

Zeev Vered – 1926-2008

To his friends and colleagues, Zeev Vered will be remembered as a man of his word, someone who led by example and never shied away from a challenge.

Mr. Vered died peacefully at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute on June 10. He was 82.

It was exactly 50 years ago that Mr. Vered founded Ron Engineering & Construction (Eastern) Ltd., after studying engineering at McGill University in Montreal. In his day, Mr. Vered oversaw the construction and renovation of a number of buildings and structures that are today iconic in this city, among them the Skyline Office Complex on Baseline Road, the Peace Tower and the Rideau Canal Locks.

“He was always on the lookout for different jobs,” says Norm Zagerman, former owner of Zagerman Steel. “He loved the challenge of working on complex projects and jobs in remote locations such as the Northwest Territories and the Caribbean.”

Indeed, one of the projects of which Mr. Vered was most proud was his company’s work on City Hall Plaza in Jerusalem, a \$127-million project designed and built by Ron Engineering in the early 1990s.

Mr. Vered was a successful developer who, his colleagues say, could have comfortably stayed busy doing just development work. But he was also a confident man, unafraid of tackling new challenges. His confidence never crossed the line into arrogance, but certainly, when he put his mind to accomplishing a task, there was little that would stand between him and a successful result.

“He commanded such a lot of respect from his peers, that all he had to do was ask and people would support him, no matter what,” says Archie McKellar, founder of Am-Tech Power Systems and a close friend of Mr. Vered. “He had an uncanny ability to get things done, whether it was on the jobsite, or in any of his philanthropic affairs.”

Indeed, in the early 1980s, it was Mr. Vered who almost single-handedly took charge of the heart institute’s major capital campaign. Over the course of six months, with Mr. Vered’s help, the institute raised the \$7 million it needed, where previously, the fundraising campaign had all but failed.

To work with Mr. Vered, his colleagues say, was to be his friend. Leonard Graham, president of Dufresne Piling, says he and Mr. Vered would often sit together in Mr. Vered’s offices and discuss life and business for hours at a time.

“He was always very interested in me, my family and the business I ran and I looked forward to seeing him and having our chats,” he says.

McKellar, too, says he and Mr. Vered formed a strong friendship almost from the first day the two men started working together in 1978. McKellar recalls many evenings spent with family at the Vered residence.

“We were always invited to the Vered family’s special events, such as bar mitzvahs and weddings. That was truly special to our family,” he says. “With Mr. Vered, you always felt you were part of the family.”

Above all, Mr. Vered was an intensely loyal man. The subtrades, suppliers and consultants who worked with him on site every day knew exactly what was expected of them and strived to do the best job possible for his companies. And, in turn, these companies knew that a job well done for Mr. Vered always led to future work.

“We were pleased to be brought on board at a project’s planning stages,” says McKellar. “Mr. Vered always wanted his subtrades’ advice right from the start of the project and he was as concerned about delivering good value to his clients as he was about protecting the project’s bottom line.”

And Mr. Vered’s loyalty extended to more people than just the subcontractors and suppliers with whom he worked regularly. At the company holiday party, for example, he and his wife Sara always took time to thank each of the people with whom they worked. They recognized the importance of being backed by a strong team and that recognition, in turn, was rewarded with its own loyalty. Many people who work with Ron Engineering and Arnon Developments today have been with the company for between 25 and 35 years.

In his later years, Mr. Vered devoted most of his time to philanthropy. A long-time heart patient, he was a regular contributor to the heart institute. He also established scholarships at Carleton University and McGill, and endowed a program in Jewish-Canadian studies at the University of Ottawa. In 2003, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada.

“In business and in life, Mr. Vered set the example that we all tried to live up to,” says McKellar. “I think that’s what I’ll remember most about him.”

Zeev Vered is survived by his wife Sara and sons Gilad, Arnon and Ron.

