

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1992

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SUBURBAN BUSINESS LEADERS

Charles W. Davis has been promoted to vice president, sales and marketing for Allied-Signal's Bendix Automotive; and Richard F. Rieli has been promoted to vice president of quality and productivity and Gary D. Williams has been appointed director of purchasing for Allied-Signal's Bendix Automotive Systems, North America.



Rieli

Lawrence Weiner, C.P.A. of Birmingham has been appointed vice president of finance at Holy Cross Hospital in Detroit where he will be responsible for all hospital financial services.



Williams

Pat Geyer of Rochester has been awarded the Ben Hagan Company's master salesman of the year award for 1991, it was announced by company vice president of sales Ray Coleman.



Geyer

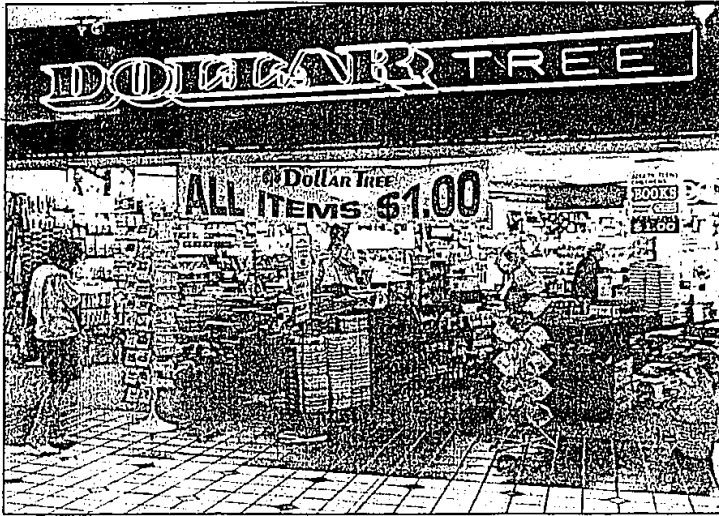
Walter Aspatore, former president of Cross & Trecker Corporation in Bloomfield Hills, has been appointed president of Onset BIDCO, a local investment company.



Davis

Please see inside for more suburban business leaders

To submit materials to this column please send a brief biographical summary along with a black and white photo, if possible, to: Business Editor, 36251 Schoncraft, Livonia 48150.



JIM JAGRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Buck paradise: Price point variety stores like Dollar Tree, where everything sells for \$1, must do high volume business to turn a profit, said Frederick Marx, a Farmington Hills marketing consultant.

Price point shoppers seek bargains

There's no such thing as sticker shock at stores where all merchandise is the same, low price. Several stores that sell everything under the roof for less than \$1, \$1.00, or \$1.30 have popped up in the area. One analyst, however, doubts they'll all survive.

How's this for a shopping adventure — everything in the store priced at \$1 or less. Dollar Tree, Dollar Bills and Every-

thing's a \$1 have proliferated in Eclectic and Eccentric communities in recent years. The variety stores offer all kinds of knick-knacks, all for a buck.

You don't want to fuss with comparing clothing and accessories in a wide range of prices? Then go to a store like 13 Below, where the maximum price on any woman's fashion in the place is \$13, or Dot's, a competitor where the top price is \$10. Those stores, too, have popped up in malls and shopping centers throughout

the metro area.

The concept is called price point shopping.

"It makes it very simple for the customer," said Rob Laski, general manager for the 13 Below chain. "We find people are absolutely thrilled they can

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Few waves seen in breakup of GMF Robotics marriage

BY GERALD FRAWLEY
STAFF WRITER

General Motors Corp. is getting out of the robotics business, and the industry is buzzing with speculation about whether this is good news, bad news or mere scuttlebutt around the water cooler.

General Motors announced last week that it was selling its half interest in the Auburn Hills-based robotics manufacturer to its venture partner Fanuc Limited, which already owns the other 50 percent.

Don Vincent, executive vice president of the Robotics Industries Association in Ann Arbor, said the news prompted calls from people throughout the industry.

"On the surface, it appears to not be a big deal," he said. General Motors is selling its shares to raise money and refocus its energies on its main business.

Vincent said robotics sales were down slightly last year to about \$470 million in 1991 from \$485 million in 1990, but overall capital spending by manufacturers was down.

Dave Conner, marketing manager at Bosch Automation Products in Plymouth Township, said although the news of the sale was a surprise, the actual sale isn't likely to have much of an impact on the automation industry.

Bosch Automation Products recently entered a partnership making GMFanuc an authorized integrator of its products.

There is no reason to expect a change in the relationship following GM's recent decision to divest itself of its interests in GMFanuc, he said.

As for changes in the way GMFanuc does business, Conner said despite the association, GMFanuc did and will continue to have customers other than General Motors.

"We're no less optimistic about our relationship this week than we were last week," he said. "We see the (divestiture) pretty much as a paper change."

Conner speculated that GMFanuc could become an even stronger force in the market, if for no other reason than its gaining its own identity from General Motors.

"Partial autonomy can only benefit the company."

When two companies join in a partnership, like Bosch and GMFanuc, they do so primarily for a business reason.

"Relationships are driven by the end user more than the two companies saying if we get into bed together we can really do something."

In the case of General Motors and Fanuc Limited, they got together for a purpose that is no longer needed and so the two are going their separate ways, Conner said.

"Does it even make sense for an auto maker to be in the robotics industry anyway?"

Thomas Getts, director of sales and marketing at the Farmington Hills-based laser processing motion systems developer Robomatic International U.S.A., said the sale could open up opportunities for other robotics manufacturers.

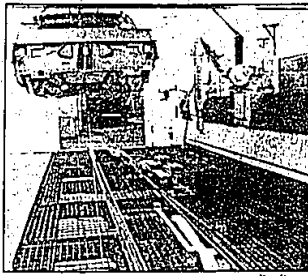


PHOTO COURTESY

Little difference: Players in the robotics industry see few changes occurring because of General Motor's pullout from GMFanuc.

Ties between General Motors and Fanuc Limited often precluded other robotics firms from doing business with GM, he said — and sometimes to GM's disadvantage.

Under the old relationship, it wouldn't be unusual for GM to spend millions of dollars on research and development for a particular application so GMFanuc could manufacture it for the automotive giant.

"That isn't very efficient when independent firms already had the products General Motors needed and could provide them without the wait or cost, he said.

If another robotics manufacturer were to bid on a project for the car company, GMFanuc usually won. "GMFanuc always received the nod in a tie," he said.

In the short term, that could change with the sale. The sale may also have an impact on the new entity.


"GM has put substantial amounts of dollar in R&D. Will Fanuc Limited do the same? I don't know but my guess is they will probably be more conservative."

A less well-funded Fanuc Limited may be a less formidable competitor, he said.

On the other hand, he wondered whether a Fanuc Limited unincumbered by the General Motors name will become a greater competitor for other automotive manufacturers like Ford and Chrysler.

Kazumasa Arima, president of VSI Automation in Auburn Hills, said his company probably won't notice any changes because he has never directly competed with GMFanuc.

"Our products are quite different from GMFanuc," he said. While that larger company devoted its energies to developing large manufacturing machines, VSI Automation clients are mainly automotive small parts suppliers.



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