

Government and corporate insiders once were outsiders



AUTO TALK
DAN MCCOSH

Now that Ross Perot is within putting distance of the White House lawn, it's predictable that we will be getting some re-examination of his short stint as an auto executive.

There are, in fact, some similarities to his brief tilting with the windmills at GM and his jousting with Messrs. Bush and Clinton. In both cases he

managed to articulate the obvious that big institutions tend to be bloated bureaucracies, run by clubby management and often ignoring the purpose they were set up to serve.

It also wouldn't surprise me if Perot fell from grace in national politics as abruptly as he left Detroit, although I suspect he will leave Washington a lot poorer. Regardless, Perot's Detroit days are part of the legend, almost as big a part as getting those prisoners out of an Iranian prison.

Perot, already has managed to panic Solidarity House, another bloated bureaucracy that is worried

that it spent its member's political push fund on an unelectable candidate.

Perot also has managed to panic Big Business for more or less the same reason. It brings to mind the time he threatened to make GM executives go out and buy their own car at a dealer and try to get it fixed under warranty.

You have to love a guy like that.

This, of course is the view of Perot as the indefatigable iconoclast, the kind of take-charge guy who is going to straighten everything out overnight.

Unfortunately, there also was the

Perot who led his EDS shock troops into battle to fix up the GM computer system and managed to cut off the phones at Buick for two straight days.

There also was the Perot audited for allegedly setting up an elaborate scheme of transfer payments that funneled cash from GM stockholders to EDS stockholders, the largest of which was Perot himself.

This may be what Perot means when he says he likes to try something, then if it doesn't work, try something else.

Still, Perot gets some surprising support from those closely tied to

the auto business. A UAW member makes the comment after being questioned about whether Perot would be good for unions. "He would be good for business, and that means jobs."

At this point, formal endorsements from higher-ups in the auto business are non-existent. GM has troubles of its own, and has brought in yet another guy to help straighten out that bureaucracy. Ford types appear to be laying low, and Chairman Lee has been through this before.

There are, in fact, many similarities between running GM or any big auto company and running the

United States, although the last guy who said that publicly did not get elected president, at least of the United States.

Of course, one of the greatest similarities is that to run an auto company, first you have to get the job, and by the time that happens, something changes in your personality.

What once seemed like a mindless bureaucracy becomes a circle of close friends, and even the company car begins to look good.

Dan McCosh is automotive editor of *Popular Science* magazine.

DATEBOOK

CASH SEMINAR

"What to Do with Cash in 1992" presented free from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, at Embassy Suites Hotel (I-275 and Seven Mile). Reservations: Patti Thompson, 336-4500. Sponsor: Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc.

OAKLAND ECONOMIC FORUM

Oakland Economic Forum meet at noon Thursday, June 25, in the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham. Non-member fee: \$20. Information: 644-1229. Sponsor: Great Detroit Chamber of Commerce.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

"10 Barriers to Personal Wealth" runs 7-9:30 p.m. Monday, June 29 at the Plaza Hotel in Southfield. Fee: \$40 at the door. Information: 362-2424. Sponsor: Yes... A Positive Network.

INTERMEDIATE WORDPERFECT

"WordPerfect Intermediate on the IBM PC" runs 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays for two weeks beginning July 21 at Cranbrook Schools in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$88. Information: 645-3635.

MEET WORDPERFECT

"Introduction to WordPerfect" runs 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays for two weeks beginning July 7 at Cranbrook Schools in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$88. Information: 645-3635.

ENGINEERING REVIEW

Part I of Professional Engineer Licensing Review Courses offered beginning Monday, Aug. 17, in Detroit and Troy. Information: 1-800-877-3926. Sponsor: Engineering Society of Detroit.

Unemployment compensation could stop with little warning

The federal program that provides additional jobless benefits to unemployed workers across Michigan and the country is beginning to phase out as the program approaches its final day for accepting new claims.

"Workers who are currently receiving or who file for Emergency Unemployment Compensation by July 2 can draw all of their benefits,

even after the program ends, as long as they meet the program's eligibility requirements," said F. Robert Edwards, director of the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

Edwards reported that MESCC has paid out approximately \$412 million in federal EUC since the program began last November. More than 115,000 unemployed Michigan workers are receiving or

have received these federal benefits.

The emergency unemployment compensation program began on Nov. 17, 1991, and originally allowed up to 20 weeks of benefits to Michigan workers who had exhausted their state unemployment insurance. In February, the program was changed to allow for an additional 13 weeks of benefits, increasing the maximum entitlement to 33 weeks.

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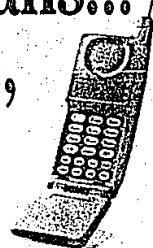
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