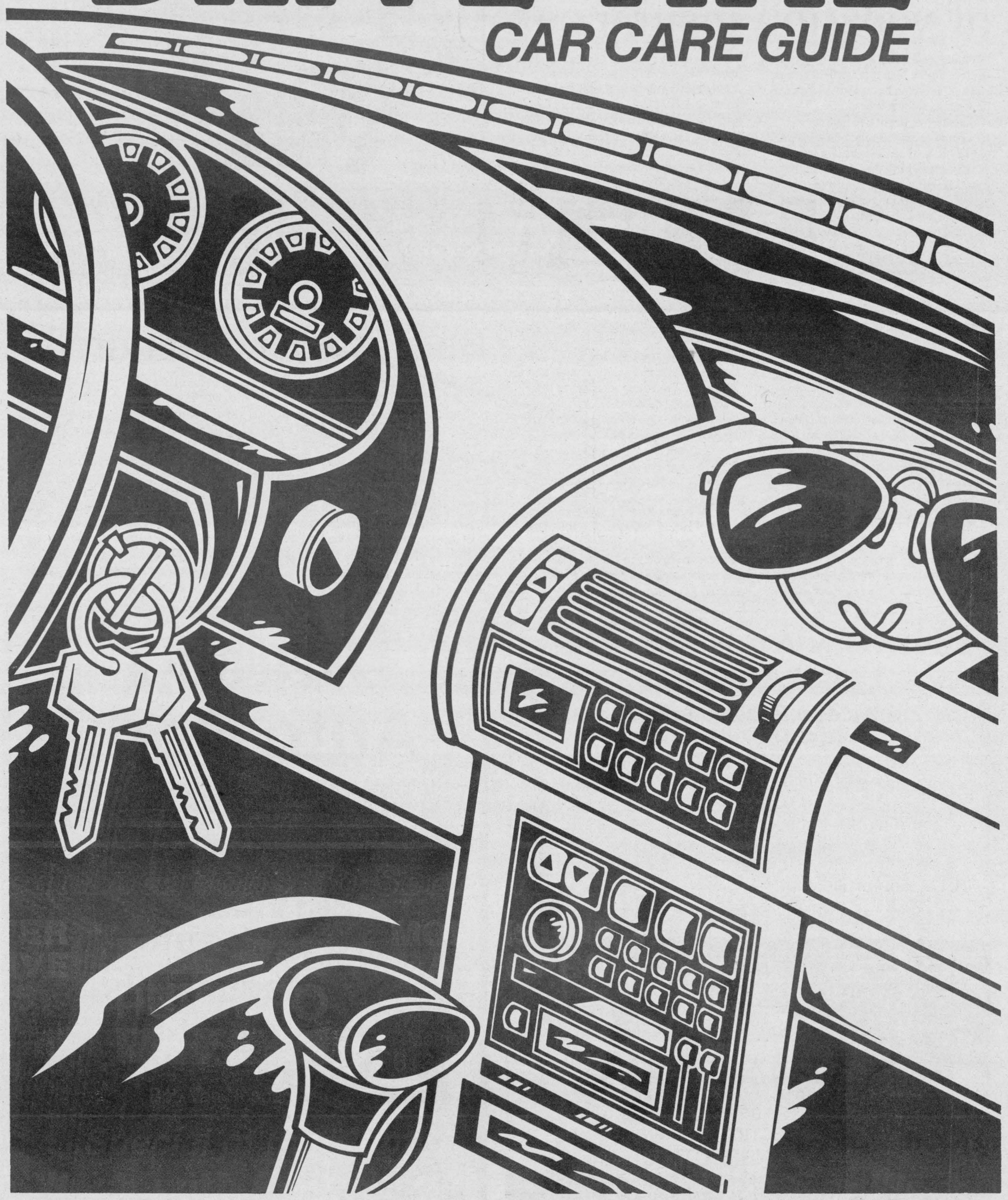
DRIVE-TIME

CAR CARE GUIDE



A special supplement to the Winchester Press, Wednesday, April 12, 1995

Maintenance best form of vacation insurance

Planning a successful vacation this spring involves more than arranging overnight stays or knowing how many places will be visited on the journey.

Attention to details, including preventative automobile maintenance, is the key to a stress-free driving vacation.

Most drivers think accidents and roadside breakdowns happen to other people. Yet, millions of motorists each year experience a roadside emergency and find out they are unprepared.

Before taking a trip, have your car inspected by a certified automotive technician. Have tires and tire pressure checked—spare included.

Some technicians inspect vehicles at no charge; others charge as much as $50. Ask about the cost beforehand, but have an inspection performed. It will still be cheaper than a breakdown.

There are a few things you can inspect yourself. Check all fluid levels, including oil, coolant, windshield washer fluid and battery water, if your car does not have a maintenance-free battery. Check windshield wipers, hoses and belts for excessive wear.

Proper oil and coolant levels are particularly important to your car's performance and should be monitored throughout your trip.

Things can go wrong no matter how well you prepare, so it's a good idea to carry emergency supplies. Your supply kit should have jumper cables, basic hand tools, flares or reflective warning triangles, first-aid kit, flashlight with fresh batteries, jack, duct tape and gloves.

If you expect to be traveling at odd hours or off the beaten path, consider carrying a citizens band radio or cellular phone for summoning help, if needed.

Don't overload your vehicle with luggage. Determine your car's carrying capacity, normally listed in pounds on a sticker attached to the driver's door. A fully loaded vehicle can put excessive stress on tires, brakes and suspension components, so pack as lightly as possible. When loading the car, position luggage so it doesn't obstruct the driver's view or shift during braking or sharp turns.

Check your route for food, fuel and rest stops. Stopping every few hours will help fight fatigue. Make hotel or motel reservations beforehand.

It's a good idea to carry as little cash as possible. A major credit card and traveler's checks are safer options. Take the telephone numbers of friends to call in case of emergencies, and let someone know your itinerary.

A full-service motor club can offer route planning, reservations, travelers checks, car care advice and roadside assistance if you need it. No one can be assured of a perfect trip, but proper planning can increase the odds.



Drewery sales representative Doug Casselman hands Kenmore resident Robert McNeill a $400 travel voucher from Winchester Travel. The prize was part of Drewery Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd.'s 11th anniversary celebrations. *Press Photo —Robinson*

Be a smarter, safer driver

(NAPS)—Heeding some hints can help you be a smarter, safer driver and perhaps save a life while on the road.

When entering a freeway, try to keep steadily increasing your speed as you enter the ramp, avoiding any sudden stops. Use your rearview and side mirrors and look over your shoulder to judge the traffic. Don't forget your turn signal.

Before proceeding through an intersection, look first to the left, then to the right and then back to the left again.

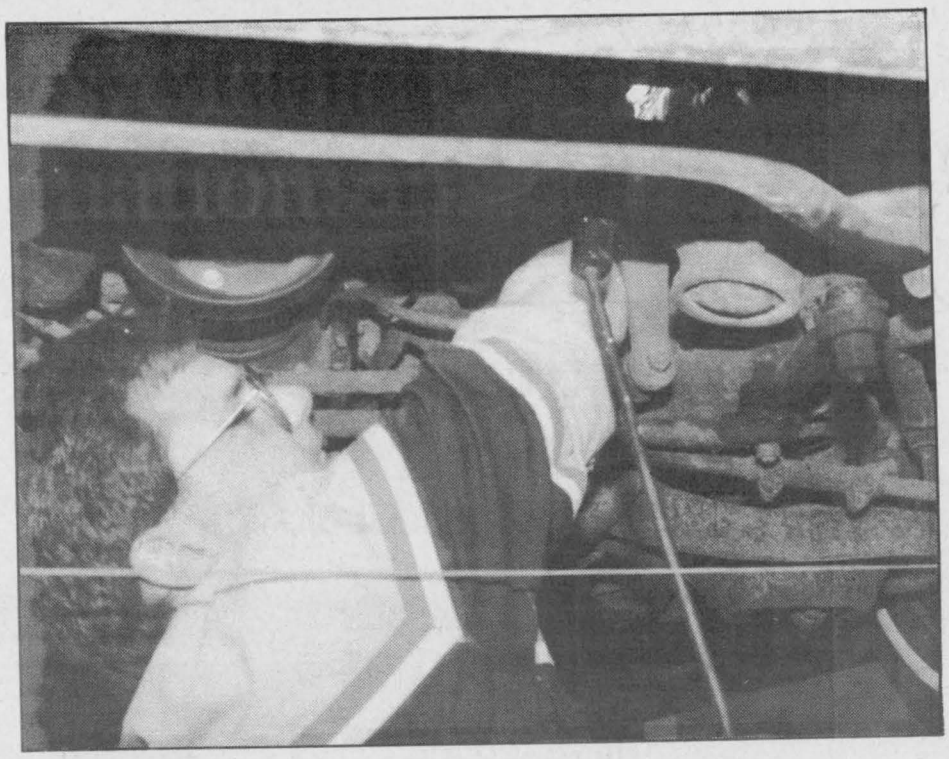
If you're the first to arrive at an accident, pull up well beyond it, turn on your emergency flashers and look out for downed power lines or spilled gasoline. If you can do so safely, turn off the ignitions of the wrecked cars. Don't move the injured unless they're in imminent danger. Send for medical help.

If you come upon an accident where someone is bleeding severely, press firmly against the wound with a thick pad of cloth. It's a good idea to keep latex gloves in your first aid kit, and to use them in this situation. If not, put a plastic bag, several dressings or other barriers between yourself and the victim's blood.

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Balancing act

Drewery mechanic Dave Van Bruinessen works at a wheel alignment on a GMC Safari van. *Press Photo —Robinson*

Automobiles and motorcycles learn to share

(NAPS)—Learning to share the road with motorcycles can help put automobile drivers on the road to safety. Here are some tips that can help drivers prevent accidents:

• Keep a conscious eye out for motorcycles in traffic, especially when crossing an intersection.

• Give the motorcyclist the whole lane even though the motorcycle only takes up a portion of a lane. Motorcyclists may ride in the left, center or right portions of the lane to avoid oil or potholes, or to be seen.

It's important to remember that motorcyclists have the same rights on the highway as other vehicle operators. Please drive safely.

Give your brakes annual physical

When a child on a bike darts out in front of a moving car, that child is taking a big chance. If the driver of that car isn't sure about the condition of the car's brakes, the driver is taking an even bigger chance.

Brake inspections are one of life's little details that car owners should tend to without fail. A brake inspection should be performed at least annually, like getting a physical.

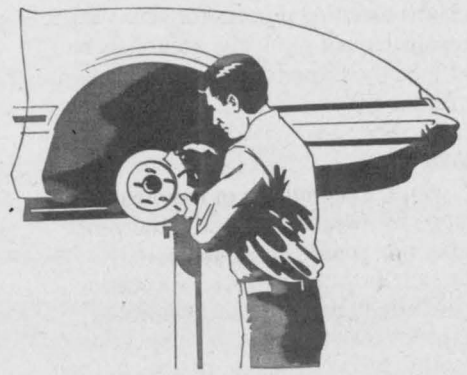
With most braking systems having more than 1,650 different parts, not to mention the advent of computerized anti-lock systems, most of us will leave this job to the well-equipped pros. If faced with the "good, better, best" option, consider that there's no room for anything less than the best in brake work. Insist on quality parts from a reputable source.

When having any type of work done on a vehicle, it helps to know the lingo. Brake inspections are no different.

Among the points included in a close inspection: 1) pads and shoes for lining wear; 2) all wheel cylinders; 3) calipers, drums and rotors; 4) all hardware; 5) brake lines and hoses for leaks, kinks or blockage; 6) brake fluid level. (NOTE: For close scrutiny, items one through four should include the removal of all four wheels.

The hydraulic system should be flushed and replaced as part of a brake system overhaul.

Occasionally, brake problems will occur even though the system has been thoroughly inspected and maintained. The good news is that these problems rarely pop up without warning, but once such symptoms surface, they rarely go away by themselves.



Warning signs include:

Pull: Car pulls to one side when brakes are applied.

Drag: Brakes fail to release properly.

Excessive noise: Brakes squeal, chatter or make unusual noises.

Low pedal: Pedal height seems different than normal.

Pulsating brakes: Jerky sensation as the car comes to a stop.

Hard pedal: Brakes require excessive pedal pressure.

An annual brake inspection is a good habit to acquire, so make it a point to set an inspection date that's easy to remember. Consider having the inspection done as a family gift. Unsafe brakes wreck more than just cars . . . they wreck lives.

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What to do after an accident

An automobile accident can leave you feeling angry, anxious and scared. When these emotions are triggered, it becomes very easy to forget many of the common sense steps to take to help ensure that the claims handling process for your vehicle repairs happens quickly, accurately and efficiently. Experts recommend that you take the following steps after an accident to decrease your chance of complications later on:

Move your vehicle to a safe place, and stop and identify yourself to the other driver. If your vehicle cannot be moved, turn on the hazard lights. Proceed carefully to determine if there are injuries, and seek medical help if needed. Notify the police and tell them who you are, where you are and relate the details of the accident. Let them know of any injuries of if anyone claims to be injured.

Exchange information with the other vehicle driver, including driver's license number and vehicle registration number. It's also a good idea to take down the vehicle make, model and license plate number. Make sure to get the other driver's name, address, telephone number and the name of his or her insurance company. Also make a list of the names and addresses of any passengers and witnesses.

Make sure to get the names and badge numbers of any police officers who arrive at the scene of the accident. Police officers will file a report on your accident if there are injuries. If a report is filed, ask how to obtain a copy of it at a later date.

At the scene of the accident, avoid any extensive discussions about who is responsible for the damage. If the other person admits responsibility, offers a monetary settlement and you accept, then your right to file a claim against the driver may be compromised. Never agree to just forget about the accident. Even though there are no visible signs of damage to your vehicle, you may find hidden structural damage. The same is true for bodily injuries that may not be reported until a few days later.

Write a complete description of the accident as soon as possible. Your description should include weather conditions, estimated speeds, time of day, road conditions and the direction in which you and the other vehicle were traveling at the time of the accident. Draw a rough sketch of the site of the accident, and make notes about any statements made by the driver or witnesses. If you happen to be traveling with a camera at the time of your accident, take photos of the damaged vehicles and the accident site.

Have the vehicle towed or driven to the collision repair facility of your choice.

Notify your insurance company of the accident as soon as possible.

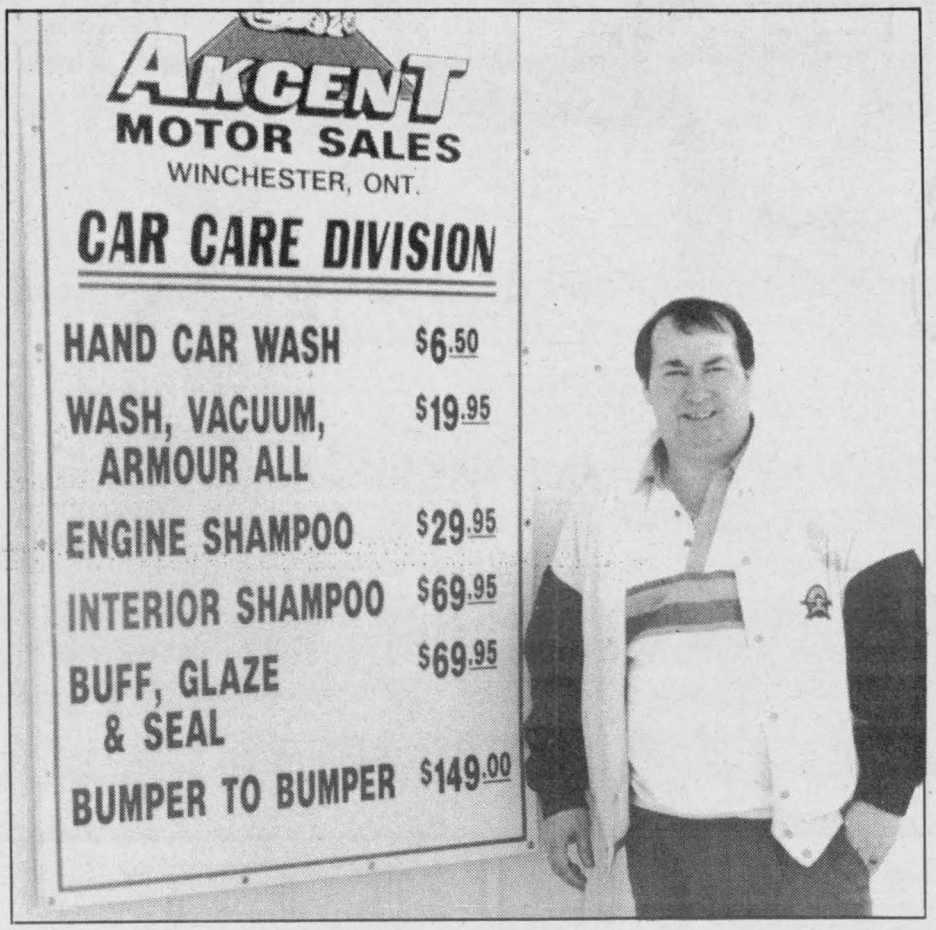
Documenting this pertinent information will help avoid complications or discrepancies about the details of the accident. It will also provide you with a written history for your files should problems surface after your vehicle has been repaired to its pre-accident condition.

Watch for our
Spring Real Estate Guide
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At Akcent Motor Sales in Winchester, Derek Taylor offers car cleaning in addition to used cars and trucks.

Press Photo —Edwards

Stats high for older drivers

(NAPS)—Average Canadians have an 86 per cent chance of being in an auto accident involving injuries during their lifetime. Experts offer these suggestions to help you stay out of such statistics:

• Be aware that as people age, their risk of injury or death in an auto accident increases. Older bodies are less able to withstand the trauma of an accident. A 65-year-old crash victim is three times more likely to die than a 20-year-old with the same injuries.

• When car shopping, consider air bags. Combined with safety belts, they provide the best possible protection in a crash. They inflate in about 1/20th of a second and deflate immediately.

• Anti-lock brakes help maintain control of your car. They automatically pump up to 15 times a second. The system does the work for you, preventing the wheels of the car from locking in a panic stop.

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Safety suggestions for mature drivers

(NAPS)—Here's good news for older drivers: Your years of driving experience and more mature judgement, help you to be a safer driver. Knowing how to avoid dangerous situations, being more cautious and deliberate are almost second nature to most older drivers.

However, age can bring not only more wisdom but also less visual acuity and other physical changes that mean older drivers may need to pay more attention to the skills needed for safety. Here are a few hints compiled by experts :

• Always use your safety belt.

• Maintain good health habits. Exercise, proper nutrition and regular medical check-ups keep minds and bodies in top condition for driving.

• Stay alert. You must be in control at all times because driving requires quick decisions. Resist becoming complacent just because driving has been a routine for so many years.

• As much as possible, avoid roads where traffic is heavy.

• Exercise particular caution at night. Eight-five percent of the information needed for safe driving comes through the eyes, and older eyes are often more sensitive to glare, such as from oncoming headlights.

• Never mix alcohol or medications and driving.

• If you're buying a new car, invest in air bags and anti-lock brakes.

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Blind spots: Avoid 'No Zone' situations

That's the word from the Department of Transportation, which created the term to describe blind spots and other areas around trucks and buses where crashes result from motorists' unintentional driving behavior.

Here are a few "No Zone" situations:

• **Side Blind Spots.** Trucks and buses have much larger blind spots on both sides than do passenger cars. If a commercial driver needs to swerve or change lanes for any reason, contact with the car in such a spot can occur.

• **Rear Blind Spots.** Unlike passenger cars, trucks and buses have deep blind spots directly behind them. Tailgating greatly increases your chances of a rear-end collision with a commercial vehicle.

• **Unsafe Passing.** Another "No Zone" is just in front of trucks and buses. When passing a bus or truck, be sure you can see the cab in your rear view mirror before pulling in front.

• **Wide Right Turns.** Truck and bus drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely negotiate a right turn. They cannot see cars directly behind or beside them. Cutting in between the commercial vehicle and the curb or shoulder to the right increases the possibility of a crash.

• **Backing Up.** When a truck is backing up, it sometimes blocks the street to maneuver its trailer accurately. Never cross behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is the process of doing so. Remember, most trailers are eight-and-a-half feet wide and can completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and loading areas. Automobile drivers attempting to pass behind a truck enter a blind spot for *both* drivers.

In 1992, there were more than 200,000 crashes involving cars and trucks. Heeding these hints can help you from becoming another statistic.



Fine finishes

These car care products are available at the Boyd Chrysler Jeep Eagle dealership in Winchester.

Press Photo —Edwards

All about your engine oil

(NAPS)—If you think you're stressed, you should see your car's engine. Here are a few facts from the experts.

• Avoid excessive idling. It can cause severe oil contamination from raw fuel drips, soots and acids.

• Today's engines work harder and run hotter than older ones. They need clean, fresh motor oil at least every 4,000 miles or four months, whichever comes first.

• Remember, motor oil is what makes it possible for the many moving metal parts in your auto's engine to work together without succumbing to stresses.

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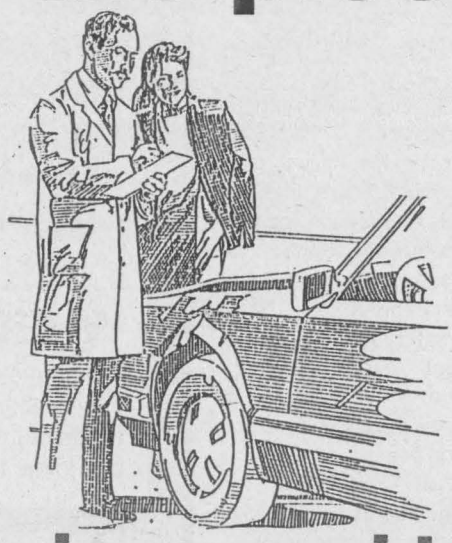
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Brake job

Dave VanNoppen fixes brakes at Winchester Automotive Services on Hwy. 43.

Press Photo —Edwards

Pot holes tough on cars

It's pot hole season! After a tough winter with alternate freezing and thawing, pot holes become more noticeable in our daily driving.

When circumstances prevent dodging a deep one, you hang on and hope you won't damage a tire or break a spring. Strong shock absorbers or struts can help prevent your losing control, but the tire still has to bear the brunt of it.

If you're one of the lucky ones, you'll only have lost a wheel cover or two.

Sometimes the jolt can be very expensive. Have you ever hit a bump hard enough to knock the muffler right off your car? Maybe it's just dragging along at the end of the tail pipe. The clatter, plus the roar of your unmuffled exhaust, gets plenty of attention from the surrounding drivers.

The loss of a muffler, and sometimes the pipes that go with it, usually is due to a broken bracket, or hanger, that secures the system to the frame. Inspecting the undercarrriage in time could help you prevent the loss of a perfectly good muffler and pipes.

Damaged shock absorbers, struts and other suspension parts are usually spotted by an expert, but it may require an alignment check to determine if the vehicle has been damaged.

Have a close under-car inspection to be sure one of those "craters" hasn't caused any damage. Car care experts emphasize that when you hit an obstruction hard enough to "jar your teeth," your car may have been damaged. Check it out.

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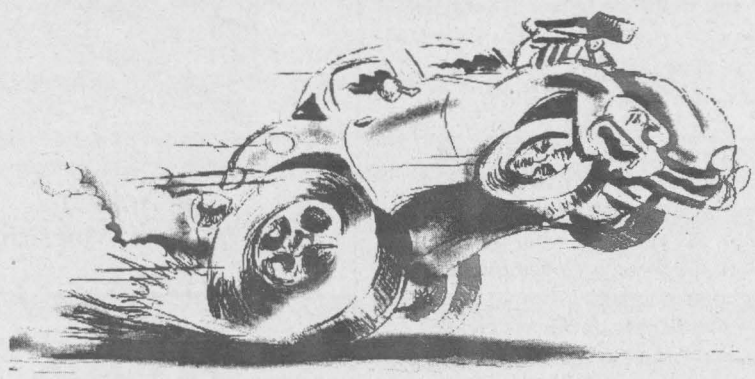
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Exploring the mysterious language of mechanics

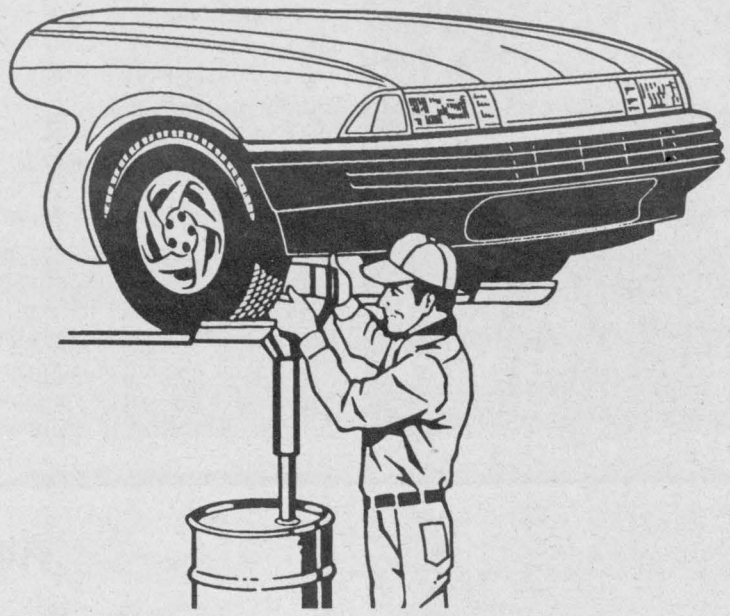
(NAPS)—"Your timing belt is slipping," and "your rackamafraka is on the fritz" are two very different phrases on paper, but these words coming from a mechanic's mouth may just as well have the same meaning to some consumers.

"Not knowing what a 'rackamafraka' is or what it does can be confusing and intimidating to a car owner," said Pat Lazzaro, professional race car driver. "But with basic knowledge about the parts of a car, anyone can learn the language of mechanics."

Lazzaro offers "plain English" definitions of these mysterious words as a beginning to overcoming what she calls "autophobia"—the rational or irrational fear of the servicing of automobiles.

• **Carburetor:** a mechanical device that mixes fuel and air together in proper quantities to suit the varying needs of the engine. The electronic equivalent of the carburetor is the fuel injection system—it does the same thing, only it is computer-regulated and more precise.

• **Alternator:** provides electrical current that is then stored in the battery. It's called an alternator because it generates alternating current versus direct current.



• **Catalytic converter:** a pollution-control device which as part of the exhaust system converts carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons into environmentally friendly substances like water and carbon dioxide.

• **Thermostat:** a one-way heat-sensitive door that regulates the flow of coolant from the radiator to the engine to get the engine to its operating temperature quickly, then keep it there.

• **Water pump:** so named because it pumps water through the engine and out into the radiator, enabling the cooling cycle.

• **Timing chain/timing belt:** a chain that synchronizes the internal mechanical operation of the engine, sort of like the conductor of an orchestra.

• **ABS:** anti-lock braking system. High performance, electronically controlled braking system that pulses the brake pedal when it senses impending lock up. Because the wheels can't lock up, it is easier for a driver to keep control.

Lazzaro stresses that there are different maintenance schedules for each of these components and urges consumers to talk to their mechanic about them.

Wet weather driving skills

(NAPS)— Experts urge drivers to refresh their wet weather driving skills to help prevent roadway mishaps and accidents.

Safety recommendations for wet weather driving include:

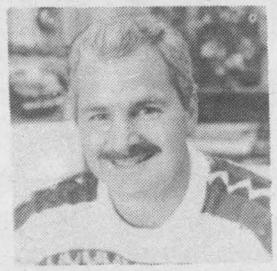
• **Increase distance between vehicles.** Allow two car lengths for every 10 miles per hour of speed.

• **Watch out for hydroplaning.** Hydroplaning means your vehicle's tires are riding on a thin layer of water and have no contact with the road surface. If this happens, take your foot off the accelerator. As you slow, your tires will cut through the water, grip the road and give you control again.

• **Keep headlights, taillights clean.** Mud sprayed from the road can cut their lighting power considerably.

• **Join an automobile club.** Auto clubs provide towing and road service benefits to assist drivers.

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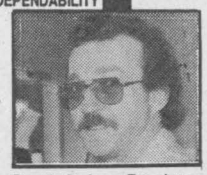
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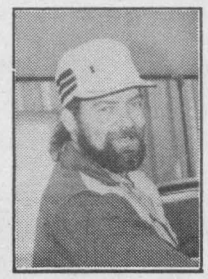
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