

Automobile expectations unwarranted

What do you want for \$6,100?

A car that works!

Beyond the warranty period!

Just after I dropped my mother off at the airport last week, I noticed a slight problem with my 1979 Chevrolet Malibu Classic — the transmission wouldn't shift into higher gear on the expressway. I've driven the car 16,000 miles since buying it last November. That puts me 4,000 miles beyond the warranty.

Being limited to first gear is a drag. On the telephone, a Chevrolet service department employee said there was a chance Chevrolet would cover the repair costs if there was something mechanically wrong, even though the car is beyond warranty.

At the dealership they didn't sound as encouraging about Chevrolet's picking up the expense. I bought the car at Mike Savoie in Troy, but I have moved since then, so I went for service at a dealership near my Westland apartment.

After the service writer at Lou LaRiche Chevrolet noticed the car was beyond warranty, he said: "Now I'm going to quote you an estimate. This will cost you \$48. That's the tear-down price. If you decide not to buy, we'll give you the transmission back in a basket and you can put it back together."

"Gulp!" I said.

WELL, SOMETHING definitely needed fixing, so I told them to go ahead.

When I returned to the office, Mike Scanlon, our Garden City reporter who has become the scourge of Lincoln Mercury dealers with his reviews of Mark IV's, advised me to call the Center for Auto Safety in Washington D.C.

"We've had more than 1,000 complaints about transmissions in Mustangs and Caprices," said Faith Little, office manager at the center. "It seems Chevrolet decided to save money and put a transmission made for its smaller cars, like the Vega, in

larger cars. It's too small for the car and burns out just after the warranty."

Two lawsuits are pending against Chevrolet and the Federal Trade Commission is investigating the transmission problem, according to Ms. Little.



Ms. Little suggested I keep the smaller transmission in my larger car and sue Chevrolet in small claims court for the costs.

FORTUNATELY, OR unfortunately, I have the larger (correct) transmission in my car. In mid-1978 Chevrolet realized there were problems and began putting the larger transmission in the Malibus, according to Ms. Little.

After leaving my car overnight, I received a call from Lou LaRiche's service person. I needed something called a governor gear. Total cost was \$92 (this included an oil change and lube job that I had also requested).

I gave the go-ahead for repair work, then called Chevrolet's regional customer relations office in Southfield. A recording answered my call.

"You have reached the Chevrolet Detroit zone office customer relations."

Currently all our lines are busy. Please hold the line and one of our representatives will be with you as soon as possible. Thank you."

I know this message well because I heard it once every 30 seconds for 10 minutes, until a human being answered the phone.

Having just passed through warranty, I

explained, my car had broken down, I explained. Something called the "governor gear" in the transmission needed replacing. Would the generous Chevrolet people reimburse me for repairs, even though the car is past warranty?

"The best I can do," said the human, "is for you to leave the replaced part and a copy of the bill with the dealership. When one of our representatives visits the dealership, he'll inspect the part and decide

whether to reimburse you."

A customer relations man visited the dealership the next day. "No dice," he said, meaning no reimbursement.

Moral to the story: Always trade in your car before the warranty expires.

Second moral to story: Never trade in your 1967 Impala.

Post office is planned

The U.S. Postal Service has awarded a \$1,288,742 contract for construction of a new Farmington post office to Marcelli Construction Co. of Walled

Lake. The 23,000 square foot building will be located on a 184,000 square foot site on 12 Mile Rd. between Farmington

and Orchard Lake roads.

The new building will replace the present post office and annex.

Widowed meet

Widowed persons meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 4, in Mercy Center to hear Diane Sugrue speak about ways to live effectively.

Mercy Center is at 28600 11 Mile. A \$2 donation will be asked at the door.

The meeting is open to all widows and widowers in all surrounding areas.

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