

Simple Stuff Some Interesting Tidbits

While reading through my recent Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA) "Antique Automobile" magazine, I came across a very interesting article written by Senior Editor Steven Rossi. The article contained interesting tidbits that "would otherwise slip through the old-car cracks." Here are some I thought you'd be interested in.

- Invented in England, the Stepney spare tire arrived in 1904 as a universal clamp-on accessory. The Thomas B. Jeffrey Co. is credited with being the first to actually provide a model-specific spare on its early Rambler line. During 1941 and the Korean Conflict, spare tires were rationed. According to Consumer Reports, about one-third of today's new cars don't come with spares."

- Goodyear acquired family-owned Cooper Tires. It turns out that Cooper owns the English Avon brand, which has been making tires since 1904. Unfortunately, their U.K. plant, which evolved into a motorcycle tire factory, will now be closing.

- Having trouble reading your oil dipstick...particularly with new thinner engine oils? You can easily rough up its surface with a file to ensure the oil clings better, and even add your own sight holes if necessary (just don't remove the level marks). Make sure to clean off any debris before reinserting. You can also lay the dipstick down flat on a clean, white paper towel...and then lift it off...to determine an accurate level. Some manufacturers have started to include a cross-hatch surface to help.

- America's oldest road racing course happens to be Willow Springs, near Rosasmond, California. It was purpose-built in 1952/1953 and has been in continuous operation ever since. Watkins Glen, New York, followed in 1956, after relocating from the surrounding village streets.

- Jimmy Clark described a few of the peripheral hazards of Grand Prix racing back in the glory days. "A hail of stones of all shapes and sizes peppered the cars and drivers. The stones stripped the paint from my helmet, and some of the skin off my face. Finally, the goggles fell to pieces under the battering (which is why drivers wore a spare pair around their neck)". From *Jim Clark At The Wheel*.

- It's always said that the car alarm "went off," but isn't it really "go on"?

- Here's a tip from an experienced speedometer guy. It's always better to zero a resettable trip odometer when the car is stationary, because when it's in motion, the gears might clash. If they're old, the brittle/petrified plastic, could easily break.



A haunting photograph of Jim Clark by famed automotive photographer Jesse Alexander after the 1962 Belgian Grand Prix

Here are some words to live with:

- "Failure is only the opportunity more intelligently to begin again." Henry Ford.
- The only car tours and motorcycle rides you regret are the ones you didn't take.
- Nowadays, I avoid pessimists, just as much as I avoid prejudice.

If you aren't already a member, consider joining the AACA. Great organization, informative bi-monthly magazine and the Chris & Kathleen Koch AACA Library & Research Center in Hershey, PA is well worth the trip! For more on the AACA check out their web site at aaca.org.