

# Rival dealers merge to create one of the oldest, largest Volvo dealers in country



PHOTOS BY EUGENE PARCIASE

One of two Volvo dealerships in the Bill Kundert/Bill Whited partnership, Kundert Volvo Hasbrouck Heights has been owned by the Kundert family for several generations. It is located at 140 Route 17. For more information, call 201-288-8984.

## BY DOUG SCANCARELLA

SPECIAL TO NORTH JERSEY CARS

Bill Kundert and Bill Whited have been playing against each other - literally - since they both broke into the automotive business years ago. At times, especially in the early years, they built up a somewhat fierce, yet friendly rivalry.

"You don't usually associate with your rivals," Kundert said. "Sometimes, though, it makes you see that you are very much alike."

Added Whited, "We probably should

not have been very friendly toward each other. Eventually, we found out that we had quite a bit in common and we became good friends."

The two became friends while selling Volvos in Bergen County in the mid-1970s. Kundert went to work for his father, Bill, at Kundert Volvo of Hasbrouck Heights. Whited worked for Volvo Dealership in Saddle River. They first met at a Volvo Regional Meeting.

"We realized right away that we had lost quite a few sales to each other,"

Whited said. "We began to see that we carried ourselves at work the same and had a lot of similar interests."

The two began to compete outside of work, playing against each other sometimes with each other in touch football and in pick-up basketball games.

In 1997, the rivalry came to an end. By then, Whited had started working for Ron Pozzi at Englewood Volvo. Kundert opened the dealership in 1975, sold it to Whited and Kundert in 1997. The transaction merged the two dealer-

ships and launched a new partnership between the former rivals.

Kundert family entered the automotive business in 1944, when Kundert's grandfather (also named Bill) opened a gas station. At the time, the price of gasoline was about 15 cents per gallon.

After several years of manning the pumps 16 hours a day, seven days a week, the elder Kundert began selling used cars on the lot. This ultimately led to the opening of the Volvo dealership in 1959. Today, it is one of the oldest and largest Volvo dealers in the country.

Kundert Volvo had always been family-owned and operated. Bill Kundert's father ran the show from 1965 to 1982. The younger Bill took over for his father in 1982. He knew the business well - from sweeping floors to sales, service and parts.

"A lot has changed since 1944, especially when you consider what the price of gas is today," Kundert said. "We went from selling gas to selling cars, but we have always been in the business of serving people. In that respect, things have not changed all that much. The family tradition of providing our customers with the quality service they deserve has been consistent here for well over 60 years."

"Kundert Volvo has experienced incredible growth, prosperity and success over quite a few years," Whited said.

"When the opportunity came to join up with them, I jumped at it. It made good sense for two large-size Volvo stores to become one larger store with two different markets in Bergen County."

The two dealerships, according to both owners, shared the same philosophy, which also seemed to indicate that a merger made sense.

"More cars to choose from with two exclusive Volvo stores, means better selection, service, and prices for all our clients," Whited said.

"Our sales staffs welcome customers into our showroom and discuss their options in a comfortable, low pressure environment," said Kundert. "All of our sales professionals are thoroughly trained to answer any and all of your automotive questions. Customers will also find that our Web site is a comprehensive tool to their shopping needs."

Today, the two dealerships specialize in new and used Volvo Cars, SUVs, and Sports wagons. Both offer state-of-the-art service and collision centers.

"We are committed to providing our customers with the best ownership experience," Kundert said. "That means they get the highest level of customer satisfaction both during the sales and service experience. We offer low prices, superior service and sales integrity."

"We are consumers, too," Whited added. "We realize that everyone's time is important. This is why we have many specialists on staff in all departments. We know people have options when purchasing a new or used car. Through hard work and genuine concern for all of our customers' satisfaction, we have developed a reputation for treating customers with integrity and top service."



Englewood Volvo, 186 Engle St., is operated by Bill Whited. For more information, call 201-567-2300.