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Product Quality Underscores Big 3 Sales Gains

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

The Big Three automakers continue their long climb back to respectability as their combined sales reports for 2011 show double-digit gains by GM, Ford and Chrysler.

The irony is that two of the three domestic carmakers, GM and Chrysler, are only less than three years removed from their corporate bankruptcies.

But the reality is that in terms of quality and consumer acceptance, the Big Three have never built better cars (per era) than they do right now, say both the consumer body themselves as well as auto analysts who take the OEMs' temperatures.

That was the framing of the Big Three 2011 sales reports issued last week. Chrysler was up 26 percent, GM 14 percent and Ford 11 percent.

Chrysler led the way. Chrysler reported 2011 annual December sales of 138,019, a 37 percent increase compared with sales in December 2010 (100,702 units), the group's best monthly sales since May 2008.

For the year, Chrysler Group sales totaled 1.37 million units, up 26 percent versus sales in 2010, the largest percentage sales gain of any full-line manufacturer.

December also marked Chrysler Group's 21st consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains and seventh consecutive month of sales increases of at least 20 percent.

"Chrysler Group finished a year of growth on a strong

note with our December retail sales soaring 45 percent to our highest dealer retail sales in four years," said Reid Bigland, president and CEO – Dodge Brand and head of U.S. Sales.

"Looking back, we were the fastest-growing automaker in the country, increasing our market share 1.3 percentage points during 2011."

Next, GM reported total U.S. sales of 234,351 vehicles in December, up 5 percent compared with December 2010. But sales for the calendar year were up 14 percent year over year to more than 2.5 million units – and the company gained market share.

"GM's balanced portfolio of fuel-efficient cars, trucks and crossovers helped us make the most of the U.S. economy's slow but steady recovery in 2011," said Don Johnson, vice president, U.S. Sales Operations.

"Importantly, we were able to grow all four of our brands and reestablish Chevrolet as a force to be reckoned with in the passenger car business. This gives us a very solid foundation to compete in a market that we expect to keep growing."

Finally, AP reported that Ford's U.S. sales rose 11 percent in 2011, thanks to strong demand for its trucks and SUVs.

AP said that Ford sold 2.1 million vehicles last year, a sign of the industry's continuing recovery. It was the first time the Ford brand has passed the 2 million mark since before the recession in 2007.

Strong sellers included the new Ford Explorer SUV, which more than doubled sales from 2010. The Escape small SUV

and Ranger small pickup also posted big increases.

Ford's car sales rose 4 percent. Sales of the Fiesta sub-



Jeep Patriot



Chevrolet Camaro



Ford Explorer

Andringa: What's Ahead for Big 3?

Look for coverage of National Association of Manufacturers' chair Mary Andringa's speech in Detroit this week in the Tech Center News edition of Jan. 16.

Andringa, the first woman to chair the board of NAM, will be discussing domestic automotive and industrial manufacturing trends going into 2012. Much to the nation's surprise, autos are leading the U.S. economic recovery. She speaks at DEC.

Gorlier: 'Super S is Mopar's Interpretation of the 200'

AUBURN HILLS – In Chrysler's most recent sales report for 2011, it cited the 200 sedan as being one of the main reasons why its annual sales were up 26 percent.

Now comes a variation on the 200 theme.

The Chrysler 200 Super S by Mopar, which will debut in Detroit later this month, has become a rolling showcase for the latest Mopar exterior parts that will be available for the 200 sedan in 2012.

"The Super S is Mopar's interpretation of the Chrysler 200," said Pietro Gorlier, president and CEO of Mopar, Chrysler Group LLC's service, parts and customer-care brand.

"The extensive list of high-quality Mopar parts enhances the performance and appearance of our Chrysler 200."

For Stage One, Mopar's long list of modifications starts at the front of the car with a large chin spoiler, satin chrome fog light trim, satin chrome grille surround and

mesh in the upper and lower grilles. The upper grille is gloss black with a recessed Chrysler wing badge.

Body sides feature new side sills, satin chrome belt molding, black chrome "200" badges and gray or hyper black 18-inch "S" alloy wheels.

From the rear view, the new look is capped off by a new trunk lid spoiler, satin chrome light bar and a matte black lower diffuser with attached exhaust openings.

Stage Two adds performance with a coil-over suspension, which also lowers the center of gravity for the vehicle. In addition, Stage Two includes a cold-air intake and cat-back exhaust.

This Mopar package on the Chrysler 200 Super S will be available on Chrysler 200S later in 2012. Mopar's Chrysler 200 Super S will be one of many Mopar-modified vehicles that will debut during the 2012 auto show season.

The 2012 Chrysler 200 is offered with a 2.4-liter World



The Chrysler 200 Super S, a Mopar variation on the 200 theme.

Gas Engine and is available mated to a four-speed or six-speed automatic transmission.

The 2.4-liter I-4 engine produces 173 horsepower and 166 lb.-ft. of torque and has an EPA estimated fuel economy rating of 21 mpg city and 30 mpg highway mated to the four-speed automatic transmission and 20 mpg city and 31 mpg highway when mated to the six-speed automatic transmission.

The available 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 engine is one of Ward's "10 Best Engines." The new 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 engine is mated to the 62TE six-speed automatic transmission and produces 283 horsepower and 260 lb.-ft. of torque. It has an EPA estimated fuel economy rating of 19 mpg city and 29 mpg highway.

The Super S package will be available from Mopar later this year.

GM Retiree Authors New Book About War of 1812

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

"It's been pretty interesting so far – I've already given four talks in the last two months."

So says Anthony Yanik of his most recent history book, one about the War of 1812 and Detroit's involvement. Yanik is a retired speechwriter with the GM Environmental Activities Staff at the GM Tech Center.

Now 82, Yanik has written a couple of books prior, but those were about automotive history, such as to do with Maxwell, Chrysler and more.

Yanik's love for American history soon led him to the War of 1812, however.

Of all of America's wars, the War of 1812 still seems the least well-known, so with the event's 200th anniversary coming up this year in 2012, perhaps Yanik's recent history book will be received beyond just academics.

Entitled "The Fall and Re-

capture of Detroit in the War of 1812 – In Defense of William Hull," the 221-page book was published by Wayne State University/Great Lakes Books recently and it adds to the scholarship on this less-known war.

"When I first started working on it, people would say, 'What are you writing about now?' and I'd say Michigan and Detroit in the war of 1812," he recalled.

"Then they would ask, 'Was Detroit involved in the War of 1812?' while others would say, 'Was there a War of 1812?' he laughs in telling the story.

According to Yanik's research, the focus of the opening campaign of the War of 1812 was Detroit, a location the War Department considered one of the significant launching points for the invasion of Canada.

Detroit's surrender only two months after the declaration of war shocked the na-

tion and led to the court-martial of Brig. Gen. William Hull. In fact, Hull was sentenced to death – the only commanding general ever to receive such a sentence in U.S. military history – and has otherwise been vilified by many historians to the present day.

President James Madison, on the court's recommendation, spared Hull's life.

Yanik's book works as a partial vindication of Hull, who otherwise was a Revolutionary War hero whose been made something of a fall guy for the War of 1812.

Yanik reconsiders Hull's abrupt surrender and the general's defense that the decision was based on sound humanitarian grounds.

Yanik begins by tracing the political roots of the War of 1812 and giving the readers an idea of what war was like in the tiny frontier settlement of Detroit in the years leading up to the war.

The Michigan eLibrary system, through which they were able to access much of the material, is a historian's delight."

The rest can be uncovered in Yanik's book.

One notable endorsement

Yanik received was from historian and author Brian Leigh

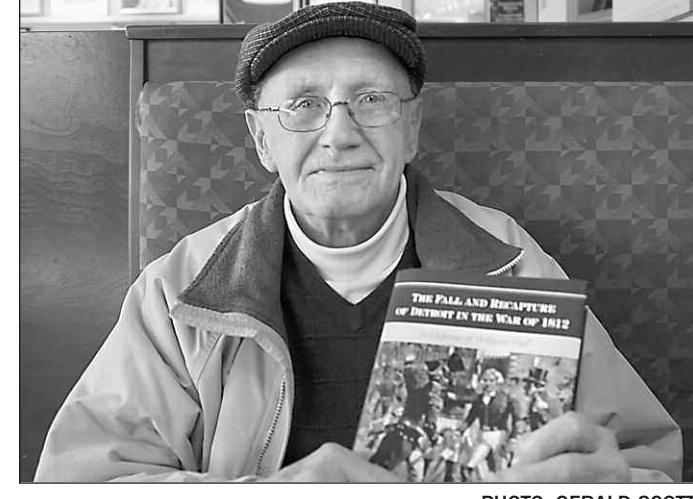


PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT
Anthony Yanik, retired from the GM Environmental Activities Staff at the Tech Center in Warren, has recently written a history book about the War of 1812.

Dunnigan.

Writes Dunnigan, "Yanik provides a detailed account of Brig. Gen. William Hull's disastrous 1812 campaign that resulted in the surrender of De-

troit and the loss of the North Western Arm to the British. The subject is of considerable relevance, given the imminent observance of the bicentennial of that conflict (1812-2012)."

Retired GM Orion Engineers Engage Students in Classroom with Science

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

It's always interesting to examine where ideas come from that result in fruitful organizations or projects.

Take, for example, the non-profit educational group, Science with the Engineers, Inc., which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary of innovation in the classroom.

The organization grew out of founder and President Thomas Chaput's experience at the GM Orion plant, where he and Jeff Gerber worked as engineers.

Chaput took a few moments before a classroom presentation about balsa wood airplanes at a 5th grade class at Paint Creek Elementary School in Orion Township to talk about his charity group's roots at GM.

"I was in plant engineering at Lake Orion, I was in the paint shop and Jeff was in trim and chassis," Chaput recalled.

"I was at Truck & Bus for 10 years, then I spent 27 years at Lake Orion – right when Lake Orion was being built, I went over there," he added.

"Then, just before GM 'restructured' (in 2008), I retired.

"I was with them from 1972 to 2008. It was great.

"Back then, Orion built big Oldsmobiles, Cadillacs, Buicks, they made five different products and there were like 6,000 people there before they cut that way down. I was plant engineer for the paint shop. It was a lot of fun. I was working with the contractors when they built the place, putting the equipment in, that was quite a learning experience, that was fun."

This is where the idea or seeds for his 10-year-old Science with Engineers, Inc., came into being.

Said Chaput, "What we did was that originally, General Motors let us leave on Friday afternoons to go to some of the neighborhood schools.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT
Retired GM engineer Thomas Chaput, left, is marking 10 years with his nonprofit charity Science with the Engineers, Inc., which presents science and engineering demos in area classrooms.

combined to develop a series of hands-on science and engineering exhibits for kids to engage in the classroom.

Demos include titles such

as Electricity – Build a Motor; Mechanical Engineering and Crumple Zones – Newton's 2nd Law of Motion; Chemistry – Evaporative Cooling; and

Simple Machines and Mechanical Advantage.

Monitoring a visit to teacher

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