

Let's blame the other guy when we run out of gas

Thursday, February 7, 1991 6:02

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A guy is suing Ford Motor Co. because he ran out of gas.

Now, this really isn't so funny, since the suit is based on a serious injury suffered after he not only ran out of gas, he was hit by a motorcyclist as he tried to push the car off the road.

Regardless, the notion that a car company is responsible for what happens after a gas runs out of gas seems to me to stretch the notion of product liability a bit far.

In this case, the argument is that the car in question had a faulty gas gauge, which still read about a quar-

ter tank full when in fact it was empty.

In a way, I sympathize if this actually occurred, since the old Fords I have been acquainted with normally showed empty when in fact there was about a quarter of a tank in there.

In fact, I once had an old Ford that had a gas gauge needle that swung down to the E mark about as fast as a sweep second hand. It ended up reading E after you got about a half a mile away from a fillup. Then the fun began.

If the sun was right, you could sort



auto talk
Dan McCosh

of eyeball the width of the E as about the first two-thirds of the tank. Then the needle entered a sort of gray area, where it gradually opened up white space below the letter until eventually, it ran out of gas and the car stopped.

THE RESULT was a steady increase in anxiety once the needle left the bottom leg of the E, since the interpretation was completely subjective and certain to fluctuate. When you went up a grade, for example, the sloshing gas wiggled the needle as it would in a hard right turn. Pretty soon, you were looking for the degree of slosh to figure out if you could make it down to the discount station or had to pull in and pay full price.

I admit this happened a long time ago, but currently, the family minivan seems to have a similar method

of estimating remaining gas. At least that's what my wife claims, since she says she has about three errands left after the needle hits rock bottom, where it seems to stay stuck even on steep hills.

In the course of my work, I drive a wide variety of automobiles, which means I often have been forced to rely on the accuracy of an unfamiliar gas gauge.

Modern technology is of little help in this matter, despite the fact that most modern cars have not only a gas gauge, but a warning light that comes on some time before the car stops dead, although there seems to be no widely accepted standard for the exact time remaining when the light comes on.

These lights tend to introduce yet another form of gas gauge phobia, since now I'm not only estimating the width of the bottom of the E, I'm trying to figure out if there is, in

fact, a warning light that will give me a sporting chance, or merely a flashing light that blinks GOTCHA when it is too late.

If you have been reading this far, you might have surmised that I am the type that tends to stretch a tank of gas a bit. Sometimes I wonder what it is drives me to stretch for the ultimate mileage inherent in a tank. Maybe it's the mental exercise of calculating miles remaining and seeing if it matches up with the Miles to the Next Rest Stop sign on the turnpikes. Maybe it's something imprinted in my psyche from adolescent memories of when running out of gas didn't seem like such a bad idea at the time.

Whatever, when it does happen, I figure it's nobody's fault but my own.

Dan McCosh is an automotive editor of Popular Science Magazine.

Affluent must plan for retiring

By Sid Mittra
Special writer

A wealthy local professional is in shock. He has been busy making money for the business that he founded and owned for 30 years.

Now, at age 60, he has sold his business for \$2 million and believes he has the right to a comfortable retirement. But being a multimillionaire is not enough.

His needs current income, adequate insurance, an emergency fund and inflation-proof investments with limited risk. Unfortunately, during working years he failed to provide for himself the many fringe benefits offered by corporations.

He is not alone. The drive and controlling nature of the affluent professional can become a time bomb that explodes the moment the professional needs to take that important step and attend to the family's financial needs.

These professionals face many of the problems listed in the accompanying table.

In a six-part article, I will address some of the major financial concerns of the affluent professionals.

Seminar "Playing to Win: Financial Concerns of the Affluent Professional" presented 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 21, in the conference room at 3290 W. Big Beaver. Troy Reservations required. Information 643-8888.

Sid Mittra is a professor of finance, school of business, at Oakland University and owner of Coordinated Financial Planning.

concerns	financial concerns
retirement	Would I be able to maintain my standard of living when I retire? How do I inflation-proof my retirement income? How do I get my money out of the business I own when I retire?
investment	How do I pay for my children's education? What are variable annuities and why are they better than fixed annuities?
insurance	How much life insurance and liability insurance do I need? What are the best ways of using insurance to help a business owner? Do I need long-term health care insurance? When I stop working, will I be covered by a current disability insurance?
estate planning	How do I avoid paying federal estate taxes? What are the different types of a revocable trust? What are the disadvantages of an irrevocable trust? Is it desirable to own all property jointly?
taxes	After the passage of the Tax Reform Act, are there tax-saving ideas left? Are the tax-exempt investments still a fit for me? Even though I cannot deduct IRA contributions, should I still make them? How do I use my business to reduce my tax liability?
miscellaneous	All professionals have peak and valley years. How do I construct my personal budget to enhance my staying power? I wish to become financially independent long before I reach age 60. What steps do I take now to ensure that I will reach my goal?

datebook

● FIGHTING RECESSION

Thursday, Feb. 7 - Prospering in a Recession 7:30-9 p.m. in Birmingham. Information 642-9259. Sponsor: Job Search Dynamics.

● FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Thursday, Feb. 7 - Establishing Independence over Your Finances: Whether Single or Married. Begins at 7:30 p.m. in Riverchase Hills. Fee \$12.50. Information: Diane Fasola, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

● INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Thursday, Feb. 7 - Industrial Relations Research Association meets. Information 643-6001.

● DIRECT MARKETING

Thursday, Feb. 7 - Direct Marketing Association meets in Southfield. Information 352-6545.

● LOTUS INTERMEDIATE

Thursday, Feb. 7 - Lotus 1-2-3 Intermediate 7:30 p.m. in Southfield Hills. Fee \$15. Information: June Fasola, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

● PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

Friday, Feb. 8 - Professional Women's Network meets in Farmington Hills. Information 473-2200.

● JOB SEARCH, RESUMES

Saturday, Feb. 9 - Career search and resume writing seminar.

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Birmingham. Fee \$45 includes one-hour consultations. Information 642-9259. Sponsor: Job Search Dynamics.

● CONTRARIAN INVESTING

Monday, Feb. 11 - Investment seminar begins at 7 p.m. in Farmington. Fee \$15. Information: Cara, 553-3543. Sponsor: Pearl & Mack.

● ADVANCED WORDPERFECT

Tuesday, Feb. 12 - Advanced WordPerfect course 2 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee \$25. Information: Denise Moody, 353-3300. Sponsor: American Society of Employers.

● PURCHASING MANAGEMENT

Tuesday, Feb. 12 - National Association of Purchasing Management meets. Information 1-773-3747.

● BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER

Tuesday, Feb. 12 - Birmingham-Birmingham Chamber of Commerce meets in Birmingham. Information 644-1700.

● FEMALE EXECUTIVES

Tuesday, Feb. 12 - Joint meeting of Stree and Excel networks of the National Association of Female Executives. Information: Joan Sheridan, 693-7039.

● BLACK BUSINESS

Thursday, Feb. 12 - African-American Business Association and Oakland County Business Council meet. Information: James Ralph, 555-9079.

● BUSINESS MARKETING

Thursday, Feb. 12 - Business Marketing Association meets. Information: Mark Ford, 352-6810.

● VENTURE GROUP

Tuesday, Feb. 12 - Southeast Michigan Venture Group meets. Troy. Information: 473-2200, ext. 260.

● BASIC SUPERVISION

Tuesday, Feb. 12-26 - Principles and Practices of Supervision 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee \$35. Information: Denise Moody, 353-4350. Sponsor: American Society of Employers.

● LOTUS 1-2-3

Wednesday, Feb. 13 - Introduction to Lotus 1-2-3 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Southfield. Non-member fee \$25. Information: Denise Moody, 353-4350. Sponsor: American Society of Employers.

● ESTATE PLANNING

Wednesday, Feb. 13 - Estate Planning: You Can't Afford Not To. 7:30-9:30 p.m. in Birmingham. Fee \$13. Information: 644-8852. Sponsor: The Community House.

SWEETHEART'S SPECIAL

Touch Their Hearts With
VALENTINE LOVE LINES

Thursday, February 14, 1991

Send that someone special in your life a message of love this Valentine's Day. The sentimental messages it will create will last much longer than flowers or candy. Create your Valentine's Day Love Line message on the lines provided.

SAMPLE

My love line is



CALL TO PLACE
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OF LOVE
TODAY

Observer & Eccentric
classified ads

Du Mouche's
AUCTION AT THE GALLERY

