

Akio Toyoda - DETROIT HALL OF FAME ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

First, may I offer my congratulations to my fellow honorees and my thanks to our hosts.

And thank you Greg, for those kind words.

I will keep them in mind the next time an open point becomes available!

Although I suppose you won't be interested unless it's a really big one, right?

But seriously, as a dealer who sells nearly 40 different auto brands...

you continue to set the highest standard...

and as a leader in this industry...

you will always have my deepest admiration and gratitude.

Now, before I begin ... I want to let you in on a little secret ...

two days ago ... I had an accident driving one of our off-road vehicles ...

so if I look a little banged up ... it's because I am!

But don't worry ... the car is fine!

And the same can be said for all Toyota and Lexus Dealers around the world.

I may be biased, but I count myself lucky to have such exceptional partners.

And it is their shoulders I stand on today... as well as their associates...

and the nearly 400,000 Toyota employees around the world.

This honor really belongs to all of them.

But of course, I'm still happy to accept it!

For me, Detroit is to the auto industry... what Hollywood is to the film industry.

And it's a place my family has always deeply admired.

When my grandfather Kiichiro, first came to Detroit as a young man...

he was so amazed by what he witnessed here that he was determined to create a car for Japan.

Years later, in 1957, my father Shoichiro would arrive in Detroit driving a Toyopet Crown, the first car Toyota would import to the U.S.

He was so proud and so confident of this car. He even parked it in front of Ford 's Headquarters and took a picture!

But then... he drove it on the I-94 ... and his confidence went ... right out the window! That poor Crown could barely go 60 miles an hour ... if that.

Not only was it getting passed by every other vehicle in order to get enough speed to actually merge that mighty Crown onto the freeway...

My Dad could only use the on-ramps that went down ... not up!

Oh what a feeling, that must have been!

But the Toyota principle of Kaizen, or continuous improvement, would soon mean that we would build a competitive car.

And today...

with millions of vehicles sold worldwide, Toyota has succeeded far beyond my grandfather's dreams.

And he, along with my father would go on to be honored by this very place that inspired them both so many years ago.

And now... as the third-generation Toyoda, I find myself here following in their footsteps.

This was never a sure thing, by the way, since it's often said the third generation knows no hardship or... ruins everything!

But so far, so good.

As long as I can remember...

I have always loved cars.

In fact, when I was a little kid, I wanted to grow up to be a taxi driver.

I didn't quite get there, but it's pretty close.

I get to do the thing I love most in the world - drive cars. Very fast.

Of course, as you've heard, I had to overcome many challenges when I was President of Toyota. But what sustained me... what inspired me... was the loyalty and support of our customers, our employees, our suppliers, and our dealers.

Because the truth is, winning their hearts has always been my biggest motivation and my biggest reward.

How many cars we sell has never been the most important thing to me.

What matters most is what those cars mean to the people that buy them.

You see, what we sell is happiness.

Who in the world has ever been unhappy when taking delivery of a car?

Cars are exciting... joyful... extraordinary things.

In fact, without question, all of us in this room are incredibly lucky.

Think about it.

We get to be part of the single greatest... most exciting... most rewarding... and in my opinion, coolest industry in the world!

And we should never take our role in it for granted.

Think about the collective power represented in this room.

automakers... suppliers... dealers... distributors... motorsports... journalists.

Together, we have an extraordinary ability to make people's lives better.

And like all good superheroes... I believe we should unite our strengths and use our collective power for good!

As an industry, we face many uncertainties and many challenges in the days and years ahead. But we also have many opportunities.

What if we focused a little less on competing and a little more on collaboration on what we can do together, to make a positive impact.

I mean, wouldn't it be great if we could just all row together?

You know, like the Nor-wee-jen fans at the World Cup?

(Roo!)

I honestly want everyone in this room... everyone in this industry... to succeed.

I want all of us to win.

So tonight... please allow me to offer all of you my hand in thanks... in friendship... and in partnership.

Like my grandfather and father before me...

I am deeply moved by this honor... an honor I humbly promise to continue to earn every day... in support of this industry and this automotive family that I am so grateful to be a part of.

Together, there is nothing we can't imagine... nothing we can't create... and nothing we can't overcome.

So wherever the road takes us, let's enjoy the ride together!

Thank you very much.