A Vision Lives On

The surgical industry lost a great innovator this month, Rich Shafer, founder and inventor of the Cool Shirt system. Now his company, Shafer Enterprises, works to continue his vision of helping surgeons stay cool in the OR …

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The surgical industry lost a great innovator this month. Rich Shafer, founder and inventor of the COOL SHIRT® Personal Cooling Systems, passed way on October 3, 2009 from complications after a racecar wreck at turn three of the Crow Mountain Hill Climb. The Cool Shirt system, a tool used in the OR for surgeon cooling, is manufactured by Shafer Enterprises LLC of Stockbridge, GA.

According to the company website, the invention that launched Shafer Enterprises and Cool Shirt® was a cooling vest for surgeons to use in the operating room. Rich Shafer, the company's founder, spent many years working beside surgeons for hours under hot operating room lights as a distributor for replacement knees, hips, etc. Through this experience, Rich saw the opportunity to help the doctors.

Since 1987, Shafer Enterprises has grown to provide personal cooling systems for surgeons, racecar drivers, football players, fire/emergency services/hazmat, military and industrial workers. Based on and designed according to NASA study guidelines, Cool Shirt® active cooling systems help people manage body heat in extreme environments using circulating temperature-controlled cool water.

Between Mr. Shafer and his partner, they together have over 70 years experience in the medical field, holding 24 different patents. Mr. Shafer was also an active

member of SCCA Racing for 20+ years and continued to race in various SCCA events across the U.S.

Rich Shafer was a great man who was full of life and always looking forward to the future, the company's website states. He loved his family, his friends and racing. According to the company, Mr. Shafer deemed the words "you can't do that" a challenge to be overcome rather than a statement of limits. As a testament to this philosophy, even after two back surgeries, he continued to race. He was 66 years old.

Mr. Shafer was survived by his wife Eileen, his son Thomas, his daughter Julie, and his grandchildren Duncan and Lincoln.

The employees of Shafer Enterprises mourn the loss of a wonderful man and team member. However, Shafer Enterprises is an employee-owned and operated business and will continue to provide the same quality products and service. All involved with the company share Rich Shafer's vision, and will work to move it forward.

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