

Toyota Celebrates 10-Millionth Vehicle Made in Kentucky; First Camry Rolled Off Line at Georgetown Plant in 1988

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[Toyota Produces First Car at New Kentucky Plant \[1988\]](#)

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (May 29, 2014) – Avery Bussell Jr. always thought he'd be a farmer. However, with times on the family farm a little tough in 1988, the 22-year-old threw his name into the mix for a job at a new company that was setting up shop 55 miles away – Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky (TMMK).

One small problem: he was one of over 100,000 others who were applying for about 3,000 jobs.

“I didn't think I had a chance to get hired,” Bussell said. “But, I did, and it changed my life.”

Now, 26 years later, Bussell – a group leader on the plant floor – and 7,000 other TMMK team members are celebrating the 10-millionth vehicle manufactured at the Georgetown, Ky., plant.

“I was worried about my future. I knew Toyota would take care of that; you have that with Toyota – a job for life,” he said.

In a ceremony at the plant today, [the “first” Camry that came off the line in 1988](#) sat next to the 10-millionth vehicle – also a Camry. Speaking to a crowd that included team members, community supporters and government dignitaries, plant President Wil James noted: “Obviously, these two vehicles are worlds apart in many ways, but, at the same time, identical in others – particularly when it comes to craftsmanship and the care and love that went into their production.”

James should know. He was hired as a mechanical engineer in 1987, but convinced the company to enlist him as a “group” leader on the production floor so he could better understand its management style – respect for people, consensus building and Kaizen (continuous improvement).

“Many people may be surprised at our growth and the success the past 26 years; I am not,” James said. “We have the best, most dedicated work force in the world. It is all about family, working together to make the best product for the customer.”

Kaneyoshi Kusunoki, TMMK's first president, had similar remarks at the “first-car ceremony” in May, 1988.

“This car is a symbol of our most important company principle – team work. For this reason, I have declared that our first car shall be preserved forever in Kentucky for our team members. It is to remind us not only of what we have accomplished today, but, more importantly, what we can achieve in the future through team work.”

The 10-millionth vehicle will have a different fate. While TMMK's first Camry was preserved for historical purposes, one lucky team member will get the chance to win the 10 millionth vehicle – a white hybrid Camry – via a blind drawing, which will take place later this summer.

In addition to Camry, the No. 1 selling car 15 out of the last 16 years in the U.S., the Kentucky plant currently produces the Avalon and Venza. In 2015, the plant will become the first in the U.S. to make a Lexus vehicle – the ES350. Past models have included the Sienna mini-van and the Solara. Since inception, Toyota has invested \$5.9 billion in the Georgetown plant – its largest in North America.

“I was lieutenant governor when Toyota came to Kentucky in 1986, and, over the years, it has been incredible to watch and assist in the growth that has taken place,” said Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear. “This plant now has 7,000 team members, and we look forward to continued growth with 750 jobs being added when production starts for the first U.S.-assembled Lexus next year.”

As TMMK neared the 10-million mark, numerous Toyota owners shared their stories. One such customer, Victoria Walker of Midway, Ky., has gone as far as to include several posts to her blog (Single Sojourner) about her Georgetown-built Sienna, which has over 300,000 miles and a name of its own.

A sample: “She is relentless, tried and true. She is my hero. She means the world to me because I see **family** stamped all over her. I ain’t lettin’ go, and you wouldn’t either if you turned the key and heard her hum. Her name is Bessie.”

To James, that is music to his ears.

“For me and every team member, that is what we strive for – stories like that. That hasn’t changed in 26 years. The key element is that every car is its own entity – one by one. Our team members have done a phenomenal job of being able to maintain that original DNA.”

While many customers take their vehicles personal, so do TMMK team members.

“The exciting part is seeing a vehicle you worked on rolling down the street,” said seven-year team member Jovonda Williams, an engineer in Quality Control. “I feel like I partly own that head-liner,” she said with a laugh, referring to a big piece of her responsibility.

She added: “There is no plan to stop. How long before we celebrate 20 million? We’ve got a new vehicle (Lexus) on top of our current mix. It is a great time to be at Toyota.”

Toyota, Baseball and Free Parking

As part of the 10-millionth celebration, Toyota owners are invited to the Lexington Legends minor-league baseball game tonight (7:05 p.m.) where they will receive “free” parking for their vehicle.

In addition to the 10-millionth vehicle being on display, a TMMK team member will throw out the first pitch and be treated to the “best” seats in the house – a pair of actual Avalon vehicle seats.