

Bob's Corner

Stories and photos about guys and their cars could fill this newspaper for at least a year, especially with reminiscing about "The First Car." I don't like to think about my first car because it was a bomb. At least, it smoked like one that had exploded.

It was The Car I Had To Have because when I turned 16 years old, California DMV decreed that I was eligible to drive by myself. My Dad didn't think it was a good idea for me to use his car instead of me letting him use it for his job. I had been driving with a learner's permit for six months prior. My first car was '52 Ford in which someone inexplicably had installed a '54 Olds V-8 and three-speed automatic transmission.

Unfortunately, the job had been done haphazardly. There were jagged edges,

loose connections and lots of smoke. But dear ol' Dad put out 500 of his hard-earned bucks for my first car. It was a fast machine. And I had three moving violations during the first four months I drove it to prove that.

Eventually we got rid of the smokin' thing, and Dad gave me his '55 Buick. This was around 1960, when he bought a new Chrysler. The Buick, a Special model with three portholes and a V-8, had something like 125,000 hard miles on it when he turned it over to me. But I was OK with that because it didn't smoke. And I had no more repair bills because of too much Olds torque on a Ford axle. I also saved money on reclaimed oil which I poured into the engine, which seemed to swallow it and quickly spit it out.

Another advantage was that the radio in the Buick worked all the time instead of sporadically.

The Buick was living proof that unleaded gasoline worked fine. Dad, a pharmaceutical salesman whose primary territory was Tijuana and Ensenada in Mexico, Baja California, bought 90 percent of his fuel from Pemex (Petróleos Mexicanos). The Buick ran fine with unleaded in its veins. Of course, when I became a teen-age cruiser, I used U.S. fuel that was leaded. Didn't seem to make any difference in performance or mileage.

Arggh. I just remembered that premium gasoline in my days cost like 30-cents per gallon; regular was a quarter.

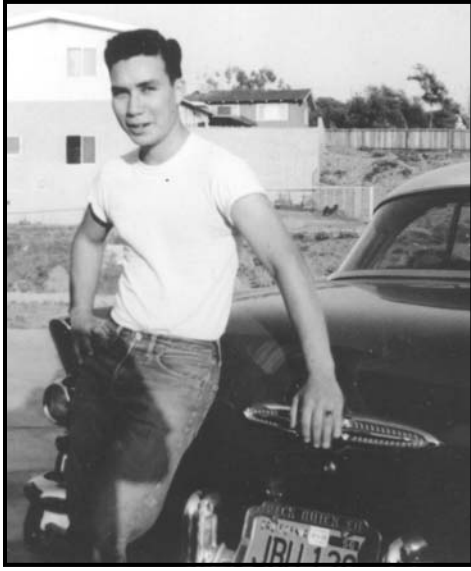
Once I got a hold of the blue-and-white machine with Rivera style body, I popped off the hubcaps and painted the rims black. Then I had overloads put on the rear to give "my car" a rakish look. I also painted the front wheel wells white, which was awfully corny, but I liked it.

I "customized" it by removing the Buick "propeller" from the middle of the Marilyn Monroe front bumper, and put three small chrome things there. To use a phrase from those days, it was *bitchin'*. Or *crazy, man!*

Oh, yeah, and I had dual exhausts with glass-pac mufflers installed. You know how we teens liked the resulting roar and rapping. We were way cool.

So I cruised San Diego County, stopping at various popular drive-in eateries. Some out there might remember the Oscar's drive-in chain that was all over the place, or Louie's Round-Up in Chula Vista. Lived on black coffee, french fries and onion rings, although sometimes I splurged on double-cheeseburgers and vanilla milk shakes. Or grilled fish sandwiches with heart of lettuce salad. Way cool.

Now I'm driving a bit more sedately. Had to give up the fries and burgers, although I'm still cool. But that's because I've lost most of the hair on my head.



The Editor, (with hair) and his '55 Buick

Opinion

By ED FEULNER
The Heritage Foundation

"What could possibly go wrong?"

That's what members of Congress probably thought when they began shoveling bigger subsidies at ethanol producers. Now, with food riots erupting in some parts of the world, we have our answer -- a lot.

Other factors -- a weak dollar, high energy costs, low crop yields in places such as Australia -- have played a role in this crisis. But diverting food to fuel is clearly a contributor, and it exacerbates the situation.

How serious is the problem? According to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, without emergency intervention, "We risk again the specter of widespread hunger, malnutrition and social unrest on an unprecedented scale." The world needs more food -- especially corn, large amounts of which are being used for fuel.

People, of course, consume corn, and it's in nearly every processed food we buy. Livestock, too, feed on corn. Some chickens eat 40 pounds of it in a matter of weeks. So a jump in the price drives up prices in just about every aisle of supermarkets. Not surprisingly, the U.N. found that the market prices of cereals, dairy produce, meat, sugar and oils rose 57 percent from March 2007 to March 2008.

There should be enough corn to go around.

"Producers plan to plant 86 million acres of corn this year," USDA reported in March. "While 7.6 million acres less than 2007, this would still be the second-largest area since 1949."

But too little of that corn is used as food. A quarter of American corn is turned into ethanol, and that amount is set to rise. Last year the federal government mandated that ethanol production grow five-fold by 2022.

Sensibly, some lawmakers are moving to suspend that law, or even repeal it and the subsidies altogether. We can't afford to keep burning so much corn while people go hungry.

The food crisis should surprise no one. When 25 percent of a staple crop is taken off the table, shortages result. Just last year, two economics professors predicted the current food shortages.

"By putting pressure on global supplies of edible crops, the surge in ethanol production will translate into higher prices for both processed and staple foods around the world," wrote C. Ford Runge and Benjamin Senauer in *Foreign Affairs*.

"Biofuels have tied oil and food prices together in ways that could profoundly upset the relationships between food producers, consumers, and nations in the years ahead, with potentially devastating implications for both global poverty and food security," the pair wrote.

Worse, at least one prominent scientist worries that ethanol production could hurt the environment it's supposed to protect.

"Biofuel from corn doesn't seem very beneficial when you consider its full environmental costs," according to Dr. William Laurance, a scientist with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

The \$11 billion a year American taxpayers spend to subsidize corn producers "is having some surprising global consequences," he says. That includes Amazon forests being clear-cut so that farmers can plant soybeans.

Unfortunately the cornfield isn't the only place where federal policy is causing troubles. Our country also is experiencing a shortage of wheat, partly because many wheat farmers have switched to corn, and partly because Washington pays them -- whether they grow wheat or not.

During 1996 lawmakers passed "legislation allowing wheat growers for the first time to switch to other crops and still collect government subsidies. The result is that farmers received federal wheat payments last year on 15 million acres more than were planted," reported *The Washington Post*.

Corn is the answer to our food problems, not our fuel problems. The World Bank estimates that the amount of corn needed to fill the fuel tank of an SUV is enough to feed one person for a year. That's a tradeoff the world no longer can afford.

Letters to the Editor

(Editor's Note: Views and commentary, including statements made as fact, are strictly those of the letter-writers.)

Typed, double-spaced letters written solely to this newspaper are considered for publication. Hand-written letters that are double-spaced and legible also can be considered. "Thank you" submissions are not accepted as letters.

Armed population From Kimball Schell Cave Junction

Although there are some who feel that an armed population is a bit off the wall, it seems an appropriate measure because the lack of deputies.

In case of a threat to life, it's possible that the nearest official help could be miles away. There could be a 30-to-40-minute delay, and even if a deputy is in the valley, it could take 10 or 15 minutes to reach a scene. That's forever if you're being threat-

ened by someone with a deadly weapon.

And there are times when no deputies are on duty, so a call-out would take awhile.

I applaud Mayor Tony Paulson and Sheriff Gil Gilbertson for taking the "bull" by the horns and telling it like it is. We have to be ready to defend ourselves, not in a Wild West no-holds-barred way, but in a reasonable, legal way.

Hopefully the meeting about gun-use laws will be scheduled soon so that we will have not only an armed population, but one that is educated.

Assisted suicide? From Fred Krauss Selma

Assisted suicide is legal in Oregon with a prescription from a doctor.

I am wondering: If a person gets a prescription from a doctor to hire someone to shoot them, would this be considered legal suicide?

Do any readers have an answer to this question?

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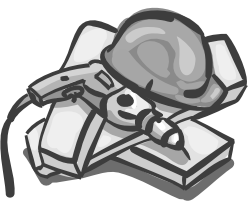
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