



AUTO BOND

BY JUDITH TACKETT

Two Japanese manufacturing facilities land in Washington County

Mention the automotive sector in Tennessee and the first thoughts are likely to be of major manufacturing operations in Smyrna, La Vergne and Spring Hill in Middle Tennessee, of suppliers scattered throughout Tennessee's geographic center, and, most recently, of the new white-collar jobs created through the 2005 relocation of Japanese automaker Nissan's North American headquarters to the Nashville area.

Now add Washington County in Upper East Tennessee to that vision.

The \$40 million startup investment that Japanese-owned automotive industry companies Koyo Corp. of USA and Nakatetsu Machining Technologies recently

announced for two new manufacturing facilities in Tennessee represents the largest outside manufacturing investment in Washington County in 15 years. The planned facilities will be located in the new Washington County Industrial Park on Highway 11E about six miles outside of Jonesborough.

Koyo Corp. of USA will initially invest about \$26 million for its bearing manufacturing company, says P.C. Snapp, economic development director for Washington County. The remaining \$14 million will be for Nakatetsu Machining Technologies, a joint venture between Koyo and Nakatetsu Inc. that will create early-process bearing components for Koyo.

"They will start with about 150 employees," Snapp

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Pictured: Dr. William Messerschmidt and Dr. Herb Ladley





BY DREW RUBLE

The Man in Blue

A former major league umpire turned Volunteer State lawmaker goes to bat for small business in Tennessee

(An excerpt from the April 2007 www.businessrn.com online exclusive)

For 27 years as a major league umpire, Jonesborough native Dale Ford applied the rules. Now an elected member of the Tennessee General Assembly representing Washington and Hawkins Counties, the Republican is busy making them instead. “This legislative job is a lot harder than umpiring the big leagues,” Ford says. “You walk on the field and you are the boss. Down here, you’re not. You just have to work hard at it. But the best part is you have a chance to help people. That’s a great thing.”

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says, but “both companies are planning to expand.”

The jobs supplied by these two suppliers will be high tech in nature, with some workers being initially sent for training to Japan, according to Snapp.

For Koyo, the Washington County plant will be its third North American location. Koyo is owned by JTEKT Corp., a manufacturer of steering, driveline, bearings and machine tools that employs about 30,000 people worldwide and has annual global sales of approximately \$10 billion. U.S. operations are headquartered in Westlake, Ohio. Koyo’s two other operating manufacturing plants are in Orangeburg and Blythewood, S.C. Establishment of this third plant, company officials say, will enable Koyo to raise its monthly production capacity for tapered roller bearings—a high-function type of bearing used in automobiles and other applications—from its current level of one million sets to 1.5 million sets. Koyo is among the world’s largest automotive component suppliers for brands including Toyota, Honda, Ford, GM, DaimlerChrysler and BMW.

More evidence of Tennessee’s increasing status as an automotive industry powerhouse is that Koyo selected Tennessee from among potential locations in five states. Washington County specifically met Koyo’s needs “with an experienced workforce and an ideal logistical location, plus the outstanding commitment and cooperation from the state, county, TVA, regional utilities and the surrounding cities,” says Koyo’s general manager, Steve McCullough. (Washington County is located along two interstates—I-



Groundbreaking ceremony at Washington County Industrial Park

81 and I-26—and approximately 60% of the U.S. population is reachable within one day’s drive.)

The jobs are needed. Over the last few years, the county has followed state and national trends as it has

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For instance, the freshman lawmaker recently sponsored a bill to create a special joint legislative committee to study an incentives program for small businesses, the primary creators of most Tennessee jobs.

"We have all kinds of programs and incentives for businesses of 25 employees and over in Tennessee," Ford complains. "But we don't have anything to offer people who employ less than 25."

Though focused on legislative matters, it requires very little arm-twisting to get Ford talking about his big league career. Here are some highlights from a recent interview:

On former Baltimore Orioles manager Earl Weaver (and their strained relationship)

▶ "The only record I have in 27 years in the big leagues is that I ran Earl Weaver out of a game one night during the national anthem. That's a record."

On the death of former New York Yankees manager Billy Martin (and their strained relationship—Ford even sued Martin once)

▶ "When he got killed that Christmas Eve, I got a call from a New York sports writer that Christmas Day. He said, 'Dale, are you going to Billy Martin's funeral?' And I said, 'You bet I am.' And he said, 'Why, you all hated each other.' And I said, 'I want to make sure it's him.'"

On his rapport with catchers, particularly Yankees catcher Thurman Munson

▶ "He called me hillbilly, and I called him everything under the sun. We got along. But he had a piece of leather on his mitt tied in knots. And when a guy would check swing that thing would flip back in his glove and make a tick sound. He'd get up and say, 'didn't you hear that foul tip?' So Yogi Berra is managing one night and that happened. And Yogi's back up the runway

smoking a cigarette. Somebody yells, 'Yogi, Yogi, we have an argument.' So he comes running out on the field, smoke still coming out of his mouth and nose. He stops and looks at Munson and says, 'What happened, what happened?' Munson replies, 'Check swing, he foul-tipped the ball, you could hear it.' And Yogi turns to me and says, 'Jesus Christ, Dale! A blind man could have heard that.'"

On the steroid scandal plaguing major league baseball

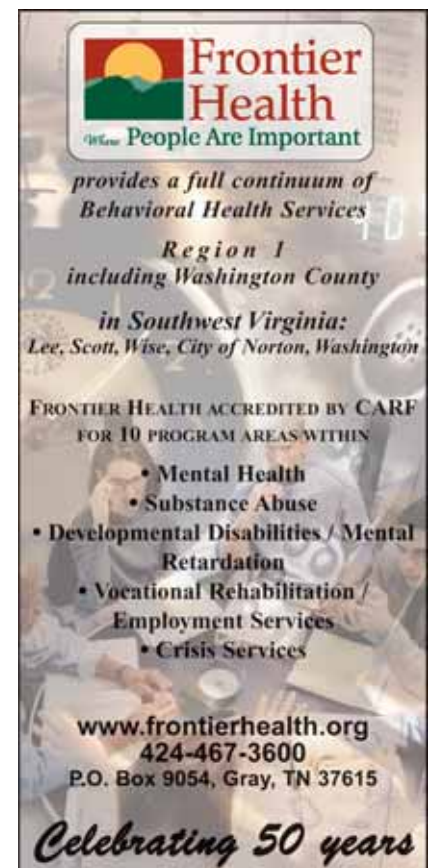
▶ "I think it was more than 80%. When Mark McGwire came into the major leagues, I was already there. He was so skinny that when he turned sideways to take his signs he looked like a zipper. And when he retired, his arms were bigger than my legs. Sammy Sosa, when he came up with the White Sox, I was there. He was just a little kid, I mean maybe 160 pounds—a skinny-looking kid. Now he's a fire hydrant. You know that's not natural." **tn**



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Celebrating 50 years

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lost some of its manufacturing base, says County Mayor George Jaynes. The two new manufacturing plants, Jaynes hopes, will help keep the work situation stable and serve to attract more manufacturing companies to the area.

The Washington County Industrial Park currently houses Bushog, a company selling mowing equipment. Koyo Corp. will occupy a floor space of about 75,000 square feet while Nakatetsu Machining Technologies will occupy a floor space of about 67,800 square feet. Snapp says the county is working on acquiring adjacent acreage.

Washington County is also doing some smart development of its own on a nearby site where it is building a new elementary school. A novel approach to school site selection, Washington County planning officials deemed the site advantageous in an effort to stimulate greater interaction between the local labor force and nearby schoolchildren. (A new four-lane road connecting the site to the Tri-Cities Regional Airport, which will reduce that trip from 30 minutes to 15 and allow visiting Japanese executives to avoid circuitous back roads, completes the overall development plan.)

Jaynes says other companies have already reached out to Washington County leaders to explore opportunities to open additional sites, but adds he is not willing yet to talk about who those companies are. He does say, however, that Washington County has been very picky in selecting companies for its new industrial park.

"We've been waiting for something like this," he says. "We felt [Koyo and Nakatetsu] would be a solid cornerstone for our park."

From a statewide perspective, the success in landing the two Japanese automotive companies certainly adds to Tennessee's burgeoning reputation as a cornerstone of the automotive sector. **tn**

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