

# AUTO CARE

## Don't get 'taken' by a mechanic

By SUZANNE CHONEY  
Copley News Service

Taking your car to a mechanic often is more traumatic than going to see a doctor.

"How much will I get taken for this time?" you mumble to yourself as you leave your car keys in the hands of the stranger at the service bay.

An auto industry roundtable held in Los Angeles addressed that issue and others relating to car care and dealing with mechanics. Among those participating in the session were representatives from Chrysler, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co., Fram Corp., Motor Service Industries, which sponsored the meeting.

Roundtable participants offered the following advice:

— "Dealership mechanics for the most part are well trained by car companies and have good equipment to work with," said Joe Doty, a spokesman for Allen Test-Products Division, Allen Group Inc. "But there are often communication problems with dealership mechanics. You have to go through a service manager who writes up the work order for the car." In the process, he said, the information you relay to the service manager may not get to the mechanic.

Deanna Sclar, author of "Auto Repair For Dummies," who was at the session, said that consumers should be assertive and insist on meeting the mechanic who is doing the work on their car.

— "You should establish a good working relationship with your mechanic early on, when you first get your car," said Robert Heinlein, Firestone vice president for retail

operations.

— Don't be too quick to tell a mechanic what you think a problem is before he has had a chance to diagnose it, said Maury Kramer, spokesman for the Automobile Club of Southern California.

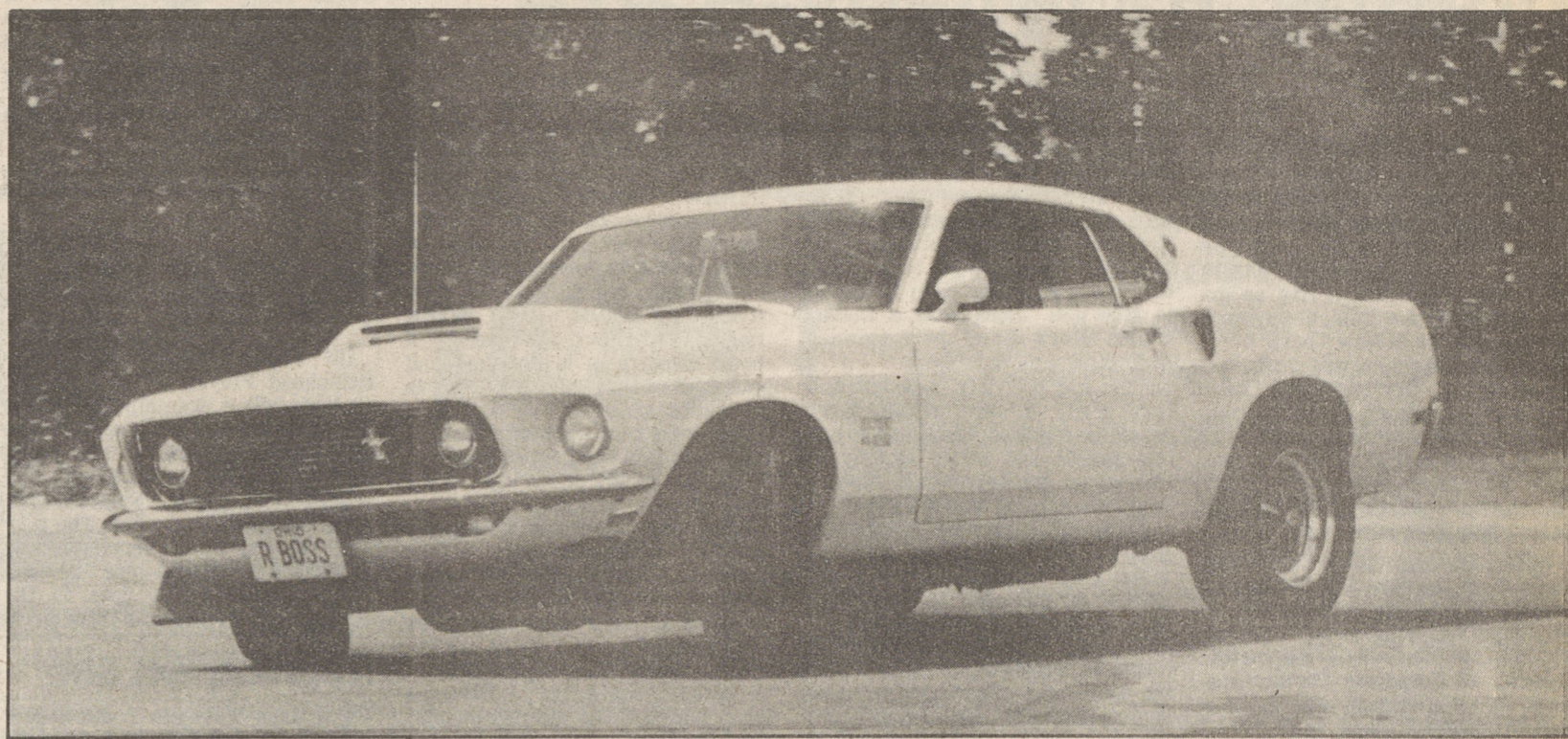
"When you go to a dentist you say, 'Doc, it hurts.' He takes an X-ray and charges you for that. But he makes a diagnosis first. He doesn't just go in and pull the tooth. But that's the opposite of what people do when they drive into the service lane and say, 'It needs a tuneup.'"

— When consulting a mechanic, "describe the symptoms your car is having in very specific terms, such as when and where and under what driving conditions it stalls," said Roy Mallroy, a representative for Fram Corp.

— Word of mouth is still the best way to find a good mechanic. Next to that, finding mechanics who are certified by the Independent National Institute for Automobile Service Excellence increases your chances for success, although it is "not a panacea," said Barry McNulty, an institute spokesman who was at the session.

— In most cases, replacing car parts with rebuilt or remanufactured car parts is cheaper than — and just as good as — new car parts. A rebuilt part is an old car part, for example, a carburetor, that is removed from the car, tested to find out what's wrong, then rebuilt using new components to replace those that caused the problem.

Consumers should ask for written warranties on rebuilt and remanufactured parts, said Harry Holzwasser, president of Arrow, which manufactures car parts.



**Mustang**  
This 1969 Boss 429 Mustang is an example of one of the more

modern collectible cars. Photo courtesy of Hemmings Motor News.

## Kick yourself for selling that Mustang

By JUNE CUTLER  
Copley News Service

Remember that 1965 Mustang you sold for \$500 about 10 years ago? Maybe you should have held onto it, because early Mustangs nowadays are bringing 10 times that and more.

Or how about the Corvair that Ralph Nader said was so unsafe? There's a loyal and expanding core of believers who not only disagree with Nader, but also are stepping up and paying more than the cars originally cost for certain models of Corvair.

To learn more about this phenomenon of '60s cars changing from clunkers to collectibles, we talked with David Brownell, editor of the Bennington, Vt.-based Hemmings

Motor News, a monthly international shopper for car collectors and restorers.

Cars like the Corvair and Mustang and "muscle" cars like the Pontiac GTOs, Plymouth Road Runners and Ford Talladegas are being avidly collected and restored by the generation that grew up admiring and wanting these cars when they were new, Brownell said.

"It's the same all the way through the car-collecting hobby. Each generation buys and sells and restores the cars they wanted in their youth, whether it's a Packard or a Panther."

Besides the pony cars and muscle cars, are there any other categories of cars worth collecting from the '50s and '60s?

"Yes," Brownell said. "The sports cars of that time, the Jaguars, Alfa-Romeos, the 190-SL Mercedes, early Porsches, Triumphs and Austin-Healeys, already have an enthusiastic following, and the prices on these cars are climbing steadily — dramatically, in a few cases — but some good buys remain. The Alfa Giuliettas from the late '50s to early '60s for instance, are still relatively cheap and the Triumphs still are good buys, in my opinion."

Brownell cautioned, however, that unless the car has been completely and correctly restored, the purchase price might be just the beginning of your expenditures. Almost every car will need some mechanical attention and, if bodywork is

involved, the ante could go up quickly. Ideally, the best type of car to buy is one that has been very well preserved with low mileage (the little old lady special) or one that has been restored and has had a few years' subsequent use to break it in.

If you decide to restore the car of your dreams and have the skills to do the job well, you'll be embarking on an occasionally frustrating but ultimately high satisfying experience, Brownell said.

"From a classical investment point of view, not really," Brownell said. "If you're jumping in simply to make money, you'd be better off putting your dollars in a money fund or stock or other security which offers a steady return on your investment."

## Things you may want to know

The Model T inspired Frederick Converse to write a symphony, "Flivver 10 million," honoring the "Tin Lizzie." It first was performed April 15, 1927, by the Boston Symphony.

More than 200 government booklets, which provide helpful information on everything from car maintenance to health and money management, are listed in the Consumer Information Catalogue.

Many of the booklets are free. The most expensive, a three-part set on car maintenance, costs \$7. To request a free copy of the catalog, send a postcard to Consumer Information Center, Dept. 24, Pueblo, CO 81900

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