

HENRY FORD —

The private man

by Art Spinella

If Henry Ford put a sock on inside out, superstition dictated it shouldn't be changed. And it was not.

When his family argued about their half-million dollar yacht, he had it cut up and scrapped.

He carried a revolver (like many Ford employees) which he often used for target practice—by shooting the nibs off a light fixture in one of the company's offices. That office was located directly below the executive dining room!

Henry Ford. The ultimate eccentric, was known for his brash behavior, but was called "a most sensitive man" by long-time friend Thomas Edison.

There are many facets to Henry Ford which never became widely known. When his right-hand-man Harry Bennett wrote "We Never Called Him Henry" in 1951, the Ford family purchased as many copies as it could find in an attempt to keep the paperback (no hard-cover house would touch it) out of public hands. And while most would blame Bennett for the shady history of the early Ford Motor Co., the fact is that no one did anything at the company without Henry either approving or directing the operations.

That goes for everything from paying works \$5 a day to dealing with mobsters.

As Bennett wrote in his book, "In the early 1920s, the Ford Motor Company was considered the greatest industrial enterprise in the world, when he was already forty, in 1903, Henry Ford organized the company with a total cash capital of \$28,000. From 1903 to 1926, total profits were estimated at \$900,839,000. . . . The River Rouge plant, an industrial wonder, covered 1,100 acres and employed over 100,000 men. (Ford) operated 35 branches in the U.S. of which 31 were assembly plants. It owned vast timber lands, mines, subsidiary manufacturing plants, and a six-million acre rubber-producing tract in Brazil. (Associated companies were located in Belgium, Argentina, France, Denmark, Cuba, England, Uruguay, Holland, Chile, Brazil, Sweden, Italy, and the Irish Free State.) In 1923, the company employed approximately 165,000 men in the U.S. and 8,000 abroad, exclusive of Canada. Approximately 500,000 men were indirectly dependent on the company for employment."

But the industrial might came after two false starts. His first was The Detroit Automobile Company, founded at the turn of the century. It flopped. Not to be deterred, Henry Ford and a lumber dealer named Wm. Murphy formed The Henry Ford Company. But Henry was taken with auto racing, which he

pursued with a passion. Murphy and other Henry Ford Co. owners squeezed him out; looked around for a good product man to salvage the fledgling company and discovered Henry Leland, one of the subcontractors to Olds Motor Works. Leland was hired and so was born Cadillac.

Henry himself was born July 30, 1863 and he labored on the family's Michigan farm until his mid-20s. He later served as an apprentice mechanic in Detroit and toyed with the notion of mass producing watches. His genius for mechanics resulted in his first car—a 500-pound quadricycle made of tube steel—in 1896.

Henry Ford was more than just a tinkerer extraordinaire. He was quite human with a deep love of children—his own as well as others—and a desire to see families happy and united. In most cases, his meddling often caused more dissension than satisfaction.

He both trusted and distrusted mankind in general and had some strange notions about criminals of any stripe. One of his greatest desires was to see the total abolition of jails. He felt that men stole because they needed money, and if he and other industrialists paid decent wages, and if the employee had a family, he wouldn't resort to crime. This attitude led to various associations with gamblers and gangsters. When matched to his concern for

(Continued on page 46)

FORD

(Continued from page 8)

children, it comes as no surprise that Ford Motor Co. occasionally found itself involved in kidnapping cases. In 1929, a five-year-old named Jackie was kidnapped. The father approached Mr. Ford (who was recognized as having dealings with the underworld) and pleaded for the safe return of his child. Ford asked Harry Bennett, "Don't we know enough of these hoodlums around town to help this man out?" Ford was not interested in having the kidnapper prosecuted and only wished to see the child returned safely. Bennett contacted one of Detroit's mobs which in turn found the child. "We can get the kid as long as no ransom is involved," said the "hoodlum," not wanting his gang implicated in the crime. Bennett related this condition to the father who disregarded the directive and paid \$20,000 to a hood who, in fact, couldn't get the child back. When the mob heard of the pay-off, it backed out (much to Ford's and Bennett's disgust), but before cutting the ties completely, they "discussed" the situation with the extortionist and delivered the \$20,000 (minus \$100 for expenses) to Bennett. The case came to a pleasant conclusion when the kidnapper—a man named Fernando—ordered the father to pay \$5,000 by check. The police delivered the draft, got the child, and arrested Fernando. Since Ford was involved from the beginning, the police brought Jackie to Bennett who turned the youngster over to his father.

The extortionist who had collected—and returned—the \$20,000 was a contract killer who later attempted to murder Bennett. Even though his name was known to Ford and Bennett, neither was interested in prosecuting the would-be assassin and the police never attempted to apprehend him.

Ford Motor Co. was so well connected with mobsters (and the FBI, by the way) that Bennett was figuratively called "Boss." When a Detroit gangster of some repute was on his deathbed following a shootout, he called for "The Boss." Recognizing who that meant, the police summoned Bennett to the hospital.

"Will you get me a priest?" the mobster asked Bennett.

"Don't know if any would come."

But the request was sincere and Harry Bennett—one of the most powerful men at Ford Motor Company and Mr. Ford's trusted con-

fidant—found a friendly padre who administered last rights.

The attitude toward criminals extended to employees at Ford. A worker stole a complete engine and installed it in his old "T." When informed, Henry asked, "Got the goods on him?" He was taken to the company parking lot where the hood of the worker's car was opened.

"That's a new motor all right," said Ford. After a short pause to decide retribution, he added, "Make sure he brings in the old one."

With that the discussion was ended, and naturally the employee was neither reprimanded nor prosecuted.

Much has been written about the "goon squads" that Ford Motor Co. had on the payroll during those early years. But there was good reason for The Service Department, as it was called.

In the early 1900s, Ford hired thousands of men—off farms and out of the cities—cities with only rich and poor as inhabitants. Imagine, if you will, an entire metropolis consisting of East L.A. or Harlem or Chicago's south side. Cities of the time were rougher than the glorified Old West.

Ford official Charles Sorenson, for example, had a desk full of knives and other weapons taken from employees. Knifings and fights were frequent affairs at the Rouge and in order to keep the mayhem to a minimum, former boxers, wrestlers and University of Michigan football players were hired. Without the Service Department, it would have been impossible to build Fords at the rate of 1.6 per minute.

In addition, Henry Ford was so convinced of his stand on the reasons for crime that even Bennett—himself coming to Ford via a jail cell—rankled at the number of criminals on the company payroll. Henry felt these men could be rehabilitated if given a good job and starting a family.

His interest in families of employees went to extremes, however. About 1914 he formed the Sociology Department which would send investigators to workers' homes to patch up squabbles and see to it that everyone was happy. Through the years, though, the department did more harm than good. It looked into the ways each family spent its money; if the children were clean; if a worker drank; and if parents were of good moral standing. No information was too intimate.

When one Sociology Department investigator discovered a Ford towel being used as a diaper, he took it. Mr. Ford, learning of the incident,

became furious and personally sent the family a supply of diapers. Soon thereafter the department was disbanded.

Henry Ford's love of children—especially his grandsons and granddaughter—led to his famous decision to establish the \$5/day wage. On a tour of the factory, young Henry Ford II and his grandfather passed a workman who leered at the pair with disgust and grabbed a wrench. Henry Ford didn't miss the look of anger and frustration. Ford wondered why there was such hatred in the employee's eyes and soon thereafter determined a possible reason: The machinist resented that his own son would never reach the wealth or position that young Henry was born to. Ford returned to his executives and asked, "How much pay would be enough to give workers a chance to put money away?" The officials took out a blackboard to calculate the financial impact on the company for each 25 cent increase in wages.

The existing pay scale was in the mid-\$2 per day range and an executive suggested upping it by 25 cents. Henry shook his head. Another quarter was added and Henry still shook his head. When the figure reached \$3.50, the executives squawked mightily. At \$4.50 they laughed. It must be a joke. At \$5 the room filled with silence.

"That looks good," Henry Ford said to everyone's astonishment, and he left. Those in the room expected Ford Motor Co. to go broke. It didn't.

Henry upped the daily wage by \$1 on two other occasions, each time causing his own managers and those of competing auto companies to sink into fits of consternation.

When the crash of 1929 looked as if it would destroy America, Herbert Hoover asked Ford to do something to bolster public confidence. Ford immediately announced the base wage would go from \$6 to \$7 per day. Industry, he felt, shouldn't wait for an economic rebound, it should force one.

Henry Ford abandoned the pay raise 22 months later when no other company followed his lead. The experiment cost Ford in excess of \$300,000,000. But Ford was never one to worry about the bottom line. In fact, he distrusted accountants so violently that for many years Ford Motor Co. didn't have an accounting department, per se. Instead, Ford insisted that the bean counters be situated throughout the operations so no power base could be constructed.

His own theory on wages and

prices often contradicted standard business practices. In 1931, as the nation sunk deeper into the depression, Ford ordered his executives to lower prices to a point that would move cars. After fitful calculations, they submitted their figures. A quick glance and Henry bellowed, "Get 'em lower!" The managers trimmed numbers, fretting over pennies, and resubmitted the prices.

"Not low enough," Ford barked as he pulled a piece of paper from his pocket. "These are the new prices."

The executives panicked. The company would go broke, they predicted. Money would be lost on every car sold. Listening to all the arguments against his plan, Ford quietly lifted the paper from the table and penciled in a few new prices. Lower.

"That's it," he said, tossing the sheet back on the table. Sheer pandemonium followed. But Henry's price cuts resulted in one of the most spectacular (for the day) sales increases in history and more profits than anyone thought possible.

Henry Ford unquestionably listened to a different drummer. A secretive man who dreaded competitors learning of his future plans, he once insisted that the Service Department keep an ear out for anyone

discussing his soon-to-be-released V8 engine. The Service Department people went about their task with such a heavy hand that soon the entire company was abuzz with rumors and speculation about Henry's latest invention. Then, one day, Alfred Sloan and another General Motors executive came to the plant to visit Ford. After a brief conversation, and to the utter confusion of all his employees, Henry led the GM officials to his secret workshop and revealed virtually every detail of the power-plant.

But foibles was Henry's most notorious characteristic. He adored soybeans and distributed loaves of bread containing 28 percent soybean meal to friends and reporters. He spent in excess of \$1.2 million on a soybean patch behind a Ford laboratory and during the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition he served an all-soybean dinner including sixteen courses with tomato juice seasoned with soybean sauce, soybean croquettes, soybean butter, soybean-crust apple pie and puree of soybean. Eventually he even produced paint for Ford cars containing 35 percent soybean oil. But Henry Ford was not the '20s version of a health food fanatic. He had a penchant for the

more fast-food variety meal. His wife Clara frequently worried about his health because the automaker would refuse to eat dinner. In reality it wasn't his health that kept Ford from eating, it was the mounding plate of hash he devoured in the galley of the family yacht just a short time before joining his wife.

His favorite cartoon strip was "Jiggs" which should give a hint of the lighter side of Henry Ford. Here was a man who whittled toys out of cedar shingles and entertained children and adults by playing jigs on a Stradivarius, dancing while he fiddled.

Once over dinner he noted that his guest was wearing an old watch. Mr. Ford asked the porter for a side-table, produced a miniature tool set (part of his daily attire) and dismantled the heirloom to the anguish of the owner. Half an hour later, much to his guest's relief, Henry nodded his approval of the inner workings and reassembled the watch.

"Haven't seen one like it since I was a boy. Nice watch."

The dismantling process was a common game with Henry Ford and usually the watches ran better after his inspection.

Except once.

Ford took a reporter's watch apart and the journalist accused the motor-man of destroying the timepiece. "Ruined it," he would tell the auto magnate every time they met. Ford would squint at the reporter and ask for the timepiece so it could be repaired. The reporter responded that he had thrown it away. "No good to anybody broken." Ford was pleased when the journalist was transferred to the West Coast.

Ford loved the notion of mass production and wanted to make watches that would sell for 40 cents each. (He bought an entire London jewelry store, had it shipped to the U.S. and reassembled, then proceeded to examine the internal workings of the store's entire timepiece inventory.) He similarly wanted to mass produce violins that would have the quality of old world Italian craftsmen. But time wouldn't allow either of these pursuits. He was too busy upping production of Ford cars to the unbelievable rate of 1.6 per minute.

Mass production resulted in incredible wealth for Ford. In his office was what he and Harry Bennett called The Kitty which, at one point, reportedly contained \$4 million—a small stash in terms of the company's and Henry's personal wealth, and used much the way an office petty cash drawer is dipped



**LOOKING FOR THAT
CUSTOM FIT IN THIS
OFF THE RACK WORLD?
TRY LOBECK'S FIRST!**

(513) 323-1932 NEW LOBECK'S CATALOG \$3.00

OUTSIDE MIRRORS A Lobeck's exclusive! Bracket and head machined from solid aluminum, brushed finish, right or left, ball milled or plain. **\$67.00 ea.**

INSIDE MIRROR This Pete & Jake's mirror comes brushed finished and includes adhesive and instructions. **\$46.00 ea.**

BUY AS A SET (R&L Outside and Inside) FOR \$165.00



SMOOTHIE '32 RUNNING BOARDS
Used by Boyd Coddington. Same brackets and gauge metal as stock. Fender bead carries thru at bottom only. **\$150.00 pr.**

Get the Lobeck's logo (5 color) on Jerseys, \$10.00, or T-shirts, \$7.00. Please add \$1.75 postage per order, and Ohio residents don't forget 5 1/2% sales tax on all orders.

**HOT ROD
LICENSE
PLATE
LIGHT**
\$17.00 ea.



2111 W. Main St. • Springfield, Ohio • 45504

into for a buck or two. But Ford didn't look like a man of wealth.

He and a crew of overall-clad engineers were testing a new model in the upper reaches of Michigan. They ran across a farmer with a problem-stricken Ford and Henry immediately went to work on fixing the car. The farmer asked what kind of car he drove and Henry responded, "A Ford." The car repaired, the owner tried to pay Henry \$1.50 which the automaker refused.

"I got all the money I need," he told the farmer.

"You can't have or you wouldn't be driving a Ford," retorted the farmer.

Ford pocketed the money to avoid an argument and later sent the man a check along with a note reading: "I do have all the money I want and I do drive a Ford and what's the matter with that?"

The Fords frequently had parties at their estate, but Henry often was bored by some of his male guests. In a fit of mischief, he would take the man's arm and begin dancing with him. "This is one of my favorite waltzes," he would say, listening to the music and holding the offending guest firmly. The embarrassed man would forever stay clear of Henry.

Ford loved publicity and recognized what would make a good story. Aboard a train a cub reporter who didn't recognize the famous man asked, "Have you seen Henry Ford?"

With a frown, Henry stated, "Saw him going into the cab of the engine."

After all, a story that said "Henry Ford was engineering a train" made far better copy than the fact he was sitting in a private car.

Henry Ford adored Clara and while little is known about their relationship, what does surface shows a great deal of tenderness and affection. He bought an inn in suburban Detroit simply because it was a place she liked. The establishment (Bottsford Inn) still stands and is used as a hotel to this day. Henry's picture hangs on the wall.

Henry hated darned socks, but Clara was, to say the least, a thrifty woman. She would patch the holes in the offending garment and return it to his drawer. Ford, not wishing to upset his wife, would wear the sewn socks until Bennett drove him away from the estate. When they passed a particular store, Henry would dash in and buy a new pair, putting them on in the car and tossing the darned ones out the window. Clara once asked Henry to drop by a local supply store and pick up a few pie tins. Henry forgot. She ad-

monished him for his forgetfulness and reordered the tins (even though the family had more than enough servants to spring one for such a minor shopping errand, and a billionaire probably had other things to do with his time). After weeks of forgetting, Henry finally returned home one evening and stated, "Got your tins." Pleased with himself, he pointed out the window. He had purchased the dealer's entire stock which filled the "T" completely. The frugal Mrs. Ford merely scowled at the extravagance.

Henry loved the Model T, but was a driving man and always had been. One of his favorite automobiles was Bennett's Franklin which he drove rapidly and often. The "T" was an everyman automobile and Henry was proud of it, but would give them away or use them for barter—some suggest to prove how an automobile could be inexpensive and not just the toy of the rich.

He met an old farmer named Jep Bisbee who made excellent violins and gave the man \$100 and a new car for one. Ford and two close friends were on an outing and stopped to see the farmer. Bisbee had left the Ford outside in the foul weather because he couldn't drive it

over a barn brace that stood about a foot off the ground. The three men pondered Bisbee's dilemma for a minute and decided to correct the problem. Ford and his two companions — Harvey Firestone (rubber magate) and Thomas Edison—built a ramp over the offending brace so Bisbee could motor the flivver into the barn. Based on their hourly income, the simple, half-hour project had a value in excess of \$10,000!

Henry hated to see a Ford in disrepair and once spotted a stalled Model T owned by a college student who had written various slogans on the side of the jalopy. The young owner was frantically trying to start the car. With a chuckle, Ford yelled from the window, "Get a horse." The youth looked up and put a finger to his nose in response. Henry, regretting the impulse catcall, stopped and wrote the license number of the car in a small book. The youthful owner of the old Model T received a letter from the college town's Ford agency stating that the dealer would be happy to take his car in even trade for a brand new model.

Now is that the action of a nasty Capitalist who for decades has been accused of being heartless? [RA]

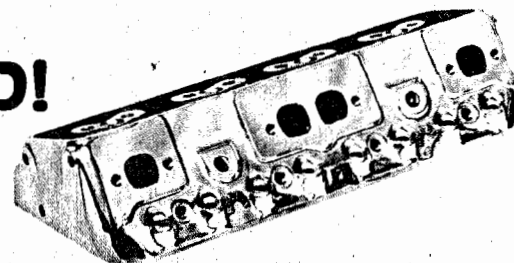
BRODIX

CYLINDER HEADS

"STREET is NEAT"

BRODIX is GO and now SHOW!

Now a
POLISHED!
Aluminum
Street Head



We are No. 1 on the TRACK. Now No. 1 on the STREET.

Small Block Chevy / NEW Big Block Chevy / V-6 Chevy / Chrysler Hemi

America's Most Beautiful Roadster of 1983
shows and goes with BRODIX!

BRODIX, INCORPORATED

P.O. Box D / Mena, Arkansas 71953 / (501) 394-1075

Call or Write For Your Nearest BRODIX Dealer. Send \$2.00 for brochure and \$5.95 for T-shirt.

MODEL T FORD

It took Henry Ford and several assistants five years of Ford Motor Company time to develop the components that led to the Model "T"

On October 1, 1908, the Model "T" was ready for full production. A simple, light-weight automobile, built with a vanadium steel chassis for rugged durability, and parts that could be cheaply mass-produced, this was the car Henry Ford had been searching for in his quest "to build a motor car for the multitude". The car featured a 20 hp 4-cylinder engine, planetary transmission operated by floor pedals, flywheel magneto, 30 inch wheels for high road clearance, and a brass radiator. Time was a crucial factor in what would become the greatest American automobile success story of all time.

Over nineteen years, Henry Ford would do little to change the basic Model "T", turning out more than 15 million cars. The price for the 1908 Touring was \$ 850 by 1917 it was \$ 360. The 1927 Tudor Sedan sold for \$ 495. Henry Ford sacrificed profits to sell volume displeasing his stock holders, he was able to buy them out by 1921. The volume on the "T" still made Henry Ford one of the worlds wealthiest and most famous men in the world.

When the Model "T" was produced in 1908, no more rugged car could be purchased. Because of this durability and quality more than 300,000 of these T's are still being driven and resurrected.

By 1922 over half of all the automobiles being driven the United States were Model T's. The last Model "T" was built on May 26, 1927.

So here we are 83 years since the first and 64 years since the last "T" was made. The Model "T" Ford Club of America is having their 1st National tour in Kansas. On the 21st of June we have 250 Model T's visiting Pawnee Rock, Kansas from about half of the states, Canada, and Australia, still proving how good the Model "T" Ford was and IS !!!