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GM's Roger Smith: New jobs are few at biggest of Big 3

By Suzie Rollins Glinger
staff writer

An engineering degree isn't the only tool college graduates need to pry open the employment door at General Motors.

"Sure, we're looking for people with more advanced degrees in technical training and personnel, but we need people who can write. We still need Lit school people with a social consciousness," GM Chairman Roger Smith said in an interview with the Observer & Eccentric recently.

Smith said GM is recruiting about 1,000 college students a year from "key" institutions.

"Sixty-five percent are people with degrees in high-tech areas and about 10 percent have advanced degrees," he said, adding that in "normal" business times, between 3,000 and 4,000 persons are recruited annually.

Smith, 57, who joined GM in 1949, earned bachelor's and master's of business administration degrees at the University of Michigan. He said he likes to use young executives as recruiters.

"They can really relate to the students much better," he added.

GM's 1982 annual report reveals that there are 657,000 employees at the automaker, compared to 741,000 in 1981. In white collar jobs, 12 percent are minorities, and 17 percent are women. Of the corporation's board members two are women.

"We're finding a lot more women available with the skills needed for the jobs today," he said. Hourly workers earn an average of \$21.50 per hour including benefits.

BLUE COLLAR jobs will be much harder to get than white collar ones, Smith said.

"We've already got 100,000-plus people on layoff that have rehired rights before we can bring any others on. We retire about 20,000 blue collar employees a year, but it will be a long time

before we start hiring new people," he added.

Quality of Work Life programs are gaining popularity and acceptance at many GM plants, including the Livonia Cadillac division, where it recently debuted.

In the program, line workers are required to keep quality control status and meet with managers to implement improvements. In addition, if a line worker learns to operate various machines, his hourly salary rate is increased simultaneously with his knowledge.

When the program got under way, management applications were screened by union leaders to make sure the applicant could work easily with assembly line workers.

"There is no executive dining room there, and there is no one set way of doing things," Smith said.

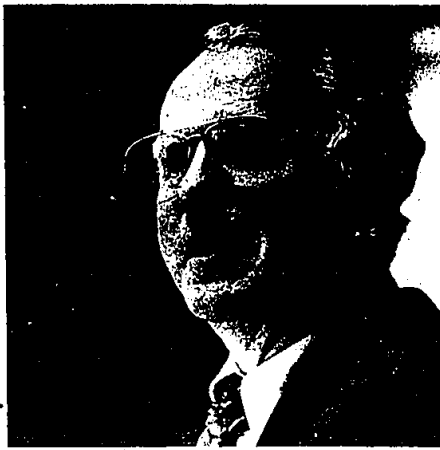
"We've had some problems because we got the people ready, and the management wasn't. But we sent them all to Black Lake to discuss the situation, and it seems to be working. Some say they feel like a part of a team, and there's a real spirit about the jobs," he added.

Prior to the program, GM didn't have a system of accepting employee input about its products, and he said the company is learning quite a lot from the people who put the cars together.

Smith, of Bloomfield Hills, said GM is doing all it can to stay in Michigan, but if workers' compensation and unemployment benefit payments don't decrease, the automaker will be unable to keep pace with the competition.

"If our competitors are going to Indiana where they pay \$340 per man for unemployment benefits, and we pay \$1,100 per man, then we have to worry about that," Smith said.

"We're trying to stay in Michigan, but we can't stay where we can't compete," he added.



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INSIDE ANGLES

THE FARMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL Symphony Band was honored with an invitation to perform on the steps of the State Capitol Building in Lansing May 13. The concert was part of the "Month of May Music Program" sponsored by the Bureau of Facilities Property Management Division, in cooperation with the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association. Select musical ensembles from throughout the state will perform at various sites during the month. This is the second consecutive year that a band from the Farmington Public Schools has been selected to perform. Last year the Harrison High School band was chosen. While in Lansing the students also toured the Michigan Supreme Court, Michigan Historical Museum and the Michigan State University campus.

FARMINGTON AREA JAYCEES are looking for donations for their annual spring rummage sale, set this year for Saturday. Those with something to donate are asked to call the Jaycee Hot Line, 477-JCCS, and arrangements will be made to drop off or pick up the items. All proceeds will go toward the Jaycees' 1983-84 calendar of projects to benefit the community.

THE NARDINEERS hosted Mort Crim, who came to tell "How to Listen to the News without Being Depressed." The TV newsmen made several stops to seniors' groups during Senior Citizen Month. The Nardineers meet in Nardin Park United Methodist Church.

WHY NOT COMBINE spring house cleaning with a worthy cause and donate those old, dust-collecting books to the American Association of University Women? The book collection barrels are back at four local supermarkets in the Farmington area: Chatham at 11 Mile and Middlebelt, A&P in downtown Farmington, Kroger at Grand River and I-16, and The Great Scott at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake roads. If getting books to one of these points is a problem, a home pickup can be arranged by calling 478-4735 or 553-5165. Donate now and watch for AAUW's annual book sale at Livonia Mall Thursday through Sunday, Sept. 15-18. Traditionally the sale has been a huge success with proceeds going to scholarships, local community projects and to support national fellowships.

THE FIVE SENSES Garden that members of North Farmington Garden Club have been planning for the last few years was dedicated last week when garden clubbers and Farmington YMCA officials gathered on the Y grounds where the five walkways have been laid. Club committees will be working all spring in the planting to please the senses beyond the usual sight and smell. The garden is in the far southwest corner of the Y's ground on Farmington Road and 12 Mile.

REGISTRATION for the Farmington Soccer Club will be 7-9 p.m. Monday, June 13, and 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, June 15, in Farmington High School's cafeteria. Boys and girls 8 to 17 years of age are eligible. For more information, call Kathy Waker, 478-6258.

OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE Daniel T. Murphy has proclaimed Saturday as "Life, Be In It" Superday for Oakland County. Superday is part of a program being celebrated throughout the county. It will be marked with special events and activities in all of the Oakland County parks on Saturday and throughout the weekend. Among the festivities will be a balloon send-off at Addison Oaks, a water ski show at Groveland Oaks, a Hawaiian luau for the mentally impaired, golf tournaments and more. There will be prizes awarded, water slide tickets for twilight Wave Pool swimmers on Saturday, complimentary mugs for 200 BMX racers at Waterford Oaks, and free bumper stickers for vehicles entering the parks. "Life, Be In It" is a five-year campaign sponsored by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) to encourage citizens to become more involved in life through recreation and leisure activity. For more information, call 858-0906.

STUDENTS AND STAFF of North Farmington High School join together in recognizing two faculty members who will be retiring at the close of the year. Counselor Stella Koski and science instructor Charles Shandor will be saying goodbye to North when school closes in June.

KUDOS to Michael Thibodeau, son of Francis and Judith Thibodeau of Farmington Hills, who was named to Alma College dean's list for outstanding academic performance during the 1982-83 winter term. Michael is a 1982 graduate of University of Detroit High School. He is majoring in biology.

MARGARET A. DONNELLY was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma, the only national scholastic society in business administration. "Election to Beta Gamma is the highest scholastic honor that a student in business administration can attain," said Dr. Joseph J. Belonax, assistant professor of marketing and secretary-treasurer of Beta Gamma Sigma's chapter at Western Michigan University.

TODD STONEMAN, son of Ronald and Gail Stoneman of Farmington Hills, has won first place in Northland Center's Mother's Day Essay contest. Todd, a third grader at Kenbrook Elementary School in Farmington Hills, won a \$100 gift certificate for his winning essay on "What My Mom's Work Means to Me." Todd's essay was selected from hundreds in his age division of 8-9-year-olds. Congratulations, Todd.

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