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The Henry Ford Acquires First Steel-Bodied School Bus

(DEARBORN, MI –March 7, 2008) – The Henry Ford, America’s premiere history destination in Dearborn, Michigan has acquired the first steel-bodied school bus, Blue Bird No. 1, it was announced today by Patricia Mooradian, president of the institution.

Blue Bird No. 1 was the first steel-bodied school bus built by Albert Luce, Sr. in 1927. Luce was the owner of Ford dealerships in Fort Valley and Perry, Georgia when one of his customers requested a vehicle to transport workers to a cement plant. Luce bought a wood-bodied bus that he sold to this customer but the wood deteriorated before the customer could finish paying for vehicle. Luce investigated ways of building a better bus and constructed a body using steel angles and channels, steel sheets, wood and canvas. He then mounted it to a 1927 Ford Model T chassis. This new bus was sold to Frank Slade of Marshallville, Georgia to be used as a school bus.

“Blue Bird embodies the ingenuity and resourcefulness of one man,” said Mooradian. “By taking one innovation, the Model T, and using it as the foundation for his school bus, Mr. Luce changed the paradigm of transportation for school-age children in terms of safety and reliability. Within eight years, all major school bus manufacturers were producing steel body buses.”

By 1932 the Depression had reduced car sales so seriously that Luce sold his Ford agencies and concentrated full-time on manufacturing school buses. He named his new company Blue Bird Body Company. Today, Blue Bird Corporation remains one of the nation’s major school bus manufacturers.

“Donating Blue Bird No. 1 to The Henry Ford at this time is meaningful to me for many reasons,” said Albert L. “Buddy” Luce, Jr., son of Albert Luce, Sr. “Last year was the 80th anniversary of Blue Bird Body Company (Now Blue Bird Corporation) and I feel this is a great way to acknowledge that milestone. In addition, 2008 is the centennial of the Model T Ford. Blue Bird No. 1 will be a valuable addition to the collection of this great institution.”

Blue Bird No. 1 will go on display in Henry Ford Museum in May, 2008.

About The Henry Ford

The Henry Ford, located in Dearborn, Mich. was founded in 1929 by automotive pioneer Henry Ford. This history destination includes Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, The Henry Ford IMAX Theatre, The Benson Ford Research Center and The Ford Rouge Factory Tour. The Henry Ford, America’s Greatest History attraction, is the history

destination that brings the American experience to life. For more information please visit our Web site www.TheHenryFord.org.