

## A Special Case

While USCAR's passenger-car-centered mission goes to the heart of his company's business, Robertson pointed out that the NAC's work (conducting dual-use technology research and development projects for military ground vehicles) is more specific. "TACOM obviously is motivated to focus on things that are of potential interest to their government constituencies."



TACOM's NAC, then, provides commercial automakers with a large but still focused area of collaboration. Robertson pointed out that this, combined with the fact that the Big Three have other opportunities to collaborate, can serve as an advantage.

"The fact that we have other forums, we have other kinds of collaborative programs – like PNGV but by no means limited to PNGV – and that NAC is a special case, I think that's fine. You almost can't have too much collaboration and opportunities to look for things you can do jointly. Sometimes collaborative efforts suffer from not having enough focus, by being so broad that anything's fair game. You can lose intensity by not having enough focus. Clearly, in this particular domain TACOM brings focus."

## The Theory of Self-investment

DaimlerChrysler has recently altered its role in the NAC's Automotive Research Center. Robertson, who sits on the ARC's board, believes his company needs to invest more.

"Up until this point," he said, "our involvement has been sort of experts participating in a project." His next step is to have some skin in the game, as it were. "We've identified five or so projects that we're going to do within ARC under the NAC umbrella. But, they're things which we had on our list as projects that we were prepared to fund to get done."

This notion goes along with human nature, and takes better advantage of what the NAC has created. "If we put our own money down," said Robertson, "the guy whose budget it came out of is going to take a real active interest in getting our money's worth. We've committed to do that, and I think it will be a more effective relationship with NAC."

## Partners Across Centuries

As was the case during World War II, these two very different automakers are again able to work together creatively. From joint ventures, such as COMBATT, to a growing commitment to the future, they once again are striving to find mutual interests that will make each more efficient and, at the same time, help soldiers and citizens alike.

## Chrysler and the Detroit Arsenal



Wooden mock-up of Chrysler's M3



Chrysler employees made the first Arsenal tank their gift to the Army



Turret married to hull on a Chrysler-built M60 during the Cold War

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# NAC HISTORY

This document is available at [www.tacom.army.mil/tardec/nac](http://www.tacom.army.mil/tardec/nac).

- 3 **Robertson Profile**  
Personal and professional background information.
- 3 **Partnership's Prospects**  
Collaborative strategies are still under construction.

## Elvis and the Dodge Dakota

Was it clever marketing, or was it the hot Nevada sun?

Late last year at the Specialty Equipment Market Association show in Las Vegas, Bernard Robertson, DaimlerChrysler's dignified, British-born senior vice-president for engineering technologies, donned sunglasses and some 1950's-era coveralls that once belonged to somebody called "Mel." He had assembled fifteen Elvis impersonators to help him show off the latest four-door, six-passenger version of one of his company's popular pickup trucks.

Eight months later, newspaper and journal articles are still hailing the

truck with a cab capable of accommodating "seven Elvis Presley impersonators, as Dodge demonstrated during a recent introduction in Las Vegas." One review that spread across the web ran this headline: "Ladies and gentleman, Elvis has left through the back doors."



Robertson (with guitar), Paul Shefferly, Director, Truck Vehicle Development, and 15 Elvises

The story got out. Dodge's new truck has four doors and a big cab.

## Reinventing visibility

All business ventures face the challenge of spreading their good news stories. This is especially important when the organizations are collaborating to save the lives of soldiers and at the same time saving money for taxpayers and consumers.

Robertson is concerned that in the brave new world of collaborative R&D, not enough of the good news stories are getting out to the public, nor to the scientists, engineers and executives who might help these ventures move forward.



Bernard I. Robertson, Senior Vice President, DaimlerChrysler Corp.

Speaking specifically of the NAC, Robertson recently said that “one of the real opportunities is to make it higher profile, to make people aware of what it is, what it seeks to do, and the scope.”



Robertson at SEMA, October 1999

One potential area of growth, as Robertson sees it, is to broadcast to the industry’s technical people, the details about projects of mutual interest. He pointed as an example to “a joint program on our common electronic architecture approach between Oakland University, NAC, and ourselves. Virtually nobody outside of the people directly involved in doing that knows anything about it.”

Robertson recommends more emphasis on publicizing, through industry journals and conferences, the vision and the results of these projects. “I’d like the whole electronic community in the industry to at least have the opportunity to be aware that there is this collaborative effort going on.”

Another question is when do the Elvis impersonators need to be called in to grab a wider audience’s imagination? And, which partner in a joint venture takes over the “visibility” responsibilities? Thinking through these and other questions, Robertson concluded that “one of the best things that we could do for NAC would be to give appropriate recognition and spotlight to all the activities, and show the extent to which there’s been collaboration.”

That approach – partners marketing partnerships – greatly expands organizations’ body of good news stories.

It’s just one more area where collaboration helps everyone win.

## Collaborative Marketing

Creativity and invention have been necessary by-products of the exciting recent trend toward collaborative R&D in the automotive world. How and when do long-time competitors begin sharing information? How do the public and private sectors join hands?

Robertson pointed to an example of collaborative marketing. “There was a determined effort made, in my view, with the COMBATT trucks. They were shown at the SAE Congress. There was a little press conference put on. Ford and we participated in that, providing trucks.”



Dodge Ram 2500 crew cab retrofitted for military purposes

The Commercially-Based Tactical Truck (COMBATT) program is part of an effort to develop the next generation of military vehicles. It is a joint venture between DaimlerChrysler, Ford, AM General, and the NAC to develop a cheaper military truck for soldiers and a more advanced commercial truck for consumers.

The NAC unveiled two prototypes at the annual Society for Automotive Engineers (SAE) Congress in March 2000. The trucks were painted in camouflage and flanked by soldiers in



Soldier with COMBATT at the SAE

fatigues. No Elvis impersonators there.

While that display created some interest, Robertson wondered if it truly sent the message that the program was part of a revolutionary new collaborative approach. “If the only visible event is something that has a very strong Army flavor to it, it will tend to reinforce this fairly narrow perception. ‘Oh, yeah, that’s the Army. The Army’s doing some technical work. Oh, yeah, the Army’s letting us know that they’re interested in buying GPS systems,’ rather than, ‘There’s this wonderful resource here that we can participate with.’”

The world of collaborative marketing, like the world of collaborative R&D, continues to evolve.

## The Eggbeater

A truly collaborative venture between the 1940’s Chrysler Corporation and the NAC’s original parent organization, the Detroit Tank Arsenal, recently made the news. Soldiers in the 1940’s referred to it fondly as “the eggbeater.”

The U.S. Army didn’t have a tank program when World War II created an immediate need for one. Chrysler Corporation got the contract to design an enormous tank plant in Warren, Michigan, and to build tanks for the Allies and later for U.S. troops.

Where would the nation quickly find engines large enough to power the new tanks? “The government needed Chrysler to create a solution,” said Robertson, a member of the Walter P. Chrysler Museum board. “Originally, aircraft engines were used to power the

tanks, but they eventually needed those engines to power aircraft. Up to that point, Chrysler had only dealt with motor vehicles, but the U.S. government asked for our help and we gave it to them.”



Chrysler engineers in 1940 designing the nation’s first tank plant

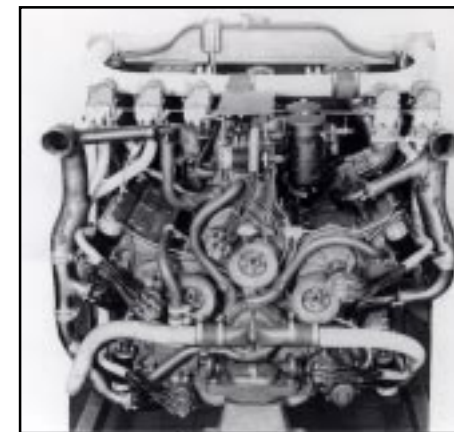
Chrysler’s solution was to combine 6-cylinder passenger car engines into a unique 30-cylinder powerplant that produced an output of 450 hp. and weighed 5,000 lb. In two years, approximately 7,500 tank engines were assembled and installed in M4A4 Sherman tanks that Chrysler made at its tank arsenal.

After searching for more than 18 months, Robertson’s Acquisition & Restoration Team found one of the few tank engines that had not been destroyed during the war. The team found an intact engine in a museum in Argentina and added it to the collection.

In April 2000, the Chrysler tank engine was put on display at the new Walter P. Chrysler Museum. A vivid symbol of Chrysler’s historic collaboration with the NAC, it stands as an example of how the dramatic past can be used to point to the exciting present.

Elvis imitators drew attention to Robertson’s truck announcement in part because Elvis is so central to the nation’s past. This engine reminds us of a collaborative past that helped save democracy.

“The engine, and the partnership and innovation it stands for,” said Robertson, “are not only significant to



Chrysler’s 30-cylinder engine for the Sherman tank, WWII photo

DaimlerChrysler, but also to the United States.”

## The Prospects of Partnership

Robertson has seen partnership change his business for the better.

“The whole approach to collaborative activity,” he said recently, “between the Big Three and government – that’s been an exciting change in the way the industry has operated. I think it’s great.”

## When it Works

The bulk of Robertson’s experience with this sort of collaboration has been through the United States Council for Automotive Research, or USCAR, the umbrella organization of DaimlerChrysler, Ford and GM, that was formed in 1992 to strengthen the technology base of the domestic auto industry through cooperative, pre-competitive research.

“I’m a strong believer in that activity,” said Robertson. “I think it’s right for the country and for the industry.”

# Bernard Robertson

### Title

Senior Vice President, Engineering Technologies and General Manager, Truck Operations, for DaimlerChrysler Corporation.

### Personal

I joined Chrysler right out of college in England. My father always admired the United States. During World War II, we had a number of American GI’s lodge with us, actually during the build-up to the Normandy invasion. England was full of GI’s and they were billeted everywhere. We had several stay with us. My father corresponded with parents of a couple of them after the war for awhile. He used to read the Saturday Evening Post and had this fascination for America, which I sort of picked up from him. He’d never been here, but he’d always wished that he could have come.

I got intrigued with America, I read the Saturday Evening Post, I saw Perry Mason and the Virginian on TV. That was all I knew about America, but it seemed like a pretty neat place. When I was getting ready to graduate from college, I’d discovered that Chrysler hired one graduate a year in England, sent them to the states for two years to go through Chrysler Institute and kind of learn the American way of doing things. Then they would go back to England to work. I applied for that and got hired into that scheme. Came here for two years and fell in love with it. It was the most wonderful place on earth.

So, I went back to England and worked there for three years at Chrysler UK. Then, I emigrated in 1970. This time around, I’ve been here 30 years, but I’ve been with Chrysler for 35 years. Somewhere along the way, I became a citizen.

### Quotation

“By training and by preference I’m a technical person.”