

Garland Ferris Ham | 1930-2015

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Garland Ferris Ham, 84, of Aurora, died Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015, in Bedford.

A private graveside service was held at Aurora Cemetery.

Garland was born Feb. 28, 1930, in Van to James Arlander and Bertie (Crum) Ham. He married Lois McGoodwin June 1, 1949, in Rhome. He served his country in the United States Navy.

Garland was a lifelong Democrat who got involved in politics at an early age. He was one of the first employees of General Motors in Arlington – his badge number was 12 – and was one of the prime movers behind organizing the Arlington B-O-P (General Motors) employees, urging workers to attend a meeting of the United Auto Workers.

After two months of hard work with meetings and leaflets, 804 voted for unionizing and only 21 voted against. On March 30, 1954, Garland Ham was sworn in as the first president of Local Union 276, having just turned 24. He remains the youngest ever elected to that office. Years later, he was still active with the Union, and his advice was still sought by those who followed him.

He later became an international representative for the UAW out of Detroit as a Union organizer. At the time of his death he was retired from General Motors and the International Union.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Herbert Ham.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Lois Ham of Aurora; daughters Sandra Scruggs and husband, Tommy, of Bedford, and Garlene Weaver and husband, Tommy, of Aurora; grandchildren Johnathan Weaver and wife, Danelle, Adrienne Weaver and husband, Daniel Bradford, Garrett Scruggs and Taylor Scruggs; great-grandchildren Payton Weaver, Coy Bradford and Eli Bradford; and numerous friends. Memorials may be made to the Newark or Rhome Fire Departments.