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History

Introduction

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People familiar with Dana know we're not the kind of company to sit by the fire and trade feel-good stories when there's work to be done (and there's always work to be done). So maybe it'll strike them as odd that we're celebrating our heritage. But we're doing more than that. This book is not simply a monument to the Dana family's remarkable history. It's a concrete reminder that our history, our collective experience, is something we can draw strength and wisdom from, something that can help us in the future.

We date our history from 1904, the year Clarence Spicer set up his universal joint manufacturing company in the corner of the Potter Printing Press. But our heritage is much broader and richer than that one company. It embraces all the history of all the companies that have joined the Dana family since then. Those companies are not simply members of the Dana family -- they are the family. And that family is still growing, and moving forward.

And the great distance we've already come is not the exclusive accomplishment of Clarence Spicer, or even of our other founding fathers. Their imagination and determination were essential; but Dana's progress over the years has come from dedicated teamwork as much as individual initiative. If I may use the automobile as an analogy for the Dana journey, our founding fathers built the engine and cranked the starting handle, but it's Dana people who have been driving ever since, and they've brought us a tremendous way.

By that, I mean all Dana people, not just the leaders. We've had some pretty powerful character behind the wheel over the years, but it's the unique character of our company that's given space and opportunity to those people, not the other way round. And that unique character comes from the Dana people who have contributed more than their time and energy and skill; people who have given their hearts and minds too. Dana people have enabled our company to prosper, and so this book is a tribute to their achievement.

As a multi-billion-dollar global corporation, it's easy to underestimate just what an extraordinary accomplishment Dana is. But consider this: between 1900 and 1920, over 2,000 separate, independent companies built one or more cars. Each of those companies had hopes, plans and ambitions. Each believed it had something unique to offer. Yet today, only 23 fairly large car manufacturers exist. To survive is an achievement. To flourish is remarkable.

Why did Dana succeed while others failed? I believe it's because most of those early companies were unprepared for change, or lacked the heart needed for continued leadership. They designed and developed a new product, then sold it, and for a while they prospered. But when they pause a moment to admire their work, the relentless tide of technology swept past them, and they foundered.

I've looked at the patent records held by some of the most influential figures in our history, and they tell the story; Clarence Spicer had some 40 patents issued to him. Albert Weatherhead had 75. A.P. Warner 100. Alexander Brown an incredible 300. They knew it wasn't enough to rely on single product. They knew they had to keep moving. They knew they had to keep ahead.

We can learn from this, and that's another reason for this book, maybe the most important. History