The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 251
“Keep the Consumer Dissatisfied”
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“We hear people complaining because of new models in automobiles. If it were not for these new models these same people would be paying more for what they have...The law of economy in mass production enters here. We are permitted to turn out cars in volume because there is a market for them. If automobile owners could not dispose of their cars to a lower buying strat[um] they would have to wear out their cars with a consequent tremendous cutting in the yearly demand for automobiles, a certain increase in production costs, and the natural passing along of these costs to the buyer.

“If everyone were satisfied, no one would buy the new thing because no one would want it. The ore wouldn’t be mined; timber wouldn’t be cut. Almost immediately hard times would be upon us. You must accept this reasonable dissatisfaction with what you have and buy the new thing, or accept hard times. You can have your choice.”

Charles Kettering, director of General Motors Research Laboratories, in a January 1929 article entitled “Keep the Consumer Dissatisfied.”

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 251. Keep the Consumer Dissatisfied.

During the fifty-year period from 1870 to 1920, the population of the United States approximately tripled. The GDP of the United States increased by eleven times. This works out to a per capita GDP increase of 4.2 times. Another way of saying it is like this: Americans were producing 4.2 times as much value in goods and services per person in 1920 compared to 1870.

Economic growth in the USA was extraordinarily rapid, even by the standards of the time, but the other advanced economies in Europe and Japan were also seeing dramatic increases. Even less developed economies like Russia or China were growing rapidly. But let’s stick with the US as our example. The trend is the same, even if the numbers here are unusually large.

If Americans are producing 4.2 times as much in goods and services per person as they were fifty years ago, it follows with an elegant inevitability that Americans need to be buying 4.2 times as much in goods and services per person as they were fifty years ago.

But wait, there is another option, mathematically speaking. Theoretically, a society could choose to have everyone work just a quarter of the number of hours per week as before to produce the same output. That society would be no richer in goods and services, but would be vastly richer in leisure time.

But what am I saying? That's madness. Western societies almost invariably choose to increase output rather than leisure, and nowhere is this more the case than in the United States. So please excuse my lunatic ravings about leisure time. That's just crazy talk.

American workers worked twelve hours per day, seven days a week in 1870, and it was more or less the same in 1920. The eight-hour workday was just becoming a thing for some lucky workers in a few industries. Henry Ford would introduce the eight-hour workday at Ford Motor Company in 1926. But for most people, work hours were scarcely any shorter.

For most of human history, most humans consumed only the basic necessities of life: food and clothing and shelter. Other purchases were rare or at best occasional. A tool. A pot or pan. A chair. But with modern manufacturing, with its assembly lines and interchangeable parts, turning out more goods faster than ever before, the willingness of ordinary people to buy more goods faster than ever before becomes equally important, hence the development of the "consumer" as a topic of study, both for the economist and the business manager seeking to increase sales. The use of the word *consumer* in this sense is a twentieth-century development. And the place where the role of the consumer first becomes economically significant is in the automobile industry, particularly in the US, for it was in the US that, first Ransom Olds, and then Henry Ford, and then a number of other competitors, strove to crank out ever greater numbers of automobiles at ever lower prices. I talked about the early days of the automobile, and the automobile business, in episode 57. But here's the thing: How long can you keep this up before something gives?

William Crapo Durant was born in 1861 in Boston, Massachusetts. Even in adulthood, he was known to most as Billy Durant. He dropped out of high school to go to work in his grandfather's lumberyard. In 1885, when he was 24 years old and selling insurance in Flint, Michigan, he partnered with another young salesman, of hardware, named J. Dallas Dort. Durant and Dort purchased for $1,500 a patent for a new design of horse-drawn cart with a spring suspension that gave an uncommonly smooth ride, and opened the Flint Road-Cart Company, later known as the Durant-Dort Carriage Company.

Dort was in charge of getting the carts built; Durant traveled the Midwest, recruiting dealers to sell the carts, and had orders for more than 600 of them in hand before the first one was ever built. Durant embraced the new American style of business management: vertical integration. Instead of buying parts from other manufacturers, he bought the other manufacturers, and the company employed mass production techniques. It built 4,000 carts in its first year, and expanded from there.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the company was producing 400 carts every day. It had become the largest manufacturer of carts and carriages in the United States, with a nationwide network of dealers, and Billy Durant was a millionaire at the age of 40. The company owned multiple manufacturing facilities, and Billy Durant moved the company headquarters to New York City. He had no production facilities in New York, but Durant didn't see himself as a cart manufacturer. He saw himself as a wheeler and dealer, a builder of business empires; more of a J.P. Morgan than a Henry Ford.

He also saw the rising popularity of the automobile and recognized the threat it posed to a company that made horse-drawn carts. In 1904, the company took control over a small automobile manufacturer in Flint, the Buick Motor Company, founded by David Buick, a Scottish-born engineer, whose company was then in bankruptcy. Durant applied to Buick the same management techniques that had made Durant-Dort a success: he remade the company from a small operation that had produced only 16 cars a year into a mass production machine that was producing thousands. He bought up Buick suppliers and moved their operations to Flint.

By 1908, Durant had turned Buick around and it had edged out Oldsmobile, Maxwell, and even Ford to become the number one producer of automobiles in the United States. He was now convinced that the potential market for automobiles was enormous. But instead of up-scaling Buick into a bigger and bigger company that could produce more and more cars, as Henry Ford was doing with his own company, Durant conceived a different business strategy: buying up a number of different car companies and operating them all under one corporate umbrella. He set up the General Motors Holding Company that year, and by the end of 1908, General Motors, or GM as it is universally known, owned Buick and had purchased Oldsmobile from Ransom Olds. In two more years, GM acquired eight more car companies by swapping stock, including the Cadillac and Oakland brands, as well as three truck companies and ten parts suppliers.

But Durant grew his conglomerate too big too fast. In 1910, a recession caught GM in a cash crunch. The bankers took over the company, forced Durant out of management, and moved the company headquarters back from New York to Detroit. The bankers installed Charles Nash as the new president of the company and put a mechanic named Walter Chrysler in charge of production at Buick, which was GM's most profitable division.

As you may have guessed, both Nash and Chrysler would later go on to found their own car companies, but for now the reorganization forced on GM by the bankers proved to be a big success. For the next several years, sales and profits grew.

Billy Durant, meanwhile, started a new car company in partnership with the Swiss racing car driver, Louis-Joseph Chevrolet, a company intended to go toe to toe with Henry Ford and his

Model T. The Chevrolet 490 debuted in 1915; it was called that because it retailed for $490 at a time when the Ford Model T was priced at $495.

Chevrolet was a big success. The company's stock price rose so rapidly that in 1916, Durant was able to swap enough Chevrolet stock for enough GM stock to re-take control his old company, in cooperation with Pierre du Pont, whose own DuPont chemical company was making huge profits manufacturing powder and explosives to sell to the Allies in the Great War, profits Pierre was using to buy up General Motors.

So Billy Durant was back in charge at GM for the next five years. During this time, he continued his business strategy of buying up other companies, such as United Motors, Frigidaire, and parts supplier Delco. This is the period when Thomas Midgely was working on the octane problem as we discussed last time.

The problem with Durant's management style, though, was that while he understood the advantages of vertical integration, he was no manager or engineer. He was a salesman. The GM conglomerate presented opportunities to coordinate the different divisions and to take advantage of economies of scale, but these were matters into which Durant had no particular insight nor any particular interest.

Durant was personally opposed to US involvement in the Great War, and so GM did not make bids on wartime government contracts, and thus missed out on an opportunity that enriched other manufacturers, especially the Dodge Brothers, whose own car company did very well during the war. Afterward, when the US economy went into the postwar slump of 1920-21, Pierre du Pont had had enough and forced Billy Durant out of the company again, this time permanently. He would start up another car company, Durant Motors, and play the stock market during the Roaring Twenties. The stock market crash of 1929 wiped out his personal fortune, and Durant Motors went under in 1933. Afterward, he lived off a pension from General Motors and explored other business ventures, but never duplicated the successes of his younger years. He died in 1947 at the age of 85.

GM vice president Alfred Sloan was elevated to president of the company two years later in 1923. By that time, GM was already getting reorganized according to Sloan's vision of the company. Sloan was a very different manager from Durant. He had a degree in electrical engineering from MIT and championed financial analyses as an aid to rationalizing and managing GM's far-flung operations, with the assistance of Boss Kettering, whom we have already met. Under Sloan and Kettering's guidance, GM would surpass Ford to become the largest car maker in the world.

Under Sloan, GM's various divisions began using more standardized parts, to take fuller advantage of GM's economies of scale. Durant hadn't minded if GM's divisions ended up competing against one another. Sloan rationalized the GM product line by dividing the automobile market by price level: "a car for every purse and purpose," as Sloan put it. At the first rung of the price ladder would sit Chevrolet, the low-price, high-volume car originally designed to compete with the Model T. The next step up was Pontiac, a division created by Sloan in 1925, then the technologically sophisticated Oldsmobile, then the spacious and reliable Buick, and at the top of the line, the pricey and ostentatious Cadillac, a car designed to cater to wealthy buyers whose tastes ran to…well, pricey and ostentatious.

But this brand reorganization was about more than creating a range of products for different market segments. Sloan also had the insight that buyers' tastes changed over their lifetimes. Chevrolets were cars for first-time buyers, young people who didn't have much money and needed affordable transportation. But as these buyers grew older and became wealthier, their tastes would shift toward more space, more features, and more luxury, until, if they worked hard and impressed the boss and won enough promotions, waiting for them at the peak of their personal success, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, sat the Cadillac, the ultimate sign that They Had Made It. Sloan called this "the ladder of success." Not incidentally, the ladder of success also guided those first-time Chevy buyers down a path that would make them into lifetime customers of General Motors.

[music: Edwards and Bryan, "In My Merry Oldsmobile"]

During the period that first Durant and then Sloan were building GM into the corporate behemoth it would become, Henry Ford's Ford Motor Company was already a behemoth, flooding America's streets and highways with Model Ts, a staggering one half of all cars in the nation. Model Ts were cheap and popular, though not nearly as reliable as cars would later become. In an era when auto mechanics were few and far between, Model T owners by necessity had to become knowledgeable about the maintenance and repair of their vehicles. The year 1915 saw the publication of an entire book, *Funny Stories about the Ford,* which was a collection of humor and satire about the Model T. I can't resist reading to you one example, a parody of the Twenty-Third Psalm that went like this:

The Ford is my auto; I shall not want another.
It maketh me to lie down beneath it; it soureth my soul.
It leadeth me into the paths of ridicule for its namesake.
Yea, though I ride through the valleys I am towed up the hill,
For I fear much evil. Thy rods and thy engines discomfort me;
I anoint my tires with patches; my radiator runneth over;
I repair blow-outs in the presence of mine enemies.
Surely, if this thing followeth me all the days of my life,
I shall dwell in the bug-house forever.

With Ford producing ever more Model Ts for ever lower prices, the machines swamped the United States. By the 1920s, cars were commonplace, especially Model Ts, to the point where many wondered if the market had become saturated.

City streets especially had become flooded with the new machines. Before 1920, city streets had been considered public spaces, filled with horses, wagons, street vendors and their pushcarts, children playing, and of course pedestrians. No one in the year 1901 believed, for example, that a pedestrian had a duty to look out for vehicles. The ethic of the city street was you were supposed to be reasonably courteous, not get in anyone else's way, and wait your turn when the street got crowded. And of course, no one was supposed to bump into anyone, let alone knock them over or hurt them. Pedestrians didn't walk into carts or horses, and they expected carts and horses not to walk into them.

But as automobiles became increasingly common, so did pedestrian injuries and fatalities. By 1920, the numbers were soaring, and the victims were disproportionately seniors and children, children who in earlier times took it for granted that the street was their playground.

In those earlier years, when the automobile was still considered a luxury item, the idea of rich people zipping through city streets, running down innocent children and respected senior citizens angered most people, and there were calls for legal action, including proposals to require automobiles to include governors limiting the speed of the vehicle to 25 miles per hour.

The car industry was horrified by such talk, and it and its local dealers fought tooth and claw against any such restrictions, and as car ownership became ever more common, more and more Americans identified with the drivers, rather than the pedestrians. Attitudes shifted until some large cities began passing ordinances requiring pedestrians to stay on the sidewalk and off the actual street, crossing it only at designated points.

There was no city in the world denser with automobiles than Los Angeles, which by 1925 had one motorcar for every two residents, a staggering ratio. That year, LA enacted a particularly strict ordinance requiring pedestrians to stay on the sidewalks and only cross streets at crosswalks, under penalty of a stiff fine. In 1928, Herbert Hoover's Department of Commerce issued a model traffic ordinance based on the one in Los Angeles, which was soon embraced and adopted across the country.

Ordinances are one thing, but changing public behavior requires more. The automotive industry and the American Automobile Association sponsored school safety programs to teach pedestrian safety to school children. Of course, these programs criticized and mocked those who disobeyed the rules and strayed into the street. The industry took the position that pedestrians injured or killed on city streets were themselves to blame.

A 1924 parade in New York City included a clown and a Model T. The joke was that every so often the Model T would come up behind the clown and knock him down. The point was clear. If you didn’t look out for cars, you were a clown, and you would get what you deserved. In the slang of the time, the word *jay* meant a rube, a hayseed, an unsophisticated country bumpkin. By the 1920s, the term jay walker—two words—started to become common, promoted by the automobile lobby, meaning an unsophisticated person who didn’t know the proper way to walk in the big city. By 1930, it was more commonly seen as one word, as in jaywalking, a word that conveyed the principle that conduct considered perfectly normal and proper a generation ago was now considered foolish, dangerous, and was in fact illegal.

Increasing numbers of automobiles posed another challenge for law enforcement: automotive theft. Automobiles were valuable possessions; even Model Ts were worth a bit of money. That made them potential targets for thieves, and automobiles are unique among stolen property in that the stolen goods themselves provide the means by which the thieves make their getaway.

The first automobiles were so hard to start that the idea of including some mechanism to prevent people from starting them would have seemed like a joke. Early Model Ts needed a key to start, but these keys came in only two types: a round shank and a square shank. By 1919, Ford offered an optional lock, but even these had only 24 possible pin combinations, which posed no challenge to any halfway dedicated car thief.

The two American cities that saw the most car thefts were Los Angeles and Detroit, the former because it had more cars per capita than anywhere else, the latter because it was full of automobile industry workers who knew the ins and outs of the cars they assembled. By 1920, it was estimated that one out of every ten cars sold in the United States would eventually be stolen. Stolen cars could then be used to commit other crimes, like burglary, kidnapping, and of course rum running. The ubiquitous Model T was a popular target, because it was easy to disassemble and sell the parts to other Model T owners.

Public awareness campaigns suggested car owners scratch their names into the undercarriage, or hide a business card inside the upholstery to aid identification. Keep your car in a garage if possible, and please, please lock the door and take your key with you, which a lot of people in the 1920s did not commonly do. Restaurant patrons were advised to ask for a table that would allow them to keep their car in view during their meal.

Auto theft was expensive and law enforcement resources were strained. In 1919, Congress passed legislation making interstate transport of stolen cars a crime. State governments began requiring titles and registrations for automobiles as a way of tracking ownership and tracing stolen vehicles. Some states quickly enacted such laws. Others dragged their feet, and became dumping grounds for cars stolen in neighboring jurisdictions.

[music: DeSylva and Meyer, “California, Here I Come”]

Meanwhile, as pedestrians and automobile titles became more heavily regulated, General Motors grew in sales, until it threatened to displace Ford as the world's largest car company, which in fact it did in the early 1930s.

In addition to Alfred Sloan's marketing strategy of different makes of cars aimed at different price points, "a car for every purse and purpose," GM pioneered planned obsolescence; that is, the company began the practice of introducing a new design every year.

Model Ts all looked the same. That was the point. Keeping the car the same year after year allowed for economies of scale. It made spare parts and aftermarket add-ons easy to find. Was your Model T a year old, or eleven years old? If you took good care of it, who could tell?

GM changed the game by changing its models every year. This required a new way of building cars, with a body bolted on top of a frame, so that you could change the body without redesigning the whole car. They would look different on the outside, even if everything on the inside was just the same.

GM designers gave their cars a different shape from the Model T and the other cars of the time. GM cars got longer and lower to the ground. GM added color to their vehicles. You surely know Henry Ford's famous quip that you could get a Model T in any color you want, so long as it's black. Actually, in the early and the late days of the Model T's run, Ford did offer a few other colors, although in the middle of its run, Model Ts came in black only. This was partly because of the Great War; which made artificial dyes from Germany unavailable. But it was also about economy. Ford used a simple, cheap black that was baked onto the car parts. And black was a popular color for cars at the time.

But over at GM, they worked together with sister corporation DuPont and by 1922 had developed Duco, a lacquer paint with a smooth, durable finish that could be applied with a spray gun. By 1925, all GM cars were painted with Duco and sold in a variety of colors. Even two tones. By the early 1930s, GM was marketing cars painted in shades with names such as Lemon Yellow, Irish Green, and Bambalina Blue.

New models every year meant no matter how well you maintained your car or how much you liked your car, over time it would begin to look old. It was this practice that Charles Kettering was defending in the 1929 article I quoted from at the top of the episode. GM cars were deliberately designed to induce customer dissatisfaction after a while, thus encouraging the customer to sell the car on the used car market while it still ran and buy a new one, as opposed to Model Ts, which Henry Ford wanted you to drive until they broke down.

In that article, Kettering defends the practice by pointing out that consumers buying new cars more frequently means economies of scale that bring down unit prices. If people bought new cars less often, they'd have to pay more for them. This may be technically true, but it skims over the question of whether consumers are paying less or more for their automobiles per year of driving.

It also skims over the environmental issue raised by mining minerals and cutting down trees to build cars people don't strictly need. But no one was thinking about that in 1929.

Henry Ford also wanted his customers to save up their money before buying a Model T. GM, by contrast, in 1919 introduced the General Motors Assistance Corporation, GMAC, a finance division created to write car loans so GM customers could buy now, pay later, and GM dealers could write loan agreements right there in the showroom. Cars financed by car loans became an accepted feature of life in America.

By the 1930s, GM was the largest automobile manufacturer in the world, and one of the world's largest corporations. Ford struggled during this time, and there were some smaller car companies I won't trouble you with, but I do have to come back to Walter Chrysler, whom I mentioned a few minutes ago when he was working at Buick. I also told you about his Chrysler Building in New York City in episode 243.

Walter Chrysler left Buick in 1919 after a dispute with Billy Durant. Durant bought out Chrysler's GM stock holdings to the tune of ten million dollars, an immense amount of money at the time. In 1921, Chrysler bought the struggling Maxwell Motor Company and steered it back into profitability. The year 1925 was the final year for Maxwell-branded automobiles; 1924 saw the introduction of the first Chrysler. It was hailed as the $1500 car that gave $5000 thrills.

The Chrysler distinction was quality engineering. Early Chryslers included such innovations as higher compression, hydraulic brakes, a carburetor air filter, and an oil filter, at a time when most cars lacked these features. Chrysler developed several brands for different buyers, mimicking GM. The original Chrysler was a Buick-level car, with the extra-luxurious Imperial for the Cadillac market. The next step down was the DeSoto. Chrysler bought the Dodge Brothers' company and turned it into Chrysler's next lower tier, with the economical Plymouth to compete with Ford and Chevrolet.

The company grew rapidly. Walter Chrysler was *Time* magazine's Man of the Year for 1928. When the Great Depression struck, the Chrysler Corporation adeptly redesigned the Plymouth for the new economy, changing it into an economical car with a sharp look, more power than a Ford Model A, and an attractive sticker price of $535. The story goes that Walter Chrysler personally drove one of the first of these new Plymouths off the assembly line in 1931 and took it to the Dearborn headquarters of Ford Motor Company, where he dropped in for a pleasant chat with Henry Ford and his son Edsel, then made them a gift of the car and took a taxi home.

In the 1930s, Chrysler also surpassed Ford to become the number two car company in America. Walter Chrysler died in 1940, at the age of 65.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Richard for his kind donation, and thank you to Stephen for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Richard and Stephen help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century,* as we shift the spotlight to India, a country we last looked at back in episode 223, in which we saw the terrible massacre at Amritsar. In the aftermath, Gandhi retooled his strategy of satyagraha, nonviolent resistance, went to prison, and negotiated with the British Viceroy (much to the irritation of Winston Churchill.) Will this lead to independence? Find out next week, maybe, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

Oh, and one more thing. I can't leave you without asking the question many of you are probably pondering already, what the heck happened to Henry Ford? You'll recall that when we last looked in on him, in the Great War days, episode 132, he was raising his workers' wage to $5 per day, a generous sum for the time, and had hired a so-called "peace ship" in a quixotic attempt to settle the Great War himself through private negotiations. And declaring that history was bunk. In 1918, he ran his only political campaign, for US Senator from Michigan as a Democrat and a supporter of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations. He lost, though only narrowly.

These were perhaps quirky acts, you could even call them naïve, but you would also have to admit that Henry Ford was displaying an admirable idealism. But later in life, he changed. He became harsh, eccentric, and worse.

In 1919, Henry Ford stepped back from the day-to-day management of his company, entrusting it to his only child, his son Edsel, then 26 years old. But in fact Edsel had very little freedom to lead the company; his dad hung around the office and virtually every decision had to be approved by him.

A year earlier, in 1918, Henry Ford had purchased a small, weekly newspaper in his hometown, the Dearborn *Independent.* Ford used the paper as a vehicle to disseminate his increasingly right wing and increasingly anti-Semitic viewpoints. During the 1920s, the paper was distributed in Ford dealer showrooms across America and had a circulation that peaked at 700,000. The *Independent* blamed the Jews for all the world's ills, from the Great War to the Black Sox Scandal to jazz music. Henry Ford discovered the Czarist Russian anti-Semitic propaganda piece, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* episode 192, and had it published and distributed in the United States.

Ford's anti-Semitic writings were collected into a multi-volume series titled *The International Jew*. It was popular in Germany, where Nazi Party members hailed it for its insights. Adolph Hitler read Henry Ford's autobiography while in prison, and in his own book, *Mein Kampf,* praised Ford as the only prominent American not under Jewish influence.

On Henry Ford's 75th birthday, July 30, 1938, the German government awarded him its highest civilian honor, the Grand Cross of the German Eagle. By that time, however, Ford had renounced his anti-Semitic views, in the face of a lawsuit, regular condemnation from the Anti-Defamation League, and a boycott of Ford automobiles. He had shut down the Dearborn *Independent* in 1927.

By the time of the Great Depression, the Ford Motor Company couldn't afford a boycott in addition to all its other troubles. The company steadily lost market share to GM and Chrysler throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Ford stubbornly stuck with the Model T, which by 1925 was selling for as little as $260, but even so, it struggled to compete with cars that offered more features. Ford finally agreed to discontinue the Model T in 1927, after a run of 19 years and 15 million vehicles. The company retooled to produce the new Model A, which, in response to market demand, was available in multiple styles and colors.

Henry Ford had also hired a thuggish man named Harry Bennett to head up Ford's Service Department, a euphemism for company security. Bennett hired football players, boxers, and Detroit gang members to work for the Service Department, which used force and intimidation to keep company employees in line. During the 1930s, the peak period of unionization in US history, Ford Motor Company fought the unions viciously.

Meanwhile, Edsel Ford remained marginalized, hardly getting credit even when he did contribute something to the company. He had pushed for the Model A, and for the acquisition of the Lincoln Motor Company, which gave Ford a toehold in the luxury car market dominated by Cadillac.

Henry Ford opposed US entry into the Second World War. Ford owned a subsidiary in Germany, which continued to operate during the war. Of course, the same was true of General Motors. During the war, the Treasury Department investigated Ford Motor Company over charges of collaboration with the enemy, but did not find evidence to support the claims.

Edsel Ford died of stomach cancer in 1943, at the age of 49, a broken and despondent man. His wife Eleanor, blamed the stress of having to work with Harry Bennett for his premature demise. Henry Ford, now 80 years old, resumed full control of the company and reportedly planned to name Harry Bennett president until his widowed daughter-in-law Eleanor and his wife Clara intervened, threatening to sell off their own substantial holdings of Ford stock if Ford followed through on that plan. Henry Ford reluctantly gave in to their demand and turned control of the company over instead to his grandson, Edsel's eldest, Henry Ford II, just days after the younger

Henry's 28th birthday, in 1945. Henry Ford II's first act as president of the company was to fire Harry Bennett.

The elder Henry Ford died in 1947, at the age of 83.

[music: Closing Theme]