



# PACKARD ELECTRIC *Cablegram*

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## New wiring demands top quality

# Packard starts 'J' production

Successful introduction of General Motors' new "J"-car this spring may very well be the building block for the future of both Packard and GM. The stakes are high; market share and the millions of dollars GM has invested. For Packard in Warren, Mississippi and Mexico, the stakes are reflected in jobs related to the "J" product. Production on which those jobs depend has begun at Packard.

In other words, if the car buying public does not perceive GM's newest entry as a quality, economical product, things could become gloomy, to say the least.

"That is why GM is stressing quality at levels we have never before seen," said Carl Rausch, manager of Reliability and Quality Assurance at Packard. "We have to deal with the belief by many that foreign cars are

superior in design and quality. Quality is as much an issue with the American public now as safety and economy were during the past decade," he said.

Rausch noted that Packard's role in the GM "J"-car quality effort has achieved greater prominence because wiring, especially with engine controls, has an important responsibility. "We can't tolerate wiring or electrical failures. They can be frustrating to an

owner, and expensive to repair. Once a car owner has an electrical problem with his car or her car—especially a 'no-start' situation—that person may lose confidence in the car."

Quality in the "J" wiring process does not focus on the inspector at the end of the assembly line, but in the design and product and process compatibility, Rausch stressed. "Car plants are demanding that wire lengths be within tolerance and that clips and clamps be at the right place on the harness to help them install the wiring properly. Because of this demand, we are emphasizing dimensional control.

"We worked to make our building process compatible with the needs of the customer. There were changes in harness design along the way, but these changes were a part of the overall GM commitment to 'J' quality. When changes were made in car design, changes were made in our wiring designs. Our changes in wiring designs, and implementation of them in the production process gives our harness products the best protection possible in the car assembly process; insurance that they can be installed properly," Rausch said.

Implementation of the designs and processes into the product is the responsibility of manufacturing. Ron Schubel, director of North River Road operations at Packard, termed the "J"-car an "ambitious effort by GM to produce a car that not only meets the need for economy and quality in this country, but around the world.

"The emphasis lies in building it right the first time. To achieve that, we have been involved in more orientation to the product and its needs. Our

(Continued on page 2)



**THE FIRST** — Dept. 1306 employees pose with historic "J" car harness. They are (from left) Chuck Brigham, Evone Wells, Elaine Bowen, Jim Pytlik (production supervisor), George Henderson, Betty Allen, Iris Wells, Hugh Fenstermacher, Carolyn Pyne, Marie Schuller, John "Gomer" Jones, Maxine Gerner and Elaine Krempaski.

# New general manager interviewed

On January 5, Packard began 1981 operations under a new general manager, W. Blair Thompson, formerly general manager of Delco Products Division in Dayton, Ohio.

Thompson, 52, began his GM career in 1945 as a cooperative education student at General Motors Institute, working at Saginaw Steering Gear. He graduated from GMI with a bachelor of science degree in industrial engineering. He also earned a master of science degree as a Sloan Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

His first assignment at Saginaw was as a detailer in 1949. He held various jobs in engineering and was promoted to senior project engineer in 1956 and to assistant chief engineer the following year. In 1966, Thompson was appointed

to chief engineer at Saginaw and served in that capacity until his promotion to general manager of Delco Products in 1974.

On Jan. 14, the Cablegram spoke with Thompson in order to provide

find that I was coming to Packard Electric. I have had nothing but good impressions of Packard, having been in the same component group that was managed by Mr. (Martin) Caserio. I've had the opportunity to be with Jim

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*Our greatest challenge today is to continue to work toward becoming as competitive as possible from a pricing standpoint.*

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readers with a view of how he sees Packard Electric and what we might expect in the future.

**CABLEGRAM: What was your reaction upon being named general manager of Packard Electric?**

**THOMPSON:** Obviously it was a surprise, as I was called to Detroit to

(Rinehart) and many of the Packard people in the past, and I've been very impressed with some of the concepts and ideas that Packard has used over the years in their management. I look at being here as a great opportunity to look at a different business being run with some different ideas and principles

than some of the other GM divisions.

**CABLEGRAM: How would you characterize your personal approach to management — your management style?**

**THOMPSON:** I have always had trouble, when people talked about "management style," with what my real management style is. I am certainly very oriented toward establishing goals and objectives for the division, each staff area and individual. For instance, I feel that each person, as an employee of Packard, should have some personal objectives on things they feel they would like to do in their jobs or with themselves — things that would, over the period of the next year, enable them to be better employees, as well as helping the division do a better job.

(Continued on page 3)



## News- -briefs

### Portugal plant

General Motors announced Tuesday the establishment of a new affiliated company in Portugal which will be supported by Packard Electric. The company, CABLESA-INDUSTRIA de Componentes Electricos, Lda., will be located in Linho, Sintra, with construction to begin in March. The plant is expected to employ 400 people at full capacity. No completion date was announced. Packard's North American operations will supply some components to the assembly plants when it is operational.

### GM announces recall

General Motors will recall nearly 80,000 mid-size station wagons equipped with rear-window defoggers to determine if a weather strip could cause deterioration of the defogger electrical grid. Involved are 1979 and 1980 Chevrolet Malibu, Pontiac LeMans, Oldsmobile Cutlass and Buick Century station wagons produced during the 1979 calendar year. Owners will be asked to bring their vehicles to dealers for inspection and, if needed, application of a special coating to the vertical strips in the electrical grid on the rear window. Both the inspection and repair will be performed at no charge to the owner.

### GNP growth easing?

Although the "real" Gross National Product grew at a five percent clip during the fourth quarter of 1980, the U.S. Commerce Department says economic expansion will be slower during the first part of this year. According to Courtenay Slater, the agency's chief economist, there will be a slow down primarily because of high interest rates, the burden caused by income taxes and the stiffer social security tax rate that took effect Jan. 1.

### 'Buy 'em off the lot!'

Effective immediately, a temporary product discount procedure is being implemented for the balance of the 1981 model year by GM. All eligible salaried employees and retirees will be given the option to select all 1981 model vehicles directly from dealer inventories (subject to dealer approval) under the Maximum Product Discount Plan. Salaried employees and retirees utilizing this procedure can anticipate delivery from dealer stock as soon as their orders have been processed by the appropriate car division — in most cases two weeks. This temporary procedure will remain in effect until the announcement date of the 1982 models. Any questions concerning this procedure should be directed to Tom Habel in Warren at ext. 2072 or 2073.

### Packard Electric Cablegram

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## Expected maybe \$1,000; \$2,500 tops

# Idea pays new employe \$10,000

A Thomas Road tool and die maker is the latest winner of the maximum \$10,000 suggestion award.

Cary Heestand, of Dept. 4152, earned the award for a spring-loaded device to hold wires in place on the multi-lead index line. At 33, Heestand is the second youngest tool and die maker at Packard.

Heestand described the device as spring-loaded with four ball bearings held in place in a slotted tube by three springs.

According to Heestand, "There was a recurring problem on the line. Engineers were in the process of designing a new pallet for the line. They had one line running, the rest were in debug, and they were trying to come up with something better," he said.

Heestand said that the original design called for a bullet-like machined part instead of ball bearings. The project engineer later substituted ball bearings, because of cost and availability.

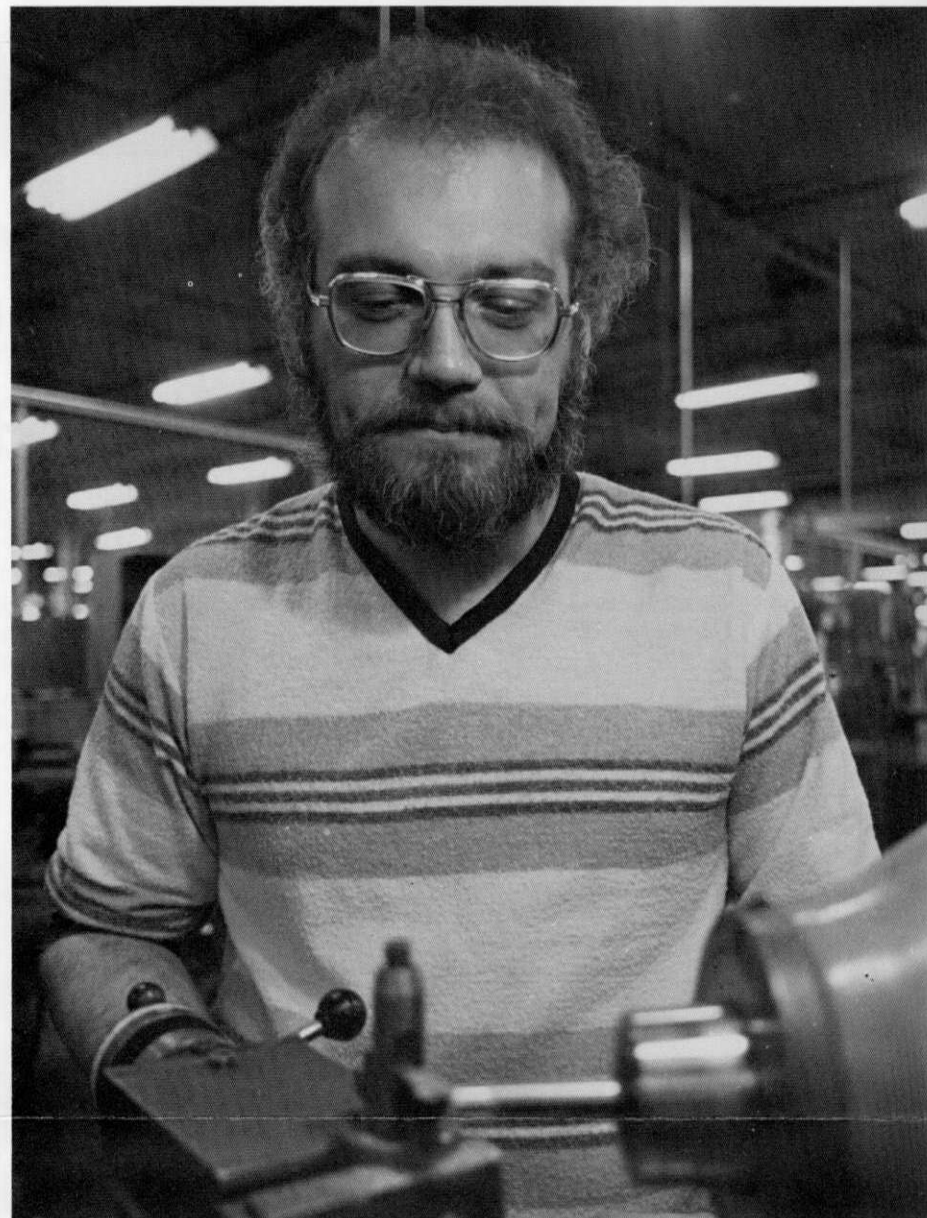
Though he has worked at Packard a brief 10 months, Heestand is no newcomer to the suggestion program. Heestand said he has already submitted 14 suggestions of which three earned him awards. "I had had awards before," he said, "but they were like \$25. I did split \$800 with another tool and die maker in November though," he remembered.

Of his latest suggestion, Heestand said he expected an award; "maybe \$1,000, \$2,500 tops." From what I've been able to gather, most of the big awards have been paid on the simple things; the ones that aren't that elaborate," he noted.

"It's a good idea, the suggestion program," Heestand commented. "They didn't have it where I worked before. It was part of your job."

Concluding, Heestand contributed at least some of his success to his position in maintenance. "You know the

problems they're having," he stated. "If they feel that an idea is at all workable, they let you go ahead on it."



**\$10,000 SUGGESTION** award winner Cary Heestand operates a lathe in the tool room on Thomas Rd.

## Packard emphasizes 'J' quality

(Continued from page 1)

foremen and production people have had additional training for the manufacturing process," Schubel explained.

Schubel pointed out that increased communications have been incorporated into the manufacturing process. "There have been improvements in the 'feedback' systems which will allow for better communication of problems or situations to those producing the wiring harnesses."

Packard Quality Control will assume a new position in the quality equation as the department works to make sure "all systems that insure quality are installed and functioning properly," stated Dale Anderson, director of Quality Control at Packard.

"Everyone, not just Quality Control, is involved with 'J' quality. Quality is not inspected into the harness; it is designed into the harness," he added.

Anderson said unequivocally that quality expectations for the "J"-car harnesses are higher than what they are for more traditional types of harnesses. "New products such as engine controls and the 'J'-car are where we will implement our higher expectations for quality. As our other products change, we will gradually expand this new quality expectation to our other products."

"As we implemented these higher

quality goals with the 'J' production, we learned things that help us improve quality in other areas," he noted.

That increased knowledge of how to achieve higher quality levels may spread what Anderson acknowledged to be a "Quality Revolution."

"Our customers want quality more than ever and they expect quality. While Packard has provided good quality over the years, we need a 'Quality Revolution' for our customers. The 'J'-car is one of our first steps," Anderson professed.

## Plant 13 makes Packard history with production of first 'J' harness

Plant 13 took honors this month with the first production "J"-car harness to be built at Packard Electric.

Jim Love, Plant 13 manager, reported the historic event occurred at 7:30 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 19 at Line 4, Dept. 1306.

The harness built will be used in heater applications.

"The start up of Line 4 was one of the smoothest Plant 13 ever had. Engineers from the Methods Lab and Reliability, lead preparation area people and just everyone involved really did their homework. It was a great start!"

Love added that a "super effort" continues in his plant to meet the high quality standards demanded for the "J"-car wiring. "Every hour, we are taking quality indexes and the results are amazing. We have been running at between 140 and 145 on those hourly indexes. Reject levels are extremely low for starting up a new line."

Concern about quality for the "J" car also caused a delay in the scheduled start for a second line in Plant 13, Love noted. "There was a problem concerning a vacuum tube for air conditioning harnesses. The vacuum tube to be used was slightly out of specification - it was not exactly to the print. In previous situations, the tube probably would have been used because it would still work. In this case, we waited until we received 'parts to print'."

Love said that he feels employees understand the importance of "J-Quality" for Packard and GM. "When they saw the pictures of the car and realized the size of it, they understood that it would be competing with the Japanese and other foreign cars. They know that American workmanship is going to be compared with foreign workmanship, and we're not going to be found wanting."



## New general manager interviewed

# New chief speaks for the record

(Continued from page 1)

I have a strong belief that people are the only really important part of an organization. As you look at organizational structures, you find that we are really just a group of people doing a job making parts and materials. If we do a good job, we're competitive, we sell a high quality product and we're successful; how well we put ideas together as individuals is going to determine how well we do as a division.

To organize my two major thoughts, then; one, I think we need goals and objectives as a division and as individuals so that we can establish direction. Secondly, we need to deal with each other as individuals and make that our top business priority.

**CABLEGRAM:** You have been at Packard just short of two weeks as this interview takes place. What do you see as the division's top priorities going forward?

**THOMPSON:** That's a very broad question and difficult to answer. I believe Packard's top priorities are probably no different from those of any other division or company in the United States. Our opportunity as a business is to provide components. In Packard's case, it involves providing wiring systems to our customers that are cost competitive and have the highest possible quality. It begins at the design stage and follows all the way through to final production, packaging and shipping. We, as individuals in the division, have got to find ways to reduce costs, improve our designs and

make sure that our processes and quality are the best that anybody can produce. We need to put those things together in a manner that provides our customers with the very best parts that are made anywhere in the world. We've got to provide them when they are needed at the quality level that satisfies the customer.

**CABLEGRAM:** What is your philosophy regarding communications and people?

**THOMPSON:** In this area I probably don't bring anything different to Packard than what Packard has already been doing, maybe better than most. I have a very strong feeling that the only way we can continue to progress is through doing an outstanding job of communicating with

all our employees. If people don't understand the issues, the problems and the divisional goals and objectives, it is pretty hard for them to work toward accomplishing what we're trying to do. There is probably no single item that is as important as communication among people, and as I have said, people are the most important resource we have.

**CABLEGRAM:** What do you perceive as Packard's greatest challenge in the near term and the long term?

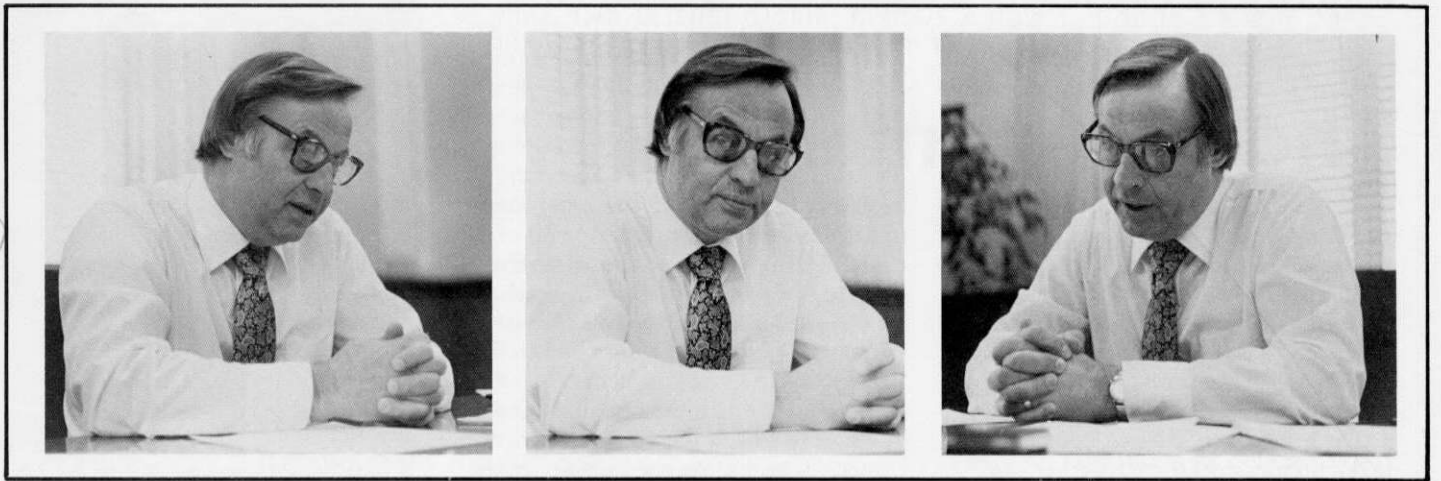
**THOMPSON:** Our greatest challenge today is to continue to work toward becoming as competitive as possible from a pricing standpoint. We must meet competitive prices if we are going to continue to sell our products to General Motors and to our outside customers. In the near term, we are

eager to continue to grow as a division in sales and in the number of people who represent our division. Our business philosophy continues to be to keep us the strongest, largest manufacturer of wiring harnesses in the world, and we have some long-term programs overseas, as well as in the United States, to accomplish this.

**CABLEGRAM:** What is your view of Packard Electric's relationship with IUE Local 717 in Warren and 698 in Clinton which represent hourly employees?

**THOMPSON:** I haven't had an opportunity to gain firsthand understanding of our relationships, but I have heard and have been told that we have very good relationships with

(Continued on page 4)



Some of the many faces of Packard's new General Manager W. Blair Thompson during his recent interview with the Cablegram.

## Brookhaven group gives help to handicapped

People in a city the size of Brookhaven have to do for themselves what many larger cities can afford to do within the framework of city government.

Concern, awareness and help for handicapped individuals has been undertaken by a group of concerned citizens in Brookhaven and Packard Electric's Plant 23 is providing support for the group's efforts.

A few years ago, Brookhaven Mayor Harold Samuels formed the Mayor's Committee for the Handicapped, a committee that met weekly in one of the Plant 23 conference rooms. Packard's facility was particularly suited for such a purpose since the building was designed to be barrier free. Easy access for wheel chairs was in the original plans for the building, along

with restroom facilities and drinking fountains that were designed to accommodate the special needs of physically handicapped individuals.

The original mayor's committee has gone through an evolution, according to Barry Sweeney, Plant 23 employee and member of the new group. The new name for the committee is BASH, Brookhaven Awareness Serving the Handicapped. Its members include physically handicapped individuals and individuals concerned about handicapped people's needs and rights.

BASH is still in the formative stages from an organizational standpoint—the members have yet to elect officers and draft a charter—but that hasn't stopped them from being involved in bringing about changes.

BASH members have been instrumental in implementing plans to have high curbs at intersections in the city converted to ramps and have helped bring about specially designated parking areas at commercial establishments.

Their biggest task, stemming from Mayor Samuels' original mandate, remains to find employers willing to hire physically handicapped individuals and to identify people who can meet the requirements for those jobs. To date, BASH has been successful in placing one person in a job. A second attempt to find a job for another physically handicapped individual resulted in the individual finding the job unsuitable, a setback that at first frustrated BASH members, but ultimately gave them renewed determination.

"You've got to get handicapped people and willing employers together

first," Sweeney said. "Every handicapped person is aware of his or her handicap. We have to make the public aware. Confidence has a lot to do with it, too. When I moved back here from working in Jackson, nobody wanted to talk to me about a job. Packard has given me a chance to prove what I can do as a handicapped person—I've got the confidence behind me now. I can go home and I don't feel like I've cheated the company after doing a day's work."

The first step in finding jobs for handicapped people is creating awareness in the community. BASH sponsors an annual Awareness Day which features a wheelchair basketball game, speakers and offers people without physical handicaps a chance to spend a day in a wheel chair to simulate having a physical disability. Eric Sanders, a BASH member who plays basketball frequently in his wheelchair with others, said of the Awareness Day game: "They were really better than we were, they just didn't know it, so we took advantage of that," referring to non-handicapped members who played in wheelchairs and lost the game.

The future looks good for BASH. They are a group of determined individuals with a difficult task—that of creating a public awareness of a subject much of society has tried to ignore. They face the challenge of overcoming stereotypes of handicapped people and outright prejudice. But they are realistic enough to know that even small gains are important and they are approaching their task with the attitude that even if progress is slow, it is worthwhile if it is progress.



**A GROUP** of Brookhaven citizens is determined to create awareness and find jobs for handicapped individuals. The committee uses Packard's Plant 23 barrier-free facilities for its regular meetings. From left are: Jeanette and W. H. Guice, Eric Sanders, Plant 23 employee Barry Sweeney and Helen Tousinau.





**THIS PHOTO** by Wilbert Brown, Dept. 956 tool and die maker, will be part of the 1980 Kodak International Newspaper Snapshot Awards display at the Equitable Gallery in New York City, Feb. 3-27. Brown photographed these Cowbirds from a bird blind approximately nine feet from the birds on his Evergreen farm in Southington. The shot was taken on Kodachrome 64 film using an exposure of 1/60 sec. at f/8. The camera used was a Canon F-1 with a 100mm macro lens. Brown said, "Photography is just a fun thing for me. I'm close to retiring and would like to do it full time."

## Thompson interview . . .

(Continued from page 3)  
the IUE locals in Warren and Clinton. I am eager to continue to build on those strengths. There is no way we can succeed as a business today if we don't have a close and loyal relationship with our unions. The success of any business depends on its people.

The hourly and salaried people who make up our workforce together can accomplish the kind of quality and cost controls that provide the opportunities for growth. If we are separated in our views and our approaches, there is no way we can succeed. We will continue to do everything we possibly can to make our relationship with our IUE locals the very best possible. We intend to represent ourselves to them as a management group willing to cooperate and find new ways of making this a better place to work.

**CABLEGRAM: Do you feel there needs to be greater employee awareness of the economics of managing Packard Electric in order to achieve our objectives?**

**THOMPSON:** That's a very good question and it can receive a very simple answer — yes. I think we have a very serious problem in the United States, probably emanating from our education system. None of us really have a very strong background and understanding of economics and the things that create jobs and allow wages to be what they are.

Business has probably done a very poor job of trying to communicate to its employees some of the things that are important for success in today's business climate. Most of us are aware that General Motors wages are at the top of the scale among businesses with which we compete. This makes our job of providing a competitive product a very difficult one from a cost standpoint, unless we can attain a greater degree of productivity along with those higher wages. Productivity is something that requires a larger investment. If we pay higher wages, we usually end up with higher investment in order to offset those wage levels. All of these things tend to make us less competitive when we are operating at a higher wage level. We need to find ways to communicate and make our people more aware of the problems we face in the business market, and we need to lay out the types of things that are

necessary for each of us to do in order to help offset higher wages.

**CABLEGRAM: Do you look toward more in the way of overseas expansion for Packard in the coming months or years?**

**THOMPSON:** Looking at the automobile industry, the major buyer of our products, it is evident that the United States has reached a point in the automotive market where the product is relatively mature and the growth that's seen over the next several years is very small from year to year. When you compare that with some of the opportunities that exist in other areas of the world, it is evident that the major growth in the automotive market in the next several years will be in overseas areas. In the past, General Motors was primarily a U.S. operating company, and although they had some overseas auto plants, they had not done a great deal by way of expanding component sales or plants. I agree with the philosophy that has existed at Packard that overseas opportunities are very great, and therefore we will continue to look for ways to expand overseas.

Most employees are aware we have an interest in Germany that will provide us a great opportunity for expansion in the European area. We also have divisional programs going on in other countries throughout the world looking at opportunities and methods to get into those areas. We will have a great deal to say about overseas opportunities as we look forward to expansion at Packard Electric.

**CABLEGRAM: Do you have any final remarks?**

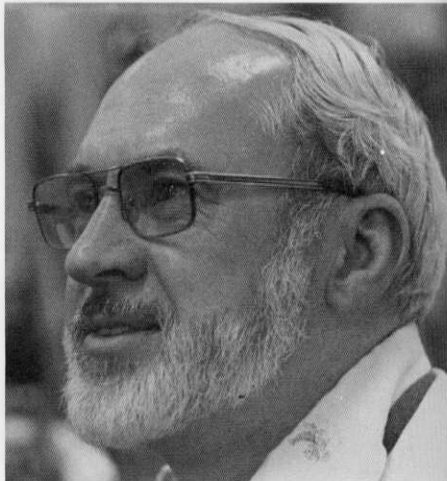
**THOMPSON:** I would like to say that I am very pleased to be here at Packard. I have not had the opportunity yet to meet many of our people, but those I have met I have been most impressed with. I knew that would be true before I came because I have met some of Packard's people before. I have talked with others in General Motors and they have always had only the most favorable things to say about Packard employees. My view at this point is that they underestimated Packard's people, from what I have seen. I am looking forward to meeting more people and I know my wife Mary's and my stay at Packard will be an outstanding time in our service to General Motors.

## Packard probe

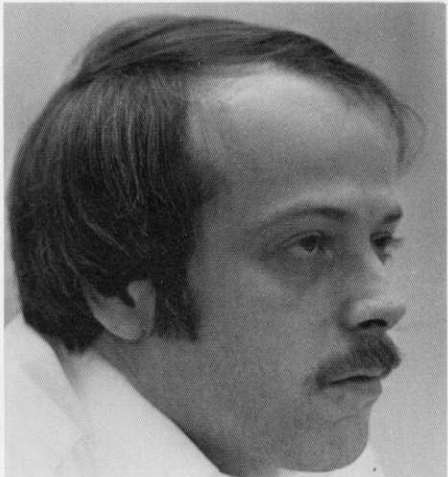
**QUESTION:** The federal government recently approved an additional \$400 million in loan guarantees for the ailing Chrysler Corporation. What is your feeling about this support?

**Warren Burnside,**  
Dept. 1255

*"I approve of it. It gives back all those jobs to those people, and we need Chrysler — certainly, just as Packard needs them and everybody needs them. Why not? It helps us all."*



Burnside



Grimm

**Randy Grimm**  
Dept. 43

*"I think it's really excellent. I think that the government ought to do everything they can to help, so there can be competition within our market."*

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