

# Just what is going on in auto land?

## KEEPING YOUR CAR ALIVE



PETER BOHR

Some news and views you might use:

If you remember "I Like Ike" buttons and hula hoops, then perhaps you also recall when even middle-class folks traded in their cars on a new model every year.

That quaint custom has long since disappeared. By the mid-1970s, the typical new-car buyer kept his vehicle for nearly four years. Now, according to the Motor and Equipment Manufacturers Association, buyers are holding on for nearly six years.

The reason? Cost, of course. The retail cost of new cars more than doubled between 1978 and 1988, making frequent car trade-ins an unaffordable luxury for most of us.

Cadillac will introduce a domestic auto-industry first, electronic traction control, on the 1990 model Allante.

If the Allante driver applies too much power for road conditions and the drive wheels start to spin, an on-board computer will automatically apply the brakes to slow the wheels until they regain adhesion. If the driver persists in stomping the accelerator pedal, the computer will cut down on the fuel supplied to the engine.

Sophisticated electronic marvels like traction control require sophisticated auto mechanics. According to the Automotive Information Council, mechanics must learn more about new systems every year than mechanics in the 1950s and 1960s had to learn in 10 years.

Despite salaries that can reach \$50,000 a year, there aren't enough mechanics well-trained in these new-fangled electronics. In fact, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company estimates there is only one auto mechanic for every 235 cars on America's roads.

Having your Chrysler products fixed should be easier in the future because of a new, advanced IBM-computer-driven maintenance system.

Chrysler mechanics will plug your car into the computer and then monitor all the car's electrical circuits for problems. When a glitch is found, the computer will lead the mechanic step by step through service procedures.

"The coin of the realm" is what Chrysler insiders are calling the hot-selling Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager minivans. While the repurchase rate for all vans is 40 percent, it's a hefty 75 percent at Chrysler, the highest in the industry.

Despite new and improved vans from rivals General Motors and Ford next year, Chrysler president Bob Lutz professes no worry. But he does admit to concern about Toyota's new minivan coming in the spring of 1990. It's a sleek, mid-engine van with seats that can fold away, allowing the owner to carry a 4 X 8-foot sheet of plywood.

Buick is on a roll. Buick's market share, 5.9 percent, is nearly a point higher than a year ago. Sales of its Riviera, Reatta, Skylark and LeSabre models are all up significantly.

Buick's boss, Ed Mertz, believes that a recent consumer survey ranking Buick as the best-built domestic nameplate and the LeSabre as the most trouble-free American car has helped sales.

Americans fretting about competition from Japanese automakers aren't alone. Europeans are anxious, too.

Within the next five years, all of Japan's major automakers will be manufacturing cars in Europe, and some analysts predict the Japanese will capture a 25-percent share in the new

European Common Market. That compares to a 15-, 11- and 3-percent share, respectively, now in Germany, Great Britain and France.

The Japanese have already struck a blow to British automakers' pride. The black London taxis, something of historical landmarks in England, are being repowered with Nissan diesel engines. For the past 50 years, the British companies Austin and Land Rover were the exclusive suppliers of power plants to London's cabs.

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## Sleep Mystery

Scientists still aren't sure whether all animals sleep. They think that nearly all pause in their daily activity, but whether all of those breaks are true sleep is a mystery waiting to be solved, National Geographic World points out.

# Treat pizza equally

Continued from Page 4  
will reduce the inflationary impact of the GST.

## MADE VISIBLE

There were complaints the government would not live up to an earlier promise to make the GST visible to consumer. So, Wilson suggests retailers adopt a "model presentation."

This could mean cash slips that set out for consumers the amount of tax they pay. And shelf prices that list both the price of the goods and the federal tax. Also, Wilson pledges to investigate unfair pricing practices arising from the new law.

Another area of criticism was the impact the GST would have on home buyers. The government estimates that owners of existing homes have already paid sales tax on materials of about 4.5 per cent, and that is incorporated in current home prices, so there will be no charge on resold dwellings. In the case of new homes, the nine per cent will be charged, but half of that, typically, will be paid back as a rebate on houses priced up to

\$310,000. Even in the high-cost Toronto, the GST would only raise typical house prices by 1.6 per cent Wilson argues.

Small businesses, in particular, are upset at the burden collecting the tax will place on them. Wilson promised an exemption for businesses with sales of less than \$30,000 annually, which removes another 750,000 outlets from the GST rolls. Ottawa will also pay an administration fee of up to \$600 to small firms to collect the tax and will provide help to modernize cash registers.

These measures will not win the undying admiration of GST critics. But they do show a degree of positive response to concerns expressed by assorted interest groups. For that, Wilson deserves some credit.

Next, we'll take a more critical look at parts of his proposal.

## RECYCLING.

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## ASK KATHY:

### NUTRITION COUNTDOWN

Q: I need to lose weight; but when I diet, I feel light-headed and weak. What suggestions do you have?

A: Too many dieters become so caught up in counting calories they ignore the importance of nutritious eating. We often hear 3,500 calories equal one pound. So to lose one pound, we must reduce our total caloric intake or increase the amount of calories we burn. With such emphasis on calories, we might mistakenly assume that the best way to lose weight is through drastic calorie reductions. Unfortunately, a reduction in calories usually means a reduction in nutrients. Dieters who unconsciously ignore nutrients become weak, tired, depressed, hungry—and unsuccessful. Check on food



KATHY HAJAS  
Diet Center Counselor

values to find which are highest in nutrients, vitamins and minerals, yet lowest in cholesterol and fats.

By eating such foods, you can lose weight while maintaining health and energy. For other healthful dieting tips, contact your local Diet Center.

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