

Closings signal loss of technical ability

Retail from page 1C

AUTO TALK



DAN MCCOSH

Once again, the impact of our manufacturing base has Michigan, the Detroit area, and its various political subdivisions as a mill in the making again, this time affecting even such unlikely posts as Livonia's industrial corridor, as GM announces it will shutter the Fisher Guide plant there at the cost of 2,000 jobs.

GM's last dismal announcement is that it will add an additional four Michigan plants to its hit list, with a total of 10,000 jobs down the drain. That this is damaging to the extreme to those folks directly is self-evident. At best, they face a premature and underfunded early retirement. At worst

the shot at a relatively high-paying industrial job is pretty much out the window.

In one form or another, this has been going on for two decades now, and I still marvel at the predictable hand wringing that goes on, and then goes away. Some of it is kind of silly, like when Highland Park officials talk about "losing" 6,000 jobs. Obviously, most of the jobs at Chrysler's Highland Park headquarters were held by suburbanites, anyway; they only moved a couple of miles away, and jobs were added, not lost.

What Highland Park is losing is a tax base, not jobs. At least Livonia Mayor Robert Bennett made that distinction when he said that most of the Fisher Guide employees don't live in Livonia, anyway. Actually Detroit lost most of the Livonia jobs, while Livonia stands to lose tax-

es. But I digress.

It seems to me that jobs, per se, or taxes shouldn't be the primary concern in these plant closings anyway. Maintaining jobs in the face of fixed or declining industrial output is the definition of lost productivity — exactly what led to this mess in the first place. The Japanese have been masters at eliminating jobs related to a specific plant while retaining or increasing employees overall — by virtue of an internal system of management that moves people away from where they no longer are needed to places where they are.

GM's lost sales are one reason why the Fisher Guide plant would have been eliminated anyway. Probably more important is that the processes for making its products are already obsolete. The structural beams, made there in stamped steel, will likely be re-

placed with aluminum extrusions in an Auburn, Ind., plant employing a scant 120 people. Likewise the steel leaf springs are being replaced mainly with composites. Neither plant is owned by GM.

The irony is that GM maintained old technology in old plants so long, rather than developing the new technology and introducing it quickly enough so that it was available to be manned with its existing employees.

The point being that we are not only losing industrial jobs, we are witnessing the disappearance of a critical technological base. I think it is about time we stop characterizing these plants as sources of so-called blue-collar or lunch-bucket unskilled jobs and recognize that they are only the final expression of the most sophisticated kind of technology.

We are not only losing jobs, we are losing the ability to do technical work of the highest order — work that ultimately will be done somewhere, by somebody.

I, for one, would like to see it continue to be done here.

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

studied and played in the back room.

Ronald, who was 32 and worked in insurance, took the night shift. He was making change for customers from his pocket. And the first time they made a sale over \$100, Barbara said, they celebrated with a Chinese dinner.

Two years after they started, the Heslopes took out their first bank loan because they were advised to establish credit. They used the money to buy lighting fixtures.

In time, they learned that china is typically bought in complete sets and there was also an opportunity to sell related merchandise, like crystal and flatware. Today, they specialize in china, crystal, stemware, silverware and collectibles.

Two-thirds of the business is wedding related with an emphasis on shower and bridal registries. Sales people help customers match place settings with silverware and glassware. Brides are encouraged to take home place settings to see what they look like on their own tables.

Each Heslop's has 1,500 patterns of china, crystal stemware and silverware.

There are nine stores in metro-Detroit including Livonia, Lakeside Mall, Southfield in the Tel-Ex Plaza, Oakland Mall, Eastland Mall, Dearborn Heights, Macomb Mall, Meadowbrook Village Mall and Novi Town Center.

Demographic studies have helped Ronald identify 200 potential new locations throughout the United States.

"The big plan would be to go national," Ronald said. "There's six or seven locations in Ohio that we would seriously want to move into."

Currently, the Heslopes employ 250 people. Their sons started working in the family business when they were about 12 years old. John Heslop, 25, is finishing college and is expected to join the company soon. Tom Heslop, 24, has come out of the back room and is supervising staff in the corporate office and distribution center in Novi.

Today, Heslop's has a 70,000-square-foot corporate office and distribution center that holds \$10 million in inventory.

"I worry about tornadoes," Ronald said referring to breakage of the fragile merchandise.

MARKETPLACE

To place your business in the marketplace calendar, mail the information, including the business telephone number and address, to: *Business Editor*, 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Or drop the information off at your local Observer or Eccentric newspaper office.

Bloomfield Hills-based LJT Accounting Services has affiliated with Triple Check Income Tax Service, the second largest income tax preparation company in the nation.

By joining the coast-to-coast network of some 350 offices in 44 states, LJT Accounting Services

now has access to the industry's most sophisticated computer services, to on-going training programs in new or modified tax laws, and to Triple Check's Tax Hotline, staffed by senior tax professionals who provide answers to the toughest and most complex tax questions.

Correll, Krywko, Harrell, Morgante & Button, P.C. (CKHM&B) in Southfield, one of metropolitan Detroit's 10 largest independent certified public accounting firms, has announced it has joined the McGladrey Network, a national affiliation of independent accounting firms serving closely held businesses.

As a member of the McGladrey Network, which includes 30 member firms with 250 partners in 87 offices across the U.S., CKHM&B expands its client service capabilities and geographic reach through direct access to the national resources and specialized expertise of McGladrey & Pullen, one of the nation's largest accounting and consulting firms with 376 partners and 70 plus offices nationwide.

The firm also gains access to international markets through DRM, an international affiliation offering the combined skills of some 8,000 people in 300 offices located in 65 countries worldwide.

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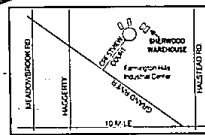
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