

Sellers from NEXT PAGE

"We educate our employees how important dealer service philosophy is to customers."

Lensing, fairly uncommon a decade ago, is the wave of the future, Blair said. "Our goal is 60 percent," he said. "The first two years of ownership are the happiest of ownership. People are shopping payment. We can offer a plan where people can lease with no money down and never be in a negative equity position at trade in."

Ford is devising a program that will enable dealers to lease leased cars to secondary users when they're returned, Dean E. said.

"Leasing also provides our user car department with a nice inventory," Liz said.

"The (leasing) benefit is repeat, more renewal," Blair said. "That's where the customer and dealer benefit. The lease program is a good front-end tool. It makes the service experience more positive. Things are less likely to break and when they do, they're covered under warranty."

In the beginning

Dean L., now 87 and retired in California, had worked for General Motors and as an assistant general sales manager for Ford before buying a dealership.

He said he was more interested in going into business for himself than climbing further up the corporate ladder.

"They asked me, 'What's your program?'" Dean L. said. "I told them, 'I have three young men I want to educate in the industrial

world and see them grow and develop."

Ford promised him the first option on any dealership transfer in the country, Dean L. said. He made his choice in 1948, using \$30,000 of his own money and a pretty good loan from a finance company.

The loan was paid off within 60 days.

Two of the sons, Tom and Bob, who owns a Pontiac-GMC Truck dealership in Farmington Hills, stayed in the business.

Tom took over the Ford operation in the early 1970s.

"I like dealing with happy people," Tom said. "You're happy when you come in and buy now, and happy when you get cars looked after and serviced in a good manner. If you keep customers happy, you'll have business."

Keeping things current

All aspects of his dealership — new cars sales, used cars, service, parts and body shop — are profitable, Tom said. "New car/new truck sales are our highest volume. Naturally, that would produce our greatest profit area."

Tom is ambivalent about no-dicker sticker prices.

"That's a tough question," he said. "I think it really puts you in a weaker competitive position to have one price. People want to work you down to the very, very lowest price."

"I think it goes over better where there are fewer competitors. We have so many competitors, it's awfully difficult to entertain a

one-price situation."

Regular Saturday hours don't fly for a lot of reasons, the Sellers said, although they host some special weekend promotions throughout the year.

"Banks, Ford Credit, aren't open," Liz said. "Employees have families, too."

Buyers stopped coming in on a regular basis on Saturdays years ago, Tom said. "People went to the cottage, worked in their yards. Dealers finally closed due to costs."

"We've met people here on Saturday," Dean E. added.

There from Day 1

Mort LaPierre has been parts manager at Sellers Ford for 40 years.

"Overall, the biggest change has been the quality of cars," he said. "No question cars built to

day are much superior to anything we've ever seen. Also, today, customers' expectations are much superior."

"We have a lot of people who have been here a long time," LaPierre said. "It's a very steady organization, very conscientious about employees. We don't have a big turnover."

Tom, 69, figures to turn the dealership to his children some day. The kids say they'll be glad to take the reins.

"My greatest satisfaction now is having three children become part of this and their positive effect on employees," Tom said.

"We started off sweeping floors and poling the grounds part time," Blair said. "Then we started selling between summers in college. We can take on any problem because we know the operations inside and out."

DATEBOOK

GM PORTFOLIO STRATEGIES

A seminar on portfolio strategies for General Motors retirees and pre-retirees for those less than 6 years from retirement will be held July 22 at the Troy Marriott from 7-9 p.m. Call Rick Kolb, Dean Witter-Reynolds, (313) 963-8900.

WORDPERFECT

"WordPerfect Level 1," sponsored by the American Society of Employers will be discussed on July 22 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 23816 Northwestern Highway in Southfield. Speaker: Robert Battaglia, We Teach. Call 353-4500 to register.

FAMILY, MEDICAL LEAVE

A morning and afternoon seminar "Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993" sponsored by the American Society of Employers will be discussed on July 23 from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:30-5 p.m.

at 23816 Northwestern Highway in Southfield. Speaker: Gary Klar, Keywell and Rosenfeld, Call: 353-4500 to register.

HARVARD GRAPHICS

"Harvard Graphics" sponsored by the American Society of Employers will be discussed on July 23 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 23816 Northwestern Highway in Southfield. Speaker: Robert Battaglia, We Teach. Call 353-4500 to register.

SMALL BUSINESS

Gary B. Kushner, a Kalamazoo businessman nationally recognized for his expertise in the area of small business employee benefits, will moderate the Saturday, July 24 Enterprise Briefing being sponsored by the Edward Lowe and the Edward Lowe Foundation from 9-11 a.m. at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Dearborn.

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