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Introduction of John Blystone

**Economic Club Luncheon
Monday, November 13, 2000**

When I was asked to introduce John Blystone my mind turned to a great Shawnee Nation Chieftain, Tecumseh, who for a time dominated the territory of Ohio, Indiana, southern Michigan, and parts of Ontario. His name meant “Shooting Star” and that is why I thought of John Blystone. He came into west Michigan like a shooting star, a light in our sky, a chieftain for SPX, and a leader who lifted one of our largest corporations to new levels of achievement. Only in name does John’s life resemble Tecumseh’s. Nor is John a Horatio Alger, rags to riches, success story, but his is truly an American story. His father worked for General Electric, and like so many Americans in corporate America, moved within the GE organization from place to place, promotion to promotion. John became used to the moves as a boy that he would make as a man.

The fact that York, Pennsylvania, was his parents’ home when he was in high school is important in the course of his life. In addition to honing his competitive skills in football, basketball, and baseball, it was natural for him to attend the University of Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh he met Julie, a practicing nurse. They fell in love, married, and have a daughter now 20 and a son 18. His educational preparation and personal life have a Pennsylvania orientation. Just as his father before him he began his career with General Electric and moved ahead rapidly. After ten years, in 1988, he became a Senior Vice President at the J.I. Case Division of Tenneco, but GE wanted him back and reclaimed him in 1991. In 1994, GE named him President of a European subsidiary Nuovo Pignone in Florence, Italy, and increased his responsibilities for the company in Europe in 1995. In addition to his success it is important to note that GE gave him a

wide variety of jobs. He was not limited to one, or even two, fields. He was an achiever in many.

I remember when Chuck Johnson, as a major stockholder and interim CEO, was looking for someone to take over at SPX. One night at a dinner party he began talking to me about John Blystone. Chuck had been concerned the past year; now he was brimming with enthusiasm. He said the deal was almost done.

Then John and Julie arrived. They embraced Muskegon and west Michigan. They were not only shooting stars, but stars who are permanently in our orbit. When a stock increases more than 1,000% in a CEO's tenure he is a star. Chuck needed a CEO and John wanted to be one. John wasn't going to wait for Jack Welsh to move aside. Fortunately they found each other.

But SPX and its stockholders and employees are not the only beneficiaries of John's tenure. He has continued and enhanced the SPX contribution to the community. The Muskegon County Community Foundation, the Mercy Heart and Vascular Institute, and Grand Valley's Water Resources Institute on Muskegon Lake are recipients of major gifts. Through personal contributions, John and Julie also give, and Muskegon Catholic Central High School is one of their special causes.

John Blystone's life and career is an American story of the late 20th century. It is an example of what the American economic system in our time offers for hard working, ambitious, visionary, community-oriented young people.

We welcome John Blystone to our podium. He is one of us. He moves about the world, but he has planted himself firmly in west Michigan, and we are better for it. He will tell us now his story of SPX.