

Life With Father

Henry Ford was born in July of 1863 - the same month as the Battle of Gettysburg. He died in April of 1947 - when America was well into the atomic age. All his life, he stayed in great physical condition, dared companions to foot races, and carried an axe in his car in case he felt the urge to get out and chop wood. At age 80, he took umbrage when columnist Drew Pearson wrote: 'the 80 year old Ford's declining health might force the Federal Government to take over the Ford Motor Company.' Ford replied - "I don't know how old or young this Pearson person is, but I'll meet him in any contest - foot race, bicycle race, or jumping contest. The Detroit Retail Merchants Association pounced on the chance to sponsor such an event. But Pearson backed off, saying 'hat's off to him for spunk.' No one need worry about the energetic way he is running his war plants.' But Person was right the first time - Ford was fast drifting into senility.

Ford had transformed the automobile industry, perfected the industrial assembly line, shocked the world by announcing a 5\$ day which doubled the average worker's wage. He priced his Model T so every employed person not only wanted one, but could buy one; thus ushering in the age of consumerism. He became the richest man in the world. He

did it faster than Rockefeller, Vanderbilt or Carnegie. He did it without gouging on price, strong-arming competitors or underpaying his workers.

Now Henry Ford did hold unusual views.

‘Brains and initiative are dulled by even the occasional use of alcohol’

‘Prohibition ranks up there with the abolition of slavery’

‘Milk should not be pasteurized; it should be drunk fresh, before it hits the air’

‘Salt should be used for brushing teeth’

‘If you study any criminal you will find an inveterate smoker. The cigarette smoker is more likely to cheat, steal and lie.’

‘If you look closely at any crime, you’ll find a woman behind it’

‘Philanthropy weakens the spirit of self-reliance’

‘History is bunk. I wouldn’t give a nickel for all the history in the world.’

Had a strong belief in reincarnation - when a chicken jumped out of the way of his car, ‘that chicken has been hit in the ass in a former life’

‘If I want a job done right, I pick the man who doesn’t know anything about it’

‘You can live as long as you want if you eat cracked wheat’

‘It’s not necessary to wear glasses. All you need do is exercise your eyes’

Greased his hair with a light grade of kerosene every day because, ‘men who work in the oil fields don’t go bald’

‘The Jew is out to enslave you’

‘Catholics take orders from the Pope’

But when he admired a Jew (such as the Detroit Tiger slugger, Hank Greenburg or Michigan quarterback Harry Newman) he’d say, ‘he’s mixed, not all Jewish or ‘He isn’t a good Catholic.’

One can imagine how it might be to grow up as Henry’s only son and go into Ford right out of high school - with Henry grooming him to someday take over the company.

In 1893, a few weeks after Edsel was born, Henry brought the gasoline engine he’d been tinkering with into the kitchen, where his wife, Clara, was preparing Christmas dinner. Henry got the engine roaring. It vibrated, spewed fumes and made a mess of Clara’s kitchen, but it confirmed Henry’s belief that he could make a gasoline engine to power a horseless carriage. He rented a shed behind his house and set up shop. Chief Engineer at Detroit Edison, he spent every spare moment on refining his engine and building a carriage it could carry.

His quadricycle was a small, boxy buggy mounted on four 28 inch bicycle tires. It weighed 500 pounds, had a horn made from a doorbell, a steering bar, a gas tank under the seat, and no brakes. It’s clutch could produce two speeds - 10 mph and 20 mph. At four a.m. on June 4, 1896, he had Clara waken Edsel, so the two and a half year old could witness its

first run. But the door of the shed wasn't wide enough to let the car out. Henry grabbed an axe and widened the door by knocking out bricks.

By the fall of 1897, Henry had enlarged the quadricycle's seat so Edsel could ride along. Henry was a nuisance on the streets of Detroit - drawing curiosity seekers, making a racket, spooking horses and blocking traffic. But three year old Edsel was delighted.

Henry and Edsel were close, went sledding and ice skating together. Clara laughed when she told friends how Edsel imitated Henry, taking the steps two at a time and carrying a notebook in his pocket to jot down observations. Henry built a workshop for Edsel above their garage, where he and Edsel tinkered on nights and weekends. Edsel had an artistic flair, began making sketches of cars with a particular interest in highly styled foreign cars. He loved to pour over blueprints with his father. A good student, he was taken out of public school in the fifth grade and sent to the prestigious Detroit University School. At age ten, Henry gave Edsel a Model A runabout to drive around the neighborhood. Three years later Henry gave him a Model N which Edsel drove to school.

Most of Edsel's classmates were headed to Ivy league schools and Edsel assumed he would - his teachers thought he'd thrive on a liberal

arts education. But Henry told him he could learn everything he needed to know at the plant. Ford had just moved into the 'Chrystal Palace,' a marvel for the time, where Henry and his patternmaker, Charlie - Cast Iron Charlie Sorensen were taking steps toward developing an assembly line. 'I'd like to put all the College professors in the world out in the Chrystal Palace,' Henry said. "And see what they could produce." As to Edsel's growing interest in fine art, Henry said, "I wouldn't give a nickel for all the art in the world, but if that's your interest, there's museums and the way the company is growing, it won't be long before you can buy any painting you want. Edsel was persuaded.

At 17, Edsel designed a sporty version of the Model-T, with lengthened hood and lowered seats. He called it 'the Torpedo.' Henry was intrigued but never put the car in production. At 19, Edsel drew plans for a low slung 6 cylinder speedster with bucket seats, wire wheels and a V-shaped radiator. Company engineers built the car and Edsel drove it for years. 'I've got a boy I can be very proud of," Henry said.

When Edsel turned 21, Henry took him down to his bank. " This is my son, Edsel, who just turned 21, said Henry. "I have a million dollars of gold in the vault and I want Edsel to have it." Then he put Edsel on the Board of Directors of Ford and appointed him Company secretary a year

later. On January 1, 1919, when Edsel was 26, he was made 'President' of Ford at a salary of \$150,000 a year.

Back on January 5, 1914, Henry had announced the \$5 day and reduced the workday from 9 to 8 hours. Ford was instantly overwhelmed by job seekers and, overnight, Henry became a legend. Ida Tarbell and the Muckrakers had been relentlessly attacking Rockefeller and the 'Robber Barons'; but they embraced Henry, wrote extravagantly in his praise. Those in industry were not as thrilled. They would have to pay their workers more. The Wall Street Journal sniffed, "To double the wage without regard to length of service is to apply Biblical principles in a field where they don't belong." Henry wallowed in the attention. "There is pleasure in making others happy," he said. "What do I want with more money. I'd rather the boys in the plant get the money rather than turn it over to relatives who never helped earn a dollar of it.'

Encouraged by his growing fame, Henry set out to stop the First World War. 'I know who started the war - the German Jewish bankers. I'm going after the Jews who started the war.'

He engaged a ship - "The Peace Ship" - and set sail for Europe to stop the war - with reporters and the most influential passengers he

could recruit. At sea, the peaceniks got to squabbling, and Henry got disgusted; left the group to return home as soon as the Peace Ship landed in Europe. “Well the Company got a million dollars of advertising out of it,” Henry told Edsel.

And the \$5 day wasn't altogether virtuous. During the preceding year, Ford had made huge strides with the assembly line and was producing half the cars in the US - over three times what they'd produced two years before. But workers were leaving in droves - unable to take being pushed at automaton-like jobs. Training replacements was a huge cost. That problem disappeared with workers lucky enough to land a 5\$ a day job. And Henry's employees could now afford to buy his cars.

‘A great man,’ Edsel called his father. Edsel was uncomfortable with Henry's anti-Semitism, but kept quiet (as he would on that all his life). But he once tried to please his father by telling a joke about a Jew. And then felt ashamed. He was the best witness in support of his father during the libel trial following Henry's suit against the Chicago Tribune for calling Henry an ‘ignorant idealist and an anarchist.’ Henry was cross-examined for 8 days, describing the Monroe Doctrine as ‘a big brother act,’ and Benedict Arnold as ‘a writer.’ In spite of the cross-examination, Henry won a verdict but was awarded only 6 cents in damages. In truth

he was not damaged in the public eye. To the contrary, folks ate up newspaper accounts of Henry's answers and the way he sat in the court room with legs crossed, rubbing a hand across his jaw like a country store philosopher. "I don't read books because they mess up my mind, he testified. 'I can find a man in five minutes who could tell me all about that.'" 'What was the United States before it became the United States?' he was asked. "Land I guess," Henry answered. The judge and jury laughed. Henry become a folk hero.

When the US finally entered the Great War, Henry did not want Edsel to be drafted. Edsel was on the Board, the company secretary, having lunch every day with his father and Charlie Sorenson. Henry got Sorenson to convince Edsel to request an exemption. The draft board denied it. Henry believed it was payback for his pacifist activities. An appeal was then made to President Wilson. 'Concerned citizens' cried foul. "I honestly believe my value is greatest here at Highland Park.' Edsel said. 'But if not, I want no stay-at-home appointment. I will accept none.' Edsel got the exemption.

Then, in 1918 Henry ran for the Senate. He'd had nothing to do with politics, rarely voted and was no Democrat, but President Wilson told him, 'I need you.' Henry refused to campaign but drew great

support, and surged to a probable victory. Until the issue of Edsel's deferment got injected into the campaign. Teddy Roosevelt (whose own father had hired a substitute to stay out of the Civil War) went public to denounce Ford and the exemption. 'Michigan is facing a clear-cut choice,' Teddy said, 'between patriotism and foolish pacifism that derides the American flag.' For the rest of his life, Edsel Ford carried the stigma of draft dodger.

By 1920, Ford was turning out cars at one a minute, and Henry cut the price from \$575 to \$440. By 1925, a car every 10 seconds. But sales had peaked in 1923, at 2.12 million when Ford had 57% of the US market. In 1924 Ford sold only 1.87 million and in 1926, 1.465 million. There was a new kid on the block - General Motors, where William S. Knudsen was introducing style and color at Chevrolet. Henry's notion that the customer can have any color he wants so long as it's black was wearing thin. Henry had hired Knudsen at Ford in 1910 and Knudsen had become production manager at Highland Park. But Henry fired Knudsen in 1921 - 'not because he was no good,' Henry said. 'But because he was too good.' Meaning Ford was Henry's company and Knudsen had gotten too big for his britches.

Edsel was the one who pushed hardest for changes in the Model T to reverse Ford's slumping sales. Edsel had always been intrigued by style and while Henry was on vacation, he had engineers chop, weld and section the body of a Model T to make it longer and lower - softening its top heavy, boxy look. The model, painted bright red, was put in the officer's garage at Highland Park. Henry went down on the evening he returned. He stood for a while, eyeing the model, then asked what it was. Told it was 'a new car,' he asked, 'Ford car?' He walked around the car 3 or 4 times, examining it closely. Then he yanked the driver side door off its hinges. He ripped off the passenger door. Bang goes the windshield. He jumped over the back seat and pounded on the top, all the while cussing a blue streak.

But Edsel refused to give up, repeatedly telling Henry how the Model T should be changed. Henry confessed to Sorenson that Edsel had become more than he could take. 'Father I think it is time to consider hydraulic brakes,' Edsel suggested. 'Edsel, you shut up. You are too soft. The Ford car will continue to be built in the same way. The Model T is a God. Are you telling me how to design a car?' Later, Henry walked out on Edsel while he was making a pitch at the drawing board. 'Get Edsel to take a trip to California and make it a long one,' Henry told

Sorenson. 'Tell him I'll send his paycheck and let him know when I need him back.' Sorenson delayed acting, but advised Edsel that it was useless to press Henry for change. Edsel capitulated. 'Well my father built the business,' he said. 'It's his to do what he wants.'

As the company grew, Edsel saw the need for a new administrative building. He authorized it and a foundation was dug. Henry came into Edsel's office and asked - 'what's that for. 'We need more office space, Edsel said. 'Why do you say that?' A secretary's desk was covered with stacks of paper. Henry grabbed them and threw them in a waste basket. 'Now you have less to worry about, he told the secretary. 'We don't need that building,' Henry said. Edsel agreed to fill the hole. 'No don't do it yet - just leave it a while' - and there it stood accumulating muddy water for months, a standing reminder to all who passed, of Edsel's folly and who ran the company. 'If that's how father wants it, Edsel told Sorenson, 'that's the way it's going to be.'

Later Edsel approved a request to construct more coke ovens, needed at the brand new Rouge plant. When Henry heard, he told Sorenson, "Wait till Edsel gets those built, then have them demolished.' 'I don't know what kick father gets out of humiliating me this way,' Edsel said. His public statement, however, was: 'I only hope I can make all my

mistakes while father is here to show them to me.’ But he had acquired the habit of tearing sheets of paper into bits and throwing them into a waste basket. When criticized by Henry his neck would tighten and his stomach cramp. When upset he often vomitted.

Edsel had become a close friend with his brother in law, Ernest Kanzler, a bright young lawyer who Henry had persuaded to come work at Ford. Henry was impressed by Kanzler and promoted him to business manager of Henry Ford & Son. But Henry soured as the relationship got closer between Kanzler and Edsel. Henry resented anyone, beside himself, who might have influence over Edsel. He'd even regarded Edsel getting married as a mistake. Henry started muttering that Kanzler was ‘piddling in Edsel’s ear,’ turning Edsel against him. Kanzler like Edsel, saw that Ford was falling behind due to failure to change the Model T. And Kanzler told Henry so. That was it. Henry waited until Edsel was on a trip to Europe. ‘Well by this time,’ Henry told Sorenson, “Edsel is out on the Ocean. So tomorrow you get rid of his pal Kanzler.’

‘I’m very disappointed in Edsel,’ Henry said. ‘He’s a weakling.’ Henry had found a surrogate son who was no weakling. It was Harry Bennett, a brawler, who kept lions and tigers in a cave at his Ypsilanti ‘castle’ - gifts from his buddy, lion tamer Clyde Beatty. Bennett was

Henry's target-shooting companion and carried guns under each shoulder. When he told a man to take the cigar out of his mouth and the man hesitated, Bennett shot the cigar out of his mouth. Sorenson sent a tough guy over to test Bennett. Bennett laid him out. When stories of Bennett's violence got back to Henry, he'd say 'That wasn't my Harry, was it?' Henry promoted Bennett to head of security and authorized him to form a 'Service Department' to police the Rouge. Henry also asked Bennett to have his men 'protect' Edsel and his family - and report to Henry on Edsel's activities.

Edsel kept pressing the argument for design change. 'A Ford can take you anywhere except into society,' Henry said. "All a customer wants is a durable, cheap car that won't break down.

Ford bought the Lincoln Motor Car Company, which Edsel wanted but which Henry was lukewarm about. But Henry, a crafty manipulator, saw an opportunity to divert Edsel's passion for change into Lincoln. At Lincoln, Edsel had a free rein on design and his Lincoln Continental - a car honored in the Museum of Modern Art - was called 'the most beautiful car ever built,' by Frank Lloyd Wright.

By 1927, with Ford being crushed by General Motors, Edsel had Ford's engineers, dealers and sales people on his side. Henry had to give in and announced the end of the Model T. Edsel was put in charge of styling a new model and in December of 1927, Henry introduced it as his Model A - to tremendous response.

But all was not well. The Union movement was gathering steam. 'Labor will never win because for every man at Rouge who might want to strike,' said Henry, 'there are five waiting to take his job. The Depression came and Henry's argument held sway. But this?, from the man who'd given workers \$5 a day because 'there is pleasure in making others happy' and 'workers should share profits generated by the sweat of their labor?'

On the cold, gray morning of March 7, 1932, 3,000 laid off employees marched to the gates of the Rouge, asking for jobs, medical care and emergency relief. The demonstrators, in high spirits were peacefully escorted by police. When they reached Dearborn, fire hoses were turned on them and they fought back, throwing rocks at Bennett's goons. Shots were fired. Suddenly, in the midst of the chaos, Bennett drove through the gate. 'We want Bennett' the mob was shouting. 'I'm Bennett,' he announced. That was met with a barrage of rocks. Bullets

ripped through the crowd as bodies of the fallen were dragged away. Five died of gunshot wounds, and Bennett was kicked unconscious after a rock hit him in the back of the neck. Fortunately he fell under the corpse of one of the march leaders - which shielded him from further harm. Henry, Edsel and Sorenson were having lunch when news of the disaster reached them. The three drove to the scene, where bodies were lying in pools of blood everywhere. When Henry saw Bennett, with blood oozing through the bandages wrapped around his head, Henry went white with shock. There were tears in his eyes. 'It was,' recalled a witness, 'as if Henry were staring down at his own wounded son.'

With the country coming out of the Depression, the United Auto Workers agreed to affiliate with the CIO. GM agreed to a contract with the union on February 11, 1937 and Chrysler capitulated less than a month later 'The union can't do anything for my men that I'm not doing for them already,' Henry said. 'Unions are organized, not by laborers but by Jew financiers.' 'There will never be a union at Ford. But once again Henry faced resistance from Edsel.

After the union campaign began, it was never happy between Edsel and Henry. In public they put up a united front, but Edsel was deeply resentful and Henry was more than ever determined to 'toughen Edsel

up.’ Edsel wanted to bargain with the union, felt the fight would damage sales. He thought agreement was inevitable and that a fair one could be negotiated. GM and Chrysler had done just fine after signing with the union. “I will meet with no union official,” Henry said. You Sorenson, and you, Edsel will have no contact with the union or any part in this. I’ve picked someone to deal with the Union. He’s waiting in Charlie’s office. We’ll go tell him he has support from all of us.’ They went down to Harry Bennett’s office. Bennett, bubbling with enthusiasm for this assignment, boasted ‘I feel the same as Mr. Ford. If any agitator is foolish enough to come in he’ll be mauled. If necessary, I’ll take the union over.’ He made the boast because of his connections to the Detroit mob.

By 1936, Ford’s share of the market had dropped to 22%, behind General Motors at 43% and even worse, Chrysler at 25%. On May 26, 1937, union demonstrators gathered at the pedestrian overpass to Miller Rd. Underneath, a line of black cars appeared to be funeral procession. But under their jackets the passengers had bats and clubs. Handpicked by Bennett, they were hard luck bruisers, thugs who worked for the Detroit mob, ex-baseball players, recently freed jailbirds, wrestlers , a well-known local boxer and former Michigan football Players. Bennett was a buddy of Michigan football coach Harry Kipke. Henry would later

boast, 'I could send over some of Harry's boys to take care of Adolph Hitler.' Unfortunately for Ford, reporters and photographers showed up for the 1937 battle between Union and Bennett's boys. Union organizers were unmercifully beaten. Women, passing out leaflets were pushed, kicked and slapped. Walter Reuther was kicked in the head, kidneys and groin. Semi-conscious, he was thrown down 36 iron steps. A union leader had his jacket pulled up over his head so they could pummel his stomach and groin. A minister bystander had his back broken. Bennett was quite pleased, but photographs in Life Magazine proved to be Ford's undoing. The publicity was devastating and the Senate Civil liberties subcommittee sent out investigators. Henry retaliated by yanking all advertising from Life, Time and Fortune (ads didn't appear for another 18 mos.) Great way to reverse the slump in car sales. But Henry knew what his problem was. J Edgar Hoover had given him names of 'Commies who were involved'.

Henry fought off the UAW for the next four years. Then, on April 1, 1941, 50,000 men at Lincoln, Highland Park and the Rouge walked off. They were told 'you left your jobs. You're fired.' Henry instructed Bennett to 'arm his people and use tear gas if necessary.' Edsel pled with his father not to do this, and for once Henry listened. Edsel took

advantage of Henry's oft made boast that 'my workers are solidly behind me - I do more for them than any union could.'" Edsel convinced Henry to agree to an election. An election was against Henry's 'principles' but he felt sure he'd win. The vote went 70% for the CIO/UAW, 27% to AFL, and 3% to stay nonunion. Henry was flabbergasted. He lashed out at Edsel for 'the biggest disappointment in my career.' 'The Jews are persecuting me, Henry said. "Close the plant down. Let the Union run it if they can.' Sorenson pointed out that government contracts would be breached. 'Well, if the government steps in, Henry said. "They will be in the motorcar business and not me.'

But the next morning Henry signed, giving the UAW everything - more than they'd obtained from GM or Chrysler. Edsel asked Sorenson, 'What in the world happened?' Sorenson replied, 'I was about to ask you the same thing.' All they could get out of Bennett was, 'Mr. Ford wanted the contract signed.' What happened was that Clara Ford told Henry she'd leave him if he didn't sign. She'd been agonizing over the stress being put on her son, Edsel. 'Don't ever discredit the power of a woman,' Henry told the press. Then Henry took public pride in having given his employees more than Ford or Chrysler.

In 1941, Edsel, with support from Sorenson brought his sons Henry II (Hank the Deuce) and Benson into the company. Henry didn't like this, fearing it might be a step toward wresting control of the company from him. But Henry held off for a couple of months. Then he ordered The Deuce and Benson to be banished from Dearborn. 'Send them to California,' Henry told Edsel. 'But keep them on the payroll.' Edsel enlisted Sorenson's support and Sorenson told Henry, 'Edsel has given me your message about Benson and young Henry. I am opposed to such action and if you have any idea I'll carry this out, forget it. Furthermore, if you do this yourself, I am through.' A look of hatred came over Henry's face. But he backed down, and the next day Henry came into Sorenson's office, nice and friendly, as if nothing had happened between them. Edsel could only say, "I don't understand why father acts this way,"

As America was drawn closer to war, President Roosevelt asked William Knudsen - the same Knudsen who'd been at Ford and GM - to head up national production. Edsel was enthusiastic about being part of democracy's arsenal and Henry reluctantly agreed to build 60,000 highly sophisticated Rolls Royce engines for England. Edsel and Sorensen kept Henry informed of negotiations and then went to Washington to sign the contract. Then Henry called them to say he'd changed his mind. Edsel

had to tell Knudsen. 'Bill, father won't do it.' 'But Mr. Ford, we have your word,' said Knudsen. 'You know father,' said Edsel. 'But you are President of Ford,' Knudsen countered. Edsel had no answer. Knudsen came out to Detroit to persuade Henry. Henry told him, 'You're all right, William, but you're in with a bad crowd there in Washington.' Knudsen told Henry that President Roosevelt had been told Ford would make the engines and that the President was pleased. At this, Henry went ballistic. He hated Roosevelt and deplored the fact the Roosevelt had put a woman (Frances Perkins) in his cabinet - as Secretary of Labor, no less. And a Jew was Secretary of the Treasury. "I won't make any of those engines,' He shouted.

The UAW accused Henry of being a Nazi sympathizer. That had some force. Henry had praised Neville Chamberlain's peace efforts. 'War is the product of greedy financiers,' he said, even suggesting, ' I think Hitler might listen to my suggestions.'" On Henry's 75th birthday in 1938, he had accepted the Supreme Order of the German Eagle from Hitler's emissaries. It was the highest honor any non-German could receive. Hitler kept a framed portrait of 'Heinrich Ford' in his office. A well-thumbed copy of Ford's autobiography - 'My Life And Work' - was later

discovered among Hitler's papers. The Nazis had closely followed Henry's anti-Semitic diatribes in 'The Independent' - Ford's newspaper.

But Edsel was winning support from nearly everyone in management and sales. They were waiting for Henry to die so Edsel could get the company prospering again. Unfortunately Edsel's health was failing faster than his father's. For some time he'd suffered from ulcers, and had spent hours on his office couch eating crackers and drinking milk. His stomach pain and vomiting resisted treatment. Henry blamed the problems on Edsel's social life. 'First he will have to change his way of living.' Henry said 'Then I'll get my chiropractor to work on him.' While Edsel and his family were on vacation, Henry went over to Edsel's estate and smashed the bottles in Edsel's liquor cabinet with a crow bar.

Then Edsel was diagnosed with Undulant Fever, which can be caused by drinking unpasteurized milk. This did cause Henry to re-assess his views on the value of unpasteurized milk and get rid of his cows. He threatened to fire every doctor at the Ford Hospital. Edsel underwent surgery and part of his stomach was removed. He improved a little, then began to lose weight. Harry Bennett started calling him 'the weakling' to other Ford managers and employees. "Edsel's emotional reactions and

upset stomachs are just like a little kid who can't stand on his own," Bennett said.

After America entered the war, Henry changed course again, reversing his opposition to government contract work. He thrilled to the grandiosity of Willow Run, which had been quickly built and brought into operation by Edsel and Charlie Sorenson. Nineteen months after first approval of plans for Willow Run, Ford delivered the first B-24's. At Willow run, Ford would build 57,000 aircraft engines, 250,000 jeeps, 93,217 military trucks, 26,954 tank engines, 1,718 tanks and tank destroyers, 4,291 gliders, 13,000 amphibians and 12,500 armored cars.

But at a cost to Edsel, who despite crippling pain, was working 12 to 16 hours a day to keep Willow Run on track to meet deadlines. And Edsel still had to deal with Harry Bennett. Harry fired a long time Ford executive who'd caught Bennett favoring cronies on contracts. Edsel tried to reverse the firing, but Henry backed Bennett. Informed that Bennett was going to place armed guards around Edsel's estate Point and the residences of Edsel's adult sons, Edsel shouted, 'Leave my sons alone. You've made up and fed father most of these kidnap stories.' Harry Bennett ripped off his jacket and balled his fists. Sorenson's intervention prevented Bennett from slugging Edsel but several days later

Bennett challenged Sorenson to a fight. Sorenson turned away, so Bennett punched out Sorenson's aide.

Edsel's wife and sons urged Edsel to quit. She and Edsel (but no one else) knew he had incurable cancer of the stomach. But notwithstanding his illness, Edsel didn't quit. Willow Run needed him.

On April, 15, 1943 Henry called Sorenson in. You confront Edsel, Henry demanded. 'Tell him to reform his attitude and behavior. Tell Edsel he will support Harry Bennett against every obstacle. Tell Edsel he will regain his health by cooperating fully with Henry Ford.'

The next morning Sorenson conveyed this message along with a pledge of support to Edsel. 'The best thing for me to do is resign,' Edsel said. 'I appreciate your support, but my health won't let me go on.' Edsel was in tears. Sorensen stressed that the company needed Edsel, and Edsel was persuaded. But he was frail, in constant pain and on death's door.

Three weeks later Edsel collapsed and his wife told Henry (what she had known for nearly a year) that Edsel had incurable cancer. Henry refused to believe it. He contacted the doctors at the Ford Hospital and

demanded they restore Edsel to health. After two more weeks Edsel fell into a coma and died on May 26, 1943 at age 49.

Henry went into a shock from which he never really recovered. For days he walked around in a stupor, not talking to anyone. Then Henry reinstated himself as President of Ford. He took steps to make Harry Bennett his successor. He asked Bennett, "Do you think I was ever cruel to Edsel?" "If it had been me you treated that way it wouldn't have been cruel, Bennett said. 'If it had been me, I'd a got mad.' 'That's what I wanted Edsel to do - get mad. Fight back,' Henry said. But he pressed Bennett for a more honest answer. "Cruel, no,' said Bennett. 'But unfair, yes.' Charlie Sorenson saw it differently. 'I couldn't believe the brutal things Mr. Ford did to his own son '

On September 1, 1945, and under pressure from Clara and Edsel's widow, Eleanor (who threatened to sell her stock), Henry offered the presidency of Ford to Edsel's son - Hank the Deuce. The Deuce (just shy of 28) proved to be no push over. 'I'll take it only if I have complete control,' he said. Henry, after unleashing a string of profanity, gave in. He had no choice. The next day Harry Bennett told the Deuce. 'I have wonderful news. I've talked Mr. Ford into making you President of the

Company.’ The Deuce told Bennett, ‘ I have plans for the company and you don’t fit into them’.

A year and a half later, Henry Ford, a senile, depressed and broken man, died at age 84.