



## Thomas A. Holden

September 25, 1928 - May 4, 2020

Thomas A. Holden, age 91, of Chesterfield Twp. Mi., passed away on May 4, 2020. He was born on September 25, 1928 in Roseville, Mi. to the late Burton F. and Mary A. Holden. He married Marjorie M. Moses on May 7, 1953.

He is survived by his wife, Marge; son, Tom (troop); and daughter, Sandie Holden. Also, survived by two grandchildren Chelsea (Kyle) Sorrell and Ariel Dodgson.

He was preceded in death by his two sisters, Jean Ewing and Mary Hanson.

Tom was the owner/operator of Kustoms Unlimited since 1951. Tom always knew what he wanted. He would say "When I go, I don't want anyone fussing, sending flowers or the rest of the 'pazazz and razza mataz'... From the gurney to the fireplace. Then if you want, set up a keg of Budweiser and/or Verners in the middle of the shop and have a party with anyone that wants to come."

Tom always had a love for mechanics and flight. As a youth, he hand built many gas powered model airplanes, mostly of his own design.

Upon graduation from Roseville High School in 1947, young Tom joined the United States Air Force serving for 20 years before retiring at the rank of Master Sgt.

While being an aircraft mechanic, Tom learned to weld and paint, giving him the talents to start doing body and paint work.

Tom's first car was a new, 1951 Chevrolet on which he frenched the

headlights and taillights and changed side trim. After all the attention and other guys wanting their cars done, Tom soon found out that whether he wanted to or not, he was in business and "Kustoms Unlimited" was born.

Tom's first big job was his 1933 3-window coupe. Tom cut the top off, channeling and sectioning it making it a roadster.

Since that time he has built many cars for himself, and performed custom body and paint work on hundreds if not thousands of bikes, cars and many other things over the years.

Some of his crowning achievements include his "HALF FAST-- HALF TON" 1957 Ford Ranchero, the "ULTIMUS" 1959 Chevy El Camino, "PRACTICAL-A-T" 1922 Ford Center Door Model – T. Tom also had a few Ridler Award contenders over the years, winning the award with Frank Morabito's "GARAGE FATHER ROD" at the 1979 Detroit Autorama and winning the 1973 Canadian Championship with John Muzik's "Muzi Kart".

Tom has done work over the years for many different clients including Promotions, Inc., repairing damaged show cars while they were in the Detroit area. He worked on show cars from Greased Lightning to the Batmobile and Tom Selleck's Ferrari.

A wide range of race cars and show cars have passed through the doors of the shop as the decades progressed.

Tom's "KusTOMs Unlimited" shop also has to its credit building most of the "Monroe Handler Project" giveaway cars for the I.S.C.A, and the "Ford Coors Courier". Even the "Big Three" had Tom doing cars for the New Car Show in Detroit along with a few prototypes.

But the "Ultimus" was where Tom made his mark. His El Camino was awarded Best Truck, Best Custom, Best Interior, Best of Show, People's Choice and Ford Motor Company's 'Special Achievement Award'. It won Best of Show and Peoples' Choice at the Detroit show two years in a row. This, according to Tom, was a feat that had never been accomplished before. Later that year, the "Ultimus" was chosen to be one of Car Craft Magazines' "Top 10 Customs" for

1963.

In early '62, Tom served as a judge at the 10th Annual Detroit Autorama. Tom also served on the MHRA Board of Directors from the early '60s until the late '70s as Second Vice President and First Vice President. Tom was also appointed I.S.C.A. Coordinator in 1963, appointed I.S.C.A. Division Director in 1972, and was Judge and Judging Supervisor until the mid '70s. Tom is a "2000 Detroit Autorama Circle of Champions" inductee. In 2002 he was selected as one of Detroit Autorama's "50 Who Made a Difference". Along with that, Tom taught auto body at New Haven High School for 26.5 years, retiring in 1999.

Twice retired, as Master Sergeant in the Air Force and as High School Auto Body Instructor, Tom enjoyed doing restoration and custom work on cars for customers alongside his son, Troop, who has been with him on and off since his preteen-age years, striving to keep up tradition.

A memorial party may be held at a later date. Stay posted.

Arrangements in care of Jowett Funeral Home – 57737 Gratiot, New Haven.

# Tribute Wall

LS

“ Tom was an amazing inspiration to all us kids in the neighborhood and we always felt welcome to stop by and chat about our hot rods and custom ideas. Back in that day he was working out of his tiny garage behind the house. He would teach us about how things were done on the ultimus. The rear horizontal fins were added metal welded and finished with solder. Tom explained that he twin bubble tops were free blown with heat like tops for jet aircraft. Tom changed lives and freed our imagination. He showed us how to create reality out of dreams. My life is so much richer for having known him.

Larry Shea



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Larry Shea - January 05, 2021 at 01:17 PM

RJ

“ Myself and my Wife had the pleasure of meeting Tom and his son at the armada flea market many years ago.He always was smiling,polite,had a great sense of humor and usually a good story or two to share.I helped Tom add to his extensive budweiser collection that he seemed to enjoy a lot.Tom will be missed but his stories will live on for a very long time and my Wife and I are both glad we had the pleasure to get to know both Tom and his son,our condolences to the family,your in our prayers.

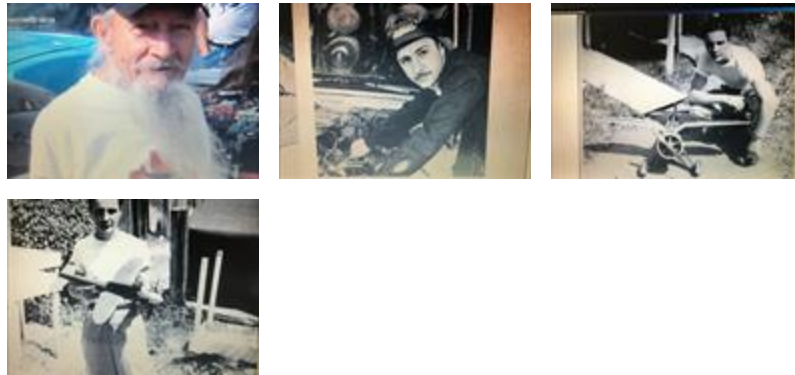
Ron and Robin

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Ron Jacobs - June 17, 2020 at 04:01 PM

TR

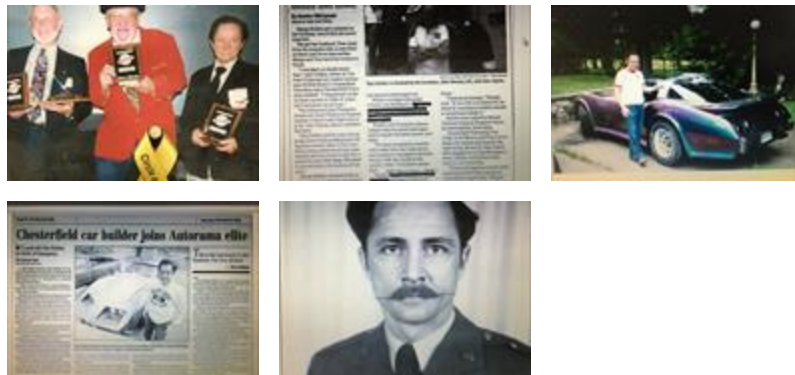
“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Troop - May 19, 2020 at 01:18 PM

TR

“ 10 files added to the tribute wall



Troop - May 19, 2020 at 01:01 PM

HB

*Tom taught me many things during the short time I worked for him. Patience, perseverance, and pride in a job well done, even if it's someone else's car. Thanks Tom for leaving your mark, on the world, and on me.*

Harry Bourlier - June 08, 2020 at 02:47 PM



“ I was watching American Pickers on the History Channel this past Sunday and saw his bubble top 1959 Elcamino the Ultimus in the episode. I didn't know Tom had passed. So sorry to hear. Tom was my teacher in 1983.



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**Paul Agosta** - May 19, 2020 at 06:30 AM



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

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**Jowett Funeral Home and Cremation Service** - May 15, 2020 at 03:40 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



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**Victoria Muzik** - May 15, 2020 at 10:27 AM



“ I FIRST MET TOM IN 1960, WE WERE YOUNG CAR LOVERS, TOM PAINTED MY WILLYS AND MY ROADSTER. GREAT JOB,..HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY GO TO GUY FOR ADVICE AND JUST PASSING TIME. WE SAW MANY CAR SHOWS, PICNICS, BANQUETS, HE BERNIE PEMBERTON., JIM BRADLEY ME AND OUR WIVES. WE BUTTED HEADS AS FRIENDS DO BUT, ALWAYS CAME UP STANDING AND LAUGHING. MARGE AND TROOP...PLEASE ACCEPT OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES WE WILL MEET AGAIN BUDDY, AND LEAVE THOSE CHARIOTS ALONE, THEY DON'T NEED PAINTING,

JOHN AND VICTORIA MUZIK AND JIM AND NAN BRADLEY

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**Victoria Muzik** - May 15, 2020 at 10:17 AM

JP

“ Tom was a dear friend to my family for my whole life. He was a great man and patriot. He will be missed by so many. I will be drinking a Bud in his honor

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**JIM Podolan** - May 14, 2020 at 09:27 PM

MA

*Bud, in his honor, me too!*

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**Mike Abraham** - May 15, 2020 at 03:16 PM

TP

“ One of the best teachers and a great sense of humor. One of the most talented people I have ever known.

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**Ted Plachta** - May 14, 2020 at 09:23 PM

BS

“ My earliest memories of Tom go back to the late 1960's when my father would take me by Tom's shop to hang out while on his way home from his farm in Capac. My father had known Tom since high school, and were always very good friends. As such, Tom painted many of my fathers race cars and pick-up trucks from the late 1950's on. I was always amazed at the cool custom paint jobs Tom did. As a car buff at an early age, I could really appreciate the talent Tom had in both his fantastic bodywork and paint expertise. He was a true craftsman, and a master of his trade, rarely seen in this day and age. I know he had many interests, especially in his firearm collection, but for a person like me, he was a Legend in the automotive world. We are all better off for knowing Tom. His legacy lives on in his son Trooper, who has for years shown his wonderful painting abilities, much of which was learned thru Tom. Rest well Tom, you will forever be missed.

*Bill & Rita Schultz*

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**Bill Schultz** - May 14, 2020 at 07:36 PM

JL

“ Tom was a man of many talents, what I always admired about him was he would make you feel welcome and no different then him. Drinking a Budweiser and listening to a joke was expected when you stop by to see him. The man gain respect from many and also wasn't afraid to give it back. His talents were spread thru many that crossed his path, his son Troop is one. Kustoms! Unlimited stands tall. Father and son stand about the same, Lord knows they look alike. Lol! There will only be one Tom Holden. Thanks for being a friend.

*Joe Lupo*

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**Joe Lupo** - May 12, 2020 at 06:00 PM

WB

“ *A true artist. I first met him in 1971 and was amazed at his dedication to car building. I don't care if it was midnight - if you drove by, the lights were on. I will miss the stories, the visiting and having a Bud and the man. God Bless you and your family. You are missed.*

*Walt and Theresa Beels*

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**Walt Beels** - May 12, 2020 at 04:20 PM

AS

“ *Truly a devastating loss to the world of custom car culture, an artist and innovator...I am very proud to have had the chance to meet and get to know him and honored to have my car painted at KusToms Unlimited...*

*if you ever thought you were going to just run in and out to drop parts off think again! I always ended up hanging out for a while and shooting the breeze, listening to stories and looking at pictures... I will always enjoy the conversations we had, Tom was always friendly, welcoming, smiling and always offered you a Vernors! 😊. Many thoughts and prayers to Troop and the entire family, may God give you strength through this difficult time.*



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**Alan Sibilsky** - May 12, 2020 at 12:18 PM

TD

“ *nice guy they don't make them like him anymore in my prayers*

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**Tony drewek** - May 11, 2020 at 07:50 PM

BM

“ Farewell to a friend and co worker for over 60 years.

*Many great memories. Cars, projects, shows, and laughs.*

*KUSTOMS UNLIMITED is TOM but only in part.*

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**BUD MONETTA** - May 11, 2020 at 01:45 PM

JJ

“ My brother, Gene Gildenpfennig, and I grew up with Tom and is family as we lived just down the dirt road from him. He and Gene had many wild ventures together especially up at the cottage in Johannesburg almost burning the place down once. He was a great person and always had a smile for everyone. He kept in touch once a year to keep me informed of his sisters. I will miss that. Rest in Peace Tom. My condolences to the family and thank you Troop for letting me know.

*Joan (Gildenpfennig) Jaworski, Port Austin, Michigan*

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**Joan Jaworski** - May 11, 2020 at 11:25 AM

RB

“ Tom Holden was one of a kind ,a good husband a good father and high standards in his work a true American I'm glad I had the pleasure of knowing him. Very truly , Ron. Borkus

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**Ron Borkus** - May 11, 2020 at 08:55 AM

RC

“ When I was a kid I remember sitting on a steel milk crate with Troop watching Tom weld and paint and whatever else he was doing. Was one of the best times of my life

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**Ron Campbell** - May 10, 2020 at 01:20 PM

DL

“ I MET TOM IN 1957 AND HE WAS A GOOD FRIEND AND MENTOR. HE WILL TRULY BE MISSED. DAVE AND MILLY

DAVE LESTER - May 10, 2020 at 11:44 AM

TR

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



troop - May 08, 2020 at 06:26 PM

TT

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall

Thomas holden. (son) - troop - May 08, 2020 at 04:04 PM

BE

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Brian Ewing - May 08, 2020 at 02:46 PM

LP

“ We always enjoyed visiting Tom in the shop, he did some amazing work and was more than willing to pass on tips we used to build our cars. Always had a cold beer for us! Rest In Peace Great Artist!

Len Palmeri - May 07, 2020 at 09:46 PM

DN

“ We loved you Tom. God bless you and Rest in Peace. You will be so greatly missed by so many.  
*Dick and Dorothy Newzell*

Dorothy or Richard Newzell - May 07, 2020 at 07:08 PM

JL

“ Always sharing memories of not just his wisdom, but of the good things that happen in life. Not just his, but of his kids that he was always proud of. ..

Julian Liss - May 07, 2020 at 06:43 PM

GG

“ Tom Holden, a gentle soul, always had a smile and joke whenever he spoke to you.  
*He will be missed.*

Gloria Gostovich Gostovich - May 07, 2020 at 10:17 AM

PJ

*I met Tom late in his life, and am so happy I did. He talked about his accomplishments with such joy and without bragging. What a man. Enjoy Hot Rod Heaven see you again sometime. God bless you and yours.*

Paul Jakel - May 08, 2020 at 02:25 PM

DN

*Such great and wonderful memories. Love to Marge, Trooper and Sandy.*

Dorothy or Richard Newzell - May 09, 2020 at 07:11 PM

RB

*So sorry i'm late, commenting. Tom was my NCOIC at Selfridge AFB, we worked in maintenance control. I often wondered what happened to his 59 bubble top, he showed it in the Selfridge air show I think 1961? He painted my 66 ford wagon, he made me a car nut. when we left Mt. Clemens for Albuquerque NM. I gave him my brothers 1958 chev wagon, I hope he made himself a nice hotrod out of it, ( no rust, Arizona car.) he was always a gentleman while working for him at Selfridge. I hope he rest in peace, our condolences to Marge and Trooper, so sorry for your lost.*

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**Roger Buck** - May 22, 2020 at 06:01 PM