

# Book profiles Chrysler Corp.'s ups and downs

## RIDING THE ROLLER COASTER: A HISTORY OF THE CHRYSLER CORPORATION

By Charles K. Hyde, Wayne State University Press

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

The automobile industry has always run in cycles. Some years sales go through the roof, everybody seems to be buying a bright new car. Other years, manufacturers have to offer incentives to practically give the cars away just to get people into a dealership.

But as the title of Charles Hyde's informative company history suggests, no company has had quite the swoop of ups and downs that the Chrysler Corp. has experienced since its founding in 1925.

For brief periods of time, the company overtook Ford to be the No. 2 automaker, but for most of its history it has been No. 3 in the Big 3. Sometimes its smaller size, leaner management structure and domestic focus have helped Chrysler be profitable while GM and Ford struggled. But, usually, Chrysler has been just one step ahead of joining the graveyard of dead auto companies.

Hyde, a history professor at Wayne State, follows the company's fortunes from its vigorous entrepreneurial begin-

### BOOK REVIEW

nings to its "merger" with Daimler-Benz.

The story begins with Walter P. Chrysler, who combined all the elements that make a great auto industry leader. He was a gifted mechanic and engineer, a superb and focused manager and a dynamic salesman. He began as a railroad man but the purchase of a 1908 Locomobile (which he immediately disassembled and reassembled) turned Chrysler into a car man.

He got his start with Buick but it was clear from the beginning that Chrysler was destined to bring his own car to the public. Over a period of time in the late teens and early '20s, he brought together Chalmers, Maxwell and other companies to form Chrysler. But the big coup was the acquisition of Dodge in 1928. In that year, Chrysler solidified its well known marques—Dodge, Plymouth and DeSoto.

Hyde provides profiles of the major figures, in addition to Chrysler, including the dedicated and mutually devoted Dodge Brothers, and a trio of innovative engineers, Owen Skelton, Fred Zeder and Carl Breen, who created the company's reputation as an engineering leader.

Much of Hyde's book is a dry

account of the company's changes over the years, touching on engineering, labor, defense work and financial matters. But for Motown residents, this is a definitive history with a sharp point of view. Hyde doesn't mince words in his direct criticism of many of the company's leaders who followed Chrysler.

Even when the company failed under the founder's leadership, as with the introduction of the Airflow, it was a failure of stylistic and engineering daring. Later failures would be more from a lack of ethics, creativity or marketing savvy.

Troubles begin with K.T. Keller, one of Chrysler's loyal lieutenants who held too firmly to the past. He was replaced by the flamboyant Tex Colbert, whose reign ended in controversy. He did, however, lead in the creation of an aerodynamic car with fins that set a trend in the '50s.

Hyde divides the Lynn Townsend era into two periods, the prosperous '60s and the troubled '70s.

In the 1960s engineering innovations from the slant-six to the turbine car gave Chrysler a modern image. But costs began to rise and sales began to fall.

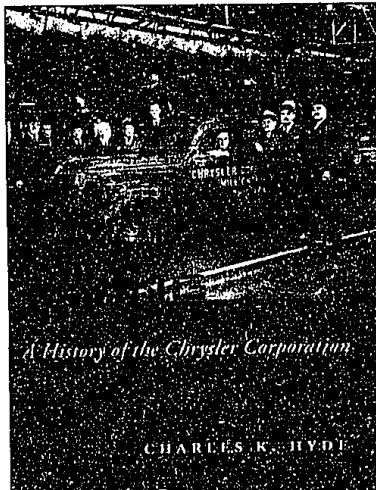
This is the point where Chrysler turned to Lee Iacocca, who became as synonymous with the company as Walter P.

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To paraphrase the company's ads, if you could find a more dynamic corporate leader buy him.

Government loans, sharp cost cutting and interesting new products (including the age defining mini-van) saved the corporation.

In 1987, Chrysler purchased American Motors and made the Jeep the leader in an SUV



revolution. Hyde notes Iacocca's failings and his sometimes overreaching ego while praising his general style.

Hyde brings the story right up to date with the merger with Daimler-Benz that was

more a take over by the German company.

This is solid information presented with intelligence.

hugallagher@e.hometown.net  
(734)953-2149

## WHERE CAN I FIND?

Through reader feedback, this interactive feature is dedicated to helping readers locate retail merchandise that's difficult to find. If where a product is sold or service is available, call (248) 901-2555 and leave a message. Please be patient; we receive an overwhelming number of phone calls. If you don't see information about your request, we couldn't find it. Requests are published twice.

### WHAT WE FOUND

The following stores repair sterling silver jewelry: Dora's 33200 Seven Mile Road, Livonia (248) 476-0055; House of Renew 231 E. Merrill, Birmingham (248) 642-0363.

- Simply soda can be purchased at Costco.
- A large lapel pin can be purchased at McDevitt's Hallmark 7 Mile Road at Farmington Road.
- For a AA width shoe for a young adult try Zella's on the Southeast corner of Middlebelt and Plymouth roads.

### FIND AND SEARCH

- A reader had a Singer sewing machine and supplies to donate to a charity or organization.

### WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

- A store that sells Bazo's lemon meringue pie and Sander's round Bump Cake for Mrs. B.
- A restaurant that has beef ribs on

the menu for Jim.

- A company who does design work to change the outside of a house for Kevin.
- A company that can restore an old trunk for Tina of Bloomfield Hills.

- A store that sells Enchanted Apple hand & body cream (formerly sold by Victoria's Secret) for Donna.

- A store that sells no fat Henri's tasteless salad dressing for Jeanne of Bloomfield (Hillier's use to sell it).
- A store that sells a plastic and canvas shoe holder (holds 30 pairs of shoes) the top fits over a door and it has Velcro on the bottom to hold to a door for Cindy of Canton.

- A store that sells one-quart size glass thermos kites for Mary.

- Someone to knit or crochet an outfit for an 8-inch Kewpie doll for Carmen of Livonia.

- Compiled by Sandi Jarackas

## FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The Public is invited to a hearing to discuss the ramifications of a state mandated breakfast program for Michigan Public Schools, and its effect on the Farmington Public School District.

The hearing will be at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32000 Shilawasee, Farmington on Tuesday, May 6, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

Publish: May 4, 2003

## CKWW & THE OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS PRESENTS

### "The Gaylord's Show"

at the Louis E. Schmidt Auditorium  
(Inside Clarenceville High School)  
City Of Livonia

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## CITY OF FARMINGTON BUDGET STUDY SESSION (SUMMARY)

A study session of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, April 28, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 20000 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1978.

PRESENT: Bush, Harrison, Campbell, McShane, Mitchell.

ABSENT: None.

CITY REPRESENTATIVES: Clerk/Treasurer Cantrell, City Manager Pastus.

Council met to review and discuss the proposed 2003-04 fiscal year budget.

JAMES K. MITCHELL, Mayor

PATSY K. CANTRELL, City Clerk/Treasurer

Publish: May 4, 2003

## CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING APRIL 28, 2003

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Bates at 7:30 p.m.

Council Present: Bates, Barnett, Bricker, Ellis, Grant, McRae and Oliverio.

Council Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Dornan, Assistant City Manager Whitney, Assistant to the City Manager Arbenaka, Directors Biasoli, Boyer, Countegian and Lasley, City Attorney Joppich and Planning Consultant Coates.

### CITY COUNCIL TOOK THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

#### APPROVED:

- Resolution in support of "Living Wall" concept along I-275 north of Eight Mile Road.
- Farmington Ridge Cluster Site Plan located at the northeast corner of Eight Mile and I-275.
- Date of May 19, 2003 for Cost Hearing for the Eleven Mile Road Watermain S&D Project.
- Intergovernmental Agreement for the surfacing of Base Line Road from Haggerty to east of I-275 and Haggerty Road from the Livonia city limit to Base Line Road.
- Request for employment under Section 10.01A of the City Charter.
- Special Event Permit for the Angela Hospice 10-K on Sunday, August 17, 2003.
- City Council Regular and Study Session meeting minutes of April 14, 2003.

### AWARDED BIDS/CONTRACTS FOR:

- Road Improvement Project for Eleven Mile/Halsted Road to Dan's Excavating in the amount of \$1,022,893.00.
- O'Neill Drain Project to Bidigare Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$14,921.
- DPW pick-up truck plows to Cannon Equipment, Inc. in the amount of \$14,945.
- Guardrail Replacement Program to Future Fence in the amount of \$12,849.

NANCY BATES, Mayor  
KATHRYN A. DORNAN

Publish: May 4, 2003

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