

I'M PROUD TO HAVE A FORD IN MY DRIVEWAY

Our industry has always been a very interesting business since we are the mavericks and the last place that the customer can still actually be the boss. No matter how beat up they get at work, when they come to buy an automobile they know they can negotiate and have a say-so in the way they are going to spend their money. It's interesting in our industry to watch all the changes that have to take place, especially with all the personalities.

In 2004, I decided that it was time to quit impressing myself with myself, and I traded my S500 for a brand new F150, four-wheel drive Lariat, that I ordered equipped exactly the way I wanted it. The last time I had to get the John Deere tractor out to pull my Mercedes out of a muddy dug field, I figured it was time to go ahead and forget about what I looked like and to be in something that could actually take care of what I was trying to accomplish. That was a Ford truck. I've been proud of that Ford truck every day since it came in off the carrier because I ordered it just the way I wanted it.

In watching the ins and outs and the ups and downs of our industry with GM, Chrysler, and Ford, I can't tell you how proud I am to see Ford stand on its own two feet and say, "we'll work this out," but I commend someone more than that, I commend the men and women in the Ford dealerships who are on the black top, as sales people around this country, for hanging in there for staying during this last year when our market and the news has been absolutely terrible.

I remember vividly being a 29 year old Dodge dealer in Auburn, Alabama, when Iacocca had to apply for the loan guarantee and the sales people that stayed with



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me through that whole time with the rash of "going out of business" and "you won't make it", sold out of trust and no cash and all the problems that face you as a dealer when you're going through that era. Then all of a sudden Iacocca pays the money back, America applauds Chrysler, the mini van and the K car came out and those sales people who hung in there had product that everyone in this country wanted, their commissions went through the ceiling, we had Toyota and Honda sales people applying for jobs. I was able to get out of both franchises without taking a hit or having to go bankrupt. It was a wonderful transition of going from worse to first almost overnight. At that time I started Progressive Basics.

This weekend my wife and I took the motor home to a beach front campground in very rural Atlantic coast of Florida, an unknown small campground on the ocean where your motor home and the oceans high tide are less than twenty feet apart. I was standing with four or five guys all around who had been pulling fifth wheels (which I never understood when you could have a very comfortable motor home with slide outs);

however, they still pull them. One gentlemen from St. Louis, who had retired from a chemical company, asked those of us in the group standing around drinking beers (except for me, I quit), "what are you guys pulling those trailers with?" They went around the group, "Well I'm pulling mine with a Chevrolet," "I'm pulling mine with a Nissan... whatever," depending on the size of the trailer or the fifth wheel they were pulling, and it got back to him and he said, "I pull mine with a Ford and I can tell you that I am damn glad to have a Ford in my driveway." It all came together at that point in time because I chimed in with him and said, "I'm with you my friend," and I think anybody right now that needs or wants a vehicle should stand up for Ford motor company. It doesn't matter if it has a few problems; we're not having to pay them to build cars. They're standing up on their own hind feet and getting it done.

Just like Iacocca paid back the money, you know and I know that it all starts from the sales floor up. It doesn't start from the president of one of these manufacturers down, look at General Motors; they got all that money from the government and poured it all into the factory, that didn't help them retail one more vehicle. They should have poured it into GMAC and allowed the dealers to put their sold out of trust units on notes or freed up that money to finance these 600 and up beacons, which are not that bad to begin with, that they now think are terrible, and let the blacktop start the ball rolling again. That is where it's all done.

And from an old Chrysler dealer in the Carter Era, Ford Motor Company I commend you with all my heart and soul, especially those men and women on the blacktop, and I say this as proudly as I can, being a disabled Vietnam veteran, I am proud to have a Ford in my driveway.

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