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Vari-Form, Pioneering Hydroformer to the Automotive Industry, Retires Historic Press

Troy, MI – After 23 years of service, Vari-Form, the industry leader in Pressure Sequence Hydroforming, has announced the company’s retirement of the first machine anywhere in the world to hydroform an automotive structural part.

Production of instrument panel beams on this machine for Chrysler S body minivans (Dodge Caravan, Chrysler Town & Country, Plymouth Voyager) began in July 1990. Over time, the press was used to produce structural parts for several subsequent generations of these vehicles. Dubbed “Old Faithful” by Vari-Form engineers, production peaked at over 700,000 units per year in 1996. During more than two decades of active use, ‘Old Faithful’ output nearly ten million units.

Vari-Form President Stephen Dow noted, “If hydroforming presses could talk, ‘Old Faithful’ would tell us about the evolution of hydroforming as an essential automotive technology. Vari-Form pioneered the application of hydroforming to automotive structural parts, and worked with a leading machine tool manufacturer to build this precedent-setting press to our specifications. Launching large-scale production on it in 1990 brought a new manufacturing concept to the automotive industry. At the time, we had to convince car makers of the benefits of hydroformed assemblies – better quality, reduced space and weight, lower per-unit costs, and less tooling. Today, millions of vehicles in North America incorporate Vari-Form hydroformed parts. Many of those were produced on ‘Old Faithful’.”

Mr. Dow summarized the future of hydroforming technology at Vari-Form: “We’re constantly pushing the envelope to design and manufacture more sophisticated parts and complex assemblies. Vari-Form works daily with our OEM and supplier partners to answer the design, performance, fuel efficiency, and safety challenges facing the automotive industry. Latest developments include applications of advanced materials permitting thinner walls to reduce part weight without sacrificing strength or stiffness - all produced on faster, more efficient equipment. Looking forward, we are constantly advancing the art and science of body structures with developments like our Hydroform-Intensive Body Structures (HIBS) initiative. Now in its third phase, HIBS is redefining the way vehicle builders and their Tier suppliers view the structure of future vehicles.”



PHOTO CAPTION

Vari-Form, the industry leader in Pressure Sequence Hydroforming, recently retired “Old Faithful”, claimed to be the first machine anywhere in the world to hydroform an automotive structural part. During its 23-year lifespan, this pioneering machine produced almost ten million parts.

About Vari-Form

Headquartered in Troy, Michigan, with production facilities in Strathroy, Ontario, Canada; Reynosa, Mexico; Kunshan (Shanghai), China; and Liberty, Missouri, Vari-Form originated the concept and application of hydroforming body, chassis and other automotive structural parts. This technology is used to manufacture more than 7 million parts a year worldwide. The company began volume production using its patented, production-validated Pressure-Sequence Hydroforming (PSH) process in 1990. Vari-Form is the industry leader and has produced more than 100 million parts to date. For more information, go to www.vari-form.com.

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