during World War II.

This Sherman was not some factory-fresh, pristine floor model but, rather, a dirty, grimy, mud-spattered, battle-scarred veteran replete with powder burns, exhaust stains, oil spills, grease smears, occasional rust spots, in other words, a three-dimensional work of art. And like any truly good work of art, the more you looked---the more you saw. This model spoke to you; conjuring up thoughts and visions of the times and places, of the individuals that built, serviced and crewed these tanks and what they must have endured.

“Rick”, I said, “This Sherman is absolutely awesome!”

“Yeah”, said Rick. “Thats Lester.”

As a member of our motley model crew, we would meet once a month at whatever venue that would allow us. It could be the Greyhound Bus Depot in Salinas, a conference room at the Bank of America or the American Legion Hall in Marina.

It was during a Sunday meeting in Marina this big guy walks in, nicely dressed, sporting a Greek captain's hat. His mustache and beard are impeccably groomed and as he rounds the table and takes a seat across from me, I notice through his open collar a gold chain from which hangs a Star of David. Then he opens his mouth and out tumbles a Bronx accent.

My name's Lester Tockerman. I was born in Nue Yauwk and grew up in the Bronx. I live in Seaside and I am a teacher with the Salinas Unified School District. I like to do Armored Fighting Vehicles.

"You're the guy!" I blurt out. "You're the Lester that builds those awesome tanks! Man, you're good."

No doubt Lester was asking himself, "Who's this jerk?" Anyway, Lester concluded his mini-bio and closed with his finish line,

"I think I should tell you, I'm Jewish."

You could have heard a pin drop. This just came out of left field. Nobody saw it coming. I, myself, thought Cal-Rep was holding auditions for Fiddler on the Roof.





Eventually we moved our meeting place to the Monterey Public Library which was a more centralized and easily accessible location (and free). Lester was now a regular and as our numbers grew, we all began to become a more organized group. We even became a chapter of the International Plastic Modelers Society (IPMS/USA): The Central Coast-Monterey Bay, Region 9-Chapter 27. Lester was one of our first chapter Presidents.

We began to travel to other chapters, participating in model contests. Lester would always want to drive and we would take a big car...err, not so much a big car as much as a car with a large trunk. We'd load up our model entries, drive to the model contest, participate and return to the car to reload our stuff being careful to leave enough room for Lester's awards, trophies, plaques, ribbons, etc. Lester would go in, clean house and come out with all the prizes; the care and feeding of a Master Modeler. Lester's work was featured in Scale Modeler and in the IPMS Journal

Under his tutelage we produced a newsletter. Lester would go around the room, photographing examples of our work, go home, write copy and then hand it over to Ramon Lomeli for final layout into one of the nicest examples on the Internet, even receiving accolades from the 'big dogs' up North. A chapter logo was developed thanks to Ramon. We were joined by some exceptional model-building artists. All the while Lester became the VOICE of our chapter (we,--- discreetly closing the door-- after all -we were in a library). We band of model nerds paid dues and it was not uncommon to find that someone (?) would toss in a twenty amongst our singles. We donated models for the troops, made donations to the needy and built for local displays and entered the Monterey County Fair.

Lester was very proud of his Jewish Heritage and he would regale us with the wisdom of the Torah. It was Torah this or it was Torah that. TORA-TORA-TORA. And then he would quietly (?) excuse himself early so he could be on time to prep, cook and serve dinners to the homeless.





When we would hold our meetings at Lester's place, it was not for chips and dip but rather spreads of fried chicken, Pizzas, barbequed ribs, hamburgers, hot dogs, deli sandwiches, etc. Lester was always picking up the tab, or trying to. He was generous to a fault.



Lester was an American Patriot and Vietnam combat veteran who wore the scars to prove it. Lester was a teacher who touched so many lives and then unleashed them to the universe to make the world a better place for all of us. Lester inspired us to be better builders and, in some way, better people.



It is written, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice for justice's sake, for they shall be satisfied." Lester was a card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union. Lester was the kind of guy whose heart was in the right place, whose head was on the right side of the issue, as anyone who's read any of his letters to the editor can attest.

Thank you, it was nice knowing you. So, Lester, when you get up to that Great Model Shop in the Sky, be sure to look up our member friends, John McClane and Adrian Garza. And be sure to look up Jesus. You're going to love Jesus. You two have lot in common. And oh, I think I should tell you---

He's Jewish.

-David Conneau



Oliver and I visited Lester a little over a week before his passing, and a day before he started hospice. Although Lester was in pain at the time, he was still the happy jolly dude I have always known him to be, and he was also at peace with the world and with himself.

Although I was still in denial and expecting there to be a lot more time, Lester knew that this was goodbye.

Thanks for all the kindness, generosity and unconditional support throughout the years my friend. It's not going to be the same without you.

-Ramon



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