Automotive Newstips

Getting the lead out

DETROIT — Back in 1908 owners of the 200,000 "gasoline buggies" on the nation's 2 million miles of service station-free roads refueled from open gas cans bought at hardware stores.

Automobile owners' manuals cautioned never to fill the gas tank with a lighted cigar or lamp nearby and to strain the fuel through a chamois to remove "foreign substances."

And if you ran out of gas, at least you didn't run out of luck, according to a 1908 Oldsmobile catalog, for you could "always get home on kerosene or alcohol, or even bad whiskey."

When today's motor vehicles pull up to the pump they have more precise fuel requirements. Currently, the content of some of the fuels available to meet those requirements is being altered by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decison to reduce lead in gasoline.

Growing concern about health hazards prompted the EPA ruling. It reduced the maximum amount of lead allowed per gallon of gas from 1.1 grams to 0.5 grams in July, 1985.

A second step will cut the allowable amount to 0.1 grams per gallon by January 1986. And a complete phaseout may be in the works. EPA is considering a total ban on lead in gasoline, possibly as early as 1988.

The lead phasedown affects the nearly 25 million vehicles manufactured before 1972 that are still on the road today. But, says the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association (MVMA), most owners shouldn't have to worry.

"Since 1972, domestic cars have been designed to run on unleaded fuel," says Harry B. Weaver, Director of MVMA's Environmental Department. "And oil companies will boost the octane rating of fuel as lead is phased down. They may refine the gas more stringently or supplement the reduced amount of lead with other additives. This should maintain the performance of cars produced prior to '72."

The use of lead as an octane-enhancer, or anti-knock agent, goes back to 1922. Researchers discovered that lead added to gasoline reduces the engine "knock" which occurs when fuel ignites prematurely during combustion. Through the years, lead has continued to be the most cost-effective way to boost octane.

In pre-1972 vehicles, lead in the fuel also acts as a lubricant between the engine exhaust valves and valve seats. The valves alternately open to exhaust burning gases from the cylinders and close to make metal-to-metal contact with the valve seats during every engine revolution.

What will happen without that protective lead coating?

"Cars that used leaded gasoline for years should have enough lead built up around the valves to prevent damage for a significant period of time," Weaver says.

If lead is removed entirely from gas, other types of vehicles besides passenger cars and trucks would be affected. Farm and utility equipment, as well as marine and recreational vehicles, all run on leaded fuel. It powers snowmobiles and snowblowers, motorboats and tractors.

To meet their needs, there are numerous projects underway to develop additives.

Auto enthusiasts who own antique or classic cars would also benefit if an acceptable additive is marketed.

Centermounted rear stop lamps gain popularity

DETROIT — The dog darted from the yard and into the quiet residential street. The woman in the hatchback compact slammed on her brakes.

The dog wasn't hit - but the woman's hatchback was rear-ended, causing extensive damage to her car.

Could this accident have been avoided?

Safety experts from the motor vehicle industry and from government say the center high-mounted stoplamp, required on all passenger cars built after September 1, 1985, can help reduce the likelihood of such accidents.

The lamp must be red with 4.5 square inch lens area, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ruling. The lens center of the lamp must be mounted on the vertical centerline of the car as seen at the rear.

"As seen at the rear" are the key words. Studies sponsored by the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association have shown that eye fixations under low-speed, stop-and-go traffic conditions are concentrated primarily in the area of the rear window.

Furthermore, the MVMA study, conducted by The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, found that drivers tended to look through the car in front in an attempt to see what was farther down the road.

The conclusion was that the eye could spot a warning that was in the rear window area more quickly than the traditionally placed stoplamps.

The numbers say the red beacon in your back window or on the trunk lid can help reduce accidents. NHTSA estimates that 900,000 rear-end collisions could have been avoided and another 900,000 accidents made less severe by use of the added light. The dollar saving could amount to $434 Million, says NHTSA.

Lighting for safety is hardly new to the motor vehicle industry, says Robert Wilson of MVMA's Safety Department. Amber lights for front turn signals replaced white lights for the entire industry in 1962. MVMA conducted research which found that amber signals are seen more readily against glaring reflections than white signals.

St. Mary's College, a best buy in education

St. Mary's College of Maryland is one of 221 colleges nation-wide and one of six colleges in Maryland included in Best Buys in College Education, the newest book by Edward B. Fiske, education editor of the New York Times. Fiske also edited the Selective Guide to Colleges which also includes St. Mary's.

According to Fiske, data on costs and academic quality of the nation's 2000 four-year institutions were examined to produce a preliminary list of Best Buys. "Then we went directly to the students and administrators ...to find out what they were like." To be included in Best Buys, a college had to demonstrate that the quality of its education was a bargain in relation to its price.

"We are, of course, delighted to be included in Best Buys," says St. Mary's president Edward T. Lewis, "and to have the distinction of being in both Best Buys and the Selective Guide. Our inclusion affirms that we are succeeding in our mission to offer in the public sector at reasonable prices the kind of education usually associated with quality private liberal arts colleges."

Each of the 221 colleges has a 2-page description. The St. Mary's entry begins "St. Mary's College of Maryland has something of an image problem — it is not religious, private, or single-sex. But if you let the name confuse you, you may miss out on a real education bargain: it is the equivalent of a small liberal-arts college within a public-university system."

Other Maryland colleges included were the U.S. Naval Academy, three private colleges Loyola, Washington, and Western Maryland — and one other public institution — the University of Maryland College Park.

Both public and private colleges and universities were included. In the case of public institutions, said Fiske, "We tended to begin by assuming a low price and then looking for signs of high academic quality." For private institutions, "we identified the best institutions and then looked for those with reasonable prices."

Overall, the colleges included have students ranking in the top quarter of the nation, faculties with at least 60 per cent Ph.Ds, a good acceptance rate in graduate schools, and selectivity in admissions. St. Mary's students rank in the top 20 percent, nearly 80 percent of the faculty have Ph.Ds, graduate school acceptances are excellent, and the college is the most selective public college in Maryland.

The best marching band in the land

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—What do you do when the organization you've headed for the past 40 years is named the best in the country? When the local newspaper runs an editorial thanking you for being a citizen of your town?

When the governor and cabinet, and the senate of your state pass resolutions in your honor, the Rotary Club gives you a special recognition, and 350 former members of your outfit from all across the U.S. turn up to "roast" you—at a seated dinner planned for 275 guests?

If you happen to be Dr. William Patrick Foster, director of music and bands at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, you smile a lot.

"I'm highly elated," said the man who made FAMU's "Marching 100" synonymous with marching band excellence. "I so appreciate the tremendous response from all over, and can't begin to express my gratitude for all the plaudits and accolades heaped on me, and on the band."

The centerpiece of Homecoming Week at FAMU was the presentation of the John Philip Sousa Foundation's coveted "Sudler Trophy," considered the Heisman of marching band awards.

The annual award is made to a "college or university marching band which has demonstrated the highest of musical standards and innovative marching routines" and contributed to raising the performance standards of college marching bands over an extended period.

The winner is chosen by balloting college marching band directors throughout the country, and the award has been made only three times before: to the University of Michigan, the University of Illinois and the Ohio State University marching bands.

On hand for the halftime presentation were Florida Governor Bob Graham; Dr. Al G. Wright, Sousa Foundation president; and the award's donor, Chicago businessman and arts patron Louis Sudler.

"I heard the greatest band in the United States today," said Sudler, who praised Foster and the 'Marching 100' for their originality and sensitivity to what marching bands are all about,' and held them up as an example of enthusiasm and dedication.

The band—and Foster—have come a long way since the day in 1946 when he faced the 45 returning World War II veterans on the practice field of what was then Florida A&M College; but Foster had a dream even then.

"I wanted to see 100 bandsmen: proud, uniformed, marching like drum-majors or a crack drill-team—and playing to the highest musical standard anywhere."

From that vision came the name, the "Marching 100," which has remained unchanged, though the band now numbers more than 215 members.

But the high point of the numerous activities that made up "Sudler Week" at FAMU was, for Foster, the band alumni's grand reunion banquet and roast.

"The response was incredible," he said. "And most wonderful of all was to be able to renew friendships formed so many years ago. Why, there were six or seven there from that first band."

On the inside page of the banquet program is the band motto—the ideas that Foster has distilled into a few, simply-stated, but challenging guiding principles: highest quality of character, achievement in academics, attainment in leadership, perfection of musicianship, precision in marching and dedication to service.

One of Foster's former bandsmen who attributes much of his success to those principles is Colonel Bernard D. Hendricks, U.S. Army., Hendricks, who commands FAMU's Army ROTC Unit, served as local chairman for the Band Alumni Reunion Committee.

Recalling his years with the "Marching 100," Hendricks said, "I learned more from Dr. Foster and the band staff about achieving a standard of excellence, and about the importance of completing a mission, than from any other experiences, courses or activities that I had in college."

"The closeness and comaraderie of the bandmembers seemed much deeper than even those of fraternity brothers. We were family. The friendships I formed that have stood the test of 22 years," he added.

William Patrick Foster is a man of many years. Known as "Bill" to his professional colleagues, "Pat" to his immediate friends, and "The Law" to nearly four decades of bandmembers. Foster is a man of iron discipline, who embodies the best characteristics of leadership and professionalism.

"He was 'The Law,'" Hendricks said. "He created an image of being the epitome of leadership. His character, his dress, his speech, his facial expressions and body language all reinforced that image. And he never did anything to detract from what he represented. He always used formal forms of address to the band members, never used profanity-- he never even raised his voice."

In his forty-odd years as a band director, Foster has appeared as an adjudicator, conductor, clinician, lecturer and consultant in more than 30 states and at 35 colleges and universities. He is the author of the textbook "Band Pageantry, considered to be the bible on Marching bands; 18 articles and our published marching band shows.

Honors are not new to Foster. He has twice before been commended by legislative resolutions in Florida--in 1977 and in May of this year--for his lifetime of superior achievement and service.

He has received distinguished service awards from the University of Kansas, his alma mater, and from Florida A&M University and the Kappa Kappa Psi fraternity.

He was the first recipient of the U.S. Achievement Academy Hall of Fame Award and is past president of the Florida Music Educators Association and the College Band Directors National Association.

The "Marching 100," for which Foster has created more than 200 band pageants, has appeared in three films, three national commercials, numerous magazine and newspaper articles, network television shows "60-Minutes," "20/20," and "PM Magazine," and in 34 nationally televised performances including the Super Bowl.

With all that--and the Sudler Intercollegiate Marching Band Trophy-- what does Foster forsee for himself and the "Marching 100?"

"Perhaps more of the same," he says, disarmingly. "I am an extreme optimist, you know. I am always planning a long way in the future. . ."

William Thomas: A handyman who works to serve

By LaMont Curry
AFRO Staff Writer

Although necessity is commonly thought to be the mother of invention, William Thomas, 84, is driven by a desire to serve people. He is an inventor whose time is shared.

"He's a likeable, easy-going man who likes to do things for people. He tinkers and tinkers with things until he comes up with something useful for others," said his daughter, Mrs. Mary Brooks.

"He's a genius that has never been given a chance because he's black.

"When we were children," said his sister, Mrs. H.N. Gibson, "he would dream of houses he wanted to build for us."

Born in 1901 in Howard County, MD, Thomas designed a tubeless tire in 1924.

"He dreamed up a tire-woke up and made it," said Mrs. Gibson. "He was serious... He contacted a lawyer, got a patent and sent it to Washington, but soon learned that he was a black man (in the '20s) trying to break into a white man's game." Thomas sees it differently.

"Things were changing so fast it became outdated in no time. My invention didn't amount to a row of peas," he said.

Thomas, who has never been to a traditional training program, is a mechanic by trade. He was employed 50 years by Freemont Auto Parts, a car recycling shop that recently moved to Jessup.

His 1924 tubeless tire was designed with springs instead of air, which eliminated the potential of blow-outs. Until that time tire hubs were made of wood, but a revolution in the industry ushered in the steel-framed hubs which proved to be to heavy for his tubeless idea, he said.

"He does it for other people, not for fame or fortune," said his daughter.

"When people were falling into the harbor, he designed a safety net to catch people. He actually drew up the concept and submitted it to Mayor Schaefer," she said.

"They responded, but said the nets would interfere with the boats (along the docks) and would therefore pose another problem," he said.

Thomas' latest invention is designed to prevent trailer trucks from jack-knifing, but discussed the details off the record to protect the idea.

He has built a model which is in Washington, D.C. and was ready to submit a proposal to the proper authorities when he took sick last April and was admitted to the Veterans Hospital. It's been on the back burner, he said, but it won't be for long.

He combs alleys for parts that he converts into wagons for children, etc., attributing his gifts to motherwit and common sense.

"There are floor lamps all over this town that he made with marbles, broken glass and plaster of paris. He just gives gifts or discovers that things are broken and sets out to fix them. His flower and Christmas gardens are famous in his community. He lives to serve others. That mind of his stays occupied.

"Can you imagine a pocket-book made out of an inner tube? He's done it," said his daughter who paused to ask aloud, "i wonder what he did with it?"

His sister summed it up. "Slaves built this country from scratch and Billy is from a generation just behind the slaves. He knows how to create from scratch... He knows how to make something from nothing. Today's children should understand how valuable his spirit is-he's got a lot to give."

William Thomas

Seton Mews is AFRO neighbor

SETON MEWS, combining condominiums with townhomes, is being developed in one of Baltimore's oldest neighborhoods, the historic district of Seton Hill. Located just west of the Mount Vernon area, in the 500 and 600 blocks of North Eutaw Street, SETON MEWS is a combination of renovated century-old buildings and new construction tied together by pedestgian walkways and gardens.

SETON MEWS is being built in two phases. Phase One, due to be completed by the end of 1985, consists of 23 one and two-bedroom residential condominiums, eight commercial units and 13 townhomes. The ground-level commercial units are suitable for neighborhood businesses like a dry cleaner, coffee shop and hair stylist.

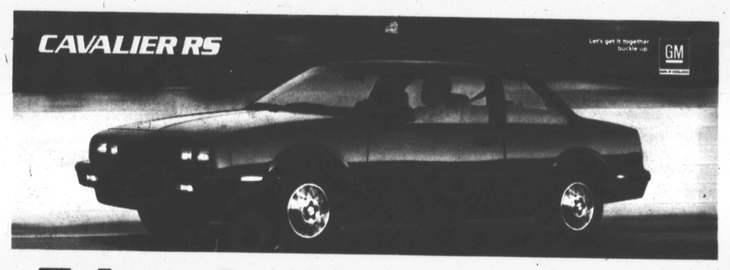
Construction on Phase Two is scheduled to begin in late 1985 and will consist of a single building at 512 N. Eutaw St. housing 12 residential two-bedroom condominiums and three commercial units. In addition, eight new townhomes will be constructed in the 400 block of George Street. To serve the residents, SETON MEWS will include a 45-space parking lot.

SETON MEWS is at the Northern tip of Baltimore's retail district, just a few blocks from The Lexington Market and across from the recently-developed luxury apartment complex, Chesapeake Commons.

Most of the existing buildings in SETON MEWS were constructed between 1840 and 1920 and served at various times as residences, storefronts and loft buildings. The residential units have been especially tailored so that no two are alike. Many of the buildings have oversize windows. Glass partitions have been blended with interior walls to maximize sunlight in many units.

Purchasers at SETON MEWS can take advantage of the $1.4 million mortgage money which the developer is offering. For those buyers who qualify, this money can be made available at 10-1/4 percent financing on a 30-year fixed rate mortgage. SETON MEWS has good news for investors, too, offering a 25 percent Investment Tax Credit. SETON MEWS condominium units are priced from the low 40's.

For information, costs and inspection hours, contact Sharon Ruocco, Sales Director, SETON MEWS, at 659-0550.



Take a look at me now!

They stop. They stare. Now, I'd like to think it's me they can't take their eyes off of. But my Cavalier might have something to do with it. It's true, my Cavalier has lines of real distinction. And with its fat 13-inch tires and laser-sharp accents, there's no doubt it's a looker. Inside, my Cavalier holds my attention with its contoured front bucket seats and handsome cockpit-style dash. And when it moves to the tune of a 2.0-liter fuel-injected engine and front drive, it moves me, too. Now, I'm a magnetic guy. But some people really like to look at my Cavalier. As I see it, either way I win!

TODAY'S CHEVROLET Live it!

JAN 1986