management philosophy, delegation and motivation were all covered, as were the conduct of meetings, public speaking, problem analysis and decision making. Headed by Hillsdale Presidei J. Donald Phillips and Mike Kolivosky, the program had a dramatic impact on many Dana peopl

Beating the cycle

In 1979, the economy was booming, the automotive market was growing, and Dana was outperforming both. Dana's investments in education, communication and diversification were paying off. New plants were being opened worldwide, and Dana employed 30,000 people in the United States alone. Total sales were at $2.8 billion, an all-time high. The only problem was producing enough to meet demand.

Then the bottom fell out of the automotive industry. Demand for Dana's core product lines fell b) half. Dana people fought for all the business they could get, becoming market-oriented rather th product-oriented. Productivity and quality at many Dana plants rose. When European manufacturers made deeper inroads into the North American heavy truck market, Dana responded by designing clutch models for Renault, Volvo and Hino trucks.

But still, plants were closed and jobs lost. Dana did what it could to relocate its people to other divisions, while helping others through outplacement programs. Dana also took opportunities foi growth whenever possible, acquiring Boston Industrial Products and Gresen in 1981.

New CEO Gerry Mitchell and President Stan Gustafson undertook a furious schedule of visiting Dana plants. Docking bays were transformed into conference halls, equipped with chairs for all Dana people, so that they could ask questions and be kept informed. Times were tough, but Da people proved their mettle. Through the recession, while many American automotive companie reported staggering losses, Dana stayed in the black.

The economy began to revive in 1983, and Dana determined to make itself less vulnerable to future recessions by becoming invaluable to customers. That meant designing proprietary products with a distinct advantage, then delivering them with unmatched service.

A capital spending initiative was launched in 1984, with a record investment of $200 million. In t same year, Project 90 was introduced, as Dana people committed to become leaders in technology, quality and low production costs. Patent applications reached an all-time high. Total Quality programs set ambitious goals for Dana people, while Dana placed greater emphasis on education and training than ever before.

The thrust to diversify continued. Acquisitions were made overseas and in the aftermarket, whil the Venture Group took Dana into leasing, real estate, building systems, insurance and savings loans. Meanwhile, Dana continued to run lean. In place of the twelve layers of management tha had been standard in 1970, there were now just five or six. And the number of supervisory positions was constantly being pared.

In place of the large, centralized manufacturing facilities, Dana kept plants small, flexible and technically advanced, and located them near customers. Excellence in Manufacturing and Excellence in Distribution objectives were introduced, emphasizing continuous improvement in quality and productivity. Just In Time delivery schedules were introduced, so that Dana custome wouldn't need to warehouse expensive inventory.

The results of these programs spoke from themselves, as Dana sales rose from $2.5 billion in 1980 to $4.85 billion in 1989.

Gerry Mitchell

Gerald B. Mitchell would be the perfect example of the American dream -- if he weren't Canadia After joining Hayes as a machine operator in 1944, his infectious enthusiasm marked him out fo rapid advancement. Appointed President of Hayes Steel in 1963, he moved to Toledo in 1972, a an executive Vice President.