

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP**

Check this box if no longer subject to Section 16. Form 4 or Form 5 obligations may continue. See Instruction 1(b).

Filed pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 or Section 30(h) of the Investment Company Act of 1940

| OMB APPROVAL                                 |           |
|--|-----------|
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|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>1. Name and Address of Reporting Person*</b><br><u>AULT JAMES F</u><br><br>(Last) (First) (Middle)<br><u>200 EAST JACKSON STREET</u><br><br>(Street)<br><u>MUNCIE IN 47305</u><br><br>(City) (State) (Zip) | <b>2. Issuer Name and Ticker or Trading Symbol</b><br><u>FIRST MERCHANTS CORP [ FRME ]</u> | <b>5. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer</b><br>(Check all applicable)<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Director 10% Owner<br>Officer (give title below) Other (specify below) |
|   | <b>3. Date of Earliest Transaction (Month/Day/Year)</b><br><u>12/15/2005</u>               |   |
|   |  | <b>6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing (Check Applicable Line)</b><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form filed by One Reporting Person<br>Form filed by More than One Reporting Person    |

**Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned**

| 1. Title of Security (Instr. 3)   | 2. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year) | 2A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year) | 3. Transaction Code (Instr. 8) |   | 4. Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed Of (D) (Instr. 3, 4 and 5) |            |       | 5. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned Following Reported Transaction(s) (Instr. 3 and 4) | 6. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 4) | 7. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 4) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|---|------------|-------|---|--|---|
|                                   |                                      |  | Code                           | V | Amount  | (A) or (D) | Price |   |  |   |
| Common Stock <sup>(1)(2)(3)</sup> | 12/15/2005                           |  | G                              |   | 600   | D          | \$0   | 12,718  | I  | Spouse  |

**Table II - Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned (e.g., puts, calls, warrants, options, convertible securities)**

| 1. Title of Derivative Security (Instr. 3) | 2. Conversion or Exercise Price of Derivative Security | 3. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year) | 3A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year) | 4. Transaction Code (Instr. 8) | 5. Number of Derivative Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4 and 5) | 6. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date (Month/Day/Year) |                 | 7. Title and Amount of Securities Underlying Derivative Security (Instr. 3 and 4) | 8. Price of Derivative Security (Instr. 5) | 9. Number of derivative Securities Beneficially Owned Following Reported Transaction(s) (Instr. 4) | 10. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 4) | 11. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 4) |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|--|-----------------|---|--|--|---|--|
|  |  |                                      |  |                                |  | Date Exercisable   | Expiration Date |   |  |  |   |  |

**Explanation of Responses:**

- Gift by spouse of reporting person to adult son.
- Beneficially Owned Securities: 9,944 - Direct Ownership.
- Non-employee director - stock option - right to buy: 4,229 shares.

Larry R. Helms (Confirming Statement on File) 12/15/2005

\*\* Signature of Reporting Person Date

Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly.

\* If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, see Instruction 4 (b)(v).

\*\* Intentional misstatements or omissions of facts constitute Federal Criminal Violations See 18 U.S.C. 1001 and 15 U.S.C. 78ff(a).

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, see Instruction 6 for procedure.

Persons who respond to the collection of information contained in this form are not required to respond unless the form displays a currently valid OMB Number.