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## When the cold weather comes even your battery gets cranky

When the cold weather comes, most of us slow down a little and do some of that good old Canadian grumbling. Your car battery is no exception. Your engine is more dependent on electrical power than ever before.

If it seems as though every single engine function runs off a computer.

All those computers, electrical clocks, etc., maintain a power drain on the battery, whether you drive the car or not. That's why you can sometimes end up with a flat battery (even if you didn't leave the lights on) after a prolonged ski trip, for example.

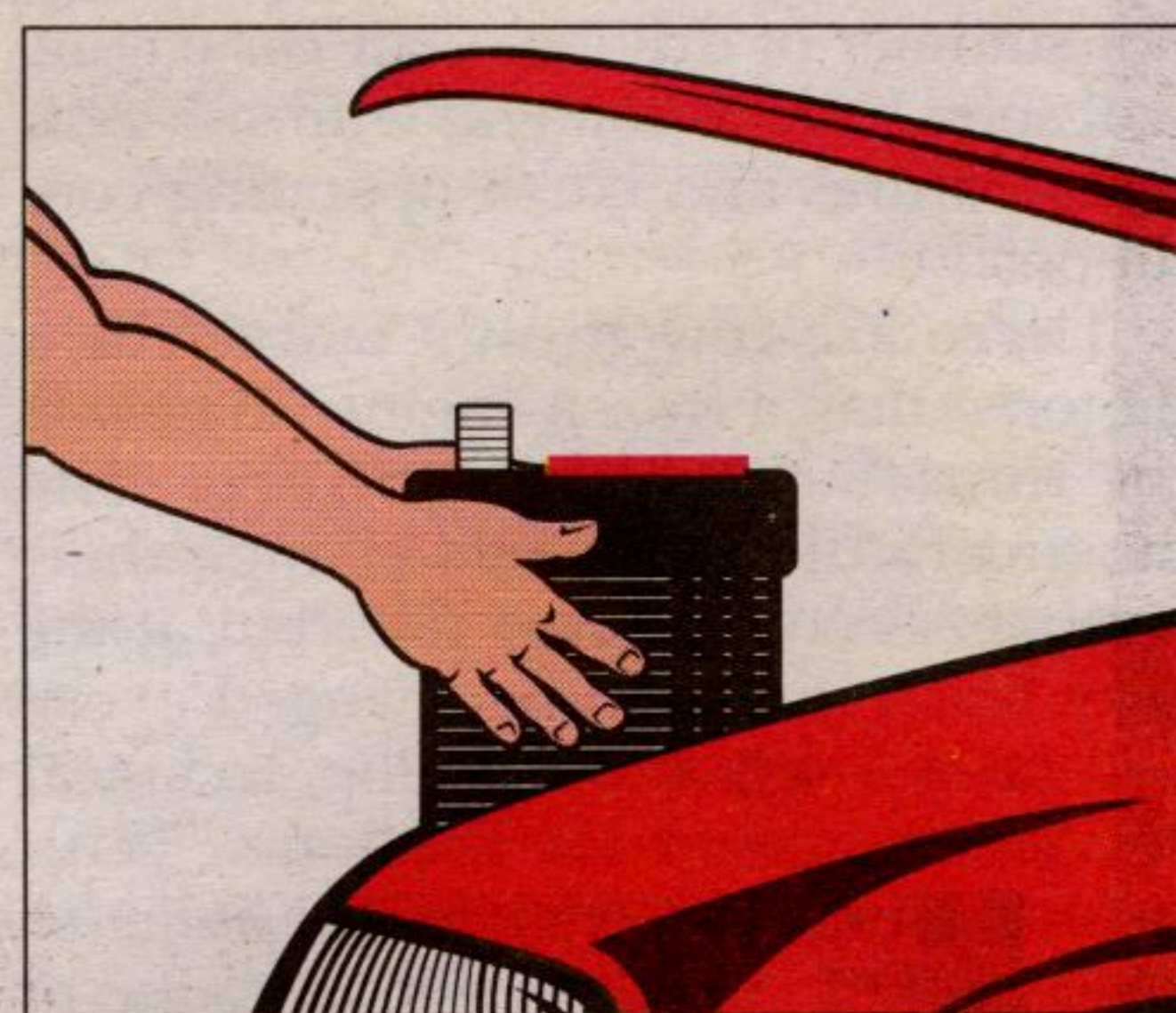
Here are some common questions and answers, reported by Car Care Canada:

**What's the white powder that I see on my battery terminals?**

That powder is corrosion, and it acts as an insulator. When you get enough of it on the battery posts, no current can get through and your car won't start. You can clean it off with a wire brush, or with battery post cleaners available at all automotive stores. You can also clean off your battery with a solution of baking soda, which will counteract the acid in the electrolyte. When the posts are clean, give them a coating of battery terminal grease to keep the corrosion from recurring.

**My battery is called maintenance free, but it isn't really, is it?**

Actually, yes. Other than keeping corrosion off the terminals, there is very little you need to do to a good battery. It's no longer necessary to check each pot and top up with distilled water. The battery pretty much holds its own electrolyte level.



Here's how the battery works. It consists of lead oxide on the positive plates, lead on the negative plates, submerged in an electrolyte (diluted sulphuric acid). The chemical reaction between the plates within the electrolyte creates the electricity, and the reaction reverses when the battery is charging so that the components regenerate themselves.

**How long will my battery last?**

It varies depending on how much you drive and how rugged the winter is where you live. Batteries should last four years and will sometimes hold on longer.

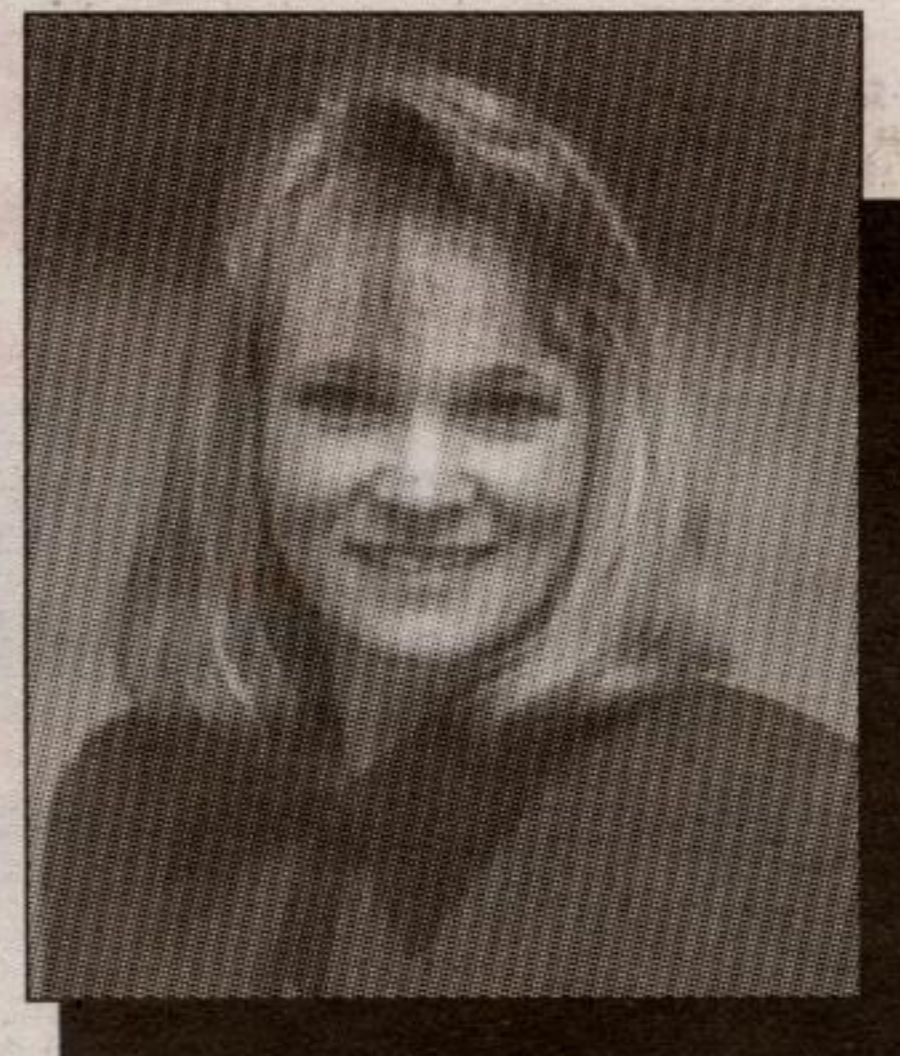
**In really cold weather, will my battery freeze?**

Yes. The electrolyte is acid, diluted with water. A fully charged battery will freeze at about -65°C (-80°F) and a fully discharged battery at about -12°C (+10°F). Keeping your battery clean and charged is a good policy. If the battery does freeze, it's likely to crack the case. That means a new battery.

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