

Ford's

A MEMOIR

by George Ezell

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FORD'S

INTRODUCTION

Career Planning

Twenty years old, newly married, working part-time for \$1.25 per hour, baby on the way. any career plan I might have had became a survival plan. Our life wasn't a blissful journey, much less a spiritual journey; it was a road trip with no destination or itinerary. A teenager driving at night on unfamiliar roads, seeing what headlights reveal; my ambition was, "keep her between the ditches".

Careening down the road, I took the first turn that came my way. July 24, 1962 I walked into the Ford Motor Company Nashville Glass Plant and was hired. It was both exciting and scary. Getting to work at Ford was a blessing. The opportunity did not come not because I had been recruited for my skills and talents. Joe Clark, a good friend of Ann's family worked there and had the influence to get me hired. He literally sneaked me into the employment office past others waiting for an opportunity to go to work. Ann and I did not have two pennies to rub together. We were living with the Clark's until we could get on our feet. I guess I couldn't reach my bootstraps.

Not all intersections are opportunities to decide which direction you will take. Sometimes they are a cattle chute. So much for career planning.

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FORD'S

For 40+ years my life was largely defined by “I work at Ford’s”. That experience was materially and personally rewarding. I am thankful for the opportunity that came my way and it is good to be reminded that it was only because of the graciousness of others that it was possible.

When asked where do you work? I replied, “Nashville Glass Plant”. Getting to know other employees, particularly those transferred to Nashville from locations in Michigan having worked at Ford Motor Company before coming to Nashville; their response to “Where do you work?” was often “Ford’s”.

Over the years, I came to understand “Ford’s” as shorthand for Henry Ford’s company. Ford was more than a company, it was the a culture, whose progenitor and proprietor was Henry Ford. His innovative and creative intellect and manufacturing acumen defined Ford Motor Company and revolutionized US automotive industry; but his personality, ethics and morals were the DNA of Ford Motor Company, a culture which proved to be a blessing and a curse.

Employment Contract

I did not sign a formal employment contract when hired and didn’t realize until later; upon accepting a job at Ford Motor Company (Ford’s) I had implicitly entered into an unwritten contract. The contract was simple; Ford Motor Company would provide conditional employment with good pay and benefits. As an employee, I agreed to give the company loyalty and a fair day’s work. It was a good agreement and I never broke that contract.

The contract was patriarchal. Had I been able to read the fine print I would have known, in the words of Tennessee Ernie Ford, I had “*sold my soul to the company store*”.

“...institutions and ideologies exert a real moral force in our lives. We typically experience this force as demands for our service, along with our moral and spiritual allegiance and loyalty...” Willlam Stringfellow ¹

Every organization is made up of humans who make its decisions and are responsible for its success or failure, but these institutions tend to have a suprahuman quality. Although created and staffed by humans, decisions are not made so much by people as for them, out of the logic of institutional life itself. And because the institution usually antedates and outlasts its employees, it develops and imposes a set of traditions, expectations, beliefs, and values on everyone in its employ. Usually unspoken, unacknowledged, and even unknown, this invisible, transcendent network of determinants constrains behavior far more rigidly than any printed set of rules could ever do. It governs dress, social class, life-expectations, even choice of marriage partner (or abstention). This institutional momentum through time and space perpetuates a self-image, a corporate personality, and an institutional spirit which the more discerning are able to grasp as a totality and weigh for its relative sickness or health.

Walter Wink

¹Beck, Richard. The Slavery of Death (p. 46).

1962-1964 - Nashville Glass Plant



The Nashville Glass Plant was a Ford Motor Company manufacturing facility located in Nashville, Tennessee. It was built in 1954 and began production in 1955, specializing in the production of automotive glass for various Ford vehicles. The plant was situated on a 129-acre site and employed over 1,000 workers at its peak.

The plant was known for its innovative processes and technology, including the use of advanced machinery for producing complex curved windshields. It was one of the first automotive glass manufacturers to do so, and this technology soon became an industry standard for the production of automotive windshields.

Despite its success, the Nashville Glass Plant was closed by Ford in 1985, as part of a broader effort to streamline manufacturing operations and cut costs. The facility was eventually repurposed as a mixed-use development that includes residential and commercial space, as well as retail establishments.

Today, the smokestack that served as a prominent landmark for the Nashville Glass Plant is one of the few remaining elements of the site's industrial past, and it has become a symbol of the city's manufacturing history. ²

² Chat gpt

Hourly Production Worker

I began my Ford Motor Company employment as an hourly production worker. The starting hourly rate was \$2.70. Normal production schedules provided regular overtime opportunities. Overtime, over eight hours a day and Saturday's, was time & one half(\$4.05). Sunday and holidays; double time(\$5.40) . After the \$1.25 per hour I was making at my previous job, it was definitely a living wage.

Beyond an hourly wage, there were numerous benefits: medical insurance, life insurance, cost of living increases, paid holidays and vacation days and a retirement plan, as I recall.

All hourly employees at Ford Motor Company were required to be members of the Union —United Auto Workers (UAW). A step in the hiring process included introduction to a union representative and signing up for union dues to be deducted from your paycheck once a month. I quickly informed wage rates and benefits were a result of the union's hard earned contract with Ford Motor Company, not the company's good will; a not so subtle reminder of hourly employees indebtedness to the union.

All new hires were subject to a 90 day probationary period before becoming official members of the union. During that time, they could be fired without cause and had no recourse to appeal their firing. As a result, new hires were neurotically compliant and perfect attenders; absenteeism being a primary reason for dismissal. Additionally, getting laid-off before 90 days, re-started the probationary period. The company was not reluctant to use those provisions to their advantage. Fortunately, I was able to complete my 90 days without interruption.

As a new hire, it was not usual to be assigned to numerous jobs until you landed in a particular area for more permanent assignment. I was first assigned to day shift (first shift); my first job assignment was sweeping floors, no place to go but up. I did not mind sweeping and I was pretty good at it.

After several shifts, I was classified as a "Nailer & Bander". Job classifications were important; they determined your hourly pay rate, determined by difficulty and skills required for the job. Classifications also dictated the order in which you would be transferred or laid-off i.e. the higher the classification the more stable your shift and job assignment. Classifications, wage rate, and priority were all negotiated by the union and were sacred cows. "Nailer & Bander" was an entry level classification. During my two years at Nashville Glass Plant had held several other classifications, including Bracket Breaker, Batch Operator, Sun Tool Operator, Auto clave operator and Side Glass Hanger are some I remember.

I successfully completed my probationary period, but on one occasion I was not sure I would make it.

As Nailer and Bander I was assigned to assemble wooden shipping crates for finished glass. The crates were KD (knocked down) requiring me to remove banding and assemble the crate by nailing components with a 16oz claw hammer and 16 penny nails. Unfortunately the crates were made of white oak, thoroughly seasoned after being stored outside. I was given a bar of soap to apply to the nails so they could penetrate the wood. What appeared to be a relatively easy task turned out to be difficult.

My foreman was an ex-marine drill sergeant named Judd; I'm sure his picture is in the dictionary next to ex-marine. His usual posture was to stand near by at parade rest watching intently while I struggled to drive reluctant nails. It was disconcerting and irritating to say the least. Then it happened. Frustrated, swinging the hammer with all my strength it flew out of my hand. Horrified, I watched the hammer flying end over end and strike Judd solidly on his shin. In that moment he expressed his pain and anger as only a marine drill sergeant can. I was certain my fate was sealed. Inexplicably, I was not fired. Maybe it was my profuse apologies?

Completing the probationary period I became a union represented employee; but that did not assure I would not be laid-off. What my new status did provide was re-call rights in the event of a lay-off; meaning I would be recalled when employees were needed. Because automotive manufacturing is subject to market demands, layoffs were routine and a reality working at Ford's; recall rights were important. Layoffs were ordered by seniority, last in first out, greater seniority and the more employees hired after you, the more secure your job. The principle of seniority was a sacred cow for union employees.

Summer months bring vacations, hiring surged to provide replacements for people on vacation. As vacations end there is an excess of employees, necessitating lay-offs. I was hired in July and was laid-off as vacations diminished. It was a jarring experience, finally getting on our feet and finding our own place to rent, we were suddenly unemployed. Being laid-off was not a surprise, plus the possibility of being recalled in a short time kept despair at bay. Because of the precariousness of our finances, I needed to find a job until recalled to Ford's.

Time Study Engineer

Scouring newspaper help wanted ads, I noticed an opening for a time study engineer with a local electronics manufacturing company. I had no experience but applied anyway, got an interview and was hired with the understanding I would be trained to be a time study engineer. My salary was \$70 per week. I accepted the offer, mostly because I expected to be recalled to Ford's soon.

After receiving brief but intense training in time study methods, I worked as a time study engineer for several months before returning to Ford's. I enjoyed my job immensely; the experience proved to be invaluable in the years ahead. Doing time studies required interaction with employees, mostly women, who were not happy to be time studied. Unbeknownst to me it was an introduction labor relations.

Not making a living wage was mitigated by job satisfaction, but our financial situation was unsustainable. If recall didn't come soon, I would have to find a better paying job. The need to find another job became urgent when my manager called me in, told me what a good job I was doing and informed because of reasons beyond his control I was being laid-off immediately.

I remember vividly the gut-punch I felt. It was not like the lay-off at Ford's with hope of recall; it was completely unexpected and devastating. I went home and wept bitterly when I told Ann. That time was very dark for us. With support from family and eventually receiving a call from Ford's, the sun appeared.

My training as a time study engineer proved to be invaluable in the years ahead.

Glass Maker

Returning to Ford's, I resumed production work. Over the next year and some months, I worked at numerous jobs with vary degrees of difficulty and shift assignments. A few jobs were physically demanding, others dangerous, handing glass or working in high temperatures. A faint scar on the underside of my left arm is a reminder. Every assignment was a learning experience.

Shift work was a challenge and a blessing. Shift assignments ranged from 1st shift (7:00am- 3:00pm), 2nd shift (3:00pm - 11:00pm), 3rd shift (11:00pm - 7:00am), and 7 day operation. The plant consisted of two main areas, manufacturing and furnaces . Glass furnaces required 24/7 operation so employees assigned to them worked 7 day operation — 1st shift 7 days + 1 day off, 2nd shift 7 days 7+1 day off, 3rd shift 7 days + 4 days off.

The blessing of shift work came with shift premiums; 2nd shift 5%, 3 shift 10% . 7 day operation included 2 & 3 shifts with their premiums plus Saturday time and one half and Sunday double time and four straight days off every four weeks. The challenge came from changing shifts every week, wreaking havoc with home life and biological clocks.

Seniority determined shift preference and younger employees assigned to a desirable shift could expect to be "bumped" by a senior employee on another shift.

Eventually I ended up working seven day operation for several months. Although the work was not demanding, shift work took a toll on our family.

Working as an hourly union production worker for nearly two years proved to be valuable experience in the years ahead. The jobs I worked, the foremen who supervised me and the production work environment provided unique and important advantage.

Success as an hourly production worker is clearly understood. The first criteria was come to work, on time. Attendance is a big deal in a production environment. Chronic absenteeism was the most frequent reason hourly employees were terminated. A close second was failing to perform your assigned job as instructed; or failing to achieve production requirements i.e. pieces per hour or failing to complete assigned work in a prescribed cycle time.

More desirable job assignments were those with unit per hour quotas as opposed to jobs on a production line where your work pace was dictated by the speed of the production line. Unit per hour jobs very seldom had quotas that could not be met with normal effort. Frequently, a worker could exceed the hourly quota and earn what was know as “hot time”; for example, with a quota of 60 pieces per hour if you achieved 60 pieces in 45 minutes, you would earn 15 minutes “hot time”. There was an unwritten understanding “hot time” belonged to the worker to use as he wanted. He could take a fifteen minute break to do whatever he wanted. In some circumstances a worker could accumulate “hot time” and complete eight hours production in seven hours or less. Leaving the plant prior to scheduled end of shift was a violation of company policy and could result in disciplinary action.

If a foreman violated that understanding, requiring a worker to sweep floors or produce beyond the 60 per hour quota, would quickly experience production losses. Mysteriously “hot time” would disappear and normal variations in the production process; usually overcome by the worker’s desire for “hot time” would result in loss of production. “Hot time”, although mutually beneficial between foreman and worker; was risky for a foremen.

The most stressful job was Production Foreman, later known as Production Supervisor. Despite being a salaried employee, production foremen lived in no man’s land between management and his employees; beholdng to the company with his survival in the hands of his workers. He was in perpetual tension between employee, union and management.

Despite that reality, when an ad for Production Foreman at the Ford Louisville Assembly Plant in Louisville Kentucky appeared in the local newspaper, I was quick to apply. Production foreman was the best opportunity for promotion to a salaried position and future opportunities.



1964- 1969 - Louisville Assembly Plant

The Ford Motor Company's Louisville Assembly Plant, located in Louisville, Kentucky, has a rich history dating back to its founding in the early 20th century. Here's an overview of its history:

- **1930s:** The Louisville Assembly Plant was established in 1913 as part of Ford's expansion to meet the growing demand for automobiles. The plant initially produced Model T cars, which were extremely popular during that era. Over the next few decades, the plant underwent several expansions and updates to keep up with changing automotive technologies.
- **World War II:** During World War II, the plant's production shifted to support the war effort. It produced military vehicles and equipment for the United States and its allies.
- **Post-War Era:** After the war, the plant resumed its automobile production. It continued to manufacture various Ford models, adapting to changes in consumer preferences and automotive technology. The plant on Fern Valley Road opened in 1955. Most [Edsel](#) automobiles (around 67%) were produced here in 1957-1959. Other models produced included [Sunliners](#), [Fairlanes](#) & [Galaxies](#). Louisville Assembly also produced heavy trucks as well as full-size cars on a separate assembly line.³
- **1970s:** In the 1970s, the Louisville Assembly Plant began producing Ford's full-size passenger cars, such as the Ford LTD and Ford Crown Victoria. These models were popular choices for families and fleet customers.⁴

³ Wikipedia

⁴ Chat gpt

My application for a Production Foreman position at the Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant generated an interview. The opportunity was the result of plans to add a second shift to existing Heavy Truck Production.

My interviewer was a Salaried Personnel representative named Royal Graham. Understandably nervous, I was shocked at his first question, "Where do you go to church?" Realizing his mistake, he quickly explained that he saw I attended Abilene Christian College (a Church of Christ affiliated school) and that he was an elder in a Church of Christ in Louisville. After that awkward beginning, the interview went well and I ultimately received an offer of a job as a salaried grade 6 Production Foreman in Heavy Truck Assembly.

Although confident my resume' and interview skills had assured me an offer, I wondered how much the church connection may have influenced a decision to hire me. Ironically, Mr. Graham had, in a very pastoral voice, discreetly counsel me against accepting a job as a production foreman. He understood what I would come learn.

Receiving and accepting a formal offer, we sold our first home we had purchased only one month prior for the princely sum of \$10,000. Moving from Nashville to Louisville was expense we were not prepared for.

When Nashville Glass Plant received notification I was being hired as a salaried employee in Louisville, I was summoned to the personnel office to complete necessary paperwork. The salaried personnel representative happened to be the brother of a good friend and football teammate from high school. He informed me I would be hired first as a salaried employee at Nashville Glass Plant and then transferred to the Louisville Assembly Plant. As a salaried employee I would receive reimbursement for moving expenses. A gracious, undeserved gift.

A final step in transition from being a union represented hourly employee to becoming a General Salaried Roll employee was withdrawal from membership in United Auto Workers. As a union represented employee, I enjoyed the union negotiate benefits and protection; becoming a General Salaried Roll employee, those were lost. I was now a "company man". There was some comfort knowing honorable withdrawal from the UAW assured a return to hourly employment if my new job didn't work. I still have my honorable withdrawal card.

Heavy Truck Production Foreman

Moving from an hourly employee in glass manufacturing to vehicle assembly to a salaried grade 6 production foreman was a dramatic change; I knew nothing about heavy trucks and becoming a salaried employee made it an anxious and stressful period.

With separation from the union and loss of its safety net, the unwritten patriarchal contract I had accepted became my employment insurance policy. I was dependent on my capabilities and trust in Ford Motor Company; neither relieved my anxiety.

Through some mysterious process, I was selected to be a foreman in the body shop. The first step in producing a heavy truck, the body shop is where sheet metal components are framed and welded, then metal finished. A completed white” metal cab is then transported to a paint department.

Later I understood my assignment was good news and not so good news. The “not so good news” — the Body Shop, in vehicle assembly, is equivalent to being assigned to right field on a baseball team. You must have a right fielder but every other position is more important and provides more opportunity for visibility and success. Like a right fielder, Body Shop only gets visibility with errors. Essentially, as a production foreman in Body Shop, I was out of management’s sight and mind; but, as I would learn, management had concerns other than units produced.

The good news —Body Shop is the furthestest point from vehicle assembly completion. The ultimate goal is achieving production quotas. Units are not counted until they are driven off the final assembly line, perhaps hundreds of units after the Body Shop. The likelihood of failing to achieve daily production quotas because of a Body Shop issue was infinitesimal.

With increased demand for heavy trucks, Ford decided to add a second shift. Because the plant was producing heavy trucks on one shift; it enabled hiring and training, salaried first and then hourly, of the entire complement of employees necessary to support an added shift without interrupting current production. New production foreman were assigned to shadow current production foreman.

Assignment to the body shop brought another unanticipated, significant factor in my training. Unlike other areas, the body shop foreman, Rudy Ohman, my trainer, was being promoted to General Foreman after decades as a foreman. His promotion meant two foreman needed to be trained. Another new foreman, Lucas was assigned. The two of us entered Rudy's foreman training school.

I cannot overstate the significance of being under Rudy's tutelage. Other new foremen were being trained by foreman who were mostly younger. Rudy had recently celebrated 40 years as an employee at Ford's. His first job was cutting trees in Upper Michigan for Model T floorboards. Eventually he became a production foreman, working in numerous facilities, eventually landing in Kentucky at the Louisville Assembly Plant. He had been working at Ford's for 20 years when I was born. His picture was in the dictionary next to "old school". His perspective on the history and culture of Ford Motor Company was invaluable. Respected and feared by his employees, I never heard him raise his voice but we all knew not to cross him. He did not have a training manual, we got that in our classroom sessions.

Rudy apprenticed us. He didn't instruct, he demonstrated. Rudy seemed to like me and we connected. Fortunately I was not a pipe smoker like my training partner Lucas. Declaring he never had known a pipe smoker who was worth a damn, Lucas struggled to gain Rudy's approval.

Like a master craftsman he supervised with inexplicable ease and success. He possessed understanding and intuition about people and production processes from years of experience. On occasions when we made mistakes, he was direct and unequivocal in his displeasure.

After several weeks of training second shift launched. The process involved a slow, methodical separation of the two shifts. Initially, the new shift came in one hour after the start of the first shift, giving them one hour of production on their own. Each day the start time would be an hour later until they were operating independently. Operating hours for first shift (day shift) 6:00am - 2:30 pm. Second shift (evening shift) 3:00pm - 11:30pm.

Besides getting little respect among peers in the vehicle assembly system, Body cab construction, consisting of framing and spot welding, was unique with regard to other assembly areas. Henry Ford's genius had created the moving assembly line, dictating work pace. In cab construction, there was no moving conveyor, resulting in workers having to maintain a pace without the metronome of a moving conveyor. One role of a foreman in the Body Shop was acting as a metronome, assuring proper pace, using any tool necessary, including but not limited too, persuasion, coercion, and/or discipline, to achieve production. It didn't take long for any illusion that I was in charge to be dashed — I quickly learned the inmates run the prison.

There are a lot of pieces involved in managing a body shop. Cab construction, framing and re-spot was my assigned area; the other section was metal finish and body hang.

I had 20+ employees to supervise, most of whom were older and experienced. Twenty-two years old, I was literally “wet behind the ears”. I knew little or nothing about cab construction or supervising people. It was literally on-the-job training. Every day was a new adventure, some lessons were hard.

With training completed, the honeymoon was over. On my own, I lived with constant anxiety; fearing failure. There was no safety net.

Leaving home at 4:30- 5:00 am I would arrive at the plant by 5:30am to prepare for the day. Once the shift started, responsibilities of supervising left little opportunity for anything else. It was not unusual at the end of the day to realize I had not had stopped for a restroom break. Unfortunately, that realization often came in the car on my way home.

At 6:00 am a bell rings, signaling the entire plant to start production; each employee expected to be on their job ready to start at 6:00. From 5:45am until 6:00am, foremen station themselves at their department’s time clock, to see who has clocked in, waiting for the “bell ringers” (employees who habitually clock in at 5:59). Employees are required to call in ahead if they were going to be absent, but there were usually some who did not. Shift start up is susceptible to production loss. Absenteeism and other factors preventing the start of production can make for a long day. Attendance and tardiness are significant factors in production operations.

Pressure to make production was relentless. Required to produce fifteen units per hour, I was acutely aware of exactly how many units had been produced at any time. So much so that I learned to listen for the sound of particular spot weld guns that signaled where a unit was in the process. If for any reason (there were lots of reasons), production was not achieved, making up for loss was difficult and required extraordinary efforts. Those occasions required all the skills of a successful foreman.

I quickly recognized my knowledge and skills were insufficient. Thankfully, several older employees understood and stepped in to advise and assist me. Without their help, I would not have survived. Day after day they mentored me, at risk of criticism from their peers. Those relationships defied a principle tenet of production management at Ford’s — supervisor's cannot befriend employees, a belief based on the assumption employees cannot be trusted. If you take your foot off their neck, they will get up and kill you. Trust was not virtue for management.

Having recognized as an hourly employee how stressful a production foreman’s job was, it was now was a daily reality for me.

Despite my two years as an hourly employee, I was pretty naive about union relations. I got my first lesson in labor relations early on.

Union committeemen were elected by other employees. The head of the union at the plant was the building chairman, also an elected position. On one occasion, without an introduction or courtesy, Louis Sexton, building chairman appeared in my area. Arrogant and antagonistic, he immediately created a scene taking me to task for some innocuous problem. Not realizing he was putting on a show to garner support, I immediately threw gasoline on the fire; providing him exactly what he had come for. Before I could counter, he departed, leaving me in his dust. Having lost my cool and embarrassed at how I had been played. It was particularly painful knowing my employees found it hilarious. It was a lesson not soon forgotten.

One of the most significant lessons learned in my early day as a production foreman came during a team meeting. During our training period the atmosphere was mostly relaxed and the Body department team developed some camaraderie.

Eventually the training period (honeymoon) ended and reality set in. One of the first meetings of our team with upper management was on cost performance. The purpose being to review department cost performance relative to cost objectives. It was our first introduction to upper management.

The meeting was held in an in-plant conference room; aka, The “Cool Room” the only air conditioned area available. Awaiting management’s arrival, the atmosphere was jovial, it felt like a post-game locker room, everyone feeling good, just waiting for coach to congratulate us on our performance.

Bursting through the door like bad guys entering the saloon in a cowboy movie, the Production Manager and his minions entered with figurative guns drawn. Immediately the atmosphere became ominous, everyone came to attention and conversation ceased. For the next hour every detail of cost was reviewed and individual performance was interrogated. Each failure to achieve an objective produced threats and promises of punishment if not corrected. Camaraderie evaporated amid excuses, blaming and scapegoating. It was every man for himself.

It was apparent, management was on a different team and we were not a team but a collection of expendable serfs; a disappointing reality but an understanding necessary for survival.

An additional revelation came a year or so into my production foreman experience. Things were getting difficult and each day seem to be intolerable. At the time, my General Foreman was a young college grad on his way up the corporate ladder. Having a particularly rough day, I confronted him and told him I had had enough, I was done. Expecting sympathy and a plea not to quit, he immediately said, “let’s go to salaried personnel and you can quit.” Shocked into reality, I quickly retreated, saying I was not serious about quitting. Again I learned how dispensable I was.

For the next five years I was production foreman in the body shop, supervising both body construction and metal finish and repair. My performance was good enough to earn promotion to grade 8 Production General Foreman . My promotion was concurrent with the opening of a new heavy truck assembly plant across town in 1969, Kentucky Truck Plant. I was selected to be a part of the body shop launch team at KTP.

1969 - Kentucky Truck Plant

Opens Tomorrow

Job No. 1 Ready to Roll At Ford Truck Plant

By GAYLE GRIFFITH
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Imagine, if you will:

✓ A 60,000-gallon bathtub that turns what's put in it black forever.

✓ Soap bubble machines that can fill a high-ceilinged, 75,000-square-foot storage area with flame-smothering suds in seven minutes.

✓ An electronic cupboard with nine

Ford's new plant may be a bull in a china shop—but perhaps a gentle bull, Page B 1.

400-foot-long shelves that can deliver up any one of 14,800 stored items at the push of a button.

It's all part of the Louisville area's newest extravaganza—the Ford Motor Co.'s Kentucky Truck Plant off Westport Road in Eastern Jefferson County.

The huge plant—the world's largest

truck assembly plant under one roof—is a half-mile long and a quarter-mile wide. Bicycles, electric golf carts and even motorbikes are basic indoor equipment for men whose jobs range all over the building.

Tomorrow, the plant gets down to business, with Job No. 1 expected off the assembly line at 10 a.m. Job No. 1 is a big semi-trailer truck for over-the-road use. It's painted "boxwood green and chrome yellow"—two of the nearly 1,000 colors and color combinations in Ford's paint library.

Job No. 1 will have an easy life, at least for a few months. As a celebrity of sorts, the first truck from the new plant will be used by Ford for promotional purposes. Eventually it will leave the limelight for Ford's heavy truck supply division.

At first, Ford will be producing just one line of heavy trucks at the plant, then gradually add other lines as production

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WORKMEN in the new Ford plant on Westport Road move across the building's 57 acres of floor

space on bicycles. The assembly of Ford trucks in the plant will begin tomorrow.

In Suburban China Shop

New Ford Plant a Gentle Bull

By GAYLE GRIFFITH
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

The Ford Motor Co.'s new Kentucky Truck Plant might be a bull in a china shop, but indications are that the mammoth facility, which will open tomorrow, will be a relatively gentle bull.

The 57-acre plant, built on a site developed by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, is surrounded by horse pastures, undulating hills, tranquil farm-gracious estates and other reminders of eastern Jefferson County's not-so-distant rural past.

There's no doubt the plant is hastening the urbanization—or suburbanization—of the area, but this won't necessarily mean smoke-belching chimneys, stream pollution or an industrial slum of the future.

Take landscaping, for example. Hundreds of trees are being planted to the east of the plant building to provide a screen for adjoining property. Across the front and flanking the entrances, flowering crabapples and Andorra junipers will be planted, while roads and service areas will also be landscaped.

Plans call for five to six acres of bluegrass and another 25 acres of more ordinary seeding. The seeding has not yet been begun, since so much construction is still under way. But some trees already have been planted along drives and in blacktop parking areas.

The new truck plant gets high marks from both the Metropolitan Sewer District and the Air Pollution Control Board on cleanliness.

A sewage treatment plant is being built along Hite Creek, two miles north of the plant, with trunk sewers to transport waste. The construction, expected to be complete by October 1970, will cost about \$2.5 million, with Ford paying about \$600,000 of the total. In the meantime, the plant will use a temporary sewage lagoon on the site.

The Air Pollution Control Board reports that the plant has all necessary permits and equipment with regard to clean air. A device that measures the micrograms of particulate matter (pollutant) per cubic meter of air has been installed in the backyard of a homeowner near the plant.

So far, the device has shown an average reading of 90, just a little above the federal government's "ideal" of 85 and Ford engineers do not expect any higher readings when full production gets under way.

One problem—at least temporarily—will be traffic. Although a two-mile stretch of the Jefferson Freeway linking the plant to Interstate 71 was supposed to have been finished by next month, the work has been delayed. The new finish date is tentatively set for Nov. 20.

Until the link is finished, traffic jams will frustrate drivers on the two-lane country roads leading to the plant. By late September the plant will be in full production, with two shifts, the first beginning at 6 or 6:30 a.m. and the second beginning in mid-afternoon, after the first shift has left the area.

Ford officials plan to work out their shift schedules to stagger traffic as much as possible and to avoid having traffic entering or leaving the plant while school buses are on the roads transporting children.

A facility like the Ford plant generates traffic and other problems of civilization, but it also brings tax revenues. Ford officials won't give the capital cost of the new plant, in accordance with



SOME WORK has already begun in the new Ford plant. Jimmy Heath, 141 S. Bayly, works in the metal finishing area.

what they say is company policy. The county tax commissioner's office also has no overall figure yet for tax purposes.

The figure of \$100 million has been repeatedly used as the price tag. One Ford official characterized this estimate as "kind of a ballpark guess, which probably slipped easily off someone's tongue."

Right on the button or only close, an assessed value of even close to \$100 million will mean substantial tax revenue for the county, state, and county school system. The present overall tax rate is about \$1.02 per \$100 assessed value, which works out to about \$1 million a year if the plant is assessed at \$100 million.

The largest beneficiary would be the county school system which receives \$1.8 cents out of each \$1.02 for operating existing schools and building and equipping new ones. The county government gets 18.4 cents the state 1.5 cents.

Jefferson County school officials have tentatively picked out three new elementary-school sites and one new high-school site in the area of the new Ford plant. But the sites will not be bought and the schools will not be built until and unless the subdivisions being planned for the area are underway.

So far, the city-county Planning Commission has received requests for zoning changes in connection with three proposed subdivisions for the Ford plant area. One project has been approved, while action on the other two is pending. According to information received by the commission, the projects would provide apartment and single-family homes for 15,000 persons.

ing to the Williamson County, Tennessee, coroner.

Williamson County sheriff's officers said Joyce was found dead in the backyard of the Tomlin home around noon. Ronald Walford, of the MSSD, was unable to locate the agency's file on the girl yesterday.

The girl, Joyce Tinnell, and her sister, Mary Lee Tinnell, were visiting Mr. and Mrs. Milton Tomlin, who are relatives of their Louisville foster parents, accord-

Nunnally Funeral Home, 4327 Taylor Blvd., said the MSSD Protective and Foster Care Division is handling the girl's funeral arrangements.

Ford built the Kentucky Truck Plant upon "415 acres of farmland" not far from where Louisville meets Oldham County in the northeast of the city. Behind the project was its plant manager, **John Van Vactor**, who convinced the higher-ups at Ford to build the plant in the home of **Muhammad Ali** instead of Kansas City or Cleveland. Around \$100 million and months of construction later, the Blue Oval had the largest production facility in its portfolio around.

1969-1972 - Production General Foreman

My promotion to General Foreman resulted in being selected to be a part of the launch team for the new plant Kentucky Truck Plant (KTP) located on the east side of Louisville in a largely undeveloped area. Being on the launch team meant that I was relieved of my responsibilities at the Louisville Assembly Plant and moved to KTP to assist in the layout and design of the Body Shop at KTP.

Being on the launch team was a great opportunity. I was able to interface with facility and process engineers as well as corporate personnel assigned to new plant construction. It was a completely new experience and I learned a great deal which proved to be helpful in the future. Relationships developed in the process proved equally important.

As a salaried grade 8 General Foreman I was responsible for Body Shop production and supervision of two salaried grade 6 production foremen; an introduction to managing salaried employees. There were approximately 75-80 hourly employees. My manager was a salaried grade 9 production superintendent of the Body Shop and Paint Department.

Being a General Foreman required a broader skill set, but did not reduce the daily pressure of meeting production. Rather than being able to direct, coerce, threaten hourly employees, I had to manage my production foremen in a manner that they would achieve production. In that regard, I was introduced to a fundamental temptation of all managers; “when things go sideways, it’s easier to just do it yourself”, otherwise know as micromanaging. Some years later I wrote about “making production” which describes the environment I worked in making production.

Infinity? I Just Want to Make Production.



In my early days as a production supervisor, Ford Motor Company and the U.S. automotive industry had a quality problem that threaten their very existence.

Back in the day... when I was a production supervisor at Ford Motor Company

Production supervisors' primary responsibility is to achieve production goals(standards) as determine by people who know what is required to be a profitable enterprise; but have little understanding or concern for what is necessary to achieve them. Production standards in themselves are a challenge, made all the more difficult by the fact that people are necessary to achieve them. In the automotive assembly business, production supervisor is consider, by many, the most difficult job. Although, a production supervisor job description includes usual requirements associated with managing people and processes, the reality is, those won't matter if you don't make production. It does not take long to understand your number one priority, production.

As a production supervisor there are two frightening realities. On one hand, your manager is ever vigilant and prepared to threaten and berate you, or fire you as promised. On the other hand, you can only achieve production with the cooperation of your employees. Employee's cooperation wouldn't be So difficult, except for the fact they most often don't believe production standards are fair.

Because employees feel production standards are unfair and supervisors are required to achieve them, it is easy to understand how relationships between supervisors and employees become adversarial. Supervisors are tasked with satisfying two masters, neither of which are ever satisfied. The production environment is mercurial, ranging from peaceful co-existence to outright warfare.

Eventually,I came to recognize an interesting phenomenon. In times of relative calm, employees would achieve production requirements consistently, barring uncontrolled interruptions of material shortages, equipment failure, etcetera. Eventually, despite

assertions of unfairness, production would be achieved in less than allotted time. The result would be what was termed “hot time” . “Hot time” being the amount of time gained by exceeding expected production rates. i.e., if the standard was 10 units per hour and the team/person was able to produce 10 units in 50 minutes, the 10 minutes gained was theirs to use as they saw fit. That arrangement worked well for supervisor and employees, to a point. It could easily get complicated for supervisors. A fundamental indicator of efficiency is employees constantly working, accordingly if a supervisor’s manager observed employees not working, it was problematic, no matter production being achieved. The problem was compounded when employees figured out that if they “banked” their “hot time” to the end of the shift they could leave early, having achieve production for the day.

It became particularly embarrassing for the supervisor if a manager showed up an hour before shift end and found all the employees gone. Not only did supervisors have to meet production, they had to enforce rules. Clock-in when you arrive and clock-out when you leave. Only pay for time on the clock. Leaving without clocking out or having someone else clock you out were disciplinable offenses. All of which came into play with “hot time”.

Astute supervisors managed “hot time” challenges by whatever means available and as long as production was achieved, managers were not concerned. That worked well until competition and company profit objectives demanded more production at less costs. As everyone understood, eventually there would come an announcement that tomorrow, production requirements are increasing, Instead of 10 units per hour, it will be 11 units per hour. Not only is an additional unit needed, cost needs to be reduced, so 11 units will have to be produced with the same amount of people.

“Hot time” is prima facia evidence increased requirement is achievable with no added people. Magically, upon announcement of 11 units per hour , “hot time” disappears and 10 units per hour becomes consistently unachievable. The ensuing battle to achieve new production requirements becomes furious. Supervisors use all available tools, including, but not limited to, persuasion, begging, threatening, cursing, and disciplinary measures. Employees file grievances through their union reps and conflict becomes a daily routine.

Like a mating ritual, with managers knowing they hold power, supervisors unable to compromise; eventually employees, weary of relentless harassment, submit to the inevitable and achieve new production requirements, previously declared impossible. Amazingly “hot time” returns and business as usual resumes. That cycle was repeated, ad infinitum.

Things a Production Supervisor Learns

- Production standards are an asset and a liability. Having standards is leverage. If production is not achieved ... i.e. “we’ll all lose our jobs”. They are a liability because they are a ceiling. Standards are never exceeded.
- Production standards are never achieved 100% of the time. Even if everyone does exactly what they should there will always be uncontrollable factors causing loss of production.
- If you get behind on production, you can not catch up, because to do so would require employees to exceed the standard.
- The only way a supervisor can make up lost production is with cooperation of employees. A tenuous proposition, since doing so will become evidence justifying future production increases. Only when the supervisor has the trust and confidence of his employees will they consider taking the risk of exceeding the standard and achieving production.
- Success for a production supervisor depends upon his relationship with his employees. Power and authority are required, but not sufficient.
- Production standards seldom, if ever, meet or exceed human beings’ capacity for creativity and innovation.
- Reliance on production standards as the means to success inherently creates an adversarial culture.
- Employees are responsible for quality problems, whether lost production or sub-standard work.
- A “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture permits the use of any means/methods necessary to achieve production.

Production Standards not Enough

Ford Motor Company, not only survived but, flourished for nearly a hundred years as a production enterprise. Passing through gauntlets of union organization, dictatorial and despotic leadership the company became the flagship of the automotive industry. Their corporate culture was built on production principles and techniques. It served well until competition arrived in the form of Japanese automobiles. Lulled by a stereotypical view of Japanese industry as incapable of producing quality products, U.S. automotive industry scoffed and doubled down on their tried and true methods and strategies. The broader story is beyond this post, but the truth is clear, Japanese automotive industry competition brought U.S. automotive industry to the brink of failure.

There were a number of competitive factors, the most prominent being quality. In its simplest form, quality was measured by TGW's (things gone wrong). TGW's were direct feedback from customers. The difference between Japanese TGW and U.S. TGW was astounding. Because TGW, in large part, directly related to production issues, production supervisors' became a key part of fighting the competition through improved quality.

Consistent with production principles, the intuitive response to improve quality was "do better". Production standards remained preeminent, only now they had to be achieved with quality. In the existing production environment, achieving quality was often an impediment to making production standards. Employees, like their supervisors clearly understood the priority of production. Given the choice of making production or taking time to correct a problem, production always won out. Production supervisors' job, difficult enough with production as priority, became exponentially harder.

The conundrum production supervisors faced can be illustrated by an early tactic employed to improve quality. An edict instituted by management was that no unit was to be produced with a defect. If a defect was discovered, the production line must be stopped and the problem resolved before the line resumed. Those who know the cardinal rule of production, "never stop the line", will understand the radical impact of that edict. At first, it seemed to simplify production supervisors responsibility, except production standards still had to be achieved, and, of course, there was no edict rescinding the long standing rule, "if you stop the line you will be fired".

Production's response to management was "I can give you production, or I can give you quality, but, I can't give you both". Management's response was "If the Japanese can do it you can do it." Production standards were no longer enough.

Achieving Quality

For Ford production supervisors, quality meant producing a prescribed amount of units meeting established specifications. Notwithstanding obvious external factors, quality problems were assumed to be a result of people not performing as expected. Accordingly, all quality problems could be resolved by employees doing better, working harder. Believing people to be the problem, only willing to do their jobs correctly when properly motivated, successful supervisors become adept at necessary skills: manipulation, intimidation, fear, punishment, persuasion, to name a few. Initial quality improvement efforts did little to produce better quality, despite people working harder. Supervisors became increasingly frustrated by the schizophrenic demand for production and quality.

In contrast Japanese understood quality as "a broad concept that goes beyond just product quality to also include the quality of people, processes, and every other aspect of the organization." With that understanding, achieving quality improvement was not a matter of working harder but required a completely new paradigm; a cultural shift beyond Ford's and U.S. automotive industry's comprehension. In retrospect, the Japanese were like Buzz Lightyear declaring "To Infinity and Beyond". Inexplicably, the Japanese relied upon commitment to continuous and unending quality improvement, production standards were not enough.

Almost 50 years later, the story of U.S. automotive industry's struggle to understand and create a new paradigm is still being written. That reality clearly illustrates the depth and breath of the challenge faced. Paradigm shift is not about renovation, but transformation; better understood as larva to butterfly metamorphosis. A final verdict is yet to be rendered. I would describe U.S. automotive efforts as "Laodician" "...you are neither cold nor hot ...you are lukewarm..."

Supervisor or Leader

Regardless of Ford's ultimate success or failure of Ford to improve quality, the short-term impact on supervisors was swift. Changes were dramatic and traumatic. Implementation of Employee Involvement, a program based on the principle that employees, rather than being the problem were the answer. Responsibility for most quality problems lay with management and employees were underutilized resources, necessary to identify and resolve quality problems. Command and control was replaced by cooperation, involvement, relationship and respect as motivational tools. Supervisors, in some cases, felt like guards at Auschwitz after its liberation.

The response of supervisors was prescient of management and corporate response. Faced with an ultimatum, some resisted and were purged, most complied. Although willing, supervisors were ill equipped for their new role, team leaders. Skills developed and rewarded in the past became ineffective and often counter-productive. Absent support of a necessary culture shift, supervisors' response was a "lukewarm" whatever necessary for survival.

Things Team Leaders Learned

- Quality is a shared responsibility and cannot be improved by edict, slogans, objectives.
- Good decisions depend on good data.
- Employees' trust is essential.

- Quality is Job#1 (Ford slogan, ironically)
- Quality will not be improved in an adversarial environment.
- Achieving quality is a systems problem.
- Quality improvement is not finite but continuous, making numerical objectives irrelevant.
- ***“To Infinity and Beyond” is the only appropriate slogan.***

QUALITY

Quality is the degree to which performance meets expectations.

Consider a few expectations we hold for our nation, our government, organizations, families, marriages and ourselves.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

“In the name of God, I take you to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.”

Do you solemnly swear that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God under pains and penalties of perjury?

*Integrity: We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly and sincerely. When we say we will do something, we will do it; when we say we cannot or will not do something, then we won’t do it. **Enron***

Making Production

My launch team assignment ended as the plant began operating in a normal production mode. For the next three years my life at Ford's was defined by making production. Producing heavy truck bodies at the prescribed jobs per hour.

A thirty minute commute, meant rising at 4:30am and arriving at the plant by 5:30 am. Production lines started promptly at 6:00am. Initially there was a single 8 hour shift 6:00am - 2:30 pm plus overtime which could vary from day to day, usually not exceeded 1.0-1.5 hour, Heavy trucks orders occasionally required working Saturdays to meet demand.

Being a General Foreman did not diminish daily pressure to perform, managing other salaried personnel brought a different , but just as relentless pressure. Performance reviews from my manger were sufficient to merit pay increases and overall I was considered to have potential for eventual promotion. My career was progressing well.

During this period, self-administered reviews of my spiritual and moral health were less than satisfactory. I began to recognize a wide gap between "ought and "is" in my life. Essentially, I was one person at work and another person elsewhere— church, home, community. My hypocrisy was fueled by the need to succeed at work, bolstered by an assumption that success at work could only be achieved through methods and means that conflicted with the "ought"of my faith. That internal conflict resulted in my concluding I could not continue to work in production and be a Christian.

My dilemma meant I would have to find another job at Ford that would not conflict with my "ought"or leave Ford. Because of "owing my soul to the company store", leaving was not a viable option. Finding a job at Ford other than production was not realistic because a college degree was required in other areas and I only had two years of college. Frustrated by not defeated, I was determined to make a change.

Friendship with the manager of salaried personnel provided opportunity for conversation and access to information. On a whim, I asked to see the Salaried Personnel Manual, which was not confidential but not readily available. Perusing the information, I came across a section entitled "Educational Leave of Absence".

There was a program available to general salaried roll employees that would grant up to two years absence for education purposes contingent on the approval of their manager. No pay, but benefits continued and seniority would not be broken. The company did not guarantee a job opening at the end of the leave but there was a good faith agreement to find employment and the employee agreed, but was not required to

return. It was the answer I had been looking for. With Ann's agreement, I applied and was granted a two year educational leave of absence. (albeit troubling that my manager signed my application without hesitation.)

Educational Leave

Shortly after my 10th anniversary of employment at Ford's; motivated by a faulty assumption that I would be able achieve my "ought" once I received my bachelor's degree and secure a job out of production; our family —Ann, pregnant with our fifth child— four children with all our belongings— moved to Abilene, Texas.

In May of 1974 I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Abilene Christian College. The educational leave had concluded. Having decided that we would consider an opportunity to work for the school and not return to Ford's, I was anxious to hear from the company. The call came and the good news was there was an opening for me. The bad news was it was the Production General Foreman position I had before I took the leave. Because I had been very clear that I wanted out of production, I declined the offer.

The obvious next question was, "What do you want?" Stunned, I did not have a ready answer. For reasons I cannot explain, I had not given serious thought to what I wanted; other than "out of production". Pulling an answer out of thin air, I blurted, "something in labor relations". After a long pause, I was told no positions were currently available and I should think about my decision and they would call back in two weeks. We decided if the only opportunity to return to Ford's was a job in production, we would remain in Abilene, Texas.

Two weeks later the call came. There was a Labor Relations Representative position available. A salaried grade 7 position less than the grade 8 General Foreman position; however, the grade 7 salary exceeded my salary from two years prior because of annual increases; it was an offer I could not refuse. August 1974 we moved back to Louisville, Kentucky and Ford's reclaimed my soul, out of production.

1974- 1984 - Labor Relations

Returning from educational leave, I spent the next decade in Labor Relations. An enjoyable and rewarding experience that provided many unexpected opportunities. My decision to ask for a position in labor relations proved to very wise — better lucky, than good. :)

As a Labor Relations Representative (LRR), my responsibilities included administering disciplinary actions for violations of company rules. Production foreman who encountered problems with their employees consulted labor relations for guidance and or disciplinary action. A LRR would assess facts and decide if discipline was appropriate and what penalty, if any, would be assessed.

The role of LRR was often like being a parent of feuding siblings, requiring mediation and reconciliations skills as much or more than hardline enforcement of rules. All hourly employees were union members and entitled to union representation in any disciplinary hearing. LRR as representatives of Ford Motor Company were considered to be an adversary by the union and hourly employees.

Oxymoron - Absentee Control

My first significant assignment was to conduct absentee hearings. The assignment meant that each day I would go to an interview room in the plant and conduct hearings for employees that had been absent or tardy the previous few days. Typically, dozens of employees would line up for their opportunity, accompanied by their union committeeman, to face my stinging interrogation regarding their absence/tardiness. Without a reasonable explanation supported by appropriate documentation, I would administer discipline which could be as little as a verbal warning or as drastic as termination depending upon their attendance records. We employed a progressive discipline system which meant that each penalty was more severe than the last. Within certain limits, I had the latitude to exercise discretion in what the penalty would be. For example, I could give a person a three-day suspension without pay and then their next discipline would be a week suspension, and so on. I might, because of mitigating circumstances, administer the penalty but waive the time off. Theoretically, the employee having been given a gracious gift and facing a next penalty of one week (appropriately threatened with such at the time of the gift) would see the error of his ways and come to work from that point on.

When assigned to the absentee hearings, I inherited all the documented absentee records of every employee. Those who came the hearings were most often employees that had a history of habitual absence/tardiness. I looked at the terrible attendance records and talked with the employees and heard their pleadings and hard luck stories and tears et al. I began to believe, that despite the failed efforts of experienced labor

relations representatives to correct their behavior, I possessed qualities and skills that would succeed where others had failed. As a result, I launched a personal campaign to single-handedly solve the plant's desperate absentee problems. It was obvious to me that my predecessors had not explained clearly nor used the tools of persuasion as I was capable of doing to turn this around. To make a long story shorter, in a short time disciplinary actions decreased and absenteeism began to increase. This did not go unnoticed by my superiors. I was informed that if I didn't get on track I would be fired. So rather than be fired, I fired. My delusions of grandeur were burst and I learned a valuable lesson. The lesson wasn't that I didn't have some special or unique skills and/or qualities that may have very well improved the process. I learned that I could not ignore the reality of history and experience and succeed by the force of my personality. What success I ultimately achieved in improving attendance came because I recognized the reality of the circumstances around me and then began to apply whatever special traits I possessed to those circumstances.

There is, I believe, a basic human trait that leads us to arrogantly believe that we individually possess knowledge and understanding that transcends all others and as well as lessons learned from the past.

My strategy to improve absenteeism was a failure. There was some consolation in the fact all strategies to improve absenteeism had failed; unrecognized by management prompted a call to my boss and call from him to me, informing me of dire consequences should absenteeism not improve immediately.

Once again I was a benefactor of good fortune. The day after receiving "notice", the son of the union building chairman reported for an absentee hearing. Chronically absent and defiantly arrogant he offered no legitimate excuse for his latest absence. In the light of my recent mandate, I abandoned protocol and summarily fired him; called security to have him escorted out of the plant. As expected, before he left the plant, his father had called management and my decision was reversed. A call to my boss prompted another call to me, demanding to know what the hell I thought I was doing? To which I responded, "Improving absenteeism." My point was made but not without consequences.

Plant Security

A consequence of my misguided effort at controlling absenteeism was an assignment as Plant Security Supervisor, not a demotion but clearly punishment. For the next year I was responsible for fire protection and security of the entire Kentucky Truck Plant. Having no experience or training it was an opportunity for failure.

Once again, I was a benefactor of good fortune. The person in line to be promoted to Security Supervisor was by-passed because of my assignment. With many years of

experience in all facets of security and fire protection, rather than choose resentment, he mentored me and became a good friend. That year provided important experience and education beneficial in the years ahead.

Plant Security Supervisor was not a glamorous assignment, however I quickly learned it was an important position with considerable risk. The first lesson, Jack (my mentor), impressed on me was the priority of fire protection. If the plant burned down, nobody would care about theft, unauthorized access, illegal parking or numerous other plant security responsibilities. I knew nothing about fire protection systems and procedures. Fortunately, there were no consequential fires during that year.

Not unlike most businesses, theft is a perpetual problem in an assembly plant. The first line of detection is surveillance of employees leaving the plant. Guards stationed at several gates watch for suspicious signs, check lunch boxes, confiscating any contraband. Occasionally a careless thief would be apprehended and fired. You can never underestimate people's capacity to do stupid stuff. One incident in particular comes to mind.

After parking in a reserved spot next to my office at the main security gate. I noticed a Marlboro cigarette pack on the pavement, it appeared to be new but was unsealed. I opened it and was surprised to find it filled with neatly rolled marijuana joints. No one was nearby so I put them in the safe in my office until they could be properly dispositioned.

Several days later, one of my security guards came in my office and announced an employee was asking if a cigarette pack of joints had been turned in. He ushered a young female into my office and after she correctly described the cigarette package, I gave it to her. She thanked me and departed. I had a guard follow her. We contacted the police who were able to stop and pull her over. Conducting a search they found 20# of marijuana in the trunk of her car.

My plant security experience was interesting and rewarding. There were some noteworthy achievements in breaking up some theft operations, undercover police working as employees to identify and arrest drug dealers. Lots of war stories.

Although fire protection was an obvious priority, theft was a constant reality. It was puzzling that employees would risk their jobs to steal items of relatively little value.

I quickly became fascinated with the idea of being the chief law enforcement officer (CLEO) of KTP. I learned how security personnel can easily assume power and authority. As security supervisor I had lots of access. The security office had responsibility for keys to all doors and locks in the plant. There was equipment to cut keys upon request. All lock mechanisms were keyed alike, each having individual key

but with the ability to have a master key. Interestingly there was a grand master key secured in a safe in my office. I had access to the “key to the kingdom”. I never used the grand master but I did have a master key issued to the security supervisor.

The first line of theft detection were guards at the entry/exit gates to the plant. They were always posted to check employees entering for ID. They were authorized to search lunch boxes or suspicious items of exiting employees. This was mostly a deterrent, but occasionally resulted in the apprehension of a thief. I never got an answer to why someone would attempt to steal a pair of cotton work gloves.

Motivated as KTP’s CLEO, I decided to do some surveillance of employees leaving the plant from a catwalk above an aisle where employees walked to the exit doors. I watched with my two-way radio in hand. I noticed an employee I knew strolling through storage racks near the aisle. He took a handful of plastic trash bags and stuffed them into his coat and headed out of the plant. I radioed the security office and told them to stop him and have him wait in my office until I got there.

Jim , in his late 50’s, a reliable worker mostly unnoticed; was waiting nervously in my office. We exchanged small talk and he asked why he was there. I confronted him about the trash bags he had concealed in his coat. Shocked, he admitted taking them for his janitorial business. He was embarrassed and ashamed.

The bags were of no significant value, but it was clearly theft. He had jeopardized his livelihood in taking them. Reasonably confident he had learned his lesson, I did not involve Labor Relations and initiate disciplinary action. After threatening to fire him if it ever happened again. I dismissed him.

During my brief tenure as Security Supervisor there were several occasions of more serious theft, including diesel engines, starter motors and air governors. It was clear that what we discovered was just the tip of the iceberg. I learned some valuable lessons about human nature.

There were occasions when I worked with local law enforcement. They were always helpful and willing to do whatever was needed to apprehend the bad guys. Talking with some detectives about a known thief but did not have any hard evidence to arrest him, they suggested that some Ford property could possibly show up at his house and a search warrant be executed. Problem solved.

There was a considerable amount of drug activity, particularly on the night shift. A LMPD officer was hired to work undercover. As a result, several employees were arrested. Word about an undercover cop was an effective deterrent.

Among lessons learned from Plant Security Supervisor experience were:

- * Thieves seldom looked like thieves, more often they were the least likely looking.
- * Every apprehended thief declared that it was their first attempt.
- * If the plant burns down, nothing else will matter.

Although my assignment was intended as punishment, the experience was important and served me well in my career and life.



Senior Labor Relations Representative

After one year in Plant Security, I received a promotion and returned to the Labor Relations Office as Senior Labor Relations Representative. The promotion to SLRR returned me to salaried grade 8 I held before my educational leave.

Thankfully, as Senior Labor Relations Representative (SLRR) there was no responsibility for absentee control. In addition to supervising Labor Relations Representatives, I had responsibility for resolving employee-management disputes, negotiating labor contracts, and coordinated grievance procedures regarding worker complaints.

Being SLRR meant assignment to night shift. Night shift was difficult for family life but the work experience was invaluable. SLRR on the night shift was a de facto Labor Relations Manager having imputed authority beyond my position. A risky proposition, if decisions were good kudos came, if not, they could be a career ender. Fortunately, I survived what was a relatively short tenure as SLRR.

There were a number of memorable experiences on the night shift, including bomb threats which were particularly anxious moments. One evening, I received an anonymous call stating a bomb was set to go off at an unspecified time and the plant should be evacuated immediately. The dilemma was obvious, bomb threats occurred occasionally but none had ever been real. Evacuating the plant was a BIG DEAL and would incur significant costs and disruption. Realizing the decision would definitely affect my career; I punted and called the Labor Relations Manager. He in turn, protecting his career, called the Plant Manager who made the decision to keep the plant operating. Being a genius, he made the right decision, there was no bomb. Unlike other decision process where the crap flows down stream, it was a circumstance where the buck stopped with the Plant Manager.

In the late 70's US automotive companies began to feel the pressure of foreign competition, particularly the Japanese. Forced to assess every aspect of their engineering and manufacturing strategies, US auto companies would be changed forever. Their monopoly on cars was over. The possibility of failure was real. In addition to engineering and manufacturing, cultural and organizational change was required. One particular cooperative venture between the UAW and Ford Motor Company — EI Employee Involvement — would have a profound effect on my career.

Employee Involvement - Giving workers a voice

Employee Involvement (EI), a joint initiative between the United Autoworkers Union (UAW) and Ford Motor Company, was a derivative of the Japanese competition crisis. Longstanding UAW/Ford animosities were transcended as they joined forces against a common foe.

“...a remarkable program known as E.I., employee involvement, that gives them a personal voice in the decisions that govern their work lives. Their complaints and solutions - from installing new fans to demanding better manufacturing quality control to designing new production techniques - can be heard by a team of fellow workers with the power to do something about them.”⁵

In the late 1970s, the parties explored Employee Involvement (EI) as a way to enlist worker commitment and effort. The objective was to improve product quality and plant operations, as well as to enhance employees' satisfaction with their jobs and with the business. EI was formally adopted in 1979 as a voluntary process. It quickly proved its value in a severe economic downturn which precipitated one of the Company's deepest financial crises and reduced the work force by almost one-half.

Every group's culture, customs, and orientation to change are different, and Ford and the UAW afford individual locations considerable latitude on how they shape and run their local programs around national principles and support Our belief is that dynamic local processes can only emanate from full participation, empowerment, and ownership of the local parties.

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/02/magazine/giving-workers-a-voice-of-their-own.html>

...these changes were accomplished in existing facilities — and with an older work force that had to be educated in new work methods and new work relationships.

... cooperative endeavors can require a paradigm shift of large magnitude. Taking people from their homogenized entities and placing them together does not necessarily guarantee a wished-for synergism. Co-locating is important, but the results could be just symbolic. The acceptance of skill availability, the blending of agendas, appropriate recognition, and working through the distractions of politics and bureaucracies are all critical to success.⁶

EI was a corporate initiate. Every manufacturing/ assembly facility was required to implement an EI program as defined by the Ford/UAW contract. I was selected to be the EI Coordinator for KTP. It was not a promotion but EI put my career in Labor Relations/ Human Resources on a different trajectory. Relieved of SLRR responsibilities, EI Coordinator was a special assignment that lasted for several months and opened doors to promotion and several unique assignments.

Following intensive corporate training in Dearborn, MI, first task as EI Coordinator was orientating and training every hourly and salaried employee, 40-50 at a time in an eight hour class. The plant population was around 1500-2500 employees at that time. EI was met with much skepticism by salaried employees and deep suspicion by hourly employees.

For management, change is hard enough, but when your career depends on making changes which are completely contrary to all you have been taught; and makes skills, that got you whatever measure of success you have achieved, obsolete it is terrifying. It was not optional, get on board or get off.

For hourly employees, participation was encouraged and supported by the Union but, was not required; making orientation an exercise in persuasion. My “conversion” rate was predictably low, an indicator of the difficult road ahead.

EI training was a great opportunity. I was brought into contact with every hourly and salaried employee. Because EI was a Ford/UAW Program, as the plant coordinator, training was extensive, usually in Detroit. There was regular interaction with corporate labor relations personnel and Union officials, all of which proved to be an asset in the years ahead.

⁶ Lofton, E. & Pestillo, P. J. (1993). Twelve years of workplace cooperation: Ford and the UAW

Management Roll

After a successful launch of EI, I received a promotion to *Supervisor, Labor Relations and Hourly Personnel*; a significant career milestone. Moving from General Salaried Roll (Grade 5-8) to Management Roll (MR Grade 9-10), receiving a salary increase and additional benefits.

A much desired benefit was the Company Lease Car privilege. MR were allowed to lease one new vehicle per year. Lease payments were calculated on the MSRP of selected vehicles, always a significant bargain. Insurance and maintenance were included in the lease agreement. It was definitely a privilege. Over the years there were occasions where the program was extended to two vehicles per year or opportunity to swap your current vehicle for a different, usually a fancier one.

An additional perk of MR was Executive Dining Room privilege. The Executive Dining Room (EDR) was only available to MR and above salaried employees. Careers were made and ended in the EDR. The Plant Manager ate there and his table accommodated 12-14 guests. There was no reserved places (except the Plant Manager's seat). Although there was no seating chart, everyone understood their place. It was a high privilege to be seated at the Plant Manager's table and a good barometer of status in the management organization. Not all managers ate in the EDR, some thought it too expensive. (We were billed for our meals, which I thought were a bargain.) Others, particularly managers in production, weren't willing to take the time to be away from their areas. The quality of food was outstanding. Others disdained the idea of currying favor with their managers.

It was an opportune time to have conversation and be on the "inside". It was also risky, if your department was under performing, lunch could quickly turn into a negative performance review. I always thought the benefits outweighed the risks and ate as often as possible. As SLR&HP I usually had time for lunch.

The EDR was a venue for special lunches and events. Special guest and/or corporate executives always meant special menus, at regular prices. :) plus the opportunity for visibility with upper management. There were occasions to have lunch with William "Bill" Ford who is now COB of Ford Motor Company.

Being seated at the Plant Manager's was by his invitation. Once invited you continued to eat there until uninvited. I was fortunate to be invited.

Being on the "inside" meant enjoying the privilege of purchasing tickets to the Kentucky Derby. Each year the company secured a block of tickets to the Derby which were made available at the Plant Manager's discretion to management employees. Although we had to pay for them, because of limited availability, it was a nice perk. In

addition to tickets, the package included a Derby Brunch, escorted caravan to the track and reserved parking. Derby was the highlight of the year.

Derby tickets were another barometer of a manger's standing in the organization. The better your seats, the more favorable standing. The first year our tickets were on bleachers in the first turn. The last year we were in a 3rd row clubhouse box on the finish line— Career progress!

Beyond salary and benefits, MR was the gateway to career progress. MR employees were recognized beyond their local facility and were candidates for promotion across the company.

KTP 83

EI was a significant part of Ford Motor Company's response to Japanese competition. A cooperative venture between Ford and the UAW. Focusing on product quality, EI was a corporate priority. Unprecedented, but necessary organizational and cultural change necessary to survive in the world of global competition.

EI was the first phase in a transition from the Henry Ford's production system to a Japanese model. A dramatic and difficult challenge, I am confident Ford management understood the necessity of change, I do not believe they had a grasp on how broad and deep the change would need to be. Having gained the cooperation of the UAW through EI, a concurrent initiative to bring management philosophies in line with the Japanese model was launched.

Because of Heavy Truck Division's unique position within Ford, corporate management chose KTP for implementation of a workplace experiment, a next step in adopting the Japanese model. The experiment involved creation of hourly self-directed work teams. A high visibility project that included a team of corporate labor relations representatives and contracting of a nationally known management consulting company. The code name for the project was KTP83.

EI and associated initiatives were top priority for the company. The future of Ford Motor Company was at stake. Executive's bonuses and perhaps their careers were dependent upon succeeding.

The plant manager was Jim Whyte who I had worked with and under for many years. We were hired around the same time, but Jim had moved rapidly up the corporate ladder.

As EI coordinator, I was selected by the Plant Manager to coordinate implementation of KTP83. That role put me in a unique position on the plant organization chart. Reporting directly to the plant manager and a de facto member of the plant operating committee, I had access and imputed authority beyond my pay grade.

As KTP83 Implementation coordinator I was responsible, in collaboration with the team, for development of a KTP83 implementation plan. There was plenty of assistance.

Additionally, working with our external management consultant, I served as an internal consultant to the Plant Manager and the Plant Operating Committee to facilitate management transition from the traditional Ford management philosophy to a participative management philosophy consistent with the Japanese model.

At Jim's direction I attended the Plant Operating Committee Meeting. (POCM) Those meetings, in the executive conference room, led by the plant manager or his designee were held daily at 8:00 am.

POCM's influence on the operating committee managers and plant operations cannot be overstated. Every meeting was analogous to pre-game preparations for a Super Bowl; —“... there is no tomorrow” —“... a must win” —“...leave everything on the field”. Unlike an annual Super Bowl, production was a daily event, the pressure relentless.

Essential for communication, and mistakenly perceived to be motivational, POCMs were more often demoralizing; they could collapsed into performance reviews of the previous day's failures. The tenor of the meeting reverberated through the organization.

My responsibility was to observe and provide critique to Jim in private after each meeting. Jim chaired the meetings and his Ford management style prevailed. Making critique relatively easy but risky.

KTP⁸³ was a local step in what was a dramatic cultural paradigm shift occurring company wide. Ford management had been trained and found success employing what Douglas McGregor described as Theory X management which assumes negative assumptions regarding the typical worker; the typical worker has little ambition, avoids responsibility, and is individual-goal oriented

One principle among managers at KTP and Ford that is a succinct definition for Theory X: *“Never take your foot off their [employees] neck or they will get up and kill you.”* Read [Wikipedia](#) to learn more detail.

We were being required to adopt Theory Y management, which was employed by Japanese companies. In contrast, Theory Y is based on positive assumptions regarding the typical worker; assumes employees are internally motivated, enjoy their job, and work to better themselves without a direct reward in return.

My task, with the help of our external consultant and assistance of corporate Labor Relations representatives, was to facilitate the transition of plant management from Theory X to Theory Y management style. It was the equivalent of converting staunch Southern Baptists to Catholicism. Training and experience with EI was helpful, but this role was different. I received extensive training by the external consultant, which eventually all members of the POC received.

The 8:00am POCM's were daily demonstrations of X theory management making debriefs with Jim easier but challenging. X theory permeated every aspect of the organization, even the meeting rooms and furnishings. Held in the plant manager's conference room, seating was arranged in a horseshoe shape. The plant manager's seat

was at the top with the managers arrayed in descending order to his left and right. There was no seating chart but everyone knew their place. I was seated in the remotest place.

Inadvertently, I discovered Jim's chair, while it looked the same as all the others it was, in fact different, with much more comfortable cushioning. As a test, I discretely exchanged his chair for one of the others. Interestingly, he never mentioned the change but his chair mysteriously returned to its proper place a few days later.

Jim suggested I videotape the meetings to facilitate our meeting reviews. Unfortunately, the videos were not very helpful. As soon as the camera appeared, everyone changed, immediately performing for the camera. Jim suddenly became a benevolent tyrant. Other operating committee members were hardly recognizable. The videos were useless as tools for critique.

A KTP83 implementation plan was developed and presented to the UAW for their approval. Even though the plan included an unprecedented 5-year no-layoff commitment, because of its radical nature, UAW elected representatives insisted there be a plant-wide referendum before proceeding. Campaigns by company and union were initiated to influence the referendum outcome.

One effort by the company to encourage acceptance was an all-hands-on-deck meeting with hourly employees. Jim agreed to give a speech. He asked me to write it. I complied and we reviewed it in depth, it received his approval. The meeting proved to be a "hand writing on the wall" experience for me. Jim discarded the prepared speech and delivered a disastrous impromptu lecture.

Hourly employees soundly rejected the KTP 83 proposal. Deeply disappointed, I was not surprised.

Some weeks prior, during a POCM Jim, frustrated and angry at some performance issues lashed out verbally. When I tried to gently reign him in, he turned to me and stated empathically before the operating committee "I've had all of this f**king participative management I can take." It was a nail in coffin of participative management and ultimately KTP 83.

Because of the significance of KTP 83 to the company, Truck Operations management scheduled a meeting in Dearborn for a report on why it was rejected and what went wrong.

Our external consultant conducted extensive interviews with hourly employees, management and Union officials to provide a reliable diagnosis. Armed with data and a well prepared report, we met with Truck Operation Executive Vice-President and his minions in the rarified air of his executive conference room.

Myself and the consultant were tasked as presenters . Only when I saw the seating arrangements, did I fully realize what my role really was, I was the sacrificial lamb. Rather than Jim being seated next to the EVP, I was, with the consultant next in line. Jim and the rest of the team followed, safely out of the kill zone. It was a very anxious experience but I learned a lot.

Thankfully, the report saved my reputation, if not my career. The consultant was point man. His conclusion why the proposal was rejected was summarized in two points:

- Hourly employees did not trust management to keep the proposed agreement.
- They were not willing to give up job classifications as required by the proposal.

KTP 83 was dead. There was no enthusiasm by Truck Operations management or KTP management to continue any unique workplace experiment. The organizational change ship had launched and would continue to progress, how and where was TBD.

Betwixt and Between

My special assignment had come to an abrupt end. KTP continued to move forward with Employee Involvement and management change. Statistical Process Control (SPC) was introduced. Rather than programs , change was slowly occurring internally, a good thing.

My special assignment had provided extensive training and experience. Additionally I have received a promotion to salaried grade 10. Unfortunately, there were no grade 10 positions in Labor Relations. My options were to return to production as a grade 10 production superintendent or take a grade reduction and return to labor relations.

My aspiration was to move up the management ladder, In assembly plants Grade 11 Production Manager was the first step to upper management. Once the dust settled from KTP 83 failure, I had conversation with Jim regarding my future. He asked what I wanted to do. I told him I wanted to be a Production Manager. Despite my previous production experience, extensive training and experience in labor relations, I was lacking broader production management skills and training. My request was to spend the next year being prepared to be a Production Manager. Jim agreed and for the next year I rotated through every department in the plant. At Jim's direction, each department manager provided training and orientation necessary for my development.

Opportunity

Employee Involvement and KTP83 provided exposure which resulted in an offer for position as a Trainer in the corporate training organization. It was a Grade 10 position and was considered a plum assignment. There were two complications. It would mean a transfer to Dearborn, Michigan and an entirely different career path. After discussion with Ann and despite those considerations, I accepted the offer.

My offer was contingent on a swap between the plant and the corporate training office. A trainer in Dearborn would transfer to KTP to replace me. We were making plans to move when I received word the trainer in Dearborn had declined the transfer. Providence had intervened.

Production Manager

Concurrent with the completion of my development assignment, there was organizational upheaval resulting in re-assignment of the current production manager and creating an opening. Promotion did not happen, instead I was offered acting-Production Manager meaning full responsibility as Production Manager (PM) without promotion or pay increase, it was a probationary assignment without guarantee of promotion. My only assurance was Jim's half-hearted promise. I accepted the assignment enthusiastically.

In assembly plants Production Managers are responsible for vehicle production. Department superintendents — Body, Paint, Trim, Frame and Chassis are direct reports. Support areas are dotted line.

I was production manager because of Jim's decision and leap-frogged several candidates with more production management experience. Previously I reported directly to Jim, but as PM I reported to the assistant plant manger, Matt. This became increasingly awkward because Jim consistently expected me to report him. It was clear that Jim did not have confidence in Matt and I was caught in the middle.

An early indication of what lay ahead became apparent when Jim, in a private meeting, commissioned me as PM. Rather than expected tasks, improving production, quality or costs, Jim expressed his dissatisfaction with two superintendents. My first assignment was to fire them. Firing long-term grade 10 superintendents whose performance records were satisfactory was no easy feat. Despite his desires, company policy dictated due process.

It was a red flag on several reasons. First, not surprisingly, it confirmed, Jim's allegiance to X Theory management and rejection of participative management. What was more troubling was his motivation to fire them was personally vindictive and

complicated because one superintendent was black. Second, it indicated a more likely reason for my selection as PM and explained my “acting” status. Third, it reinforced Jim’s expectation that I report to him. I was beginning to see “the hand-writing on the wall”

As “acting” production manager there were some inherent challenges; acting clearly implied temporary, an impediment to developing my superintendents support and a team environment. I had years of relationships with my superintendents mostly through Labor Relations except for early years in production. Though I was respected, they were skeptical. My relationship with Jim was advantageous. There was no question I was Jim’s choice and had his ear; however, any distrust of Jim, and there was a lot, was shared by me.

The first step was to develop a business plan for managing production operations. The business plan’s primary objective was changing from day to day, reactive, crisis management to strategic planning. A major culture shift, the plan was the culmination of twenty years of experience and training and was consistent with organizational changes the company was initiating.

I submitted and reviewed the plan with Jim, receiving his approval. In retrospect, I committed a strategic error in not involving the assistant plant manger (Matt), my direct manager, and other stakeholders in that process... so much for participative management. :)

For eleven months I was responsible for managing production operations at Ford Motor Company’s Kentucky Truck Plant. At the end I did not receive a promotion, but was re-assigned as Trim Department Superintendent. The new salaried grade 11 Production Manager (not acting), was a superintendent who previously reported to me.

I was deeply disappointed and spent a lot of time assessing that experience, trying to understand why I failed to get the promotion. Self-assessment is always a challenge. As I reviewed my brief tenure, there were positives.

I accomplished Jim’s edict to remove two superintendents. They were not fired. With their agreement and without loss of pay, transferred to other positions. That achievement was not fully appreciated by Jim, his desire was to punish and send a message. One metric of success as production manager is production of vehicles on time with quality, that goal was achieved without significant negative occurrences.

Another metric is direct labor cost. Direct labor, or headcount, is an assembly plant’s most significant controllable cost. Production operations have all the direct labor. Each year the plant is tasked with reducing direct labor cost, in other words, reducing headcount. The most challenging facet of production management is continually

reducing headcount by improving efficiency, while achieving production and quality goals. Achieving production and quality will not suffice if cost objectives are not met.

Ironically, it was not failure to achieve cost objectives that brought about my demise, but how we planned to achieve it. As mentioned earlier, each department superintendent was required to develop a business plan including plans to reduce direct labor within their area. Each department submitted plans which were reviewed and revised where necessary. Once I was satisfied their plans were reasonable, all of them plans were combined into a Production Operations Business Plan.

There was a problem, committed direct labor reductions, primarily by work rebalance, did not achieve our objective. Without assistance from other plant entities; engineering, maintenance, material handling, labor relations, further reductions weren't possible. Although all areas of the plant were assigned cost reduction tasks, there was no coordination or cooperation toward achieving the plant's overall cost objectives. It was every man (department) for themselves. As a result opportunities for cost reduction through synergy and teamwork were lost.

Organizationally production, engineering, maintenance and material handling reported directly to Matt (Assistant Plant Manager) who reported to Jim. A team effort to achieve cost objectives would be Matt's responsibility.

Matt was provided the Production Operations Business Plan along with a detailed letter requesting he facilitate involvement of engineering, maintenance and material handling in a team effort to achieve direct labor objectives. To my knowledge, Jim never saw the business plan nor the letter. I learned Matt's communication to Jim was simply production could not achieve direct labor objectives. He requested that I be replaced as Production Manager. I was unaware of Matt's discussion with Jim. He did not respond to my letter or communicate his concerns.

Suddenly, there was no usual communications with Jim. In the executive dining room he avoided eye contact and conversation. When your manager quits talking to you, it's a sure indication something bad is about happen. I was unwilling to wait so I had his secretary put me on his schedule to meet in the afternoon. At lunch I was ignored and asked about his silence and told him I wanted to meet with him. He said he was too busy. When I told him I was already on his schedule, he reluctantly agreed to meet.

It was clear to me that Matt had undermined me and I had lost Jim's support. I was not going remain as Production Manager. My intention for the meeting was not plead my case but to express my disappointment with the two of them. Why he did not have enough respect for me to question Matt's judgement? My final question of Jim was, "Why treat me so disrespectfully? No process was required to replace an "acting" production manager, arbitrary dismissal was sufficient.

Remembering the two superintendents he wanted removed. I got my answer, it was about punishment and sending a message.

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake," an apparatchik says in 1984. "We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power." How is power demonstrated? By making others suffer. Orwell's character continues: "Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation."
George Orwell - 1984

Purgatory to HN80

Dismissed as production manager, I was assigned as Production Superintendent. It was ironic that I had left production ten years earlier because I didn't believe I could work in production and be Christian and now I was back. During those years spiritual growth matured my perspective and gave me confidence to live my faith in whatever circumstance.

Settling into production superintendent responsibilities didn't take long. Thankfully my peers were generally sympathetic and not antagonistic. The daily routine included the production manager's morning meeting with all superintendents. It occurred after the POC meeting. The agenda included a debrief of the POC meeting, information and direction for the day.

Several months into my new assignment, the production manager announced the plant was looking for a volunteer to be the plant representative on a team being formed to design and launch an entirely new heavy truck. A full time assignment, for several years requiring weekly travel to Dearborn until the vehicle was launched, The prospect of leaving production and taking a special assignment was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. I was the only volunteer.

Somewhat of a surprise, Jim gave his approval and I was officially assigned to represent KTP on the HN80 (code name) Program. No promotion or raise, little did I realize the adventure I was embarking on.

HN80 -1991

Kentucky Truck Plant was the only assembly plant in Truck Operations. All other vehicles were produced within the Automotive Assembly Division (AAD). Truck Operations included design, engineering, material and logistics, manufacturing and assembly functions necessary for heavy truck production. With its own Executive Vice-President, Human Resources, Finance, Product Development, Sales and Marketing and various other functions made Truck Operations uniquely independent. A blessing and curse.

Ford Motor Company was primarily a car company and AAD was the heartbeat. Truck Operations existed because of the Ford family's insistence the company always be a full-line vehicle producer. Their controlling interest assured Truck Operations continuation despite its relatively minor contribution to the bottom line.

Truck Operations was a mirror image of AAD, independent but redundant, making it vulnerable to being absorbed or eliminated.

Because of waning heavy truck sales and aging vehicle designs, and Ford family's insistence, a decision was made to fund an entirely new heavy truck program. The program was named HN80.

New vehicle programs are critical in the automotive industry. Complex and costly, their failure can cripple a company. Customers expectation of new and better models every year makes new vehicle programs (NVP) a high priority. Historically, NVP development cycles from concept to production could take five or more years. Foreign competition had reduced NVP to less than five years.

Survival of Truck Operations depended upon development of completely new heavy truck products. HN80 was the answer. With the exception of "refreshing" programs, HN80 was the first completely new heavy truck program since the introduction of the F-series in 1951.

With HN80, not only were new products being designed, new and innovative processes were incorporated. Traditionally, product development was conducted sequentially ; vehicle design — engineering — purchasing — assembly finished vehicle — sales and marketing. That sequential process created protracted new product cycles and often less than desired vehicle quality.

Inspired by Japanese automotive companies, HN80 was the first vehicle program at Ford to adopt the concept of co-located vehicle program teams. Instead of each team working independently in discreet locations, all teams were located at a single facility. Each team was required to involve all other teams in their process. Every step in the process required sign-off approval from other teams before proceeding. Painful but effective it was very effective.

As the plant leader with sign-off responsibility, there was leverage seldom enjoyed by the plant. Also a first, an hourly team of product specialist dedicated to the program was located in Dearborn.

For four and a half years my weekly routine was traveling to Dearborn via company plane usually on Mondays and returning home on Fridays. An obvious downside was being away from family. The HN80 experience proved to be a highlight of my career.

As a member of the HN80 team, numerous relationships with a variety of people from different areas were formed. Ed Volker, HN80 program manager, became a mentor and close friend. He understood the challenges a plant representative faced dealing with other disciplines, particularly engineering, and often ran interference for me. He regularly assigned responsibilities that elevated my status with the team.

Being in Dearborn provided exposure to a corporate environment I had never experienced. One particular incident remains vivid in my memory. Not long after joining HN80 team, I was visiting Truck Operations headquarters for a meeting. While in the rest room at a urinal, Truck Operations' Executive Vice-President Ken Dabrowski walked in and took a urinal next to me. To my surprise, he greeted me by name and expressed his appreciation for my participation on the HN80 team. He then proceeded to give me an assignment.



Early HN80 clay model

As plant representative, I was included in every phase of the product development process including exterior design. Hn80 began with a conceptual, impractical futuristic line drawing, that set a framework for a new innovative exterior design.

Although exterior design had little impact on assembly processes, our opinions were welcomed and occasionally resulted in some changes. After team sign-off, final approval of exterior design belong to corporate executives.

Invariably, an executive would feel the need to express some concern that would generate some minor redesign. For example, a VP through the design did not have enough chrome accents.

Each product segment was engineering and designing their respective components concurrently. Because most components are interrelated, co-location and team participation were essential. It was an arduous process that required leaders to employ new or different management skills. Ed Volker's leadership sustained the team effort.

Participating in the product development process provided important product and process knowledge. Training for Production Manager gave me basic understanding of all plant functions; enabling me to better represent their interest in HN80 design.

As plant representative for HN80, I had responsibility and authority beyond my salary grade. Ed Volker made me a member of the Hn80 management team. My peers were executive management level. As a result I was included in most activities and opportunities reserved for the management team. It was a heady experience.

One particular experience stands out. An executive management review of early HN80 prototypes was conducted at a private airport in Indiana near KTP. Truck Operations management including VP Ken Dabrowski flew in for the event. I attended as a part of the KTP management team, which included plant manager Jim Whyte and the plant operating committee.

Assembled in a large hanger to greet Ken Dabrowski and his entourage, I was shocked when Dabrowski greeted me first. He proceeded to invited me and my wife to join him and his wife for dinner that evening; instructing me to pick them up at heir hotel around seven. It was a Prince and Pauper story without a swap.

Overcoming the anxiety of selecting a restaurant and the thought of entertaining them, we managed to have a wonderful dinner and conversation. Ken and his wife were very cordial and made us feel comfortable despite our professional and social disparity.

There were noteworthy experiences, National HeavyTruck Dealer meetings in the SuperDome in New Orleans and Montreal Canada.

I traveled to England to review body construction tooling with time to tour London, Oxford and Stratford on the Avon.

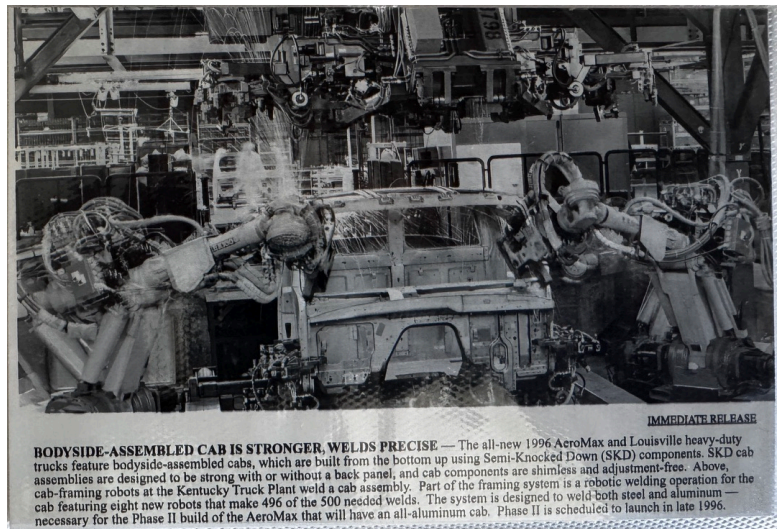
Traveling each week to Dearborn I stayed in the Dearborn Inn, Hyatt Regency Hotel and RitzCarlton, all luxury hotels owned by Ford Motor Company. My expense account was generous making travel less stressful.



For several years the majority of my time was spent in Dearborn with the HN80 team. Along with product specialists participated in every aspect of product design and development; tasked with assuring assembly concerns were identified and addressed. The fruit of our efforts would become evident when we launched at KTP.

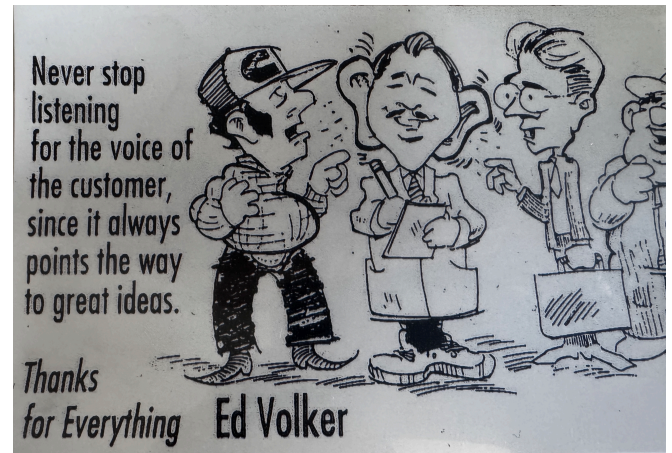
There were several noteworthy innovations that were spearheaded by the KTP team. Body construction was accomplished with flexible tooling, capable of producing multiple cab configurations with a single framing fixture. Additionally, HN80 offered steel and aluminum cabs. Our welding engineer developed spot welding equipment capable of welding both, an industry first. We also produced integrated sleeper bodies for highway tractors.

The program consisted of two phases. The phase I was successfully launched in 1995, Phase II followed the next year.



Participating on the HN80 team and leading the KTP launch was certainly a significant experience in my career at Ford's. I gained a lot of product and process

knowledge. The most impactful part was being a part of the team and the relationships that were formed. It was truly a pleasure.



HN80 Epilogue

The HN80 program and its products were a success on all counts. Unfortunately, financial realities overrode the Ford family commitment to remain full-line vehicle company.

Ford Agrees to Sell Heavy-Truck Business

Feb. 20, 1997

The Ford Motor Company agreed today to sell its heavy-duty truck business to the Freightliner Corporation, a unit of Daimler-Benz A.G., in a move that would allow Ford to shed a money-losing business and Freightliner to increase its market share in the United States.

The news was disappointing but not surprising. The \$200 million price tag seemed like a bargain.

The production vacuum created by the sale of heavy trucks was quickly filled by F series Heavy Duty products; in high demand and highly profitable they assured the long term viability of KTP.

Out of a job following the HN80 product launches, I was given some brief special assignments in production working for an area managers.

Ford announced the introduction of the Ford Excursion to be produced at KTP. Designed as an answer to Chevrolet's Suburban, it fit well with KTP product lines. Unlike HN80 program there was no co-located team and the final design was handed off to the plant for launch.



As a result of my HN80 assignment I was designated plant launch leader for the Excursion program in 1999, my last assignment before retiring. Lasting about a year, leading the launch was a good assignment and I was still enjoying working.

Back surgery and knee problems made working on the plant floor more difficult. With 37 years of service I was eligible for retirement but it was not financially feasible

without some special considerations from the company. Planning for retirement was on my mind regularly.

Retirement

December 31, 1999 emerged as a target for retirement. I began talking to my manager about the possibility of retiring at year end. The Excursion launch was scheduled for the spring of 2000 so he was concerned about losing his launch leader.

There was a possible win-win solution. The company offered a Supplemental employment status that would allow me to work after officially retiring. Very desirable because the employee continues their responsibilities, compensated at their ending salary without benefits. Being officially retired, they also received retirement benefits. It was fondly called “double dipping”. It was an ideal solution, it mostly solved financial issues and allowed me to finish my assignment as launch leader. A plant manager’s approval was required.

Appropriately, I had earlier notified corporate Human Resources of my intention to retire 12/31/99. The notification did not commit me to retire but notified them and generated a retirement package that define the details of benefits etc. It also triggered a notification the plant of my intentions.

My manager, Buster McCreary, had had conversations with the plant manger about the possibility of my retirement but there had been no firm declaration. I asked him to request the plant manger’s approval for Supplemental status if I decided to retire. Notification from Human Resources was interpreted by the plant manger as an ultimatum, complicating any request for supplemental.

Jim Whyte, my mentor, was no longer plant manager, replaced by Frank Foley, a hard ass whose reputation preceded him. He lived up to his reputation and had created shock and awe with his arrival. He did not appreciate what was interpreted as a threat to retire if I didn’t get his approval for supplemental status.

Buster informed me that Frank wanted a meeting with me. At the appointed time I went to Franks’ office. Seated behind his desk, his body language clearly communicated the meeting was not to congratulate me. I was seated across from Frank. Other attendees included the Plant Human Resources Manger, Assistant Plant Manager and Buster.

Without any pleasantries, Frank launch into a prolonged tirade attacking me, accusing me of abusing my position and stealing from the company in my travel to Detroit. Personal and demeaning I was speechless, angry and humiliated by Frank’s accusations, I was deeply disappointed, but not surprised that none of the witnesses offered any defense on my behalf.

Unwilling to respond, the meeting ended. I left defeated but determined to retire, supplemental or not. Buster was bewildered but helpless.

Although the meeting was a terribly sad and disappointing end to my career at Ford's, after I had time to reflect, I felt some relief that a decision had been made/forced and we could proceed with our lives. It was not the end of the story.

A lame duck, waiting for my final work day prior to the Christmas Holidays; the annual KTP management Christmas dinner was coming up and since I had not been uninvited, Ann and I decided to attend. Always a grand affair, it would be our last hurrah, it lived up to its reputation and we enjoyed the occasion. Everyone received a unique KTP coffee cup from Louisville Stoneware.

It is still my favorite coffee cup.



The week after the management dinner I received a call that Frank wanted to see me. Curious but unafraid, I entered his office and took the same chair as before. Behind his desk, I hardly recognized him. Unlike the angry despot previously, he was smiling and friendly. He open the conversation with, "I've been watching you since our previous meeting." Not particularly surprised, I replied, "Really". Frank continued, "Yes, I was impressed that you and your wife attended the Christmas party. That said a lot about you and I have been thinking about your request for supplement status. I have decided that I will approve the request."

Caught completely off guard, I managed to express my sincere appreciation. Fortunately he didn't offer his ring or anything else, which I would have gladly kissed.

As a result I officially retired on December 31, 1999 ending my unsigned employment agreement with FORD'S after 13,674 days.

Afterword

Completing my Excursion Launch Leader assignment I continued working supplemental status as a leader in the newly created KTP Engineering Launch Facility, managing an hourly product specialist team for several product launches over the next several years. A very enjoyable and profitable experience, I resigned from supplemental status and really retired.

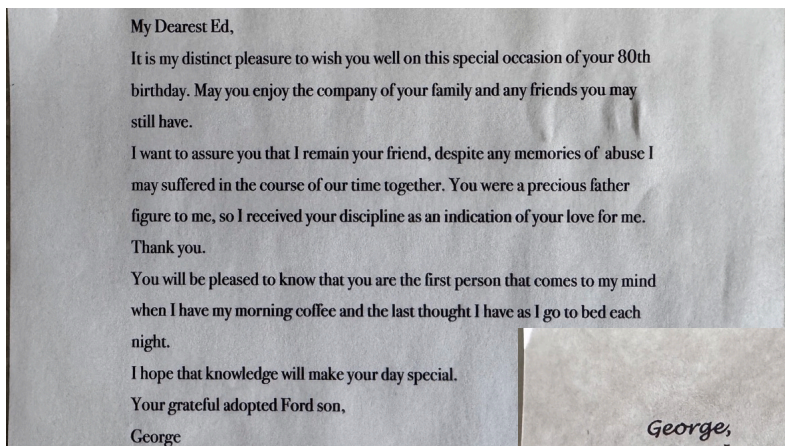
The quote below is from the HN80 memento I gave our team.

It's not just the work. Somebody built the pyramids.
Somebody's gonna build something..
Pyramids, Empire State Building
...these things don't Just happen.
There's hard work behind it...
Picasso can point to a painting.
A writer can point to a book.
Everybody should have something to point to,
What can I point to?

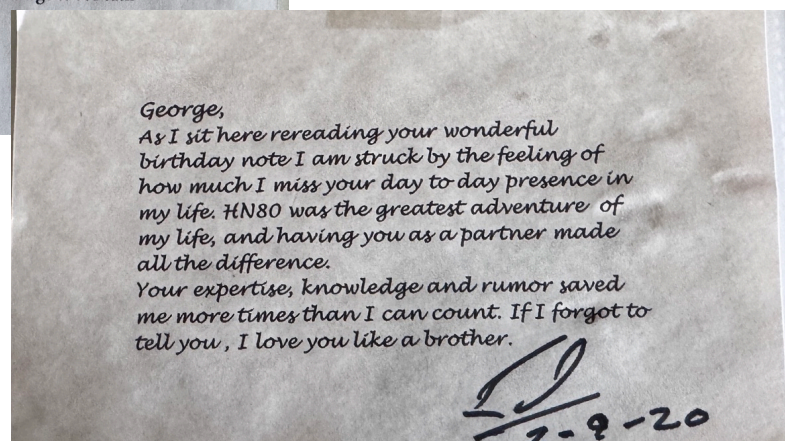
Cary Lefevre from Studs Terkel's Working

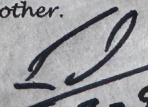
As I reflect on my years at FORD'S there are many things I can point to with a sense of pride and satisfaction. It was hard work, but it was not just the work.

One thing I would point to as 'other than work', is found in the note I sent years later to Ed Volker on his 80th birthday and his response.
Ed has since passed away.



My Dearest Ed,
It is my distinct pleasure to wish you well on this special occasion of your 80th birthday. May you enjoy the company of your family and any friends you may still have.
I want to assure you that I remain your friend, despite any memories of abuse I may suffered in the course of our time together. You were a precious father figure to me, so I received your discipline as an indication of your love for me.
Thank you.
You will be pleased to know that you are the first person that comes to my mind when I have my morning coffee and the last thought I have as I go to bed each night.
I hope that knowledge will make your day special.
Your grateful adopted Ford son,
George



George,
As I sit here rereading your wonderful birthday note I am struck by the feeling of how much I miss your day to day presence in my life. HN80 was the greatest adventure of my life, and having you as a partner made all the difference.
Your expertise, knowledge and humor saved me more times than I can count. If I forgot to tell you, I love you like a brother.

2-9-20

Epilogue

It is my desire this FORD's memoir has provided a glimpse of what it was like to work in the automotive industry. More importantly, that it portray the story of a satisfying and successful career made possible, not so much by skill, talent, hard work or education, but because of the providence of God and people who mentored, cared for, tolerated and corrected me along the way.

The unacknowledged hero of my FORD's career is ANN WATSON EZELL, now married 63 years, she carried for years the burden of family responsibilities that were sacrificed on the FORD altar. Always supportive she not only tolerated an insufferable and inconsiderate FORD manager, she loved me. It could not have happened without her.

It has been good. I am thankful.

George Ezell

July 8, 2025