

CarStory with Bill Sherck The Old Car Detective



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When gasoline was 39 cents a gallon

Once upon a time, gas stations were on every corner and you could fill your tank for five bucks. I know because I worked at one.

Toronto on New Year's Day 1962 when I pulled in for gas at Harold Lehman's Esso station and filled the tank of Mom's '61 Pontiac with my last five-dollar

bill. Now flat broke, I asked the man in the office for a part-time job. He told me to report for work in half an hour.

I started pumping gas at 6 pm on the coldest night of the year. The first car I served was a 1954 Ford sedan, and the driver wanted "two bucks of the cheap stuff." I lifted the nozzle

off the pump and pulled the rear license plate down to expose the gas cap. Dad had owned a '54 Ford and I knew exactly where to put the gas in.

I shoved the nozzle in and squeezed the handle. Nothing happened. I had forgotten to turn the pump back to zero to erase the previous sale. When I let go of the nozzle to flick the switch on the side of the pump, the nozzle popped out of the filler neck and fell into the snow. In my haste to put it back in, I tripped over the hose and landed in the snow.

The driver began adjusting his rear-view mirror to see what was going on at the back of his car, and the car behind me backed up and went to another pump.

I finally got the gas flowing into his tank, then couldn't remember how much he wanted. "Did you want it filled up?" I yelled. His window was rolled up but he must have heard me because he put up two fingers.

By 7 pm, cars were lining up at the pumps five or six deep. The boss, Harold

Lehman, barked orders left and right and soon discovered I was new on the job.

The next three hours were a blur. "Three dollars of high-test and make it snappy!" "I think you better check my tires." "Don't use that oily rag on my windshield!" "Where's the key to the washroom?" "Could you check my anti-freeze?" "One of my headlights is burned out." "I can't get my trunk open. The lock's frozen."

My worst mistake of the evening was putting five buck's worth of gas into a car, then having the customer insist he had only asked for two. I had to use a hose and gas can to siphon out three bucks. And that's when I got a mouthful of gasoline.

When my shift ended at 10 pm, I thought I was going to get fired. Harold came over, pointed a finger at me, and said: "I'm giving you all the extra hours I can 'cause you need the practice real bad!"

Do you have any old car stories to share with our readers?

Email: bill@carstory.com



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HWY 12.3L/100 KM (23 MPG) CITY 15.7L/100 KM (18 MPG)

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*Leasing and financing plans from Toyota Financial Services. D.A.C. Lease offers valid on 2006 Sienna (Model 2A30CPN), 2006 RAV4 (Model B033VPA), 2006 Tacoma (Model M152NFB), 2006 Tundra (Model D141SB) and 2006 Highlander (Model H21APA). MSRP of \$30,800/\$29,700/\$35,880/\$43,505/\$37,855 at 2.8%/5.2%/3.1%/1.9%/2.8% for 48/48/48/48/48 months. Monthly payment includes \$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390 freight and P.D.E. Down payment or trade equivalent of \$3,667/\$4,403/\$4,707/\$4,656/\$5,862 plus first payment due at lease inception. Security deposit waived on all 2006 leases. Total lease obligation of \$21,859, \$14,202, \$15,051/\$23,858/\$28,608, \$40/\$26,454, \$48 and purchase option price of \$12,628/\$13,489/\$16,863/\$20,012, \$30/\$15,520, \$55. License, registration fees, insurance and taxes extra. Based on a maximum of 96,000 kms. Additional km charge of \$1.10/1.07/1.01/1.15 for excess kilometres if applicable. MSRP of 2006 Sienna (Model 2A30CPN), 2006 RAV4 (Model B033VPA), 2006 Tacoma (Model M152NFB), 2006 Tundra (Model D141SB) and 2006 Highlander (Model H21APA) is \$30,800/\$29,700/\$35,880/\$43,505/\$37,855. Financed at 1.9%/2.9%/2.9%/1.9%/1.9% APR equals \$886, \$594/\$6,061, \$41, \$5, \$1, \$44, \$20, \$1, \$82, \$1 per month for 36/36/36/36/36 months. Cost of borrowing is \$910.67/\$1,708,108/\$1,526,602/\$1,296,203/\$1,118.96 for a total obligation of \$31,710.60/\$30,458,164/\$37,506,604/\$4,791,204/\$5,975.96. Freight and P.D.E. cost of \$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390 license, registration, insurance and taxes extra. **MSRP is \$30,800/\$29,700/\$35,880/\$43,505/\$37,855 for 2006 Sienna (Model 2A30CPN), 2006 RAV4 (Model B033VPA), 2006 Tacoma (Model M152NFB), 2006 Tundra (Model D141SB), 2006 Highlander (Model H21APA) and 2007 FJ Cruiser (Model B11FMA). Freight and P.D.E. cost of \$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390/\$1,390 license, registration, insurance and taxes extra. These are limited time offers. Dealer may sell lease for less. See your participating Toyota Dealer for full details. †These estimates are based on the Government of Canada's approved criteria and testing methods. The actual fuel consumption of these vehicles may vary. Refer to the Government of Canada publication EnerGuide Fuel Consumption Guide 2005. All rights are reserved.