

Cars depend on law suit in black homeland

As if Ross Perot weren't enough, now GM chairman Roger B. Smith has an irate Edward Patrick Lebone Motollegi to worry about.

Motollegi is chief and CEO of the Bafokeng tribe in central South Africa. More precisely, the tribal lands are in Bophuthatswana, a pseudo-country set aside by the South African government inside its boundaries, sort of like Hamtramck is inside Detroit.

The South Africans set up Bophuthatswana mainly so that its black population could be treated as residents of another country, including being issued passports to enter white South Africa.

THE BOPHUTHATSWANIAN in turn set up gambling casinos where they could dance naked for white

tourists and host visiting rock and roll tours — things denied white native South Africans and hence worth a lot of money — sort of like Wind-

soor. All this would have been of little interest to Roger Smith except that the Bafokeng tribal homelands were also sitting on top of a geologic phenomenon called the Merensky Reef, one of the largest deposits of platinum, palladium and rhodium.

Platinum, palladium and rhodium, it turns out, are critical elements of automotive catalytic converters. The Bafokeng have pretty much a lock on the materials since the Merensky Reef and a couple of nearby deposits are pretty much all there is in the world outside the Soviet Union.

THIS SITUATION led GM a dozen



auto talk
Dan McCosh

years or so ago, when it became clear that precious metal catalysts would be used on all U.S. cars, to sign long-term contracts with Impala Mining Ltd. to buy the majority of the output of the Merensky Reef mines.

Impala got cut into the action mainly because South Africa didn't recognize tribal ownership of land. The government of Bophuthatswana, acting as trustees, brought Impala in to do the actual mining.

Even so, royalties to the Bafokeng of about \$45 million on \$400 million a year worth of platinum quickly made them the richest tribe in Africa. Impala, a relatively new face on the mining scene in South Africa, also was getting rich.

NOT QUITE so happy or so quite so rich were the occupants of the teeming work camps, mainly young black males who left their tribes to hit it big in the mines, working in the

110-degree temperatures in a 36-inch crawl space a mile or so underground.

You can't make everybody happy, you know.

Or, for that matter, keep everybody happy very long.

Chief Motollegi, once again demonstrating the dangers of an MBA run amok in the underdeveloped world, now is charging Impala with cooking the books and underpaying his tribe. He's also investing his platinum money in a competitive mining venture in which he has a 45-percent stake. The abrupt cooling of relations between the Bafokeng and Impala Mines is being watched closely for its effect on world platinum supplies.

IN CASE you are wondering whether this demonstration of entrepreneurial activity on the part of

the Bafokeng is evidence of a new benevolence on the part of South Africa, it's worth noticing that Chief Motollegi has managed it mainly by putting himself in exile in neighboring Botswana.

Roger Smith isn't the only one worried about the effect on the auto industry. Europe is only beginning to change its laws on tailpipe emissions to where catalytic converters are necessary to meet the requirements.

The European demand is likely to double the demand for the precious metals, further strengthening the Bafokeng's bargaining position.

The outcome of all this now is in the hands of the Bophuthatswana Supreme Court, where Chief Motollegi intends to spend some time tossing lawyers at Impala instead of spears.

Dan McCosh is the automotive editor of *Popular Science*.

datebook

● **START A BUSINESS**
Saturday, Nov. 26 — "Starting a Business: Get It Right the First Time" offered 10 a.m. to noon in Southfield. Information: 557-2141. Sponsor: Metro Business Management Associates.

● **CAREER WOMEN**
Monday, Nov. 28 — National Association of Career Women meets in Southfield. Information: Helen S. White, 651-3339.

● **DIRECT MARKETERS**
Thursday, Dec. 1 — Direct Marketing Association of Detroit meets in Southfield. Information: Karen Surma, 292-5000 Ext. 5239.

● **WOMEN BUSINESS TRAVELERS**
Tuesday, Dec. 6 — "More Effective Business Travel" offered 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Township. Fee: \$10. Information: 451-6888. Sponsor: Traveling Women's Information Network.

● **REAL ESTATE WOMEN**
Wednesday, Dec. 7 — Commercial

Real Estate Women Inc. meets. Information: Vicki Dallas, 652-6560.

● **INVESTORS CORP.**
Monday, Dec. 12 — National Association of Investors Corp. hears presentation on "Evaluating Your Investment Portfolio" at 7:30 p.m. in Bloomfield Township. Free. Information: Robert Showalter, 353-2639.

● **BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS**
Wednesday, Dec. 14 — International Association of Business Communicators meets at 5:30 in Troy. Information: Kim Welch, 588-7600. Free to non-members.

● **MEDIA RELATIONS**
Tuesday, Jan. 10 through April 11 — Media relations seminar offered 6:35-8:15 p.m. in Farmington Hills. Information: Vivian Dick, 927-1173. Sponsor: University of Detroit.

● **COMMERCIAL INVESTORS**
Friday, Jan. 13 — Commercial Investment division of South Oakland County Board of Realtors meets in Southfield. Information: 585-1283.

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\$2 Weekend rate.*	Weekends	Up to 12 hours of parking.
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Theater Validation Program.*	Any day after 6 p.m.	Free parking with \$2 discount on theater ticket.

* These programs available for lots A & B. Enter from Beaubien Street east of Renaissance Center.



By Mary DiPaolo
special writer

As America gathers around the table this year to give thanks, I know that I am thankful to those who set the example as owners, managers and employees of small businesses.

With everyone in such a rush these days, it is encouraging to find and do business with companies that make customer satisfaction a focus — across all areas of the operation. Without further ado, here is my list of things to thank our model small businesses for:

Thanks to owners who take pride in maintaining an exterior environment that shows their care. Well-lit, debris- and chockhole-free parking lots make my life (and the life of my car) that much easier.

Thanks, too, for keeping shopping carts where they should be rather than "in my face" each time I drive into your strip mall or store lot. And thank you for all the extras that indicate your professional attitude and

sensitivity in these areas: additional handicapped parking spaces, hiring outside-store security and being available and willing to help in emergency situations.

THANKS TO the managers who successfully recruit, hire and train employees in order to make doing business with you a pleasure. Never do I find myself in the middle of employee training as my order is being processed at your company, nor have I been forced hear employees complain about you.

You understand what it takes to create an "all-for-one-and-one-for-all" work environment and have tak-

en full responsibility for it and your own actions. Unlike so many others, you are accessible, available and working on a daily basis. Your employees and customers respect and admire your dedication to their cause.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank employees who know the meaning of the expression, "service with a smile." Not only are you kind, courteous and helpful in the face of adversity, but you go beyond what is required of you and your job. You are self-motivated and, if I didn't know better, I would think that you own the business where you are employed.

When asked a question, you give or get the right answer instead of mumbling "I don't know." And when you have more customers, you speed up rather than worsening backups or delays.

It has been said that small business is America's biggest business. Thanks again to those who take their small-business involvement seriously by setting an example for independent enterprises everywhere.

Mary DiPaolo is the owner of MarketTrends, a Farmington Hills-based business consulting firm. She is also producer and host of the cable television series, "Chamber Perspectives."

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