

# Cutler Bay

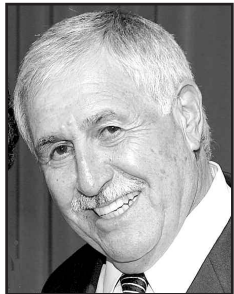
SERVING SOUTH DADE

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## It's time to get serious about decline of American business

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You can't be serious?

Oh yes I can...once in a while. Like now, because I am truly worried about what seems to be happening to our once-great country.

What has been going on with Toyota and all their recalls got my juices flowing. Back in 1973, I purchased my last American-made car — a Chevy Caprice. It stunk. The car jerked and bumped every time it changed gears. The service manager said there was nothing he could do to fix it and not to worry about it.

An insider at the dealership told me the truth. GM had decided to use a much smaller transmission, one designed for a smaller car in an effort to save weight to meet the government standards for mileage set at the time. They also decided to remove a part called the demodulator which smoothes out the shift changes. That saved them money and weight.

Eventually, I became part of a class action suit and got a few hundred bucks back. Big deal. I wrote a letter to the then-president of GM and told him that I had purchased my last U.S. made car and that many other people were probably doing the same thing. I am sure he was really concerned about my letter.

I have since gone through a bunch of German and Japanese cars that have all run well over 100,000 miles with hardly any problems. It seemed those people knew how to make reliable vehicles, an art that we lost

somehow along the way.

Now Toyota is building their cars here in the U.S. and using parts made here as well. And what is happening — the same old stuff. What is wrong with us? I have been to Japan and visited factories there. They are nothing like our facilities. The employee loyalty and devotion to their work is unlike anything you see here.

I worked for one of the major manufacturers of Hi Fi equipment in this country at one time. (Remember when we actually made things here?) When I was out on the road selling, I began to see some strange brands on my customer's shelves like Panasonic and Pioneer.

I asked why the stores were selling these products instead of my American made stuff. The answer was simple: Because the quality and prices were considerably better. I went back to my factory and after fielding dozens of calls from unsatisfied users, went out to the factory floor to see what was going on.

The first thing I noticed was a stack of electronic chassis one on top of the other with nothing separating them to avoid scratching the delicate circuit boards. I went and got the engineer in charge of quality control and asked him to come take a look.

Richard took one look and responded, "Is that all you called me out here for? I was on my coffee break!"

I later was summoned to the vice president's office and given a lecture on minding my own business and not getting the owner of the company upset because it might affect some bonuses. A short time later they instituted a test procedure in which the units were sampled from different lots of assemblies and placed on a rack plugged in for 48 hours to see if they would fail. I went by and noticed

that none of the volume controls were turned up so I cranked them all up. The next morning, Richard and a bunch of others were demanding to know who turned up the controls because almost all of the units were burned out. I admitted the deed and was told by doing that you could burn out the transistors.

I tried to explain that what I did is exactly what customers do once they get their units home. No wonder we were getting so many complaints.

Did anyone care? Maybe the owner of the company who had his name on the product, but the unwritten law was don't pass any bad news up to the boss because he would get mad and it would affect everybody.

The company, of course, is out of business and last I heard Panasonic and Pioneer are doing quite well.

Look into the Toyota story and you will find that the gas pedal problem was well known at the American company CTS, that made them for Toyota, but no one would dare tell the boss.

I was told once that even though we in the U.S. didn't make anything anymore we would become an "information society". The only problem is that all our information has to come from India or the Philippines. I am glad to have lived through the Greatest Generation years but I truly feel sorry for those of you who missed it and must now see us headed downhill very rapidly.

I'll try to get back to being funny in my next article.

*Other articles of national importance can be viewed at Ernie's website at <[www.sochin.com](http://www.sochin.com)>.*