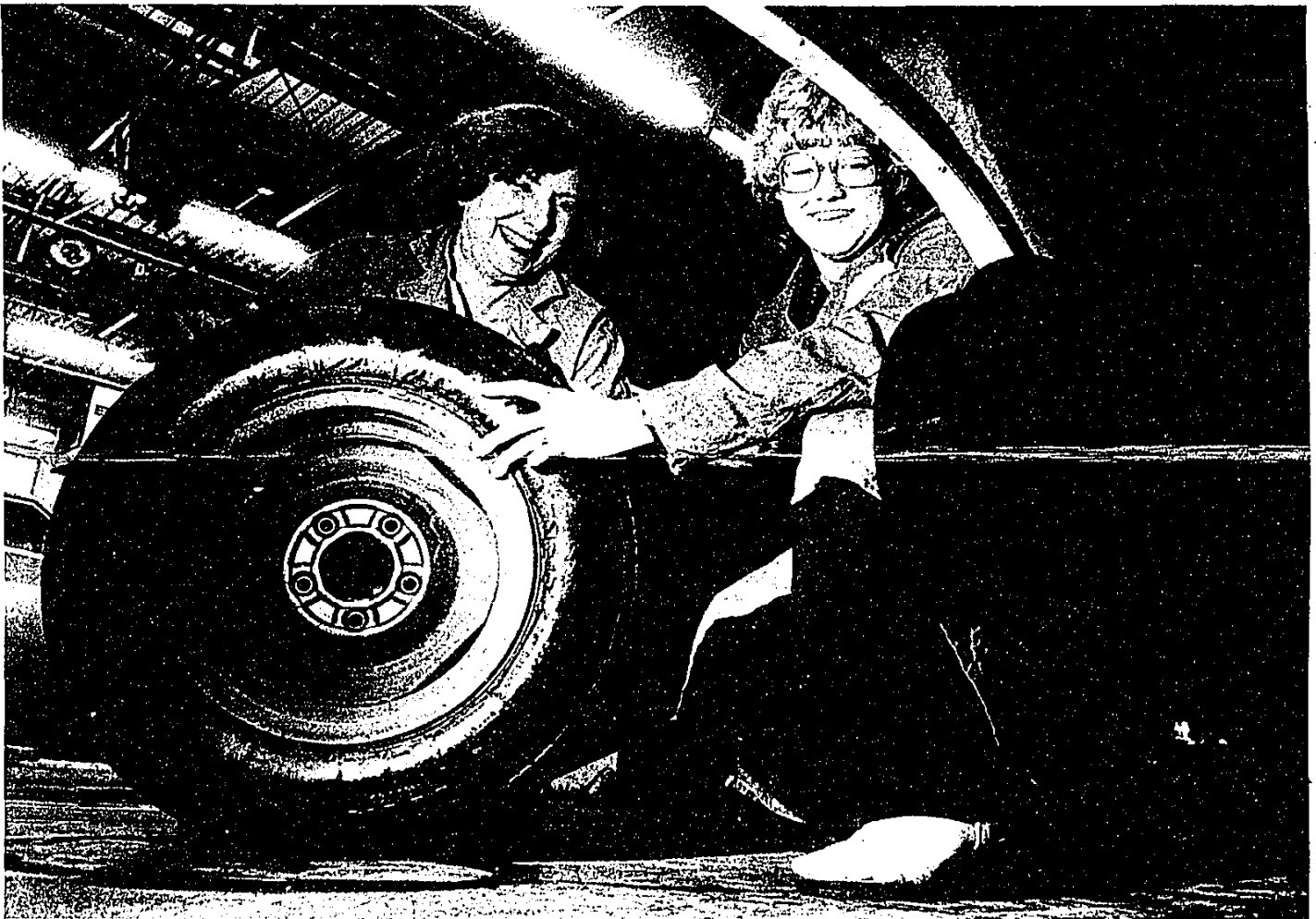


Women mechanics



Sabra Sherter and Dianne Rause, both of Southfield, are among the many women who now want to know how their own cars work

and how to perform maintenance and repair work. (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

Females join automobile self service

By SHERRY KAHAN

The women giggled a little when they put on the shop coats usually worn by mechanics. But when they walked into the service area to examine the cars, they were serious.

They had not gone out on a rainy night to the Goodyear Tire Center in Livonia to check on upholstery colors or car styling, the traditionally assumed prerogative of women. They wanted to learn about motors, and the root of the noises under the hoods or near the rear axles.

This new feeling on the part of women to know something about mechanics had been recognized by Goodyear, when it scheduled a series of car care classes for women.

"I want to know about my car, so I'll know what to do when something goes wrong," said Mary Moorcroft of Livonia before the session started.

Recent social changes bringing women out of the home and into the workplace, have also caused them to buy their own car. But few know much

about its workings. They sometimes feel victimized by service stations.

"We get ripped off when we take our cars to be repaired," spoke up Diane Rauss of Southfield. "I think they take advantage of women."

"I want to know more about my car," said Sabra Shekter of Southfield. "I don't like feeling dumb. I want a general overall picture of how the car operates. I want to understand mechanics when they talk to me. I don't want to fix the car myself, I just want to know what they mean."

She regarded the class taught by Dave Stumbras, manager, and Bob Hiner, assistant manager, as "a fantastic idea."

ON THE OTHER hand, Tracy Benson of Bloomfield Hills was ready to learn the dirty-hands stuff like changing the oil. "You pay an enormous amount to have this done."

"When I go to a service station, I don't want them to think I'm a dumb broad," said Suzanne Thomas of Westland, who confessed she had

done some reading about mechanics. "If you have a car, you've got to know the basics."

"There was a time when women relied on men to know it all, but they don't always. If you don't find out yourself, you're not going to know."

From her experience as a consumer, Mrs. Thomas has decided to treat her car the same way she'd treat an illness. "Get a second opinion," she counseled.

Mrs. Thomas and her daughter, Karen, can both change oil, change the engine coolant and change a tire.

"A lot of women pay to have their radiator filled with antifreeze," Mrs. Thomas said. "But it costs more when you have it done at a station rather than buying it at the store."

Would she describe herself as being a troubleshooter?

"I have to be," she laughed. "My car has a lot of troubles."

In her opinion the value of the class was proving to women "a car is not as

complicated as some would like us to believe."

She added: "I think these women will go on and learn more, and take better care of their cars."

She also mentioned that she has sometimes thought of possibly becoming a mechanic.

JAN BEAUCHAMP of Redford is being more careful to check her car's oil supply since she took the car care class. She will also pay closer attention to any signals she gets from her dashboard lights. As for a tune up, "I've neglected that," she admitted.

Mrs. Beauchamp learned to drive late in life, having relied most of her life on public transportation and being driven by her husband. When his work schedule changed his hours, she was forced to take the plunge and buy her own car.

Now she is thinking of getting a small notebook so she can keep track of filter changes and tire rotations. With her new knowledge she is ready to roll.