

Area Ford plant 'factory of future'

TV auction
tops budget

The Channel 56 Auction has raised a projected total of more than \$335,000, topping last year's total by \$15,000. The auction represents 11 percent of the public television station's operating budget.

Merchants contributed more than 9,000 items during the 17th annual fund-raiser. The nine-day sellathon for Detroit's public television station aired April 12-20.

Ford Motor Co. is calling its Livonia transmission plant a "factory of the future."

"Many of the 'factory-of-the-future' innovations you've heard our competition talk about already are functioning here at Livonia Transmission and down at the Lima (Ohio) Engine Plant," said Max L. Jurosek, general manager for powertrain operations.

Jurosek took national news media on a tour of the two plants that will make the drivetrain for the company's 1986 front-wheel-drive Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable. The Livonia plant will make the automatic four-speed overdrive transaxle; Lima, the 3.0-liter V-6 engine.

"The roots of the future are in these plants," Jurosek said, describing Livonia and Lima as "closer to the paperless factory" than any other North American transmission or engine plant.

• The world's largest known collection of high-power laser welding systems, resulting in greater precision and savings in material, labor and time.

• Diamond and solid carbide tooling, which produce better quality finishes in half the time and lasts 20 to 40 times longer than conventional steel tools.

• Machines which check the quality level of the parts being produced, alerting machine operators to developing trends. Other machines analyze their colleagues like a doctor with an EKG, reading each machine's "vibration signature."

• Automated guided vehicles (AGVs) for delivery and transfer of all major components.

"This technology not only serves today, it rehearses and provides the viable choices for tomorrow," he noted.

THE FORD executive said, "We're confident that these two manufacturing plants take Ford Motor Co. into a leadership position in North America in efficiency, technology and quality. And we're very close to achieving world leadership in some areas."

The company invested \$1.2 billion in new tools, facilities and launch costs to build Taurus and Sable's all-new drivetrain, with Livonia and Lima receiving nearly \$700 million of that.

"The division and plant objectives established for the Taurus and Sable drivetrain programs were by far the most ambitious ever undertaken in a new transmission or engine program."

Lewis C. Veraldi, vice president for luxury and large car engineering and planning, said the result "represents the product of virtually five years of painstakingly hard work and dedication on the part

of everyone connected with the program."

He described the Taurus and Sable powertrain as highly reliable, extremely durable and fuel-efficient (estimated at 20 mpg city and almost 30 highway).

Employees' roles have changed, Jurosek observed. "It used to be that management planned the machinery, layout and work stations, made design changes, worked with suppliers, planned the training, and so on."

"The AXOD and V-6 projects, however, began with hourly employees and salaried employees working side by side as teams in making or having important input into these decisions."

At Livonia, a direct supplier link through a telephone modem gives instantaneous vendor feedback on transmission case quality.

AMONG INNOVATIONS at the Livonia Transmission Plant:

• A state-of-the-art "local area network," one of the largest and most complex in the worldwide auto industry, linking 650 computer-controlled machines. By fall, the network will connect all electronic control devices that help run the machines on the plant floor, as well as personal computers and data processing machines. The resulting network, Jurosek noted, will enable all the plant's computers to "talk" to each other, greatly improving information exchange.



Ron Darga, operator in Ford's Livonia Transmission plant, checks a cutaway sketch of a transaxle case casting against a number on a computer terminal (background) to locate the source of an internal leak. Ford bills the plant as a "factory of the future."

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