

Daily Herald

AUTOFOCUS

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AutoSunday

Parts now must talk to one another

More recent fixes:

A customer has his 2005 Chevy Silverado towed in from another shop.

That shop replaced the fuel pump only to find out the truck still wouldn't start. After pushing the vehicle in for testing, our technician confirmed

the fuel pump was operating. Further diagnosis confirmed there was no fuel injector pulse and therefore the engine would not run.

Next the technician tried to communicate with the powertrain control module (PCM) and discovered that there was no communication. After testing the bus line (this is the line that links all the onboard computers and processors together so that they can talk to each other) the technician discovered that the PCM was not connected to the bus line.

Working back from a common splice, the technician found where a mouse had gnawed through the bus line under the relay center under the hood. The wire was repaired and we now had communication. The fuel pump ran, the injectors had pulse and the vehicle started right up. A lot of effort for a silly mouse!

Technical difficulties

We had a regular customer come in with his 2003 Chevy Trailblazer flashing all the 4WD lights on the dash randomly. After carefully working through a diagnostic repair procedure, the technician traced the problem to a bad rear liftgate module. That's right, the liftgate module was confusing the system, causing the 4WD to malfunction.

After the module was replaced and the computer updated, everything went back to normal. It is a new day with all the electronic processors and how they tie together throughout the vehicle.

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Auto briefs

Midwest CUs to discount car loans

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A consortium of credit unions in four Midwestern states is pledging \$10 billion in loans to car buyers and teaming with General Motors Corp. to offer special discounts to boost flagging car sales. The group, made up of 1,200 credit unions in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, said last week it will offer its members a "supplier discount" plus \$250 off the purchase price of GM vehicles.

"Access to credit is a huge deal in America right now," said Mark LaNeve, GM vice president for North American sales.

A supplier discount is roughly 5 percent off the manufacturer's suggested retail price of a vehicle, LaNeve said, and can be applied in addition to any other discounts and incentives already offered.

The program runs through June 30 and, depending on the results, may be launched nationwide in early 2009.

His ideas and influence gave rise to the great General Motors empire

By JASON STEIN

Wheelbase Communications

DETROIT — The picture is a work of art if ever there was one.

In some ways it belongs in the White House, next to a guy named Kennedy. Or perhaps next to another man named Washington. Or Lincoln. Or Jefferson.

Here, on the highest floor of one of the tallest towers in a place still nicknamed the "Motor City," in a hallway layered with light-colored thick carpet, Alfred Sloan watches over all of them.

His gaze is constant.

Here on the 39th floor of Detroit's Renaissance Center, in the heart of the automotive capital of the world, Sloan is immortalized on canvas with the richest of oils.

Day after day, his face sits in a perfect frame, next to all of the other former leaders, on the hallway wall leading to the board rooms at General Motors.

He built this place. And in many ways, he built this town.

In all of the years of automobile making, no man has had a greater stake than the man who once formed GM into what GM is today.

Considered one of the top business minds of the 20th century, Sloan was at the helm of GM during the most dynamic time in the history of the automobile, when car production was rising at a volcanic rate and when organization was essential to survival.

Some call Sloan the first celebrity chief executive officer, along the lines of Donald Trump. Others maintain he changed the face of commerce forever.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, said Sloan's autobiography is a must-have, especially "if you want to read only one book about business."

Whichever side your opinion falls, Sloan was a visionary.

Target "every purse and purpose" was Sloan's theory.

But it was much more complex than that.

He pioneered the concept of marketing and corporate leadership, selling GM as a symbol of the American dream. He met Ford's vehicle-for-everyone ideal with distinct brands — Buick, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile and Cadillac — in a range of colors, shapes, sizes and prices for every pocketbook. He encouraged aspiration. He perfected automotive financing.

And it all worked wonders. In 1921, when Sloan took charge of General Motors, GM's share of the U.S. market was 13 percent. Ford had 56 percent. In 1927, after Sloan had completed and fully introduced the multidivisional operating management structure, the numbers were reversed.

But Sloan was about more than just numbers.

He excelled in customer care. He understood the principles of mass production. He believed in dealerships. And he lived each day with a simple vision.

"I never minimized the administrative power of the chief executive officer when I occupied that position," he once said. "I simply exercised that power with discretion; I got better results by selling my ideas than by telling people what to do."

Sloan's pace was always quicker than anybody else's. Born on May 23, 1875, in New Haven, Conn., Sloan was the son of a coffee and tea importer. He studied electrical engineering at an early age before eventually graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at just 17.

Sloan began his professional career

in a machine shop that made ball bearings. Within seven years he was running the company.

Less than 20 years later, in 1916, his company merged with United Motors Corp. and with another company to form General Motors Corp., which began making cars.

When Sloan first joined GM, the automaker was in immense financial trouble due to problems within the automobile industry and the lack of organization within the company.

"The corporation faced simultaneously an economic slump on the outside and a management crisis on the inside."

Sloan cleaned it up. He believed each division would be in charge of its own profits and have its own managerial staff. However, there would be an executive committee that would be responsible for overseeing each division and creating company policy.



GREG PERRY/
Wheelbase Communications

ALFRED SLOAN

It worked wonders and Sloan's career shot forward.

It only took seven more years for him to become vice president, then president and then, finally, chairman of the board by 1937.

Under Sloan, GM became famous for managing diverse operations with financial statistics such as return on investment.

Not everyone saw things his way. During the 1920s he phased out trams (in favor of GM buses) and had them burned to discourage a reversal of policy for public transport. He later advised a decrease in bus services on cost-effectiveness grounds. Any influence this had on car purchases was, of course, incidental.

In these ways and others, Alfred P. Sloan continued to increase GM's profitability.

He made it a personal goal to visit dealerships across the country, at

one point fitting a private rail car as an office and then traveling to each major city in the United States, visiting five to 10 dealers a day.

But what made Sloan one of the four business leaders of 20th century was his creation of an organized General Motors. And, above all, Sloan "motorized" America for GM, before retiring as chairman on April 2, 1956.

His place in history was cemented. Every hardworking American wanted to own a Chevy, then maybe a Pontiac, then hopefully a Buick, then ultimately a Cadillac.

The formula was complete.

North America was hooked.

And a painting was being commissioned that would hang in the main office on the highest tower in this automotive capital.

• Jason Stein can be reached at wheelbase.us@mailbag.html.

Chevy drops the top, and price, on Corvette

By RICHARD WILLIAMSON

Scripps Howard News Service

For 55 years, Chevrolet has been tweaking, tuning and transforming the iconic Corvette, maintaining its reputation as America's premier sports car.

For the 2009 model, they're doing something quite innovative with the convertible: They're lowering the price.

The ragtop retails for \$52,550, a reduction of \$2,695, which doesn't much affect its position somewhere between the less potent \$37,975, V-6-powered Nissan 350Z and the more powerful, more exotic V-10-powered Dodge Viper at \$88,926.

Cars like the Corvette don't need marketing tricks to enhance their appeal. Every new version is an instant collectible, and the current model may be the smoothest operator in a long line of powerful

At a glance

Price as tested: \$73,210

Engine: 6.2-liter, 436-horsepower V-8

City/highway fuel economy: 15/25 miles per gallon

Length: 174.6 inches.

Wheelbase: 105.7 inches

Curb weight: 3,222 pounds

Built: Bowling Green, Ky.

performers.

The 2008 Corvette coupe and convertible introduced the LS3 6.2-liter V-8 as the new standard engine. Except for the price, the 2009 model features no major changes.

The 436-horsepower engine has the deep rumble you expect, roaring to life with the press of a button on the keyless ignition.

Once awakened, the monster V-8 can propel the rear-drive convertible from 0 to 60

mph in 4.3 seconds via the six-speed automatic equipped with paddle shifters on the steering wheel.

The visceral blend of car and driver has never felt as seamless as it does in the current Corvette. If you demand the harshness of a stiff suspension, you can dial in the "Sport" mode. But the softer "Touring" style is really ideal for city driving.

Purists may want a stick, but I really prefer the automatic, especially with the paddle shifters that allow you to operate the transmission manually. To save fuel, the stick has a first-to-fourth gear shift pattern that can feel awkward in routine driving or force you to accelerate more briskly than the situation really requires.

The 2009 lineup of Corvettes offers several choices.

If you can't wait 4.3 seconds to get to 60 mph, you can move up to the ZR1, but you'll have to get on a waiting list. With a



COURTESY OF GENERAL MOTORS CORP.

The visceral blend of car and driver has never felt as seamless as it does in the current Corvette.

6.2-liter supercharged engine that produces 638 horsepower, the ZR1 — nicknamed "Blue Devil" — takes the "supercar" category to new extremes.

In addition to the coupe and convertible, Corvette also offers the Z06, sire of the ZR1, that is equipped with the 505-horsepower LS7 engine and built on a lightweight chassis. The Z06

is an offshoot of the Corvette racing program.

This year's buyers can choose from nine exterior colors, including two new ones — Cyber Metallic and Blade Silver Metallic.

Two new leather-wrapped interiors, Dark Titanium and Ebony, join Sienna and Linen, as color options.