

# FROM THE PUBLISHER

## One Million Car Rally

Imagine that the 510,000 readers of this publication gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C. and that they brought their family and friends who also read *African Americans On Wheels*. That's about another 500,000, making the total assembled more than one million strong.

What if they all brought their three cars? (According to our reader surveys, the average African-American household has at least that many). It would be more than a demonstration, it would cause gridlock in Washington, Maryland and Virginia.

Let's not call it a protest. Instead, let's declare it a showcase of black buying power. Maybe we'd also invite the 1.4 million blacks who plan to buy a new vehicle in 1998. Perhaps, then our economic influence on the auto industry would get some much needed attention.

Speaking of 1998, this edition features full coverage on both import and domestic vehicles for the new model year. The editors of this user-friendly guide have compiled a list of vehicles, arranged according to the companies that make them or country of origin. For example, Ford Motor Company owns Jaguar and holds a stake in Mazda, so they are listed on the same page. European and Asian makes are also grouped together, unless owned by a domestic company. The upscale or niche players are also grouped together.

In addition to our standard line-up, we continue to add new sections in response to your demands. This winter we are pleased to offer a section on motorsports, written by our new Senior Editor Joe Elia, as well as a special travel segment.

You may have noticed that we have rearranged our schedule to better serve you. This issue is Winter 1998, instead of Fall 1997. The next *AAOW* will be the Spring 1998 edition in which we'll bring you highlights of our Second Annual Golden Wheel Awards, held in January in conjunction with the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The ceremony will take place at the new Museum of African American History. Awards will be handed out for Executive of the Year, Company of the Year, Minority Supplier of the Year, and Vehicle of the Year. Our independent panel of judges is currently selecting the finalists.

As we close this year, *AAOW* reminds you of the tremendous power you have as consumers. We also want to reiterate the well-known maxim that "information and its application is power." With these thoughts, we promise to continue to arm you with the kind of information you need to fully wield your economic might. The rest is up to you!

*Randi Payton*

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The new 1998 Lexus GS400/300 and LS400/SC400 are "wickedly" fast, as our test at Summit Point Raceway in West Virginia proved.

Photo by Al Marcossi

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# Mobil Leads the Way to Safety at the Pump

By Lolita Standifer

Mobil Oil is revolutionizing the way motorists pay for gas, so don't be surprised if your next trip to the gas station is an "out of this world experience."

With Mobil's latest innovations -- the Go Card and Speedpass -- trips to the pump become safer and faster. To pay for gas, you simply slide your Go Card or wave your Speedpass across a scanner on the gas pump, allowing you to pay for gas without leaving your car unattended or opening your wallet. Asking the attendant for "\$5 on pump 10" could become a thing of the past.

"This technology is a benefit to customers who don't want to carry cash," says J. Donald Turk, Mobil's public affairs spokesman. "It is also a useful budgeting tool for teenage drivers," he adds. "This program has been extremely well accepted by our customers who have demonstrated a choice for convenience and speed of payment...and ensures parents that their teenagers are spending money on gas and not other things."

The Go Card is a pre-paid rechargeable

gas card available in amounts of \$25, \$50 and \$100. Much like a debit card, the magnetic strip is read and the amount of money spent is automatically deducted from the total amount on the card. Since activation does not require a password, losing the Go Card is the same as losing cash.

Convenience and safety are the primary concerns most frequently expressed by consumers when making gas purchases, says Turk. The Speedpass key ring, which Mobil started rolling out in May, utilizes a miniature transponder device that employs radio signals to communicate with an electronic system in the gas pump. When the key tag device is waved across the scanner, it activates the pump and automatically charges

the purchase to your credit card.

Both devices are provided free-of-charge to the consumer. Turk says the Speedpass program is well over half way through its introduction phase. For now, Mobil is ahead of its competitors in new technological consumer products.

Amoco said it is still surveying consumer groups to determine if there is broad interest in the Speedpass or similar technology. "The Go Card and Speedpass are just one area of service that Mobil is providing its customers," says Howard Miller, Amoco's senior public affairs advisor for marketing.

According to Miller, a survey of Amoco's Chicago market revealed that Amoco stations in urban areas reported low incidences of crime due to brighter stations, ability to make gas payments with a credit card at the pump, better placement of the mini-mart and attendant stations and adding video cameras for security surveillance.

Turk says Mobil is also taking measures to improve locations and lighting, but is pursuing technology as well. A variation of the Speedpass, due out in November, is called the Speedpass Car Tag. It can be mounted on the windshield of a vehicle, so the customer does not have to leave the vehicle except to pump the gas. A similar technology is used throughout Europe where cars can drive straight through toll booths without stopping. A device located at the pump scans the car tag microchip, accesses your credit card account via satellites and activates the pump.

Go Card and Speedpass are available now, and can be obtained at participating Mobil stations or by calling 1-800-730-TO-GO.

