



# Arthur Buckel

AUG 24, 1934 - OCT 30, 2018



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# Table of Contents

<b>Obituary</b> .....	Page 3
-----------------------	--------



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Arthur Buckel, a veteran of the thermoforming industry who was the 1999 Thermoformer of the Year, died Oct. 30. He was 84. Buckel won the top award from the Society of Plastics Engineers' Thermoforming division for his diligence and dedication to the craft of thermoforming. Thermoforming industry colleague James Throne in Dunedin, Fla., said, "Art was a giant in thick-gauge aspects of thermoforming, and he was the point man for formation of the European thermoforming group. At K shows, Art would organize bus tours through the back woods of Europe. He knew the people and what was going on in the industry." A former SMI partner, Frank Ames of San Diego, said, "Art was an amazing and talented guy with an ability to see a plastics solution in three dimensions. He could figure out how to do it in thermoforming and pressure forming. Art was a pillar in the plastics community and should be recognized as such." Coincidentally, Buckel's wife of 61 years, Barbara, died on Oct. 30, 2017, exactly one year to the day before his passing. Survivors include a son, Victor Buckel; a daughter, Christi Buckel; and granddaughters Sara Sackett and Olivia Quintenella. All live in San Diego. A memorial service is scheduled at 11 a.m. Jan. 12 at Clairemont Emmanuel Baptist Church, 2610 Galveston St., San Diego. Started in plastics in high school. Known as Art, he was a thermoforming pioneer. Buckel grew in San Diego and started working in plastics in high school. His father enrolled him in an apprenticeship program that included fabricating flexible vinyl. "My dad instilled a hard-work ethic in me, and he introduced me to a craft that fit me perfectly," Buckel said in a 1999 Plastics News article. After he got his journeyman's card, he enrolled in San Diego State College as a math major, and also earned tuition money by manufacturing interior automotive components on a machine he bought himself. After two years of college, Buckel got bored and dropped out. He was drafted by the U.S. Army in 1959 and spent two years in Oklahoma. After he returned home, Buckel dedicated himself to his plastics career.



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He started Pacific Auto Accessories, which made soft goods for auto interiors and tops. When automakers asked for hard parts, Pacific couldn't use injection molding for the small volumes needed. The company bought a thermoforming machine. In 1972, Buckel started Specialty Manufacturing Inc. to vacuum form heavy-gauge automotive parts. The company also made thin-gauge packaging. After 20 years at Specialty Manufacturing, Buckel sold the company, but he remained in plastics. He had met Bill McConnell, a fellow thermoformer and frequent speaker, at a conference. He worked with McConnell's consulting company and helped SPE develop thermoforming divisions in other countries, including New Zealand and Australia. Buckel served as director of the SPE Thermoforming division from 1987 to 2010. In 2011, he became the division's first emeritus director.



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