

DRIVING WITH DEDE . . . . .

# Is This Any Way to Talk to a Lady?

By DeDe Benson

Robert Frost said it. "There is something that doesn't like a fence." Now it's my turn. There is something that doesn't like a woman. And that's an automobile mechanic. That's at least if he's #1. In his old army boots, has uncertain blue eyes and goes by the name of Hank.

Now, I guess I know as much about cars as the next League of Women Voters Foreign Policy Committee chairman. After all, it was I who spent three hours in the library looking up trade restrictions on automotive replacement parts. So, I'm not exactly a babe in the woods on the subject.

But to talk to Hank, you'd think I was dumb. I say "Talk to Hank" advisedly. Every time I drive in, he mumbles something about test-driving a manifold and takes off in his car, leaving me standing there. You'd think we were married, the way he carries on.

My last non-communication with Hank happened just last week. I was late for a hair dresser's appointment, it was raining and my car wouldn't start.

Naturally, I was frantic. If you miss an appointment with Mr. Gino he demotes you from Friday afternoon to Monday morning. And do I have to tell you what kind of mood Mr. Gino is in on Monday morning?

So, I called Hank. My tears must have moved him because he was out in five minutes.

Hank was unusually talkative when he came. He actually said, "Hi." He got me started and I made it to Mr. Gino's with 27 seconds to spare. Which was fortunate since it meant I only had to wait 45 minutes before the maestro could take care of me.

But wouldn't you know that as I tried to start my car again, nothing happened. Nothing, that is, except my hairdo began to disintegrate in the downpour.

So, I called Hank again. This time he took a half hour to come and didn't bother with a "Hi." Instead he pushed my car into the station, popped up the hood and left me to peruse his ample supply of automotive magazines. You'd think they'd publish a few articles a gal could appreciate!

Just as I was absorbed in a piece about "How to Sell More Upholstery Shampoo," Hank approached me. It was evident he was about to speak to me because his Adam's apple was quivering.

"When's the last time you had your car tuned up," he challenged. By his serious look, I thought I'd humored him. "The last time the piano tuner came through town," I quipped.

He managed to hide his amusement manfully as he

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didn't even crack a smile. "Elias Benson," he identified, "You've got a cracked distributor cap and your spark plugs are fouled. No wonder you couldn't start."

I bit my tongue before I could blurt out an indignant that's no way to talk to a lady. Instead I told him to fix it, which he did.

I really can't be too mad at Hank. He even thanked me when I paid for two service calls and a complete tune-up. And he was polite enough not to mention that my Mr. Gino Special looked like a wet cocker spaniel.

But one thing saved the day. I still have Friday afternoon's at Mr. Gino's.



This is an oil filler cap. It is supposed to breathe through a wire mesh filter. This one choked to death long ago and its engine suffered the consequences.

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