

John DeLorean Dies

Written by Keith ID1027
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John DeLorean

The flashy automotive executive John DeLorean, whose equally flashy car of the same name proved a financial folly but burned its way into pop culture with the "Back to the Future" films, has died at the age of 80.

DeLorean died on Saturday at Overlook Hospital in Summit, New Jersey, after suffering a stroke, Michael Thomson of A.J. Desmond & Sons Funeral Directors in Royal Oak, Michigan, which is handling funeral arrangements, told Reuters on Sunday.

With his mane of silver hair and penchant for marrying much younger women after divorcing his wife of 15 years, DeLorean cut a striking figure during the 1980s, his flashy style perfectly in tune with a time of excess, marked by conspicuous consumption and widespread recreational drug use.

At the height of his success, he owned two estates, a 20-room apartment on New York's Fifth Avenue, and had a personal fleet of 22 trucks, cars and motorcycles and dropped in on his favorite golf course by helicopter. He also underwent cosmetic surgery and was a perpetual dieter.

But he was best known for his abandoning a promising career in Detroit that began at age 24 as a Chrysler engineer to create his own sports car company in 1973. It surprised no one when he named the car after himself.

A maverick known for technical innovations and risk taking, after switching to General Motors he developed top-selling models for its Pontiac division, and at 44 he was the head of General Motors' giant Chevrolet division. Analysts predicted he would become the next GM chief.

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It was eight years before the DeLorean Motor Car Company, based in Northern Ireland, produced its first car, the DeLorean DMC-12. The striking car, with its gull-wing style doors, super-sleek design and metallic finish was one of fewer than 9,000 produced over three years before the company failed in 1983.

Despite its failure, the car achieved a permanent spot in pop culture history when it was used as the time-travel vehicle in "Back to the Future," a huge hit starring Michael J. Fox that spawned two sequels.

The car was even featured in a "Back to the Future" thrill ride at Universal Studios theme parks, in which riders sat in mock DeLoreans that pitched and rolled in front of a giant screen projecting high-speed scenes.

In October 1982, he was arrested in a Los Angeles hotel and accused of conspiring to import 220 pounds of cocaine, estimated by the prosecution to have a street value of \$24 million, in a desperate attempt to save his failing business. DeLorean's lawyers pleaded entrapment, and he was acquitted. He was also cleared of racketeering and fraud charges.

True to form, he ran newspaper ads appealing for donations to help pay his legal expenses.

He published his autobiography, "DeLorean," in 1985 and filed for bankruptcy in 1999.

Funeral services will be held next week and will be private, the funeral home said.

[Source](#)