

# Stan Ovshinsky Calls for Clean Energy To Aid in Reindustrializing the Nation

By Stefanie Carano  
Staff Reporter

Amorphous semiconductor, nickel-metal hydride, photovoltaics – these are products of modern innovation spun from the mind of Stanford Ovshinsky.

At 88, Ovshinsky has witnessed the postwar renaissance of American industrialization and said that he is inspired to create his advancements in materials so the United States, and particularly Detroit, will rise once again. “Detroit was the center of industrial life, not only of the United States, but of the entire world. That’s what brought me up here, to Detroit. It attracted all of us who were industrially minded, so to speak. We came from everywhere and from every country,” Ovshinsky said.

“Now, we have a declining city area which didn’t happen accidentally. It declined because we did not have the people who understood manufacturing, understood advancement, understood good management and made, really, the wrong decisions.”

On Nov. 10, Ovshinsky spoke at Macomb Community College as part of its fall lecture series, “American Ingenuity and Embracing the Freedom to Dream,” at the Lorenzo Cultural Center auditorium.

Ovshinsky is calling for a re-industrialization of the United States with the implementation of clean energy products. Many of his inventions – the nickel-metal hydride battery that powers many hybrid vehicles, photovoltaic film that can help produce solar power – have advanced the use of clean energy.

“We need to curb emissions,” he said. “And I know that the Detroit automakers made a grave mistake and fought the fact that you had to do something about emissions, which was bad, because all other countries knew you had to do it and it was a terrible thing that we

didn’t act on it because only then, other countries came in and Detroit’s automotive industry went down to what we’ve seen.”

He said he is particularly proud of his accomplishments in advancing the nickel metal hydride battery, currently featured in vehicle models like the 2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid and Toyota Prius.

“If any of you are driving a Ford, a hybrid, that’s my battery in there,” he said. “I’m very proud of that because 40 percent of all of the climate-change gasses comes from the transportation sector – 40 percent. And it’s going to get bigger now that China has so many cars and so on. So, I’m very proud of that.”

Ovshinsky grew up in Akron, Ohio, and admits he doesn’t have much formal education. While he didn’t attend college, he said that growing up, he spent a lot of time in libraries, reading up on his favorite scientific subjects.

Some of his latest work involves photovoltaics and he talked about how, ultimately, solar energy will be the answer to the world’s clean energy needs, frequently referencing the presentation he made at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ (IEEE) January conference.

He said it’s clearly the answer to clean energy, the only problem is cost.

“In order to solve the problem of energy, you have to make it cheaper than burning coal,” he said.

Ovshinsky added that the United States needs an energy policy.

His company, United Solar Ovonic, is a major manufacturer of amorphous silicon photovoltaic solar panels. The firm currently provides solar energy to a variety of commercial facilities around the world, including Coca-Cola’s bottling plant in Los Angeles.

He concluded his presentation saying that no society



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

**Scientist Stan Ovshinsky gave a lecture about renewable energy in the U.S. last week.**

can be without energy in today’s world.

“Wherever there is no energy, there is no civilization,” he said. “It’s a gathering society.”

Ovshinsky had a rather mercurial career, as he is the friend of a number of Nobel Prize-winning scientists from around the world. He is also well known inside the auto industry from his early work at Energy Conversion Devices when it supplied batteries to the auto industry.

Even at 88, Ovshinsky’s ongoing research remains relevant to society and he still casts a rather tall shadow.

# U.S. Carmakers Show Strong Sales

By DEE-ANN DURBIN  
and SHARON SILKE CARTY  
AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) – U.S. auto sales put in their strongest performance of the year in October as buyers grew more confident in the economy and new models lured them into dealerships.

Every major automaker but Toyota chalked up better results last month. Overall industry sales climbed 13.4 percent to 950,165.

October’s seasonally adjusted annual sales rate – which shows what sales would be if they stayed at the same rate all year – was 12.26 million vehicles. That’s the best monthly rate since August 2009, when Cash for Clunkers spurred Americans to buy more cars and trucks.

“The trends are positive, and we are going in the right direction,” said Jesse Toprak, vice president of industry trends at car pricing tracker TrueCar.com. Sales aren’t increasing as fast as the industry would like, he said, but “we are seeing more confidence by consumers to make big-ticket purchases in an uncertain economic environment.”

Chrysler, Ford, Honda and Nissan all saw double-digit jumps in sales compared with last October. General

Motors Co., which is preparing for an initial stock offering later this month, saw sales rise 3.5 percent.

Toyota Motor Corp., which has been struggling with safety recalls and an aging lineup, saw sales drop 4 percent. Sales of its Camry sedan, which hasn’t been updated in three years, fell 14 percent in October. The rival Hyundai Sonata saw sales double.

The Japanese automaker also has been pulling back on incentives, which rose significantly in the spring after the company recalled millions of cars and trucks over safety problems. TrueCar.com said Toyota’s incentive spending dropped 1 percent between September and October, while most other manufacturers increased incentive spending.

GM’s sales were driven by its SUVs and wagons, which posted increases of 36 percent for October. Sales of GM’s most popular wagons – the Chevrolet Equinox, GMC Terrain and Cadillac SRX – were up 58 percent compared with last October. Truck sales were also up.

“There is generally less bad news out there. The consumers are starting to believe that the worst is over,” said Don Johnson, GM’s vice president of U.S. sales.

Consumer confidence rose slightly in October, according to a report released last week by the Conference Board. Automakers said small businesses are also deciding to invest in new vehicles instead of repairing old ones.

Ford Motor Co.’s sales rose 19 percent. Among the winners was the F-Series pickup, which saw sales rise 24 percent thanks in part to a month-long Ford promotion. The redesigned Edge wagon, which recently went on sale, also saw a 24 percent jump.

Chrysler Group LLC’s sales rose 37 percent from last October, partly on the strength of the new Jeep Grand Cherokee, which saw sales more than triple. Ram pickup sales rose 41 percent.

New products gave a boost to Honda Motor Co., whose sales climbed 16 percent. October was the first full month on the market for the redesigned Odyssey minivan, which saw October sales increase 52 percent. Wagons were also hot at Honda, where CR-V sales climbed 19 percent.

Nissan Motor Co. said its sales rose 16 percent for the month, thanks to a 38 percent jump in sales of SUVs, trucks and crossovers.

Sales are expected to jump early in 2011 following the upcoming holidays.

# U.S. Economy Grows at Only 2 Percent During 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) – An economy growing 2 percent a year might be tolerable in normal times. Today, it’s a near-disaster.

A growth rate of 5 percent or higher is needed to put a major dent in the nation’s 9.6 percent unemployment rate. Two reasons why that’s unlikely well into next year and maybe beyond:

- Construction – both residential and commercial – collapsed last year. And it isn’t expected to regain its strength for years. Typically after recessions end, construction booms and powers a new economic expansion.

- The recession that began in December 2007, after the housing bubble burst, became the Great Recession once the financial crisis erupted in September 2008. Economic recoveries that follow a financial crisis are typically long-lasting. Banks usually take years to resume lending normally.

“To really get ‘Morning in America’ and get people feeling like jobs are really coming back, I would want to see something close to 5 percent” annual economic growth,

says economist Josh Bivens of the Economic Policy Institute, referring to the iconic 1984 Reagan re-election ad.

That isn’t likely to happen soon. Macroeconomic Advisers doesn’t expect the labor market to recover all the lost jobs until at least 2013. Other economists say it could be 2018 or longer.

The government reported recently that the nation’s gross domestic product, the broadest measure of goods and services produced, grew at an annual rate of 2 percent from July through September. GDP had risen at an annual rate of 1.7 percent in the second quarter.

Economists say it takes GDP growth of 3 percent a year just to keep the unemployment rate from rising as more Americans reach working age and immigrants enter the country. It would take 2 additional percentage points of growth for a year to reduce the unemployment rate by 1 point.

Recoveries from deep recessions are usually robust. Once the recession of 1981-82 finally ended, the economy boomed in 1983 and 1984.

# Porsche and Fiat to Join 2011 NAIAS Auto Show

By Stefanie Carano  
Staff Reporter

With new automotive exhibits and new displays, this year’s North American International Auto Show at Detroit’s Cobo Center is expected to be better than ever.

“It’s going to be a great show,” said NAIAS Chairman and National Automobile Dealers Association president Barron Meade.

He said 2011 attendance is expected to top last year’s numbers – the 2010 show saw approximately 710,000 public attendees, more than 4,500 members of the press and more than 140 exhibitors.

“We’re looking to build on last year’s momentum,” Meade said.

Meade said there will be two additional exhibits this year – from Porsche, which is returning after being absent last year, and from Fiat.

“Because last year Fiat just had two cars, but now it’s a true brand, so that’s an additional brand that’s going to be at the show,” he said.

“We get word-class displays and having that world-class display from Porsche is going to be a great addition this year, and Fiat.

“... And then, of course, Ford’s display is always enhanced and we’re looking forward to what General Motors is going to bring us this year, too.”

He said Toyota’s Scion brand will add more square footage to the display this year.

“So, we’ve got some very positive messaging. With the brands that are available out there, we have a high percentage of attendees,” he said.

Meade said some of the absent brands at this year’s exhibition are those that have been discontinued, such as the Mercury brand.

“So, most of the people that are not going to be there are due to the change in the branding landscape,”



**2011 North American International Auto Show chairman Barron Meade said this year’s show will see two additional exhibitors.**

he said.

Introduced in 2009, MEDC EcoXperience will return once again to the basement of Cobo, offering visitors a test drive of the latest alternative energy vehicles, including hybrids from Ford and GM as well as the 2010 Progressive XPrize-winning electric vehicle.

He said this year there also will be interesting displays on how plug-in hybrids work and all the different technologies available moving toward the future with flexible power plants.

Meade said people will see some noticeable improvements to the condition of Cobo Center.

“A lot of the improvements are behind the scenes because there was several years of it needing to be upgraded, so you’re going to see our goal – we have a new catering company at Cobo now, we have a new building management company, so there’s a lot of positives that you’re going to see at the show and both consumers and the exhibitors are going to continue to get a better facility,” he said.

This year’s NAIAS vice chairman is Bill Perkins. He will be next year’s show chair.

# Recreational Vehicle Market Is on Way Back Up

FOREST CITY, Iowa (AP) – Two years ago, the recreational-vehicle industry was torpedoed by \$5-a-gallon fuel prices and a tanking national economy.

Now, the industry appears to be climbing back toward profitability, according to Cedar Valley dealers and Forest City-based Winnebago Industries Inc.

Sales have risen at Cedar Falls-based Ace Fogdall Inc., which sells towable RVs, said Sara Miller, the dealership’s manager.

“RV sales are up quite significantly over the last couple of years,” she said.

Fuel prices near the \$3 level haven’t had much effect, Miller said, but she added that other factors played a role in the slump a couple of years back.

“It really was a factor at the start of the financial crisis and also when we had the flooding and tornadoes, so it’s hard to determine what the singular impact of what fuel prices were,” she said.

Things also are looking up at Paine’s RV Sales and Service in Waterloo and Evansdale, said Jeff Paine, vice president.

“Everything is optimistic; people are looking,” he said. “We’re getting a lot of interest shown, a lot of entry-level and mid-lines in towables.”

Tighter credit remains a potential hurdle, Paine noted.

“Financing is not quite back to where it used to be,” he said. “They’ve got to have more equity in their unit to purchase it.”

Jasper’s RV in Hazleton is still looking for an upturn in sales, said Dan Jasper, owner.

“I guess we’ve about the same since the downturn,” Jasper said. “The last three years have been exactly the same, within one or two units every year, so sales have been flat.”

The recession and its ancillary effects likely have been the chief culprits, he said.

“It’s the economic conditions, people holding onto their money, paying down debt,” he said. There are numbers that would indicate the industry still has some rough times to endure, not the least of which is a national unemployment rate persistently near 10 percent.

Winnebago, in a sense, was in the center of the 2008 downturn, as might be expected of the largest manufacturer of motor homes in the U.S.

Winnebago laid off nearly half of its 4,000 employees and shuttered one of its operations in Charles City.

“We pretty much hit rock bottom in 2009,” company spokeswoman Sheila Davis said. “At our highest point, we had about 4,200 employees, and we were down to about 1,600.”

Winnebago stock fell as low as \$3.23 March 6, 2009. In the year and a half since, however, the price has climbed at a fairly steady clip, reach \$17.30 April 29, 2010. The price has faded somewhat, since then but has hung in the \$10 level on a consistent basis since the summer.

In mid-October, the company reported a fourth-quarter profit that exceeded analyst expectations and fueled a 9 percent surge in company

shares.

Winnebago reported a profit of \$4.9 million, or 17 cents a share, in the quarter ended Aug. 28. A year earlier, it lost \$50.2 million, or \$1.73 a share. Analysts had been projecting EPS of just 5 cents a share.

Sales were up 107.1 percent, to \$123.1 million.

“Increased motor home delivery volume continues to be a driving force behind our improved results, however, we remain cautious until we see continued retail growth,” CEO Bob Olson said in a news release.

Winnebago said dealer inventory jumped 20.7 percent and demand has remained at a “consistent level” since its fiscal second quarter.

Only a few days later, Winnebago said it was looking into a possible acquisition of Indiana-based SunnyBrook Manufacturing Inc., which builds towable RVs, travel trailers and fifth-wheel trailers.

The potential purchase is part of a plan that Winnebago had announced about a year ago in which the company said it would look for ways to

diversify its business.

Winnebago said it expects a deal to be completed by year’s end.

“So, we’ve seen some improvements in that time,” Davis said. “It’s an improved market. There not only were fewer sales in the marketplace in 2009, but there was also too much inventory on dealers lots. As dealers worked through that excess inventory and the age of the inventory came down, we were able to see an increased order bank to get that in line with the retail environment.”

The company is back to about 2,000 workers, Davis said.

Mac Bryan, vice president of administration at the Alexandria, Va.-based Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, said there won’t be any double-dip recession in the RV business.

“I don’t think there’s any question the industry’s in recovery,” Bryan said. “The year-over-year shipment increases through August were up over 70 percent. That’s pretty hard to match if you ask around.”

# Focus:HOPE Hosts ‘Art Blast’

A new Art Blast program launched this year will feature a series of multi-cultural concerts and community conversations for all residents living in the neighborhoods surrounding the Focus:HOPE campus on Oakmand Blvd. in Detroit.

As part of its new Focus:HOPE Village Initiative, Focus:HOPE invites neighborhood residents and children

and families from Glazer Elementary School, Joy Prep Academy and Paul Robeson / Malcolm X Academy to participate.

The series continues on Dec. 2, when Art Blast will offer the Reg Pettibone Native American Dancers, with children performing with homemade rain sticks. Art Blast is funded by a grant from the Kresge Foundation.