



Volvo Cars Manasquan — Coming Full Circle

By Jon Otto w/ Jack Fletcher



Ed Fletcher had been looking for the right dealership for several years. In 1966 he found it; an American Motors dealership on Route 35 in Manasquan, New Jersey. The location was perfect. In 1968 when the Volvo franchise replaced AMC, Ed and his five sons began growing the business. It was here that Jack Fletcher began to learn the “car business”. Ed sold the Volvo dealership in 1985 and after a little break, in 1993, he purchased Stein Cadillac in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Under Fletcher family ownership, Stein Cadillac became Gold Coast Cadillac and in 1997 moved to a larger site on Route 35 in Oakhurst, New Jersey. Here, at this still somewhat rural location, the Fletchers grew Gold Coast into the largest volume Cadillac dealership in the country. Eventually in 2007 the Fletcher brothers sold Gold Coast



Cadillac and retired from the retail side of the business and started a major wholesale operation. But after ten years, Jack found he missed the retail side, so in 2017, when Garden State Volvo became available, he purchased it. Jack was back where he had started nearly 50 years before. In those intervening years, not too much had changed at what Jack renamed, Volvo Cars Manasquan.



Jack was about to change that. Working with Volvo’s corporate image group, Ideal Image, and its national design company, SDA Partnership, a brand new, state-of-the-art facility was to be designed and built to Volvo’s specifications.

This is when Penn Valley Constructors enters the story. Not long after Jack purchased Volvo Cars Manasquan he started looking for a design and construction team to accomplish Volvo’s intent. Car dealers all tend to know each other, particularly when



Moving the "Mountain"

they handle the same brand. They meet at manufacturer's meetings and help each other by exchanging vehicles when one dealer has a client who wants a car the other dealer has. Generally, this is a friendly relationship, particularly when there is a reasonable distance between the dealerships and competition is at a minimum between the dealers. Since Volvo was asking all of its dealers to upgrade their facilities and adopt the new Volvo image, it only made sense for Jack to ask his fellow dealers in central New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania about their construction experiences.



Framing Service Drop Off

By the time Volvo and Jack started the initial image design for Manasquan with SDA and Volvo, Penn Valley had already been engaged in three projects; Wynn Volvo in East Norriton, Pennsylvania completed in April of 2017 for the Wynn family and Volvo of Princeton & Bridgewater Volvo, both for Dave Long and his family which were completed in October and December of 2018, respectively. On all three of those projects we had teamed with KD2 Architects of Glenside, Pennsylvania with whom we have been working for about ten years.

As is always the case, the major challenge and the slowest part of any major construction project is the site design and land development process. Jack worked on that part of the project simultaneously with his negotiations with us. All of this reached

conclusion in the winter of 2019-2020. That, of course, is when Covid struck. So rather than starting in the spring of 2020, the project was further delayed until the following winter.



Service/Parts Steel Erection

Like many of our automobile customers, Jack needed to stay in business while we were building his new dealership. This meant we had to do a significant part of the site work, installing most of the drainage and parking and construction for the new service bays, write-up bays, customer waiting and parts areas. Then Jack had to move



Insulated Metal Panels

his operation into the new portion of the building allowing us to tear down the old service bays, offices and showroom. But before we could do anything, we had to clear a small forest and remove a small "mountain" that was the backyard of the property. It was about three acres of pretty heavy woods that covered the "high ground" behind Jack's office.



Service/Parts Ready for Occupancy

Old Showroom Ready for Demo



Service Drop Off

on site when we needed it. In this case and many other instances, Jack worked with us and we were, with very few exceptions, able to protect costs.

The project proceeded as smoothly as possible and became a remarkable metamorphosis from the 1960s dealership to what is now a beautiful dealership.

The Volvo Image is really spectacular, the outside is a Scandinavian "Jewel Box" while the interior is warm and inviting yet still maintains the Scandinavian crispness. The customer waiting areas and service write-up areas also maintain the welcoming environment. That is the goal of all car dealerships.

In all we had to remove over 24,000 cubic yards of soil, which converts to roughly 1600 truck loads. This was the beginning of a linear and time consuming schedule. But Jack kept on selling cars and servicing them.

The new service bays are a night and day change from the old; they are clean, well lit and spacious. Air conditioning and natural light introduced into the bays by very generous fenestration, make the service department at Volvo Cars Manasquan a really nice place to work.

Other newsletters written about projects done during this time, we have called "Construction in the time of Covid". Everything that applied to those projects came to bear at Volvo Cars Manasquan; long lead times, volatile pricing and material shortages. As with other projects built during the time, we had to preorder and often prepay to hold pricing. We often had to take early delivery of materials or be totally "kicked out" of the schedule and subject to increased pricing. At Volvo Cars Manasquan, we took delivery of the entire pre-engineered steel building a full three months early. By doing this we avoided a 20% price increase and had the certainty of having the material



Service Write-Up



Service Bays



Jack had indeed “come full circle” from the humble dealership where he got his start in the automotive business to a brand new state-of-the-art, seven acre facility built to Volvo’s specifications. It is no surprise that Volvo Cars Manasquan has become one of the largest Volvo dealers in the United States.

For More Information:

Volvo Cars Manasquan
2415 Highway 35
Manasquan, NJ 08736
www.volvocarsmanasquan.com
877-470-7662



Entry Element



Penn Valley Constructors, LLC

1707 South Pennsylvania Avenue
Morrisville, PA 19067
1-800-523-3746 • 215-295-5055 • Fax: 215-295-2980
www.pennvall.com
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Contact us for your next project!

800.523.3746



Interior View