"I listened and learned"

—about

SERVICE STATION OPERATION

By Bill Olson

"I listened and I learned"

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Some men never listen, some listen out of courtesy, some purely out of curiosity, and some just to acquire the basis of an argument. Still others listen to learn. Bill Olson is in the later category. He is a composite of the men who continue to operate service stations at a profit, in spite of chiseling and price cutting in peace time, and a multitude of annoyances in war time. This book is a record of how and what he learned. It is recorded for the benefit of others who, like Bill himself, know how to learn by listening

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Bill Olson REALLY LIVES

BILL OLSON really lives as surely as John Doe or Joe Doakes. For Bill, too, is a typical representative of a typically American group — the *good* service station operators. You mee. him, most of the time, when you buy gas for your car. You get sore at him, occasionally, when he won't sell tires without a priority, or wait till "next time" for coupons for the gas you want today. You depend upon him for sound advice concerning the maintenance of your car. And you sincerely admire him for his energy and ingenuity. But, unfortunately, you don't find him in every service station in America—to your frequent disappointment.

Not so many years ago, Bill decided that service station operation offered a profitable, interesting, and permanent future to a man who wanted to be his own boss—some day. So Bill embarked upon this career by starting as a "helper," or, as the boys called it, a "grease monkey," in the corner "filling station."

Later, he progressed to managing a large and ornate, super-duper, deluxe station of a big oil company. That was where Bill learned about "Merchandising," "Housekeeping," "Profitable Operation," "Service Procedure," and the human element of service station selling and supervision. His observations, comments, and wise-cracks on this subject are gems of Americana.

After a few years spent in "learning" service station operation

and petroleum products from the ground up, Bill decided to become master of his own fate. That was when Bill took over his own station, where he soon learned about "price differentials," Q.D.A.'s, chiselers, competition, and credits. His trials and tribulations during this phase of his career ran the scale of emotional experiences from those of the hero in a Shakespearean tragedy to those of Alexander Botts of *Saturday Evening Post* Earthworm Tractor fame. He has felt "higher than a kite" after a head office pep meeting, and "lower than a snake's belly" after trying faithfully to put the "pep-ideas" across with his customers — and failing, he thought, too often.

Today, Bill is "sitting pretty," making a profit, raising a family, buying war bonds, and rendering an essential service to his community and his nation. But Bill will never stop learning, nor will he ever be completely self-satisfied. Neither will Bill ever be, as he puts it, "filthy rich," nor smug, for he has acquired a philosophy. And that philosophy is what will make this recording of his thinking on the subject of service station operators, their woes, and their joys, worthy of any time you may see fit to spend in reading about it.

"I Listened and Learned"

WHEN the folks that are putting out this book asked me if I wouldn't write down some of the things I'd learned about working in a service station after a good many years of "fillin' 'em up," they said thousands of newcomers in the service station business would be reading it. When they said that, I just about backed out. After all, I'm a service station operator, not an author. About all the writing I'd ever done was a few post cards to my customers telling them it was time to come in and get their winter oil drained, or something. Even after they told me they would write it if I would tell it, I still had cold feet.

So, I decided if I did tell this stuff, I'd have to forget about thousands of readers and talk just like you and I were talking across the desk in the station office when business was a little slack. It won't be fancy reading, but it will be the straight dope. And maybe it will be useful dope, too. At any rate, there are some mighty pretty and profitable service stations scattered around the country that are being run by boys who used to work for me, and sit around and talk about what made a service station tick.

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All I'm going to do is try to tell you what I—and a lot of others who know more about it than I do—have learned about how and when to do some of the things that have to be done around a service station, and hope that even if you don't agree with me, what I tell you will help you figure out your own way to do these things better. I hope you don't agree with me all the time, because that will prove that you're doing some thinking of your own. And believe me, there's plenty of opportunity around any service station for the fellows—or the girls—who can use their heads for something more than a place to park their uniform caps.

First, maybe I'd better try to explain just what I mean by *listening* and *learning*. When I first started working in a service station, it seemed to me there wasn't anything very complicated about filling gas tanks and putting in oil. I thought all the talking the boss did, and all the service manuals he gave me to read, were just trying to make a simple job sound important. But I was a polite little cuss and didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings, so I listened

and I read. But I didn't take it too seriously. I listened, but I didn't learn—because I wasn't thinking.

After a while I was smart enough to see that I was working harder and getting less done than some of the other fellows, so I tried another plan. I began doing *exactly* what I was instructed to do. The service manual said that when a customer approached, I was to hurry out to meet him, smile like I was glad to see him, lift my hat and say, "Good Morning (comma) Sir! Shall I fill it up with Super Special?" Well, I finally got so I could scoot up to a car without acting like I was trying to steal second base, and I managed to give prominent display to my bridgework, and acquired a chronic cold from exposing my head to the elements. But since the manual said to say "Good Morning, Sir!" I never did feel real sure about what I ought to say in the afternoon and evening. So, I decided I was still on the wrong track. I was listening and performing, but I still wasn't learning.

About then, I began to do a little thinking. I noticed that a lot of other businesses were serving the same customers I was. Doctors, dentists, department stores, shoe stores, super-markets — they were all service businesses in a way. But my dentist never tipped his hat to me. Most department store clerks were pleasant, but they didn't greet me with a tooth-paste-ad smile, and the shoe salesman didn't say "Good Morning, Sir! May I sell you two?" I got to looking around at the successful men I knew, and found that most of them were pleasant, courteous, respectful, and helpful. But I didn't see one who acted like movie ushers did a few years ago, when all you got in a super-colossal movie palace was snappy salutes and a dead-pan "next aisle to the right, please" instead of a little genuine interest in getting you seated where you could relax and enjoy the show.

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I decided the thing to do was to just be myself—to act natural and treat customers like I'd want to be treated if I were a customer. I found I felt more at ease that way and the customers acted as if they felt more at home in my station, too. Of course, acting natural didn't give me the privilege, when Father Malone drove in, of yelling, "Hi, Father, how ya doin'?" even though the Father is a swell guy who wouldn't have cared. And no customer was a "partner," "pal," or "brother" to me. And, though I've often felt like it, I never permitted myself the pleasure of whistling

"Jeepers, Creepers, Where Didja Get Those Peepers?" while filling the tank for a good-looking young lady—and good-looking young ladies do drive cars.

I hope I haven't given you the idea that I am making fun of the material on service station operation that the various oil companies and others have prepared, or suggesting that you ignore it. Far from it. There's some sound stuff in that material and every successful service station operator I know makes use of a lot of it. The point I've been trying to put across is—and in time you'll find it out for yourself—that no two service stations, no two customers, no two employees, are exactly alike. Because that's the case, no manual and no training course can tell you *exactly* what to do in every situation.

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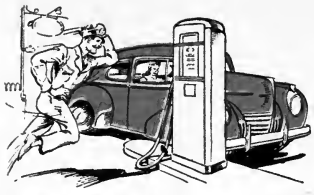
If you want to be a success in a service station—or in anything else, for that matter—you have to follow up reading and listening, with thinking and analyzing, so you can learn how to apply what the other fellow is trying to tell you to your own particular job. In other words, when I say "listen and learn," what I really mean is "listen, *think*, and learn."

So, instead of assuming—like some service manuals I've read do—that there's just one exact procedure that will bring you fame and fortune if you follow it, or bring calamity down upon your head if you don't, let's admit that there's frequently more than one way to kill a cat. Then, let's take one thing at a time and square off for a darn good look at what has to be done and why, and why one way of doing it may be better than another.

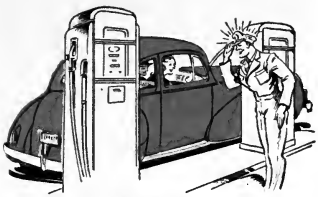
Bill Olson

WHAT I WAS TOLD AND WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT HOW TO BECOME A GOOD SERVICE STATION OPERATOR

— OR, A TABLE OF CONTENTS



1. PROMPTNESS SAVES THE CUSTOMER'S TIME.



2. PERSONAL NEATNESS—

3. AND COURTESY ARE IMPORTANT—

4. ESPECIALLY WITH LADIES.

5. CARELESSNESS IS INEXCUSABLE.

6. KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR PRODUCTS—

7. AND THE CUSTOMER'S CAR—

8. AGGRESSIVELY PRESENTED—

9. KEEPS YOU BUSY—

10. AND INCREASES PROFITS,

– within practical limits

"How I should conduct myself as a service station attendant"

"WITHIN PRACTICAL LIMITS"—Just three simple words. But they are a mighty good guide to follow around a service station. The stuff you read in service manuals; the pictures you see of what a well-dressed service station attendant will wear; the pep talks of company supervisors; the statistics from "experts"; and—yes—even what you read in this book, are all meant to be helpful and you should try to apply them all—at least *within practical limits.*

What I mean by "within practical limits" is this. If the manual says "always wear a clean uniform," "shave every morning"— or if you belong to the non-shaving half of humanity "keep your hair under control with a hair net and bobbie pins," but remember, there's nothing to be gained by trying to look like Robert Taylor or Hedy Lamarr. Just because everybody agrees that courtesy is about the most important trait a service station attendant can have, doesn't mean you should act like a movie butler. And, though you'll want to know all you can about the products and services you're selling, that doesn't necessarily require that you be a walking Encyclopedia Britannica. On the other hand, it certainly will hurt you and your station if your trousers bag at the knees and sag at the seat, and you've got a beard like a shipwrecked sailor; if you act like a "Dead End Kid" and know so little about your products and

services that you can only "stand with your mouth open" when a customer asks you a simple question.

These things are important because of the influence they have on the customer, of course. But they are even more important because of the effect they will have on your mental attitude towards yourself and your work.

"Practical limits" must be established by you to your own satisfaction. When you've done that, you'll begin to see that nothing you read, hear, or see, about service station operation has to be completely accepted, nor should it be completely rejected. Instead, it should be interpreted for use by you within the practical limits set down by yourself. With that idea in mind, let's take a look at a few specific examples.

Of course, we know that in reality the old saying that "Clothes make the man" is hooey. You or I might put on a black frock coat and a collar that buttoned in the back, and still we couldn't get up in the pulpit on Sunday and preach a sermon. And a good preacher could probably deliver a good sermon dressed in a zoot suit. Yet clothes will do something for a man — or a woman. Do you think a fellow could stand out on the corner in overalls and get the same results directing traffic as a uniformed cop?

Anyhow, it has been pretty well proved that a neat personal appearance is a big asset for a service station attendant. I'm no psychologist, so I won't try to tell you why it is. A man in a pair of greasy coveralls probably could service a car just as well as one dressed in a clean snappy uniform. But the important thing is, he wouldn't have as many cars to service. I've tried it both ways and I know. Motorists just seem to like to have

neat looking attendants wait on them, just like you or I would go out of our way to eat in a restaurant where the help doesn't carry samples of the menu on the fronts of their shirts.

Do you have that "time to change" look?

All the service manuals and all the training courses will tell you plenty about looking neat to attract and please the customers. But I always have felt that there was an even more important reason for keeping yourself looking snappy and, what the magazine ads call, "well-groomed." I don't care how much a man insists it doesn't matter to him how he looks. The fact remains he's going to feel better, have more confidence in himself, and more respect for himself and his job when he can look at himself in the mirror and say honestly — "Brother, you look OK."

Not knowing just where you're working, I naturally can't be very specific about the matter of the clothes

you wear on the job. Chances are you'll wear uniforms furnished by the boss and very likely he'll take care of at least part of the expense of having them laundered. Before you tell me you wish they had picked some other kind of outfit for you to work in, let me say that I know there was a lot of thought and experiment put into designing and selecting the uniforms worn in most service stations. That's especially true, by the way, about the uniforms designed for girl attendants. Your uniform is good-looking and sensible. It fits well, and is practical and comfortable to work in.

From there on, it's up to you. You'll want to change uniforms often enough that the one you're wearing is always reasonably clean.

Personal neatness is an asset in any business where you contact the public. However, don't get that "I'm showered, shaved, shined, and shampooed," expression on your face, or the customer may think you're too "pretty" to do a good lubrication job.

– and a word about shoes

Wear good, comfortable shoes. You're going to be on your feet a lot and it's hard to greet a customer with a smile when your feet hurt. So pick your shoes for comfort rather than style. I don't mean an old pair with slits cut in them to take the pressure off your pet corn. Shoes can be comfortable as well as reasonably neat. And "within practical limits" that's what you should have.

I've read a lot of service manuals that have a good deal to say about personal cleanliness and neatness. Personally, I always felt that the average fellow — or girl — who had brains enough to make a good service station attendant didn't need to be told to wash his

face. Even the best of us get a little careless sometimes, though. So I just want to throw in my two cents' worth on the subject here by saying that I don't think the author of the average service manual is insinuating you're a bum when he reminds you about a lot of things like washing your face and hands, shaving every day, brushing your teeth regularly, and seeing that your hair is trimmed and brushed.

Those things are important. Again, it's not so much a matter of what the customer thinks. He probably won't know or care whether you've brushed your teeth, unless your halitosis is bad and you breathe down his neck. But there's no question about it, you'll have a lot more respect for yourself if you know your teeth were brushed and your hands are clean enough that you don't feel like hiding them behind you every time you count change into a lady's glove.

All right, now. We'll suppose that you're on the job, all spruced up in your new uniform, and up drives a customer. You can wait until he's well stopped and amble slowly out and see what he wants, or you can be on your toes, practically waiting for the car to stop rolling. Now, I always have looked at it this way. It took just as many steps to get from where I was out to the customer, whether I kind of took my time and let the customer wait a few seconds or whether I started just as soon as I noticed his car coming my way and

No matter how much time a customer has, he doesn't like to spend it waiting. So, get started promptly. Remember, the distance between you and the customer's car stays the same unless you move to shorten it. Taking your own sweet time won't shorten the distance as fast as it will the customer's temper.

was out there waiting for him. In other words, I didn't make my work any easier by delaying. On the other hand, I could save some of the customer's time by being on the job and ready to take care of him.

Of course, you can argue that it only saved a few seconds, and nobody is in that big a hurry. But everyone thinks *his* time is valuable and it always seems longer when you're waiting than it really is. So, I always have figured, since it didn't make any real difference to me, I'd do it the way it was most likely to please the customer. If it made him feel better to have me on my toes, it was a pretty sure thing he'd be more pleasant to do business with. After all, if both you and the customer are feeling pleasant, doing business can be a lot of fun. And I don't mind telling you that's one of the reasons I'm in the service station business. Maybe it's not the easiest way to make a living, or the quickest way to get rich, but it is one of the pleasantest.* And it has always worked out with me that the more pleasant it was, the more profitable it was. So anything that makes things more pleasant and cheerful around a service station, is worth doing from a dollars and cents standpoint, too.

why courtesy and customers harmonize

You'll probably read and hear a lot about courtesy around a service station. Maybe you think much of it is baloney. Maybe some of it is. But I always remember what I once read about courtesy. Someone told a famous old general that he thought courtesy was nothing but wind. And the general replied that maybe it was, but there wasn't anything but wind in a tire either, yet it certainly made riding a lot easier. When you come right down to it, that's about all courtesy amounts to. It's just a way of meeting and treating people that

*On Page 193 we'll talk some more about why working in a service station is a good job.

sort of takes the bumps out of the road of personal relations. You could get along without it, but it would be something like driving your car on the rims. You might get where you are going, all right, but the going would be a lot slower and harder than if you were riding on good tires. And it would be tougher on you than on anyone else because you'd be getting all the bumps.

One of the first things I had to learn when I went to work in a service station was that acting courteously didn't mean that I felt I wasn't the equal of any man or woman who drove in the station. And it didn't mean just because I said "Sir" to a man or "Ma'am" to a lady, that I considered myself anybody's "flunkey." In fact, it worked just the other way. The more courtesy I displayed—within practical limits, of course—the more courtesy the customers showed me. That not only made my job more agreeable, but it also made me think a lot more of myself. It got the station a lot of business, too, and naturally that's important, because there isn't any way anybody has figured out yet to make money and pay bigger salaries without increasing business. But the important thing to me was that I felt like I was somebody when I could walk up to the owner of a $5000 limousine and have him treat me like he knew that I was doing my job of servicing his car just as well as he was doing his job of running the town's biggest bank.

I've read and listened to a good many rules and regulations and suggestions about courtesy. They are all

When a lady drives in, it's a gentlemanly practice to smile and treat her with courtesy. But it should be done in a business-like manner. Remember, you're not asking her for the next dance.

helpful, especially when you're new at this business, and not always able to figure out for yourself just the right thing to say and do in every situation. So it's a good idea to read what the various manuals say about courtesy and to watch and listen to some of the more experienced employees. The thing you've got to remember, though, is that real courtesy is something you can't put on and take off like your uniform. It's got to come from the inside. Courtesy is a mixture of a lot of things. Politeness, friendliness, and a sincere desire to be helpful. Once you get the feel of those things, courtesy will come as natural as walking. It will be natural for you to smile as if you were glad to see him when you meet a customer, if you really are glad to see him. A friendly "Good Morning, Sir" or "Good Afternoon, Mrs. Blank" will become second nature if you feel friendly. And a cheerful "If you'll unlock the hood, I'll check your oil and water" will pop out without your thinking about it, once you begin to feel that checking the oil and water is a helpful service that you really want to perform.

this is the essence of it.

If I had to put what I have learned about courtesy in a few words, I think I'd say, "Be natural, be pleasant, and treat every customer like you would want to be treated yourself." The main thing, though, is you've got to feel it.

Another thing I've always liked about working in a service station is that there's no excuse for ever getting bored. You meet all kinds of people and you meet lots of them. I got right chummy once with a governor and a couple of congressmen who used to stop in my station. Another time, I recognized, in the picture of two fellows who got shot trying to hold up a bank, a couple of customers who had been in the station the day before for a lubrication job and some information

about the most direct route from downtown to the main highway to Chicago. Service station work is interesting, all right, even though a lot of it is doing the same thing over and over again.

There's two dangers about doing a job over and over again. It's so doggoned easy to get in a bad rut, if you don't get in the habit of doing the job right when you first learn it. And it's just human nature when a job gets so you can do it without thinking that sometimes you do it just that way. A little later on we'll talk about the importance of learning to do these routine jobs the right way. Right now, though, we'll discuss the equal importance of not letting those jobs get so darned routine that you do them with your hands while your head is AWOL.

What's your mental attitude?

After you've filled a few hundred gas tanks, you might say you could do it in your sleep. Maybe you could, but that doesn't make it a good idea to sleep while you're doing it. That means you want to be careful and not bang the hose nozzle against the car as you put it in or take it out of the tank. Actually, you'd have to give it a pretty hearty smack to really hurt anything, but it makes a racket and the customer is bound to have visions of a lot of scratches and dents in the back of his car. The same goes for dragging the gas hose across the bumper or fender when the filler opening is on the opposite side of the car from the pump. It may not do any damage to the car, but it plays hob with the customer's nerves since he imagines you're rasping off the finish.

Any married man will tell you that a woman most appreciates what she calls "the little things." So, while it's good practice to be solicitious, don't try to set an example for her husband or boy friend.

Spilling gas is another thing that is easy to avoid if you watch what you're doing. Even though the customer does tell you to put in eight, he won't be happy if it turns out that the tank will only take seven and a half and you let a half gallon—that maybe represented part of his last ration coupon—flow over the back end of the car. It doesn't do the finish any good and it's a waste of somebody's gas—the customer's or the station's, depending on the circumstances. Besides, it makes more work for you, for you have to flush off the spilled gas with water and then wipe off the car.

Carelessness builds business for competitors

There are a lot of other little things coming under the head of carelessness, that you'll want to avoid. Things like letting the hood drop with a clatter; letting the radiator overflow when you're putting in water; forgetting to replace valve caps on the tires, in addition to the most unforgivable offense of all—neglecting to replace the gas tank cap securely. Now, don't start telling me that anyone with a little horse sense knows better than to do things like that. Of course, he does. That's just my point. It won't take you long to learn what you ought to do. But it may take a little longer to learn that knowing what you ought to do is no good unless you remember to do it.

That's why I say that carelessness is inexcusable. If you've ever noticed a customer's face when you've just dribbled oil on a freshly washed fender, or tried to pacify one who'd discovered that he'd driven a couple of days with his gas tank cap in your pocket, you'll understand what I mean.

Maybe you remember the cartoon that turned up in several different versions about the time the "streamlined cars" began to appear. It showed a very bewildered service station attendant trying to put water in

the gas tank of a car that looked the same on both ends, while his partner tried to fill the radiator with high-test gasoline. I don't suppose many of you folks who read this book will have any trouble determining which end of the car the gas goes in. But you'd be surprised at the number of times I've seen fairly experienced attendants fumble around to get the hood of a car unlatched and make a couple of scouting trips around the front end trying to locate the oil filler pipe.

If you don't know— find out

Stuff like that not only wastes your time and the customer's, but how do you expect the customer to trust your recommendation as to the right grade of oil to use when you plainly didn't know his car well enough to be sure where to put the oil in, once you decided on the right grade? So, one of the things I learned pretty early in the game was that it was a good idea to know as much as I could about all different makes of cars that were apt to show up in my station. Now, I don't mean by that, that you should absorb a lot of technical dope about horsepower, gear ratios, front wheel toe-in, etc. But you ought to at least be able to recognize the different makes of cars on sight, and from that know what side the gas tank is filled on, whether the oil filler pipe is on the left or right side of the motor or in the center; and where the battery is located. Even some semi-technical facts are useful. It helps to know if a car has a pressure cooling system—which means you give the radiator cap a twist and let it "blow off" steam first, instead of screwing it right off and letting it blow steam

You might as well flip cigar ashes on a hostess' oriental rug as be careless with a customer's car. Both arouse resentment. Dribbling oil or spilling gas on a fender, or banging the pump hose against a car, are good ways of encouraging a customer to try another station.

in your face—or if it's a make that has an extra high compression motor that *ought* to be run only on high anti-knock gas.

It's a lot easier today to learn all you need to know about a customer's car than it was when I first started pumping gas. Along about the end of World War I there were over 900 different makes and models of cars running around. To make it worse, most of them were "assembled" jobs. That is, the car manufacturer bought some engines here, some frames there, and some wheels and bodies and radiators and headlights somewhere else. Sometimes he'd switch suppliers in the midst of production, so you could never be sure, even when you identified the model, that it would be just like the last one of that model you serviced.

Today, it's a lot easier. Twenty or thirty will cover about all the cars you're likely to meet, and a half-dozen "popular priced" makes will account for three out of four cars you service. So, it shouldn't take long to learn to identify most of them as fast as you sight them. Oil companies furnish their stations with identification charts showing such things as radiator ornaments, hub caps, and other distinctive features. In addition, there will be other charts showing various types of gage and dip sticks, the location of oil and gas filler pipes, hood locks, and similar useful information. A little study of these charts will save you a lot of time, and give you the satisfaction of knowing what you're doing.

There are a lot of other things you'll learn about a customer's car that will be mighty helpful, though you won't find them on any charts. What I'm thinking of is such things as the car's mechanical condition, the customer's driving habits, the kind of driving he does, etc. Those things all have a bearing on such matters as what grade of oil to recommend, how often it ought to

above all, learn the customer's buying habits

be changed, when you ought to recommend a lubrication job, or a wash, check the tires and battery. Those things you'll have to learn by using your eyes and ears and head. But you'll make a lot of friends, get the station more business, and get a lot more fun and satisfaction out of your job, if you make it a point to learn the "personalities" of the cars of your regular customers, as well as the characteristics of the customers themselves.

Pretty early in your career you're going to find out that a good service station attendant really has two jobs. He's a service man, and he's also a salesman. Both jobs are important. I'd hesitate to say one was more important than the other. But there isn't any question that selling is harder to learn because it deals in that unpredictable factor — human nature. So, you'll find that most service manuals and training courses put a lot of emphasis on the selling part of your job. Maybe you'll feel that they overdo it and try to make selling sound more complicated than it really is. But if you want to make the most of your job don't pass up any opportunities to listen and learn all you can about selling.

Personally, I've always felt that there wasn't any human occupation that had as much plain, unadulterated hooey written and taught about it as the art of selling. I used to be a pushover for every book on salesmanship that came along. After I read a few dozen of them, though, I decided that all any of them did was to tell me in a few thousand words: First, find someone

You'll find it twice as easy to sell "specialties," such as auto polish, fly spray, handy oil and furniture polish, if you show the customer the package, or better still, hand it to him. Then, all that is necessary to complete the transaction is for him to hand you the money.

who could use what I had to sell; second, make him want it; and third, ask him to buy it.

Repeat Sales are what you want

Of course, actually doing all that isn't quite as simple as it looks when it is boiled down to those few words. Most any motorist who drives in your station has use for most of the things you have to sell. But nearly all of us have a sort of stubborn streak that makes us resist being "sold" anything. So, you've got to make him want what you have to sell without letting him realize you are "selling him." Now, that requires some fast thinking and tactful talking, because the average motorist isn't in a "shopping" mood when he drives in. He thinks he knows what he wants, and what he needs, and he wants to buy it and be on his way. Your best chance of selling him more than he came in to buy, in the short time you have to work on him, is to convince him by a brief demonstration. And put "showmanship" into it. Some people don't believe half they hear, but most folks will believe what they "see with their own eyes." It takes no fancy sales talk to sell a customer a couple of quarts of oil when you can show him on the gage stick that his oil is down a couple of quarts. And if you can show him that his windshield wiper is "smearing" because the blade is worn out, you've got an extra sale rung up, two times out of three.

Or, to take a not quite so simple example, you might, if you had time enough, talk so convincingly about your company's furniture polish that Mrs. Jones would decide she just couldn't get along without it. But unless Mrs. Jones was housecleaning that day and the polish she was using was making the furniture "gummy," it would likely take more persuasion than you'd have time to apply, between filling the tank, checking the oil, adding water, wiping the windshield, making change, and saying, "Thank you, call again."

On the other hand, if Mrs. Jones' dog was on the back seat, busily scratching fleas, your chances would be good for a quick extra sale if you suggested, "Mrs. Jones, our Killerdiller Insect Spray would fix Rover's fleas in a minute. It won't stain his coat nor irritate his skin. Wouldn't you like to try it?"

Your job is not "Street Pitching"

The point I'm trying to get over is that good selling in a service station is just being genuinely helpful — keeping your eyes open for things the motorist really needs. As we go through this book, we'll take up a lot of points you'll want to watch for prospects of extra business. But it isn't enough just to keep on the lookout for a quick chance to sell "something." The thing to remember is that you and the station are in business to stay, and to stay in business you must have business that will stay with you. So, you can't sell in a service station like a house-to-house salesman peddling patented potato peelers, who is going to be in the next state by the time the housewife learns her Little Marvel Combination Potato Shaver and Cherry Seeder has rusted so bad it won't work, because there's no way to wipe the blade dry after using. I know the average service station doesn't sell patented potato peelers—or any other gadgets and useless services that don't give the customer his money's worth. But sometimes selling a customer something he finds he didn't need, or something that doesn't do for him what you said it would, makes him feel much like the housewife with her useless Little Marvel.

Although there are forty-eight states in this country, it is surprising the number of people that are "from Missouri," when something is wrong with their cars. They want to be shown. Don't ask a motorist to take your word for needed services—show him.

Your job as a salesman in a service station boils down, then, to finding what a customer needs and telling him briefly and logically why he needs it. To do that, you've got to know enough about cars to be able to recognize what they need, and enough about your products and services to determine without hesitating what you have to offer that will satisfy them. And you've got to know those things so thoroughly that both you and your customer can have confidence in your judgment. Once you feel certain in your own mind that what you're offering a customer is something that he'll get real benefit from—something that you'd buy yourself if you were in his place—it isn't hard to sell sincerely and convincingly. But the first step in selling anything is selling yourself on what you have for sale.

It isn't necessary to be a soap box orator when selling your products or services, but if you can't enthuse a little about them, you certainly can't expect the customers to enthuse about buying.

Service station selling isn't simple, though I've never thought it was as complicated as some service manuals and books on salesmanship unintentionally make it appear. It does take some thinking and it takes some study and planning. But it's worth the effort. Believe me, you feel swell when a customer drives in for five gallons of gas and you send him away with a tankful, an oil change, a new accessory, and a lubrication job. And you have a right to feel good, too. You've made more money for the station—and ultimately for yourself—and you've done the customer a good turn as well. Because that dirty oil wasn't doing the engine any good and the birdies that chirped when you rocked the springs

a little were that car's only way of warning its owner that something was rubbing—and wearing—and needed grease.

Another thing I learned is that it's a mighty good idea to try as soon as you can to get a sound working knowledge of the products you're selling. Such knowledge is not only useful, but it gives you a lot of personal satisfaction. You'll find that out for yourself sooner or later—better sooner than later. Don't confuse knowledge, though, with memorizing a lot of statistical facts. Such information is generally of no more use to you than knowing the number of miles to the moon, for the simple reason that you can't use it to any advantage, unless you happen to get on a radio quiz program. What you want are facts that you can put to work —facts that will help you determine what a customer's needs are and put you in a position to answer his questions.

Let's take motor oil, for instance, and take a look at what we mean by knowledge. You'll want to know about gasoline and lubricants, too, of course, and we'll talk about all these products in a later chapter. But motor oil is a good place to start, because you'll probably have to answer more questions on that subject. You could clutter up your mind with technical data, but such facts, by themselves, won't help you much in deciding which can or bottle to grab off the stand when the customer says "Put in a quart."

What you should know about motor oil is that the refiner has produced different grades, not to give the motorist the sort of selection a woman wants when she buys a hat, but for the purpose of meeting various engine requirements. Knowing why those engine requirements influence what grades of oil to use, is what constitutes knowledge. Naturally you'd have to have

a staff of mechanical engineers to find out — and the memory of an elephant to remember — the motor oil requirements for every engine. But the automobile manufacturer has found out, and your station likely has a Chek-Chart wall chart that shows what the manufacturer's recommendations are. So, knowing how to use that chart at a glance is about the most practical knowledge you can have about what grade of motor oil to use in a given car.

While we're at it, let's follow this thing through and find out just why you need a knowledge of what grade of motor oil to use. The common belief is that you use an SAE 30 in summer and an SAE 10 in winter for the same reason that a change in atmospheric temperature may make you change from light shorts to red flannels. That, however, is something that the engine never hears about. You should remember that at 60 mph (pre-Pearl Harbor speed) a 3000° flame is released nine thousand times per minute in the average 6-cylinder engine. That adds up to a lot of heat and makes the engine pretty hot. So, a few degrees outside temperature added to or subtracted from the total heat already in the engine can't make a great deal of difference so far as a running engine is concerned.

Then why change grades at different seasons? you might ask. (We're not talking here about merely "changing" to replace dirty oil with clean oil. We'll take that up further on.) There are two good reasons for this practice. Oil gets stiff when it's cold. The heavier the grade, the stiffer it gets. If the oil gets stiff enough, the engine may not start at all, or at least the battery will be run down in the effort to get it going. Under those conditions, the car owner can't do much winter driving.

Besides—and this is even more important so far as

the engine is concerned—when you do get the engine started, if the oil is stiff, its flow through the various leads to the bearings and other lubrication points is pretty slow. As a result, the moving parts of the engine won't get proper lubrication and if that condition exists very long a lot of wear and damage will result. Since the engine's oil supply is carried in the crankcase in the bottom of the engine, as far away as possible from the source of heat, the engine has to run some time before it gets the oil warmed up. So, in cold weather, if the oil is too heavy, the engine may be in for considerable damage (provided it will start) before its heat has thinned the oil enough to permit a normal rate of flow.

You can see, then, that the problems of getting the engine started and of assuring adequate lubrication while the engine is warming up, give you two sound reasons for using a lighter and thinner oil in cold weather. But a lot more factors must be considered in determining how much lighter, or how much heavier, an oil should be at any season. One is the mechanical condition of the engine, which means the fit of the bearings, the clearance of the piston rings, etc. These, in turn, are influenced by care and usage. If a car has been driven 40,000 miles without an engine overhaul, it stands to reason that wear will have caused wider bearing and ring clearances and a heavier grade of oil can be used.

The man who knows his job and has a routine way of doing it, never gets confused when customers pile up a little. Keep calm, but be efficient, and your work will be made much easier and more pleasant.

Now, just exactly what grade of oil is best to meet the mechanical conditions of each car that comes in your station, is something that can't be set down in this book. You couldn't use the information if it were set down unless you knew what to look for in the engine and had a chance to tear the engine down and take a look, which is something you will not likely be able to do. But a lot can be learned about the approximate grade of oil to use from the old hands around the station—if you ask questions and pay attention to what they do. You'll soon be able to tell a lot about the mechanical condition of an engine by the way it sounds when it's running and by the extent and color of the exhaust smoke. You can get a lot of dope about what the manufacturer recommends from lubrication charts and literature supplied by the home office.

There's a reason for the different grades of oil; that's the point I want to make here. And the reason is under the hood, not out where the birdies fly. When you understand the requirements of the mechanism under the hood, you can make suggestions and recommendations to the customer that are sound. When you can do this, you'll feel a lot prouder of yourself than when you have to ask, "What grade of motor oil do you wish, sir?"

But there's another reason for knowing about your products besides just personal satisfaction. Taking oil for an example again, if a relatively new car—one that ought to be using, say SAE 20—drives in, and to hide your ignorance or because it happens to be handier, you put in SAE 40, you'll do the engine an injury. Under the circumstances, an SAE 40 will be too thick to get between the closely fitted parts and do a thorough lubricating job. Because of insufficient lubrication, those moving parts will wear until the clearances

an engine is one place where two 20s don't equal 40

are wide enough to let the heavier oil in, after which time your SAE 40 oil will *begin* to do a good lubricating job. (Unless, of course, the car's lubrication system can't handle the heavier oil, in which case it will never be satisfactory.)

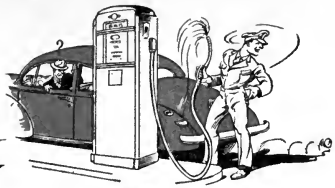
However, the man who trusted your judgment will be driving a car that has to use heavy oil, because light oil will no longer do a satisfactory job, and if he tries to use it, excessive oil consumption will make him keep constantly adding oil to keep the level up. That happens because some of the metal on the rubbing parts is gone, just as surely as your arm is gone if you run it through a buzz saw. And you can't say, "Oops, I'm sorry," and put either the metal or your arm back on.

The results of that kind of ignorance or carelessness are something you don't want on your conscience and to prevent such things from happening, you've got to know your products, as well as the cars you put them in. When you know that, you've got knowledge—knowledge that will give you a great deal of satisfaction and make you a lot of friends among your customers at the same time.

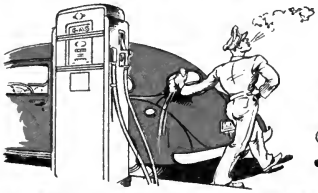
In a later chapter we will talk some more about the products a station sells. If you really want the complete dope, though, told so guys like you and I can understand it, I'd suggest you try to get hold of a book called *The Service Man's Guide to Automotive Lubrication.*

The "boss" may seem to be taking in money by the "wheelbarrow full," but it's never all profit. He must take advantage of every saving and every sales opportunity to pay your salary and make a profit. Help him; you may be in his shoes yourself some day.

1. DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK THE CUSTOMER WHAT HE WANTS.



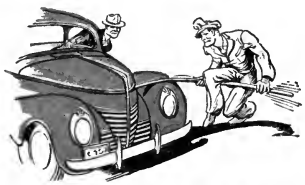
2. KEEP AN EYE ON THE GAS TANK CAP.



3. WIPE THE TAIL LIGHTS AND REAR WINDOW, WHEN PASSING BY.

4. WATCH OUT FOR MISSING VALVE CAPS.

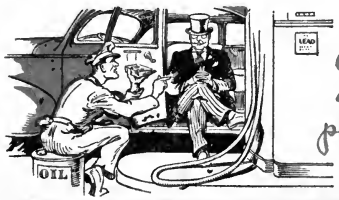
5. AND WHY NOT WIPE THE WINDSHIELD — WHY NOT?



6. GETTING THE HOOD UP IS ALWAYS GOOD PRACTICE — IF POSSIBLE.

7. CHECK RADIATOR WATER LEVEL CAREFULLY.

8. CHECK THE OIL — USING THE DIP STICK.



9. AND DON'T OVERLOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO SELL FAN BELTS AND SPARK PLUGS.

This procedure (within practical limits) will make your work pleasant and profitable

"About servicing a customer's car"

A little while back I said we'd take up the importance of doing the routine job of servicing a car the right way. Nine customers out of ten who drive in your station come in for gasoline and maybe a quart or two of oil. They may want—or expect—to have their radiator filled, battery watered, and tires checked, too, but their main purpose is buying gas. So, most service starts at the "pump island" and a big proportion of the station's business—and your duties—will be performed there. Because that's the customer's first, and most frequent, contact with your station, his impression of you and your station is going to be pretty much formed by the kind of service he gets at the pump island.

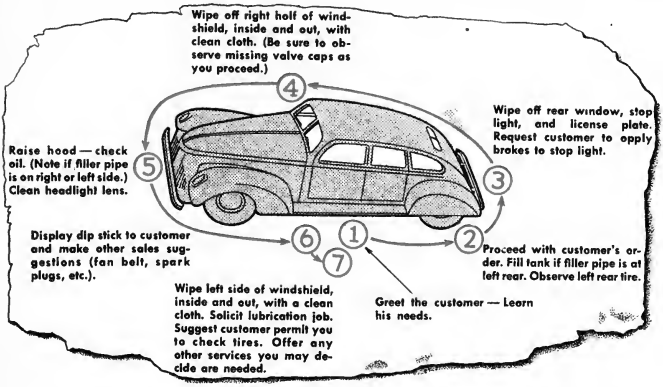
So far as I know, nobody has figured out a way to keep a service station in business without customers. And SERVICE, rendered promptly, efficiently, and cheerfully, is the best method developed so far to keep customers coming back. Few service station operators, and no oil companies, are in business just for the fun of it. So, I suppose we might as well admit frankly, most of the effort that has been put into developing a smooth, efficient, and fool-proof pump island service routine has been the result of the purely selfish discovery that customers like it and it gets business.

Naturally, you're interested in building business for the station, for your chances for promotion and more money depend on it. But correct service routine offers another advantage that's as close to you as your own two feet. It makes your work easier, because it has been

carefully worked out to eliminate extra steps, lost motion, and "back tracking."

So, let's take a look at the system that under one name or another has become just about standard in all well-run service stations.

Regardless of what your particular company may call its service routine, it likely begins with greeting the customer at the left of the car as he drives up.



Various cars have different locations for the gasoline filler pipe, oil filler pipe, hood locks, etc., but this general scheme will serve to save you many steps and give the customer the impression of receiving efficient service. However, do not hesitate to make improvements on this procedure to suit specific occasions.

From there it proceeds around the car to the right, with stops for putting in gas, wiping rear window, cleaning windshield, checking oil and water, etc., and winding up again at the customer's left side to make change and invite him to return. If you'll take a look at the illustration, you'll get what I mean when I say a standard service routine makes your job easier. You can see that the whole job is covered in one trip with no back tracking or wasted steps. You cover every service that the motorist requires, or expects, without lost

motion. And you have a chance to check the car thoroughly for possible extra services.

I think we agreed a few pages ago that since it wasn't any more work to be out there waiting for the customer when he drove up, it was a good idea to beat him to the pump island if you could. So, we might as well start this service routine by waiting for the customer and greeting him when he drives up. It's pretty safe to assume that he wants gas, so you'll save his time if you put your greeting something like, "Good Morning, Mr. Smith, shall I fill it up with Whosis XXX?" Of course you want to be practical. If a customer drives in with a flat tire, you wouldn't start in by trying to sell him gas. Maybe he wants gas, too. But chances are he wants his tire repaired. So get at that first.

Now, I want to say here, that there is no law that requires you to say "Good Morning." You can say "How do you do, Sir" or "Hello, Mr. Jones," even in the morning, and naturally you wouldn't say "Good Morning" in the afternoon. The main thing is that you want to say something that's pleasant and friendly and natural. I don't know why, but "Good Afternoon" never seemed to sound natural coming out of my mouth, so I don't say "Good Afternoon, Mr. Blank" very often. In the same way, while it seemed perfectly natural for me to say "Good Evening, Miss Brown," to a not-so-young high school teacher who used to

The customer comes in to buy something—not for a confidential conversation. Step up smartly and find out what he wants. He probably doesn't want to whisper "5 regular" in your ear, but don't expect him to be a professional hog-caller to make you hear.

drive her shiny little coupe in every Friday evening for five gallons, I never felt right about saying "Good Evening, Mr. Slugg," to a truck driver, unless I was standing where I could duck behind a gas pump real quick. The point is: Use a form of greeting that *feels* natural to you and it will *sound* natural to the customer.

All the service manuals and instruction books recommend that you wind up your greeting with "Shall I fill it up?" "May I fill it up with Whosis XXX?" or "How many will it hold, sir?" On the whole, I've found that pretty sound advice. (Yeah, I know there's a war on but we'll come to that later.) I'll admit some manuals I've read talk so mysteriously about the psychological angles of asking a man to buy a tankful of gas, that you'd think selling a customer nine gallons when he originally intended to buy a dollar's worth was a transaction somewhat in the class of selling gold bricks. But there's pretty solid evidence to show that it is distinctly to the customer's advantage to keep his gas tank full. There's less room for air, which always contains some moisture, and, under certain conditions, condenses and accumulates in the bottom of the tank. There's less room, too, for the gas to slosh around in the tank, so, it seems reasonable to assume, less loss from evaporation. Besides, if a motorist lets you fill his tank each trip, he'll not have to use so much of his gas, driving back to the station for refills. Of course, it's easier and more profitable for you to sell a customer 10 gallons at one time, than to sell him five today and another five next week. Anyhow, you can't always be certain he'll come back to you next week and not stop in at your competitor's on the way home some night.

Since it's to your benefit as well as the customer's to sell him all the gas his tank will hold, I guess we can agree that it is sound, honest business to include some

form of "Shall I fill it up?" in your greeting to the customer, rather than "How many?" or "What can I do for you?" But there's something to be said on both sides as to whether it is a good idea to mention your gas by brand name by saying something like, "Shall I fill it up with Whosis XXX?" One argument in favor of it is that it's just plain good advertising to call the brand name to the public's attention as often as possible. On the other hand, I've had customers who still think of my Whosis XXX as Whosis Regular, and Whosis Super XXX as Whosis Ethyl, even though they've been driving up to a pump that says "Whosis XXX" or "Whosis Super XXX" for years. If I said, "Shall I fill it up with Whosis XXX?" they'd tell me, "No, fill it up with regular, just like I always buy." In a case like that, mentioning the brand name just causes confusion. So, the question of whether you want to mention the specific brand by name is something that requires using your head a little.

But there are still good reasons for "filling it up"

If it's a regular customer, you'll soon know what he wants and you'll mention that brand name if you mention any brand at all. If a customer drives definitely to a particular pump, you can assume that's what he wants. On the other hand, if he sort of "straddles" two pumps, it's a good idea to ask, "Shall I fill it up with Whosis XXX or Super XXX?"

Of course, there are times when there is a very good reason why you ought to, or want to, sell a customer one grade rather than another. On Page 102, we'll go into the different grades of gasoline in more detail. Here, we'll just mention that a lot of the newer cars have high compression engines that were designed to run on high anti-knock, premium grade gas and they simply won't deliver top performance unless they get it. The manager, or some of the older employes, can tell you — or

show you where to find out on the charts—which these cars are. When one of those babies drives in, you'll want to at least suggest your premium grade—Whosis Super XXX. Generally, there's only a slight extra profit in it for the station, but it's a better buy for the customer whose engine needs that kind of gas. Even if he doesn't buy it, you've done your part.

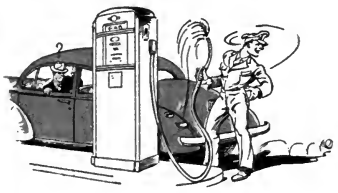
It's the same thing with the low priced "competitive" or "third grade" gas that many stations handle. It's a good gas for the money, but Whosis Bargain Zip won't give the motorist the kind of performance Whosis XXX has taught him to expect, and there's always the chance that when his car knocks or is hard to start, he'll only remember that it's Whosis gas and forget he paid a couple of cents a gallon less for it. There's less profit in it for the station, usually, so you're doing both the customer and the station a favor if you try to steer the sale to the regular grade.

That doesn't mean, naturally, when a jallopy full of school kids rattles up and asks for four-bits worth of Bargain Zip, you ought to stop to give them a sales talk on Whosis XXX. But if a customer, who looks like a couple of cents more a gallon wouldn't break him, gets too close to the Bargain Zip pump, it's always good business to sort of ignore that fact, and proceed with "How do you do, Sir; shall I fill it up with Whosis XXX?" In a lot of cases, you'll find he just hit the Bargain Zip pump by accident. Even if he didn't, and won't hold still for anything else, your conscience is clear. You, at least, tried to sell him your best *value*.

Once you've got the customer's gas order, move briskly to the rear of the car and proceed to put in the gas. I say briskly, even though the last thing I want this book to sound like is an old top sergeant drilling a squad of rookies. Actually, it probably won't make

15 seconds difference whether you move around the customer's car with a little snap or just stroll around. But it makes the motorist think he is getting serviced in half the time, and a lot better, if he sees you going about it with a little pep and zip.

Your first step in filling the tank is to see that the dial on the pump is set back at zero. That's supposed to be done as soon as the previous customer has driven off, but maybe one of the other fellows used the pump last and forgot. By now you are supposed to have studied the charts showing different gas filler pipe locations, so you shouldn't have any trouble getting the cap off. When you get it off, HOLD IT IN YOUR HAND.



Some day, someone may invent a gas tank cap that can't get lost — but in the meantime, you'll be numbered among the unsung heroes if you put it back where you got it — on the filler spout. A good practice is to keep it in your hand — not your pocket — while filling the tank.

There's no place you can put it down that there isn't a chance of forgetting it. Be careful when you put the hose nozzle in the tank. Don't bang it against the opening or drag the hose across the car or bumper. As we mentioned before, those things may not hurt anything, but your customer is sitting up front where he can't see what's going on and he only hears a noise that reminds him of the $10.00 he spent having a fender repaired after a truck backed into his rear end.

There are a lot of different styles of pumps in use, so we can't go into details here about how they work. Most stations these days, though, have electric pumps. The flow of gas is controlled by a valve in the nozzle, worked by a sort of trigger. You merely press the trig-

ger and the pump does the rest—all, that is, but shutting off the gas. You have to do that. The main point to keep in mind on this part of the job is to KEEP YOUR MIND on it. Some modern gas pumps can deliver at a rate of 15 gallons per minute. That means that last inch or so of the tank can fill up pretty fast, especially if the car is sitting on a slope.

So, even though you're *sure* there's plenty of room in the tank, from the time you put the hose in until you take it out, keep your eye on that little patch of liquid you can usually see down the filler pipe and your ears tuned for the sounds you'll soon come to recognize as indications that the tank is filling up. Sometimes a little air will get trapped in the filler neck. This will often cause the gasoline to "blow back" and overflow when the tank isn't near full. That's another reason for keeping your eye on what you're doing.

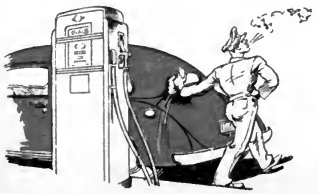
When the tank is filled—or the amount specified by the customer put in—shut off the pump and take the nozzle out slowly so the last few teaspoonfuls of gas will drain into the tank. Then lift the nozzle quickly from the filler opening and hang it up. Don't wave the nozzle around over the car while you replace the filler cap, so the last reluctant drops will dribble over the car's finish.

Nobody's perfect, of course, so the chances are that once in a while there will be some gas spilled in spite of your most careful efforts. If that happens, flush the gas off the car with a little water and wipe it off carefully with a clean rag. Don't merely wipe off the spilled gas, for that just rubs it into the finish and a few repetitions of that treatment will leave the finish around the filler opening in a sad condition. Gas spilled on the driveway should be immediately flushed away with water, too, not only as a safety measure but also because

most modern gasolines contain identifying coloring which leaves a stain when the gas evaporates.

It might be a good idea to take up with the boss what the station's policy is regarding overflow gas. The fair way to handle, it always seemed to me, was to consider the spilled gas "on the house" if the customer had told you to "fill it up." It would seem that the customer ought to be charged for spilled gas when he specified a certain quantity and it turned out the tank wouldn't hold it. However, since nobody likes to pay for gas that he doesn't get—especially under rationing when it costs coupons as well as cash—that's just another reason why you want to always be especially careful not to let any gas spill or overflow.

A good many of the manuals I've seen stress taking another shot at getting a full tank sale, after you've put in the gas ordered, when the motorist has specified a certain amount. They recommend saying something like "That's five, Mr. Jones. Another few gallons will fill it up. Shall I put them in?" Personally, I've always felt that such a maneuver ought to be handled very carefully. Unless the customer has dropped some remark like "Oh, I think five will do it," that would lead you to feel that he hasn't any unshakeable reasons for only wanting five, it seems to me the chances of annoying the customer are more than the profit on two or three gallons are worth. In any case, it's another one of those situations that calls for using your head and you certainly don't want to say "another few



Remember that a rear vision mirror is of no value if the rear window is "blacked out." It's such a little spot to clean and is so appreciated by the customers, there seems no justification for not doing it properly.

gallons will fill it up," if you aren't sure they will. A customer could very reasonably get sore if "another few gallons" turned out to be almost as much as his original order.

Naturally, I'd be the first one to admit that a lot of the stuff in the last few pages may have to be laid aside "for the duration." There's no point in trying to sell a motorist a tankful when he's only got coupons for three gallons. On the other hand, if a motorist's allotment does give him enough coupons to "fill it up," it's just as much as ever to his interest, as well as the station's, for him to drive out with a full tank.

Generally, though, the service routine starts a little differently under gas rationing. You might as well assume that the customer's purchase is going to be limited by how many gallons he has coupons for, not by the room in his tank. So your greeting, unless there's a B or C ration sticker showing, may have to be, "Good morning, Mr. Jones, how many today?" If you don't know the customer, or at least recognize him as a regular, the next step is to ask to see his ration book.

I know that sounds unpleasantly like you don't trust the customer. And you may hit an occasional customer who resents it. But, it's against the law to sell gas without ration coupons and you can't very conveniently take the gas out of the tank, if you've put it in and then find out the customer hasn't the coupons to cover the purchase. Most customers understand this, and there will be no hard feelings if you are reasonably courteous in making your request to see the book. When you have the book, see that it agrees with the windshield sticker and check the license number written in the book against the car's license plates. And make sure that both the book and the coupons are valid at the date offered. Your boss will keep you posted on what

coupons are good, along with any other current regulations about handling coupons. From here on, the routine proceeds the same as usual, except when you collect, you collect ration coupons as well as cash.

After you've finished filling the tank and replaced the cap, wipe off the rear window, stop and tail lights, and license plate. Usually, a clean, dry cloth will do the job. Take enough time and elbow grease to do it thoroughly. The customer appreciates a clean rear window. One on which you've just smeared the dirt around a little will not only annoy him, but will also give him a good reason for suspecting the rest of your service is equally sloppy. While you're back there, ask the customer to step on the brake, so you can see if the stop lights are working. Then take a look at the tires to see if they need air or show signs of wear, or missing valve caps or lugs that ought to be called to the owner's attention.

From the rear, the next stop is at the right side of the car, where you wipe the right half of the windshield, opening the right door or asking the customer to roll down the window so you can clean the inside. A good job on the windshield is always important and it's worth whatever time and effort it takes to get it really clean. Most stations supply one of the various window cleaning fluids for use on dirty windshields. Most of them will need it in the warmer months, when they are usually well spattered with the carcasses of bugs that didn't duck in time. By all means, never use

Valve cap missing? Some careless attendant forgot to put it back after inflating the tires. But that's no reason why you shouldn't do the motorist a favor and sell him a new one. The best way to find missing valve caps is to look at the tire valves.

a dirty or greasy rag on the windshield. Even if it doesn't leave the windshield dirtier than when you began, the customer thinks it will. Besides, if you use a greasy rag, no matter how clean the windshield may look, the customer is probably going to find himself looking at the world through a blue haze the first time he drives against bright lights. And that won't make him think any too highly of your service.

There are a few cars which have the oil filler pipes on the right side of the engine. On those, the next step is raising the hood and checking the oil. However, most of them have the filler pipe on the left, or in the center where it can be reached equally well from the left side, so we'll check the oil when we reach the left side. The usual next step is wiping the right headlight. If there's time, have the owner turn the lights on so you can inspect them. Take a look at the right front tire for air pressure, condition, and missing valve cap or lugs.

You're certainly going to come up with a red face if a regular customer drives in with a hot engine caused by your failure to keep the radiator full. Why not check the radiator water as a matter of course? Nature made your wrist so that it would swivel for just such tasks.

If the car is an older model with the radiator cap on the outside of hood, check the radiator now. If it's a removable cap, take it off and lay it on a cloth in the space between the fender and the hood. If hinged, place the cloth under the cap as you lay it back on the hood. If you can touch the water with your finger, the radiator is usually full enough. If it needs water, be careful not to overfill. The water is likely to be a little rusty, even in the cleanest radiator, so if any overflows, wipe it up at once. Replace the radiator cap and wipe it, as well as any bright metal on the radiator.

In seasons when there is apt to be anti-freeze in the radiator, it's usually smart to get the customer's permission before adding water. If he's using a permament type anti-freeze, it will generally be O.K. to add water. Otherwise, the addition of water may weaken the solution so it won't give adequate protection. In that case, the customer will probably want you to test the strength of the solution before or after putting in water. If you overflow the radiator when it contains anti-freeze, always flush off the spilled liquid with water immediately and then wipe off carefully, because some types of anti-freeze are very tough on the car finish.

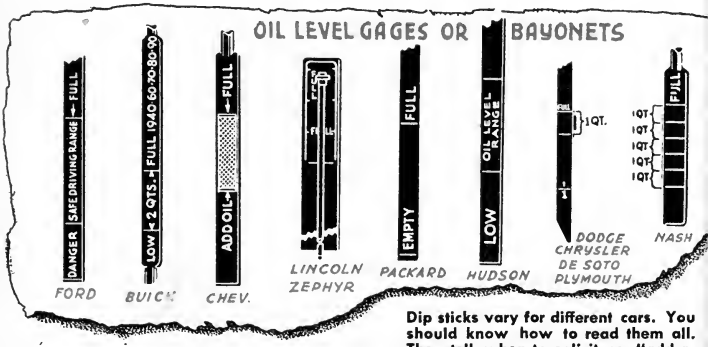
anti-freeze also loosens purse strings

From here you move on over and wipe the left headlight and give the left front tire the once-over as you move up to the left side of the hood.

Checking the oil is the next step and it's just about the most important part of the pump island service routine. Next to gasoline, motor oil is your biggest sales volume. And while a car can run out of gas without suffering serious damage, if it runs low on oil—or the oil gets too dirty—the owner is going to have a nice repair bill. The average motorist has more or less come to depend on the service station for seeing that his engine always has plenty or good clean oil. So, it's up to you not to let him down.

Checking the oil has become such a standard part of station service that it's hardly ever necessary to ask the customer's permission to look under the hood. In a lot of newer cars, though, the hood latch is in the driver's compartment. When that's the case, you naturally have to ask the customer to unlatch the hood so you can check the oil. The charts in the station will likely show which cars have inside hood latches, so you'll know when you have to ask.

When the hood is lifted—and carefully propped so it won't fall on you—pull out the gage stick which you'll see sticking out of the side of the engine, usually just above where the crankcase pan bolts on. Have a clean rag—or better still, a paper towel—in your hand when you do this because generally the stick will be pretty well covered with oil that has been splashed up by the motion of the engine, so you'll have to wipe it clean and put it back in the engine and pull it out a second time to get a true measure of the oil level.



Dip sticks vary for different cars. You should know how to read them all. They tell when to solicit an "add-a-quart" sale, and when to sell a crankcase drain.

All gage sticks are marked to show "full." Some are also marked to show "safe driving range" and others are marked to show the actual number of quarts the oil is "down." The illustration gives you an idea of most of the types of gage sticks—or bayonets—you're likely to run across and you can see that it won't take long to learn to read them so you can tell at a glance how much oil is needed.

After you've read the gage stick yourself, show it to the customer. Be sure to hold the rag or paper towel under it at all times to catch any dripping because it's

hard to wipe motor oil off the car finish so thoroughly that the spot won't collect dust. Even though the gage stick shows full, it's still a good idea to let the motorist see for himself. Driving conditions have a lot to do with how much oil an engine uses. If the customer does some hard driving before his oil is checked again, he may find the oil level lower than he thinks it ought to be and suspect you of not checking it accurately the previous time, if you just sing out "oil's OK" without showing him the gage.

Of course, if the gage shows the oil is down, you want him to be looking at it when you say "It's down a quart, Mr. Jones." Actually seeing for himself that the oil level is down is more convincing than any talking you can do, even if we assume that the customer knows you and would willingly take your word for what the gage shows. Incidentally, there are some cases where the customer has a good reason for not wanting the oil level full. A car that's using a lot of oil often uses up the first quart of a level full crankcase very fast, and then drops back to a lower rate of consumption. So, if the engine is run with the oil level about a quart below the full mark, it is likely to use less oil. Naturally, it's poor judgment to try to sell a full crankcase under those circumstances.

Most of the manuals I've seen recommend that when you're showing the customer the gage stick, you ask

In some hands, the dip stick, instead of being the means of selling a quart of oil, or an oil change, becomes a d(r)ip stick — a booster for the dry-cleaning business. By holding it over a cloth, you can show the motorist that the crankcase oil is low without dribbling oil all over his vest.

him how long the oil has been driven. I've always considered that both good business and good service. There's more profit for the station in selling an oil change than in adding a quart or two. And it's more economical from the motorist's point of view to change the oil instead of adding some, if it takes more to bring up the oil level than the engine will likely use before a change is necessary. A good rule to follow is to always recommend an oil change when the oil level is down to half full or less.

In any case, the point you want to keep in mind, and mention tactfully to the customer, is that you can't clean dirty motor oil by adding a couple of quarts of clean oil to it. If the oil is dirty enough to need changing, any clean oil you add is largely wasted, and it's to the customer's interest to know that.

Whether you change the motor oil or just add oil, be sure you get the customer's OK on what grade you put in. Usually, he'll accept your recommendation, assuming that what you recommend will be—as it certainly should—the grade the manufacturer of the car recommends as shown on your lubrication charts. A few motorists have their own ideas, though, about what grade of oil to use, so you'll want to say something such as "The manufacturer recommends SAE 20 for this model. Shall I put SAE 20 in?" That way you've done your part by suggesting the grade you know is right, and if he insists on using something else, you can at least assume that he knows what he's doing.

The car builder should know—

There are a lot of factors involved in selecting the right grade of oil and no part of your job in a service station is more important than knowing what grade to put in a given engine at a given time. We'll take up the finer points of the business of picking the right grade of oil on Page 112. But right here, I want to say that

nothing will increase your value to the station and its customers as much as good sound knowledge of what oil to put in a car and why that oil is right.

Assuming that you and the customer have agreed that a quart or two of oil is what's needed, the next step, of course, is to put it in the crankcase. Naturally, you want to first make sure that you grab the right grade of oil—whatever grade you and the customer have decided you ought to put in. If you're putting in packaged oil (under war-time conditions, most of your packaged oil will be in bottles or fiber containers, rather than cans) the grade is plainly marked on the container. However, "bulk" oil put in dispensing bottles at the station for easier handling, should be identified by keeping each grade on a separate shelf or by some labeling system of your own design. If you're dispensing oil by filling a measure from a drum, or highboy, the point is to make sure you draw from the one that has the right grade marked on it.

About the only thing you have to watch in putting the oil in, is to see that you don't dribble any over the fender. That's most likely to happen as you lift out the empty dispenser, bottle, or measure after pouring the oil. So, it's a good idea to hold a rag over the pouring spout as you swing it over the fender. When you've put the oil in, check the gage stick again and show it to the customer, so he can see for himself where the oil level stands. Be sure the gage stick is back in place and the oil filler cap on securely. A missing oil filler cap can do more real harm than a lost gas tank cap, because a filler cap usually serves as a filter to keep dirt from being drawn into the crankcase with the ventilating air. If it's lost, not only will oil be splashed out, but dust will be sucked into the crankcase, which does neither the oil nor the engine any good.

If the car you're servicing is one of the younger generation with the radiator filler cap under the hood, you check the radiator now instead of while you're at the front of the car. You follow the same procedure, however, as we outlined it a few pages back. If the battery is located under the hood, and there are no other customers waiting for you, it's a good idea to check the battery and put in water if needed. While this is a service that is usually done when the car is lubricated, and normally doesn't have to be done any oftener than that, it takes only a few seconds to do it while you've got the hood up. The driver will appreciate your interest, and it often opens the way for selling an "extra" —a battery charging job, a new battery cable, or even a new battery—if your check shows the battery is "down." Some batteries, of course, are under the seat or floor, where they aren't so easy to get at. Checking these usually takes more time than the customer wants to spend. In such cases, always *ask* if he wants the battery checked before you barge into the job.

Getting under the hood isn't enough

You may think I've used up a lot of words talking about this pump island routine. I'll admit I could tell you in a few minutes how to go through the motions. At the same time, I could write a couple of books the size of this one and still leave out stuff about pump island routine that you'd probably like to know. What I've tried to do is hit the high spots here and give you what you need to get started, and try to put over the idea that the main thing is to keep your eyes open as you go along, and try to be helpful.

A good example of what I mean by being helpful comes up when you've got the hood open. The average driver doesn't look under the hood once in a blue moon, and a lot of them wouldn't know what to look for if they did. So, you can do the customer a real

service by looking for loose or worn wires, radiator or water pump leaks, a worn fan belt, cracked spark plug porcelains, oil leaks, etc. Those are all little things and maybe they won't interfere seriously with the car's performance at the moment. But a cracked spark plug insulator can waste a lot of gas, and a worn fan belt may let go "miles from nowhere" and let the motorist in for a lot of trouble and maybe serious damage.

In many cars, the fan belt drives the water pump and generator as well as the fan. So, a broken fan belt means not only no fan, but also no water pump and no generator. Maybe you wouldn't make the customer your worst enemy by failing to see and tell him about a worn fan belt, but it's a cinch you'll go a long way toward making him a friend, if you call his attention to anything you find wrong under the hood—and fix it up for him if you can.

When you've finished under the hood, let it down *gently*. Most of the new type hoods are big and fairly heavy and make an ungodly clatter if you let them drop. As I've said, banging the hood down isn't likely to really hurt anything but the customer's feelings. Still, he has come to associate noise like that with dented fenders and scratched finish, and while it may be he will enjoy the feeling of relief he gets when he sees there was no harm done, it won't improve his confidence in your ability to take care of his car. And

Use the power of suggestion, rather than a crowbar, to get the hood up by asking, "Shall I check the oil?" Then you're on your own; does the car need a fan belt, spark plugs, filter cartridge, battery recharge, oil change?

that's the one thing you've got to offer to make a customer want to come back.

A good many of the newer cars have hoods that will latch automatically when lowered. Most of the older models and a few of the newer ones, however, have latches that must be fastened by hand. On these latter types, you want to be especially careful that the hood is fastened securely. It's a good idea to check the self-latching jobs, too, just to make sure the latch caught as it was supposed to. An unlatched hood will cause an annoying rattle, and if the wind gets under it, the driver may suddenly find the hood flapping in his face. That's apt to be embarrassing, at least, since the average motorist doesn't have Superman's X-Ray vision to help him see the road through a hunk of sheet metal.

windshields need wiping too.

After you are through under the hood, the next step is to clean the left half of the windshield carefully, inside and out, just as you cleaned the right half. Since this half of the windshield is in the driver's direct line of vision, any spots or smears will be especially noticeable, so it calls for a particularly careful job.

When the windshield is finished, what you might call the normal service routine is completed. This is the spot, then, to mention any extra services your check-up of the car showed were needed. If you've got the time—that is, if there are no other customers waiting—always ask the customer to drive to the air tower so you can check his tires. This little service will probably always be more appreciated than it was in the "good old days," before the war taught us to take care of our tires. If the battery wasn't under the hood, where you could get at it, offer to check it now. Of course, if any of the tires look low, tell the customer about it and have him move his car to the air tower so you can check the tires, even if there are customers waiting.

If you've done any little service such as tightening a loose wire or adjusting a fan belt, tell the customer about it. That's not bragging about your work. He ought to know about it, and he'll feel better towards you and the station, if he knows you're keeping an eye open for his needs.

This is the time, too, to turn salesman, if your inspection of the car turned up anything needed in the way of paid extras. Remember, though, the customer is probably anxious to get on his way by now, so don't annoy him with a long sales talk. But if you heard squeaks, when the customer drove in or while you were "joggling" the rear end to see where the gas level was, it's safe to assume that the car hasn't been lubricated recently and that's your cue to say something like "Has your car been lubricated lately, Mr. Brown? We have a Chek-Chart of your car that helps us get every point with exactly the right lubricant." Or, if you found a cracked spark plug porcelain, you might ask, "Has the engine been running smoothly, Mr. Jones? You've got a cracked spark plug that might be making it miss."

If he shows interest in such suggestions, you can safely proceed to try to sell him what he needs. Otherwise, unless it is something that might cause serious trouble soon, better let the matter drop for this time.

Talk to a customer about the fine points of his car and the advantages of keeping it up. Lay the groundwork for future extra sales. But don't try to be a combination service station attendant and wit or the customer may conclude that you're half service station attendant and half wit.

That brings us down to the final step—taking the customer's money and giving him change. Nine times out of ten, the customer will ask you "How much?" Whether he does or doesn't, you want to tell him plainly "how much" as he hands you the money. Itemize his purchase for him when you tell him the total. That is, say: "Five gallons of Whosis XXX is 95 cents and a quart of Superslick oil is 30 cents. That's $1.25, Mr. Smith." That may sound like unnecessary trouble, but you've got to total it up that way in your head, anyhow. If you do your figuring "out loud," there's less chance of the customer turning the matter over in his mind later, and maybe forgetting that was 30 cent instead of two-bit oil you put in, and figuring you'd short-changed him.

If the customer hands you anything except the exact amount of his bill, always mention the amount he gives you, before you start to make change. If the Mr. Smith we've just mentioned handed you a five, you'd say, "One-twenty-five out of five." Then count the change into his hand, starting with the amount of the sale and adding each piece of change as you hand it over. Again, this may seem like a lot of extra bother, but it's the quickest and most accurate way to make change and the surest way of avoiding any misunderstandings with the customer about his change.

In normal times, most stations do a certain amount of credit business. In the case of a "charge" customer, winding up the sale consists of writing up the sales ticket and having the customer sign it. After a while, we'll talk about some of the paper work involved in running a service station and we'll go into the matter of credit business then. About the only thing to mention here is that you want to be sure to write up the ticket plainly and accurately, and to have the customer sign it himself.

Once in a while, you'll have a customer who is in a hurry, who will wave you aside with a "You sign it. I've got to get going." When one does, just smile and hand him the sales book and pencil and say, "Sorry, it's against the rules." The boss will back you up on that. Not many charge customers have any intention of beating their bills. But if a man's in too big a hurry to take a few seconds to sign a charge slip, he may also be in too big a hurry to remember that he told you to sign it. When he gets his bill later on, he may quite sincerely question a ticket that has his name on it, signed by someone else. And that always causes ill feeling, even when it's settled without anyone getting sore.

Cash or credit, though, you wind up the financial end of the deal with a hearty "Thank you, sir. Come in again soon," or words to that effect. Outside of forgetting to put on the gas tank cap, I don't think there's anything about the service routine that's as serious as forgetting to say "Thank you, call again." The old-time vaudeville actors used to have a slogan, "Always leave 'em laughing." Their theory was that if the act ended with a good laugh, that's what the audience would remember, no matter how lousy the act might have been up till then. I don't mean that a cheery goodbye will cover up poor service. But the customer's last impression of the station should be a pleasant smile and a sincere invitation to come back.

There's a genuine satisfaction in getting a good clear look at the outside world. Always clean the windshield properly. Besides, cleaning windshields is an established practice with other service stations which you must follow in order to keep in the running.

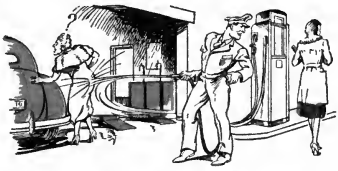
1. MAKE IT EASY FOR BANKER SNODGRASS TO WRITE A CHECK.

2. PREPARE THE WAY FOR MRS. VAN SNO —BEFORE SHE GETS THERE.

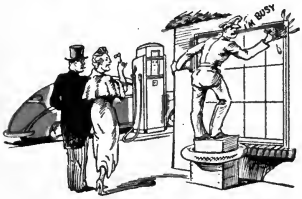
3. KEEP TIRES AND ACCESSORIES HANDY, BUT NOT UNDERFOOT.

4. KEEP SPECIALTIES AT THE PUMP ISLAND —BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.

5. KEEP THE DRIVEWAY CLEAN SO CUSTOMERS CAN GET IN.



6. WASH OUT THE LUBRITORIUM EVERY DAY—REGARDLESS.



7. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME TO PAINT THE PLACE.

8. KEEP BATTERY WATER CONTAINERS FILLED AND CLOSE AT HAND—

9. BUT NOT TOO CLOSE.

"Within practical limits," all these things will add to efficiency, appearance and good will

"How I should maintain my station and schedule my work"

I'll never forget my first morning on the job in a service station. I'd been working in a grocery down the street and was pretty tired of stacking canned goods on the shelves, sacking beans, and sweeping out the place at closing time every night. Besides, I was crazy about automobiles and the idea of getting paid for doing nothing but take care of cars all day struck me as being doggoned near one long vacation with pay. So, you can understand how I felt just a wee bit let down that morning when the boss showed me the closet where the brooms and mops and cleaning stuff were kept and said, "Now, Bill, right here at the start, your first job every morning will be to sweep the driveway and police the station grounds."

There I was, with my hands itching to get hold of a gas hose or a grease gun, and he hands me a broom. Guess I must have looked sort of disappointed because the boss added, "Now don't get the idea we're shoving this job off on you because you're the new man. While you're doing that, Hank will be mopping out the rest rooms, Sam will be setting out the displays, filling the water cans, and blowing out the air lines, and I'll be doing a little dusting and cleaning up here in the office."

Well, I started to work, giving the driveway the business with the broom and chasing the empty cigarette packages and handbills around the lawn. Personally, I thought I had done a pretty fair job. That is, until the

boss came out and showed me where I'd missed a couple of old newspapers that had blown under some bushes behind the station, and had forgotten to sweep the gutter from the driveways up to the corner. "Sorry, Mr. McKane," I said, "I didn't know you'd want me to sweep down the gutter, too."

How to "housekeep" without being a housewife

"That's all right, son," the boss told me, "you're too new to think about things like that. But just remember, our customers see this station first from the street and that gutter along there is our doorstep, even if it does belong to the city. A lot of our customers here are regulars, and that's the way we want it. But every regular was just another car driving by the first time, and there wouldn't have been any first time if he hadn't liked the looks of our station from out there in the street."

The point I want to get at here is that I know there are going to be days when you'll be wondering whether you're a station attendant or a janitor. You're going to find that what we call station "housekeeping" is an important part of your job. Before we go any further, we might as well get straight on that point, not only why housekeeping is important, but also why it's *your* job.

In the first place, no matter where your station is located, you're going to have rush hours and slack hours. If you have enough attendants to keep customers from blocking the driveway during rush hours, you're going to have more attendants than it takes to handle the business during slack hours.

The station has just two outs in a case like that. It can hire a porter or janitor and let the station attendants sit around and take it easy during the slack periods. Or, it can let the attendants put in their spare time at housekeeping and let the wages of the janitor you don't hire go to fatten up the attendants' pay envelopes a little. A good many years of service station operation

have proved that most men—or women—would rather have a few bucks more on payday than a few hours of doing nothing each week. So, pretty nearly all service stations operate on that basis, and so far as I know, it has turned out satisfactory for everyone concerned.

It has always seemed to me, though, that the main reason for making housekeeping part of a service station attendant's job, was that he knew better than anyone else how the job ought to be done. Or, maybe I should say, why it ought to be done. There's a lot more to the job than merely keeping the driveway swept clean and the station windows washed. Housekeeping is maybe 25% keeping the place *looking* nice and 75% keeping it *working* smoothly. A neat looking pump island—with the water cans filled and in the right place, the air and water hoses carefully coiled and hung up, the battery water kit and extra clean rags handy but out of the way, and the oil cans and bottles stacked evenly on the rack—makes the station look better, all right. What's more important, though, it makes it a lot easier for you to do your work. Now, you might hire a guy to follow you around and keep the pump island straightened up, but the chances are he'd just get in your way when you were busy and take more of your time telling him what to do than it would take for you to do the work yourself as you go along.

It's the same way all around the station. What needs to be done to keep the place looking attractive is always so mixed up with what has to be done to keep every-

A pump island isn't just for the purpose of keeping the pumps off the ground. It provides a place for water cans, etc., so your customers and you won't fall over them. Good housekeeping is good practice.

thing working efficiently that the two jobs just can't be separated. The fellows who dish out the service are the ones who really know what it takes in the way of day-to-day maintenance to keep the station and its equipment in shape to make it easier to give the customers first-class service. And because they know better than anyone else what has to be done and why, they can do a better job of getting it done than anyone else. That's not Bill Olson, owner of Olson's Service Station, corner of Sixteenth and Main, giving a pep talk to a new employee, either. It's Bill Olson, who still pushes a mean broom himself, telling you straight from the shoulder what he has learned the hard way, which is that lots of times the best way to get a thing done the way you know it ought to be done is to do it yourself.

To get back to my old boss and his remark about the looks of the station being what brought the customer in the first time, the old boy had something there, though he couldn't have told you why it worked that way. There have been a lot of smart professors and advertising research men running tests and making surveys for years trying to find out why, for instance, new, good-looking packages will increase the sales of an old, well-known breakfast food. And they haven't found out yet why changing the color of the printing on a box will make customers think what's inside the box is better than before. Or why, by slapping on a little chromium trimming and putting in a few extra lights, you can step up the sales of the old corner drug store. All they know for sure is that people—and that includes you and me—do judge a lot by appearances when they go to buy something, even though most people—like you and I—would insist that what they want is quality merchandise and dependable service, and to heck with all the fancy trimmings.

I've read a lot of service station manuals that went to considerable trouble trying to explain why a good looking station produced more business than a messy looking one. Personally, I haven't yet read an explanation that satisfied me. It never seems to me that it explains much to compare a service station to a package on the grocer's shelf and say that a motorist won't buy gas in a sloppy station for the same reason that he won't accept a can of tomatoes with a dirty label. And I am not convinced that the average car owner stops and says to himself, "That guy Shultz lets his station get like the back end of a junk yard, so he'll probably treat my car like an old junker ready for the scrap pile. But Murphy's got a pretty flower box in the station window, so I know he'll not miss anything when he lubricates my car."

The motorist likely will go to Murphy's instead of Shultz', all right, but I don't think it's altogether because he believes he's going to get better service just because Murphy's station looks cleaner. I don't know, but I've always suspected that a good part of the reason is that we've all got a little more vanity in us than we like to admit and that it just sort of flatters us a little bit to do business with a smart, prosperous looking outfit.

Anyhow, it isn't something you have to take my word for. Every oil company has records to prove it. A few gallons of paint and whitewash, maybe a little grass seed, and some elbow grease applied to a scrub brush, have pulled more than one station out of the red. A nice, tidy looking station just will do more business than a shabby joint, no matter what the reason is. And like I've said before, if you expect to make anything out of your job, you're going to see that the station gets all the extra business you can swing to it. So,

even if you'd rather just pump gas, don't forget that the station is going to have more cars coming in for you to pump gas into, if you pitch in and do your share toward making the station look like a nice place to do business, to the guy who's driving along the street.

How to entertain the girl friend

There's another thing that always kept me interested in keeping the station looking good. I always found it kind of felt good to be able to point out a nice snappy looking station to my friends and say, "That's where I work." Yeh, I know. I've *owned* the station for a good many years, and *naturally*, I think everybody ought to be interested in keeping it up. But I haven't always owned a station. My wife still kids me about how my idea of showing her a good time before we were married used to be to take her down to the corner for an ice cream soda and then walk her back past the station and let her stand and listen to me talk about how swell the place looked with all the new lights on, and how we were servicing more Packards, Cadillacs, and Pierce-Arrows than any other station in town. However, I don't recommend these days that you try to entertain your girl—or your boy-friend—by taking them down for a look at where you work. My wife must have really been crazy about me, or she wouldn't have stood for it. But I don't think human nature has changed so much since the days I was pumping gas for someone else, that a guy won't still get a kick out of working in an attractive station that does business with high class customers.

I don't know just why it is, but nearly every service station manual I've picked up opens the discussion of service station appearance with a few pages on keeping the rest rooms clean. Maybe it's because there isn't any other part of your station that will bring you a quicker kick-back from your customers if you neglect it. Any-

how, rest rooms deserve a few moments of serious discussion. Naturally, you know what part of a service station is referred to as the "rest room," although I've often wondered who gave it that name. Certainly not the service station attendant, whose job it was to keep it clean on a busy summer afternoon.

Judging from the amount of rest room advertising done by the major oil companies prior to Pearl Harbor, one would think the main objective of the motoring public was to get from rest room to rest room.

An English friend of mine once remarked, "This is the only country on earth where they advertise rest rooms to sell gasoline."

Contrary to the apparent belief on the part of some of the advertising boys, I think that no matter how spotless they are kept, rest rooms alone — deluxe or simple — will not promote business. The motoring public will not go out of its way to drive to your service station and purchase your products or services, just for the privilege of reveling in the atmosphere of your rest rooms, no matter how much you "glamorize" them.

But, on the other hand, the same motoring public will certainly go somewhere else for automotive maintenance services if you don't keep up your rest rooms properly. Rest rooms, therefore, may be an excellent way of losing business.

Surely, it should go without saying that this is one small part of a service station that should be kept clean and orderly. This can be done with very little effort,

Nothing can be so embarrassing to both a lady customer and yourself as not maintaining, as a lady would like to find them, the facilities that are a part of all good service stations. And oddly enough, ladies don't like to stand around and wait while you get things in order.

and the motoring public will cooperate if the manner in which you maintain your rest rooms suggests that you expect them to be used properly.

Remember, people are influenced by the surroundings they encounter. Men may throw cigarette butts on the floor of a cheap tavern where the atmosphere of the place suggests that is the usual practice. But you have never picked cigarette butts off your bathroom floor, or had to wash wisecracks off the walls after the same men paid a visit to your home. Why? Because the atmosphere and surroundings suggest they shouldn't conduct themselves in that manner.

Remember, also, that the average person will judge your service by the condition in which he finds the rest room. If you haven't sufficient pride to keep your surroundings clean and orderly, why should he expect that you will lubricate a car properly, wash a car thoroughly, or perform any other service correctly?

You may not be able to make your rest room look like the set for a Cecil B. DeMille bathtub scene, which, by the way, is what some of the service manuals seem to advocate. But you can keep it clean and provide many little conveniences which will mean a great deal.

Hints to the "help"

For instance, keep a good big waste paper basket handy. If you don't want cigarette butts thrown on the floor, keep a cuspidor within reach. A person may love the opportunity to do a little thinking and planning involving appointments and calls. A calendar, and even a city map, on the wall at the correct elevation may be an appreciated convenience. Anyone who has ever seen the contents of a lady's purse, will know the joy she will experience if a good sized shelf is located below the mirror. These are just a few suggestions.

Of course, it goes without saying that a rest room has got to be clean. I don't just mean look clean, but

really be clean and sanitary. Rest room floors ought to be mopped every morning and all the fixtures scoured. It's a good idea to use a little disinfectant in the water, too. It not only does away with any stray germs, but it also kills any unpleasant odors that the daily mopping and wiping doesn't catch.

As far as it's possible to do it, give the rest room the once over after each time it is used. Most people, as we said, will cooperate and try to help keep the place clean, if it was clean when they went in. But there are always exceptions, and you don't want all your good work on the rest room wasted, by having one sloppy customer leave it messed up for whoever follows. At least several times a day check on the supplies. Nothing disgusts a customer more than to get his hands wet and find the towels are all gone. I could carry that thought farther, too, but I guess you get what I mean. And don't forget the mirror in the ladies' room. No woman wants to look at herself in a mirror that makes her face look like it's full of wrinkles.

How to gage your assets

And so, I say to you: If you want to be successful in the service station business, center your attention on the sale of gas and oil, accessories, and automotive services—but don't handicap yourself by ill-kept surroundings. And when you feel the urge to gage your chances of success, stroll into the rest room. Pause and ponder. You're on the right road if you can say to yourself, truthfully and honestly, "Yes sir, that's a M-I-G-H-T-Y P-R-E-T-T-Y P-R-I-V-Y."

Most of the remarks I've passed out about rest rooms can be applied to any part of the station. I don't mean to be making fun of a lot of well-meant advice that has been written and preached about taking care of the driveway, pump island, grounds, office, lubrication room, etc. But it always seemed to me that a lot of the instruc-

tions you run into on the subject kind of get tangled up too much in details. Maybe I'm just not cut out to be a high-powered executive, but I've never been able to even tell the fellows and the girls who are working for me just what they ought to do every minute, and how they ought to do it. If I can't do that for one station, when I'm right in it myself, I don't see how I could set up any kind of a detailed program that would work in hundreds of stations I'd never seen.

The station driveway and pump island have got to be kept cleaned up and straightened up, because they are at once your salesroom and your workshop, so far as a big percentage of your customers are concerned. It's a good idea to start the day with sweeping out the driveway—or raking it, if it's a gravel drive. There's bound to be a little grease or oil dripped on the drive now and then. That not only doesn't improve the looks of the driveway any, but it's also dangerous on a concrete drive. An oily spot on concrete is better than a banana skin for shooting your feet out from under you when you least expect it, especially if you wear rubber heels. That, of course, is hard on your dignity, if nothing else. And if it happens to be a customer that makes the slip, the station may have a mess of bad trouble on its hands, in addition to a very displeased customer. So, in addition to the daily sweeping, a concrete driveway ought to be scrubbed now and then, using some grease-cutting fluid to loosen the stubborn spots. You can handle the grease situation on a gravel drive by scattering a little clean gravel on the grease spots and leveling it off.

If your station is located where there's ice and snow in the winter, you've got another driveway cleaning problem. You'll save yourself a lot of work by keeping the snow shoveled off before it has a chance to

pack. It doesn't take many cars driving in and out to turn the snow into ice. I've seen more than one pump clipped off by a car that kept skating right across the pump island when the driveway was slippery. So, the best thing to do is to clean the snow off as it falls and before it has a chance to be packed down hard, or scatter sand or ashes on it. Salt or chemicals that melt the ice make the driveway sloppy and the mixture is apt to rust the metal parts of any car it gets on.

Merchandise displayed at the pump island shouldn't be piled up like articles at a Ladies' Aid rummage sale. The pump island is primarily the place to sell gasoline, not a place to play football with your merchandise.

The pump island needs to be swept daily and scrubbed now and then, too. But the main thing there is to keep everything straightened up. It wastes your time and the customer's if you have to stop in the middle of servicing his car and run back to another part of the station for a clean rag. And while it may give the customer a laugh if you kick over the water can, spilling a couple of gallons of cold water over your feet on a cold morning, it won't be any fun for you, or impress him with the station's service. I don't want this book to sound like an old-fashioned grade school reader, but around the pump island the old motto, "A place for everything and everything in its place," tells the story better than anything I can write.

The main idea is to give it a little thought and get things arranged so they are handy for you and then keep them that way. About the only broad advice I can think of on that subject is to keep the things you have to use where you can reach them when you need them, but where they won't be in your way when you

don't need them. Of course, you can't stop in the midst of waiting on a customer to take an empty oil can to the trash box, or put a measure away. But you can at least put them where nobody will stumble over them until you have a chance to put them where they belong. Keep the gas hose—or water and air hose, if you have them at the pump island—hung up when not actually in use. It's better for the hose and it's better for you, because a loose hose can tangle your feet and throw you quicker than a cowboy can rope a calf.

The inside of the station has to have its share of attention, too. There will be days when you think the inside takes more than its share of looking after. Yet if you stop to think how much of the station activity is handled there, you can see why things get in such an awful mess if you don't keep them in order.

The average service station lot hasn't any room to spare for a big building. So, a mighty little space has got to serve as your office, stockroom, display room, and salesroom. You'll no doubt have a good many customers in and out of the station, especially in cold weather, and you want the place to make a good impression. If the customer finds the desk is cluttered up with papers and tools, and greasy coveralls hanging over the back of the chair, and has to hurdle the mop bucket to get in the rest room, you can hardly blame him for thinking maybe your service is no better than your housekeeping.

Wherever it's practical, there should be shelves and racks to hold stocks and supplies that have to be stored in the station. If you have to set merchandise on the floor, stack it neatly against the wall, where it is out of the way and makes an attractive display. If there's room for what the advertising people call "point of sale" displays, put them up. But don't overdo it. One neat

display will attract more attention and sell more merchandise than a lot of displays thrown together like a cut-rate drug store on a one-cent-sale day.

There's a lot of paper work that has to be done in any service station and the desk is the place to do it. You can't do very satisfactory bookkeeping with your records all mixed up with empty coke bottles and last night's newspapers. And you don't want to ask a customer to sit down to sign a work ticket or a check with his arms resting on greasy cleaning rags.

Paying bills is not most customers' idea of fun. Don't make it harder for your customer by making him wait while you burrow down through several layers of junk to find a flat spot on the desk where he can write a check.

Naturally, the floor inside the station has to be swept and scrubbed often enough to keep it looking respectable. How often that is depends a lot on how much traffic goes through the station building. In winter, when customers may be coming inside to get warm, you may have to mop up tracked-in snow several times a day. But it's worth it. Even if the customers don't come inside the station, you're going to enjoy having a place that's not all messed up to work in.

Since I've had the girls working for me, I've sort of turned the inside of the station over to them. The ones I've had in my station are pretty good kids, and kind of touchy about being treated any different from the boys. But I finally convinced them that all I was trying to do was to have everybody do the job they were best suited for, and after I had them check the inside of the place over a couple of times after the boys had finished cleaning it, they got the point. I'll back my

boys against any service station attendants when it comes to keeping the station clean, but a girl has just got the knack of spotting dust in the corners or streaks on the window panes that the boys don't have. And it's that keeping on top of little things that's the secret of keeping the station interior looking presentable and operating efficiently.

Another mighty important part of the station is the lubrication department. First of all, of course, this department is a work shop. Housekeeping there is chiefly a matter of keeping tools and equipment organized so you can do a workmanlike job of lubricating a car. But you can't do a workmanlike job while you're skating around on a floor that's slippery with spilled crankcase drainings or tripping over a rental battery that somebody left in the middle of the floor. So, in this department, too, we get back to the old motto about **"A place for everything and everything in its place."** These days, most grease gun outfits come with special racks to hang all the various gadgets and tools on. Even if there isn't one of those, it's easy to rig up some kind of shelf or rack to keep equipment on. All the equipment and tools should be kept in their regular places, and when they have been used, you should *wipe them off before you put them back.* That wiping off is important. You can get yourself a nice set of skinned knuckles, and maybe worse, from throwing your weight behind a grease gun with a slippery handle.

Now, I've seen some pictures of model lubritoriums that look more like the operating room of a hospital than something around a service station. I've never seen one in real life that looked like a surgeon could move in and start taking out an appendix. But the idea is sound—I mean the idea of keeping the lubrication department spotless, not taking out an appendix—and

something along those lines is what you ought to shoot for, within practical limits, as I've said before. The floor ought to be swept at least once a day. And it's a good idea when possible to scrub the floor after the station is closed for the night.

If you're doing any lubrication business to speak of, it will take a daily scrubbing to keep the floor from getting slippery. You'll probably have to use something to dissolve the grease, but for the love of Pete, don't use gasoline or any other inflammable stuff anywhere inside the station. Even if you keep the doors and windows open, fumes are apt to collect inside the building and if said fumes then come in contact with a lighted cigarette, or spark from an electric motor, your folks will probably collect your insurance.

As I said, the idea of keeping the lube department cleaner than it needs to be from a purely mechanical point of view is sound. Maybe you've never thought about it from that angle, but right there can be the best "sales arena" you've got in the station. When you've got the car on the lift, you've got a chance to really go over it and see what it needs in the way of accessories—such as spark plugs, oil filter, fan belt, battery, tires, etc. If you've got the customer in there with you, you've got a real chance to do some selling because you can show him exactly what is needed and you've got the time to tell him why he needs it. But you aren't going to have many customers, particularly lady customers, standing around if they feel like they're

While customers like to see the lubritorium nice and clean, you rarely find one who appreciates this evidence of good housekeeping if it is done while he is around. Why not get this task done early in the morning or after closing hours?

going to have to send all their clothes to the cleaners as soon as they get out. So, it's a doggoned good sales stunt to keep the department so clean that customers will enjoy standing around and chewing the fat with you while their cars are being lubricated.

Another thing about service station housekeeping that always seemed important to me was the station lighting. Lights in this day of electricity are pretty easily taken for granted. It's a fact, though, that if you're keeping night hours at a station, good lighting can do a lot toward attracting more customers and making your work easier and more pleasant. Now, I haven't any intention of going into such technical stuff as to where and how much light should be used around the station. You aren't likely to have anything to do with that until you're running your own station, and even then, that's a job for experts. But to get the most out of any lighting set-up, you've got to keep the bulbs clean, burned-out bulbs replaced, and the reflectors polished. That's where you do come in. It's surprising how much of the light the station pays for will be lost if bulbs and reflectors are allowed to get a film of dirt on them. And it's also surprising how a few minutes a week spent in polishing bulbs and reflectors will snap up the after-dark appearance of the station. So, keeping them cleaned up regularly ought to be a standard part of your housekeeping job.

Signs—and that includes the pumps, too, for they usually have the name and trade-mark of the gas you're selling on them—are something else that will pay off in appearance and customer appeal for a little day-to-day attention. Let me say here, for your future reference when the day comes that you're bossing the station, that I'm strong for advertising signs, but I think they can be overdone. We'll take that matter up in

another chapter. The point I want to make here is that a sign in a service station has one purpose and that is to get a short message over to a passing motorist in a hurry. Too many signs affect the motorist like a dozen people all shouting at him at once. He doesn't get what any of them are saying. And a dirty sign is about the same as trying to talk to a customer with your mouth full. He may get your message, but the chances are it will be garbled.

Most signs around a service station, including those on the pump, are enamel or at least a hard, glossy paint. It's surprising what a good scrubbing and a coat of car wax will do to snap them up. Somebody actually tested it out once and found that an average sign could be read about a half a block farther when it was waxed and polished. So, it's good from an advertising standpoint to wipe and polish the pumps and the signs that can be conveniently reached every day, if possible, and give them a good going-over and waxing once a week or so.

A little time, work, and thought, put in on the grounds, would have made a big improvement in the looks of a great many of the stations I've seen. A good many stations, of course, don't have any vacant ground around them. But pretty nearly any neighborhood or suburban station, even around the larger cities, is likely to have at least a strip between the driveways and the street. Here a little well-cared-for grass and maybe a few shrubs or flower beds can really set the station off. You don't have to go in for any expensive landscaping program to get a good effect. But if there is any ground around your place, it's worth the effort to have it covered with a good stand of grass that's kept mowed and trimmed around the edges.

-and how does your "lot" look now?

Naturally, I can't tell you what you can or ought to do in the way of fixing up the grounds around your station. But if you've got any vacant space around your station lot, you at least want to keep the weeds cut down, and all trash picked up. And the one thing you don't want to do is to use the space for throwing out used crankcase oil, empty oil cans, discarded signs, etc.

As I said before, it's pretty hard to say where maintaining appearance stops and maintaining efficiency begins. But I've never seen a really efficient station that didn't also look pretty good. And in all my traveling around, I have never run across a neat, attractive looking station that didn't turn out a pretty good job of service, too. There are some duties, though, that come strictly under the head of maintaining mechanical efficiency. These are important. They are even more important than just keeping the station looking nice, because a little thing like water in the bottom of the storage tank, or a stuck valve on the air compressor, can lead to all kinds of trouble.

When I first started to plan this book, I had a lot of stuff clipped out of service manuals and instruction books, and pages full of notes about things that I thought I ought to talk about, such as draining the compressors so there wouldn't be any water collected in them, testing the tanks for water, and inspecting the oil in the hydraulic hoist. I knew this was all stuff you ought to know and would have to learn to be a top service station hand. But the more I read and figured, the more it seemed to me that anything I could set down in a chapter or two in a book like this would be likely to mix you up more than put you straight on just exactly what had to be done.

In the first place, hardly any two stations have identical equipment, so I wouldn't know what particular

kinds to try to describe. Then, I got to reading over the instructions that went with some stuff that I'd never worked with before, and I realized it was a heck of a job to try to figure out how to take care of any piece of equipment when you didn't have it in front of you to look at. In other words, there are some cases where you can't just listen and learn, but where you've got to listen and look, too, before you can learn.

So, you're going to have to get some personal instructions from the boss, or some of the older help, about the jobs that have to be done in taking care of the equipment. The manufacturers of all the things you use around the station, have turned out equipment that's really OK. After all, when you stop to think about it, it's sort of a tricky job to pump gas from an underground tank behind the station, out to the pump island, measure that gas down to a fraction of a pint, and even figure up the bill, with you doing nothing but squeezing the trigger. And it takes some fairly complicated machinery to do it. It always has amazed me how doggoned little care station equipment could get along with. You don't want to get the idea, though, that the equipment can take it forever, and plug along day after day without any attention. You can't get away with neglecting it indefinitely. It needs lubrication and servicing just like any other machinery. You want to make it one of your early duties to find out what needs to be done and when, and then to see to it that it's done regularly.

Service manuals say to keep tires, accessories, specialties, etc., within easy reach; but that doesn't mean they should be piled up so you don't have to move a certain part of your anatomy off a chair in order to get to them.

Some oil companies take care of servicing station equipment for their dealers. It's not a bad plan, for most of it is a little out of the average amateur mechanic's class. Even so, it's a good idea for you to know something about it yourself, just in case.

Somebody, who makes a business of checking up on such things, made a survey of service stations that had gone out of business a few years ago and reported that most of them had failed because of poor management. I read somewhere else that nine out of ten service station failures were caused by what the writer called "untrained and inadequately informed manpower." Now I don't know whether those two fellows were talking about the same thing or not. I always figured that the boss was part of the manpower around my station. And I also always felt that part of my job of managing was to see to it that I didn't have any "untrained and inadequately informed manpower."

I'm ready to agree, though, that from what I've seen of the business, when a station goes broke, it's usually because it wasn't run right. Of course, you have to use your head a little about picking your location. You can't stick in a couple of pumps on some back street and hope to do much business. And you can't stock poor quality gas and oil and expect customers to buy it—at least not for long. But if you've got a reasonably good location and handle an established brand, your success will be pretty much up to how the station is run.

Now, before you start to yell "So what" let me say that I know if you're just starting to work in the station, "running it" is not likely to be your immediate responsibility. But a big hunk of the job of running the station consists of running the employees, and there's where you can be a big help by sort of taking over the job of running yourself. Of course, I hope

most of you folks reading this book are going to stick with the service station business. If you are, why sooner or later you're no doubt going to have to take over the job of telling some newer employees what to do. And you'll have to know something about lining up the various jobs, so they'll all get done on schedule, without piling up the work too much at one time, or on one employee.

There are two reasons for setting up a work schedule and sticking to it. The first is to make sure that everything gets done, and gets done at the right time. For example, if a customer comes in the station early in the morning, in a hurry to get off on a long trip, he's not going to like it if he has to start off with his tires low because you didn't have the air pressure up. So, you schedule hooking up the air hose and starting the compressor, as one of the first things to be done when the station opens. The second reason for a work schedule is to spread the work out so nobody has too much to do at one time. There's plenty of work to do around a service station and it can pile up on you awfully fast if you don't keep it moving. But if you organize it, you can level it out over the week and keep the station personnel working as a team. That way a whale of a lot of work can be accomplished without putting the pressure on any one employee, or killing yourself with work one day and having nothing to do the next to keep you awake between customers.

One thing you must keep in mind about a work schedule is that no schedule you can lay out is going to do you any good if you don't follow it. At the same time, you don't want to forget that the purpose of the schedule is to make it easier to get the work done. So you've got to watch that you don't let keeping to schedule interfere with getting the work done. Just because

the schedule says it's Hank's week to scrub the rest room floors, it doesn't mean that you can't scrub them if Hank's got three customers waiting for lubrication jobs. Or, because the schedule sets Friday for changing the window display, you can't do it Thursday while it's raining and you can't cut the grass.

It takes a lot of thought and planning to set up a good schedule. The chances are, no matter how good a schedule looks when you first set it up, you're going to have to try it out and change it, time after time, before it gets to be what you need. The idea is to get something outlined and get going. Don't be like a fellow one of my customers told me about. This man was a nut on planning his work every day. He'd lock himself in his office the first thing every morning and schedule his work for the whole day, right down to the minute. Usually, when he came out with his schedule, there'd be telephone calls piled up and a lot of people waiting to see him, that had collected while he was making his schedule. When he got through with them, he'd have to go back and revise his schedule. But by the time he got that fixed, there'd be a new crop of waiting business, and he'd start the whole thing over. By the end of the day, he had a pretty good schedule —but it was too late to use it.

Most service station manuals put out by the oil companies include some sort of work schedule. One of those will be useful for a starter. You won't be able to follow it to the letter, because there aren't any two stations where all conditions are exactly alike. This is something that it seems to me the fellows who write some of these manuals seem to forget. Besides, you won't even be able to hit your own schedule right on the nose every day, even after you've got it set up the way you want it.

The first thing to do in arranging a work schedule is to make out a list of all the various jobs that have to be done. Put them all down, even if they don't amount to much. If there's an old pooch that hangs out at the station and has to be fed every morning, put "breakfast for Fido" on the list. Or, if you've got a hang-out sign that starts squeaking in the wind when the hooks aren't oiled every couple of months, "oil sign" should be somewhere on the schedule.

When you've got a list of what has to be done, the next step is to split it up into groups of jobs that have to be done every day—or oftener—jobs that have to be done twice a week, once a week, once a month, etc. The service manuals will be a big help in working this part out, because they can give you a rough idea, based on the practical experiences of a lot of stations, about how often various things need to be done. On that basis you'll find your schedule breaks down into daily, weekly (a few twice-a-week), and monthly duties.

Your schedule of daily duties will be the most important part of the schedule. It will include most of the work, and most of the things that have a direct bearing on keeping the station operating and getting the customers taken care of. Most stations will split the daily work up between opening duties and spare-time chores. That doesn't necessarily mean that the spare-time stuff can be put off all day. It just means that the opening duties have to come first to get the station ready for business.

A motorist likes to do business in clean, sparkling surroundings. But if he has to wait until you come down from a ladder and wipe the paint off your hands, he may feel he'd prefer service to glamorous surroundings. Painting should be done during "off" hours.

Opening duties will include such things as getting the station and the pumps unlocked, getting out and checking the petty cash and change funds, attaching the air hose—if you take it in at night as many stations do—and starting the air compressor. You'll need to inspect the pumps to see that they're working all right and the dials are set back to zero, or the pump bowls filled if there's no dial. Get some clean rags out to the pump island, so the early morning customers won't have to wait for you to hunt up a rag to wipe their windshields.

Organize your station - and your work

See that the water hose is working, or the water cans filled, and that the stand with the canned or bottled oil is filled and handy. In other words, the station ought to be all set to handle the routine pump island services just as fast as you can get it ready. That's important, because the average early morning customer isn't out just because he likes the morning air. He's usually on his way to work, or starting out on a trip, and has a real reason for being in a hurry, so he'll appreciate prompt service even more than customers coming in later in the day.

After that, the outside displays should be put in place so the station looks like it's open for business. If you've got a soft drink or cigarette machine, see that they are ready to go, too. Even an early morning customer may be thirsty, and maybe the guests at his house the night before smoked up all his cigarettes.

The lubrication department should come in for an early inspection. See that the tools are all in place and the grease guns filled. Usually a customer doesn't bring his car in for a lubrication job early in the morning unless he needs the car for important driving. So, you don't want to keep him waiting while you get ready to go to work.

As I said, the jobs that are usually classed as spare-time duties can't just wait until you happen to get around to them. The difference is that you can't serve a customer until you've got the pumps unlocked and set, while a few cigarette butts on the station floor won't interfere much with getting an early morning motorist on his way in a hurry. But you want to get going on these jobs just as early in the day as you can. One job you don't want to put off is cleaning the rest rooms and checking the supplies. Rest rooms ordinarily catch considerable early morning trade, and you can't explain to Mrs. Van Snoot that the ladies' room won't look like that if she'll come back in an hour.

Other jobs in this group that should come toward the top of the list are sweeping or raking the driveway and pump islands, sidewalks and gutters, picking up papers and trash on the grounds, sweeping and dusting the office, checking the battery water dispenser, etc. The air compressor should be drained and the air lines "blown out." It's a good idea to do that at closing time in cold weather, as there's danger of the moisture freezing and blocking the air system. Then you can follow up with cleaning the dials and globes on the pumps, washing down the pumps, and shining the hose nozzles.

Some time during the day, check over all the lights and see that all burned-out bulbs are replaced and ready to go when it gets dark. The lubrication department floor, the lifts or the pits, the grease guns, etc., need to be cleaned up once a day and just before closing time is as good a time as any to take care of that, so the place will be ready to go in the morning. Scrubbing the floor in there takes a little time, and you don't want to hold up a lubrication job during the day while the floor is drying.

There are a lot of other things that have to be taken care of every day. The lists here are just suggestions. There are always some station records that have to be kept right down to date every day. One of the most important is your inventory. It's a good idea to set up a regular time each day to gage the gasoline in storage. Some stations do this at closing time. Others do it the first thing in the morning. If your station operates on a two-shift schedule, it's usually done first thing in the morning and again when the second shift takes over. And there's always paper work—like getting out cards to customers, reminding them to get their cars in for a lubrication job or an oil change, following up mailing cards, and keeping files in order—that has to be done day by day if you don't want to let it get on top of you. Most of the effect of these follow-ups will be lost if you wait until next week to mail out the cards that should have gone out today.

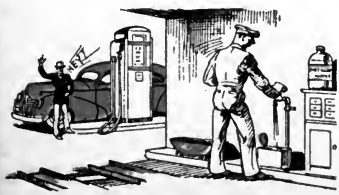
Some stations operate on a shift basis. Then there are other duties that have to be scheduled at each change of shifts. The new shift will need clean rags, and maybe additional stocks of canned and bottled oil. The petty cash and change funds will have to be checked out from one shift to the following one, and stock records checked. And, of course, the new shift will inspect the rest rooms again, see that the pumps are operating all right, and that things in general are in shape to carry on. A lot of the daily duties can be divided among the different shifts. Some, naturally, will have to be done by a certain shift. You can't very well put off hooking up the air hose and starting the compressor for the second shift. And you don't want to do business half a day with the driveway cluttered with papers, cigar butts and grease. But the second shift could look after draining the compressor and some of

the straightening up around the inside of the station.

Splitting the work among the attendants on duty, of course, depends on a lot of things, such as how many people are on the job, and how much time the various duties take. That has to be worked out separately with each station. The idea is to divide the work as evenly as possible, and the best way to do that is to shift the jobs around. That not only evens up the work, but it gives each employee a chance to learn each job so he can step in and do it in a pinch. It gives him a change, too, and keeps the work from getting monotonous.

Jobs that are usually done once a week will include washing the light bulbs and reflectors, washing the windows and the gas hose, and washing the walls and painted surfaces and touching up the paint where it's needed, especially in the rest rooms. Usually the grass will need cutting about once a week in the warm months and about once a week the storage tanks ought to be tested for water in the bottom. Testing the gas pumps and the oil dispensers for accurate measurement should also be on the weekly schedule.

Some places, local regulations require you to check pumps even oftener. Naturally you want to check them immediately if there's any question of their being accurate. You don't want to be giving your customers short measure and, on the other hand, a few days of pumping out oversize gallons of gas or quarts of oil can make a



Battery water containers and radiator water cans should be kept filled, and put back in the same place after they are used, Of course, if you enjoy playing "Button, button, who's got the button?" you may get a lot of pleasure out of looking for them while the customer fidgets.

big hole in the station profits. The tire gages also should come in for a check-up while you're at the checking. A tire gage a couple of pounds off means all the tires you're checking will be a couple of pounds off in air pressure. That can make considerable difference in the way the tires wear and the car rides and handles. And that's doggoned important to the customer, especially right now when a few hundred miles of tire wear may mean the difference between whether the customer drives or walks.

Other things that ought to be on the weekly schedule are checking the fire extinguishers and seeing that the lift is well lubricated. Such things might hang over for longer than a week with no harm done, but they're too important to let slip, and the best way to make sure they aren't forgotten is to schedule them to be taken care of regularly. The same line of thinking applies to such weekly jobs as straightening up, dusting, and rearranging merchandise displays. There's no reason why work like that can't sort of be held in reserve to fill in when you're not so busy. The trouble is, that "not so busy" time rarely comes around a service station, and, human nature being what it is, it's a good idea to give the displays their spot on the weekly work schedule.

There are, of course, other things that may belong on the weekly schedule. Usually there's considerable paper work that is handled on a weekly basis. Just what that includes, depends on how your accounting system is set up. In most cases, stock records of everything but gas will be on a weekly basis, and that means inventory of oils, greases, accessories, specialties, etc., should be scheduled to be taken weekly.

The weekly schedule should be spread out over the week. That is, one job should go down for every Monday, another every Tuesday, and so on. A good plan

is to include them with a certain set of daily duties; that way, as the daily duties are rotated among the various employees, the weekly duties are rotated too. Again, the secret of making a work schedule really help you get the work out on time, is to follow it regularly, once you get one that fits your needs. You don't have to be unreasonable about it and put in overtime checking the fire extinguishers on a day when four or five extra lubrication jobs have thrown you behind schedule. But don't get the habit of putting the weekly jobs off to another day, just because there are seven days in a week.

There are any number of little jobs that should be scheduled for attention about once a month. If you've got curtains in the rest rooms—and nice bright curtains are a good idea in the ladies' rest room, at least—you can't expect them to carry on contributing homelike atmosphere to the place more than a month without being changed. Most of your signs, in spite of frequent wiping off, will develop a dull film that takes a once-a-month washing to remove. The compressor oil and the compressor release valve need to be checked about that often, too, and so do the connections and stuffing boxes on the gas pumps. The list of monthly duties probably won't be long, and will vary a lot depending on what equipment you have and how dirty the air and general surroundings of the station are. The idea is to get down on the schedule what has to be done, and spread it out over the month and do it on the day the schedule calls for, so nothing will be forgotten.

I've always found it was a good plan to get a complete schedule drawn up and hang it somewhere inside the station where everyone concerned could look at it and see for himself what he was supposed to do, and check himself to see he had got everything. Of course,

it shouldn't be long until the daily duties, and most of the weekly duties, will get to be pretty much a habit and you'll go through the schedule without much thinking about it. Still, it's a good idea to have the schedule around in black and white, so the monthly jobs won't get neglected and there won't be any arguments about whose work is what.

Here are the girls again

Since I've had girls working in the station, I've had to change my scheduling a little. I've found, like most other station managers I've talked to, that there's some things the girls are better at than the boys. As I said, they have a better knack for keeping things straightened and dusted up. And most of them are a little better on handling the paper details. Since there's plenty of work in those lines that they can do better than climbing a 16 ft. ladder and polishing a big reflector, I try to schedule the girls for the paper work and inside cleaning, wiping off and arranging displays, etc., and let the boys carry most of the load on the outside, where a strong back comes in handy.

Getting the most out of your time around a service station isn't only a matter of getting the work lined up. You've got to learn to figure out the easy way to do each job. That's something that you've got to learn by practice. I've seen some manuals that took up a page or two, with illustrations, on how to change a tire. But if I didn't have a tire and tools to get my hands on, I wouldn't have been any closer to knowing how to change a tire when I got through reading than I was before. The idea was sound. It told you exactly how to change a tire and it told you the right way, too. You could learn quicker and better, though, by watching, and then helping somebody actually change a tire. So, I'm not going to spend too much time in this book trying to tell you just how to do a certain job.

You've probably heard of the old recipe for making rabbit stew that starts out with "First you catch your rabbit." Well, we're going to assume that you've got a rabbit. In other words, we'll take it for granted that you've got your job in front of you, and a rough idea, for instance, that the way to sweep a driveway is to push the broom across the pavement. From there, you can likely find out for yourself, even if you don't have someone to show you, that smooth, sweeping strokes get results. Just daubing at the dirt takes too much time. And a hefty roundhouse swing is apt to scatter the dirt and make extra work.

There are a few things about how you do your work, though, that I'm going to talk about in a general way. Keeping out of the way of accidents will go a long way toward helping get the most out of your time. Certainly you aren't working at peak efficiency with a smashed toe, or a handful of skinned knuckles, or when you're explaining that you got that black eye bumping into the car hoist and not because the other guy had a faster left than you did.

So, to begin with, you can eliminate a lot of your chances of getting hurt by following a few of the suggestions I brought out about keeping things straightened up around the station. To repeat, that means keeping the driveways and floors free of grease and the water cans and air hose out of the way. When the hoist isn't in use, it ought to be clear down on the floor. There, the worst it can do is to trip you. While that's

There are two ways of keeping the driveway clear. One is to clear away the dangerous obstructions after they have accumulated. The other way is not to let things accumulate in the first place. Personally, I've found the latter way the best.

not good, it's usually less serious than, say, banging your head on a partly raised hoist. Those things are solid and they're hard, and you don't have to be traveling very fast when your head connects, to get a nasty bump, or even a cut scalp.

Another thing to keep in mind is that an automobile is a big hunk of machinery. Maybe it doesn't have anything against you personally, but when it's a case of you and a car being in the same spot at the same time, the car nearly always wins. Most of us wouldn't think of crossing a street without taking a look to see if there was a car coming, but I've seen plenty of service station attendants wander back and forth around the driveway of a busy station as if they expected the cars to get out of their way.

It's true that usually the cars in the driveway aren't moving very fast and very few drivers are so hardhearted that they'd run over you if they could avoid it. But a ton or two of car will give you quite a jar, even if it just nudges you a little, and letting cars run over you is not very good practice unless you're in training to become a movie stunt man. Often, there's more traffic moving through a busy service station than goes by on some streets. So use the same judgment when you walk around the station that you would in crossing a street. After all, some motorists are a little bit squeamish about running people down, so don't embarrass your customers by making them run over you.

I remember one station manual I read that said the best safety device around a station was on the station attendant's shoulders. It's a fact that doggoned few accidents happen in a station that couldn't have been prevented by somebody using his head a little. For instance, all I've just said about keeping the driveway, etc., free of obstructions, is just common sense.

The same thing is true about the way you go at your work. The average station is a busy spot at times. When you've got cars waiting, it's a temptation to step on it a little and take short cuts, jumping across the drain pit or hurdling a lowered hoist. It might save you a few seconds and maybe make the customer feel you're putting on a little extra speed for his benefit, but a fall into the drain pit will eat up all the time you've saved on a lot of short cuts, even if it doesn't break your neck. And it will take considerably longer to pick yourself up from where you lit when you stubbed your toe jumping across the corner of the hoist, than it would have taken to have walked around it. We all agree that snappy service is what the customers want, but that doesn't mean there's any percentage in not taking enough time to be careful.

The same idea applies to the certain amount of strong-arm work to be done around a station. It's better to take a little time and get set and then go at it a little easy and not tear into it like you thought it was going to fight back at you. I mean, if you have to lift a heavy oil drum, you want to take time to get your feet planted solidly under you and then get a good hold on the drum. Keep your back straight and lift with your legs. It may be more spectacular to stroll up to the drum, lean over, and jerk it up, but it's also a good way to get a sprained back or other serious injury. Where practical, it's still better to use the car lift to hoist heavy oil drums.

You can keep out of the way of a lot of minor misfortunes by taking time to be careful. In the first place, if you're using tools, be sure they're the right tools. An oversize wrench, or one with worn jaws, will more than likely slip when you begin to put on the pressure. Even

a good wrench may slip off the nut if you jerk at it instead of applying a steady pull.

Ordinarily, of course, you won't be working on a car with the engine running. In case you are, though, it's a good thing to remember that the fan can take a nice bite off a finger, even when the engine is just idling. And watch out for hot spots like the manifold and engine head when you're working under the hood.

If the fan belt is loose, tighten it. To know if the fan belt is loose, look and see. To build goodwill, mention the fact that you're glad to do it gratis, and act as though you are — but don't spoil your opportunity to make a good impression by "wrecking" yourself doing the job.

They get hot enough to raise a nasty blister, just at a touch. The same goes for the radiator. The cap may be hot, and if the radiator is boiling for any reason, it is liable to gush boiling water and steam in your face. Let the engine cool off a little, if there's time, or at least have a rag over the opening when the cap is loosened.

Some "hot stuff"

As I have already mentioned, the hoods on modern cars are often big and heavy. You can save yourself occasional smashed fingers or a banged head by making sure the hood is securely propped before you start to work under it. And be sure it is braced open before you start putting air in the spare tire that's usually carried inside.

This could go on and on, with warnings about not getting your fingers pinched in the door, or getting your hands snagged on sharp projections. It sounds like I'm talking to kids, but you'd be surprised how often experienced station men will put a hand on the front door jamb while reaching to clean a windshield and get it pinched when somebody closes the door.

Sometimes I think service people as a whole must

live right, or there would be more accidents than there are around stations. After all, your principal merchandise is gasoline, which is nothing for kids to play with. But today, underground tanks and modern pumps take the gas right from the tank truck and deliver it to the car without the air touching it. So, handling gas has been made so safe and simple that sometimes we kind of lose sight of the fact that under some conditions, gasoline is a more powerful explosive than TNT, and about as easy to set afire as anything in the world. So, if you want a long and happy life, treat gasoline with respect at all times.

That's the reason most stations have rules against filling a tank in a car while the engine is running. Of course, you don't want to smoke while gas is being pumped, and it's usually a good idea to remind the customer not to come close if he's smoking and inclined to get out of the car and wander around to watch the proceedings while cars are being filled.

The station will have its rules about selling gas in containers other than the car's tank, and these must be followed. And gas with tetraethyl lead in it must never be sold for anything except to be used as fuel in an engine. It's no good for cleaning or for gasoline stoves.

No instructions about working around a station would be complete without a warning about carbon monoxide. There isn't much chance of getting mixed up with it, normally. The trouble is that getting mixed up with it even once is usually once too often. Any engine makes carbon monoxide when it is running, and shoots it out the exhaust. You can't see or smell it, or even feel the effects of it, until it's too late to do anything about it. But whenever an engine is running, there's carbon monoxide in the air. Outdoors, it is immediately mixed with the air and made harmless.

So, about the only precaution is to remember not to run an engine inside the lubrication department or other enclosed space around the station. It's a temptation on a sub-zero night, to run a car inside and close the doors while you're thawing out a frozen radiator. But regardless of the temptation, *don't*, unless the station is equipped with a flexible hose to fit over the car's exhaust pipe and carry the exhaust gases outside.

Another thing that there's no use kidding ourselves about is fire. But when you're working all the time with stuff that's as easy to ignite as gasoline, there's always a chance of a fire, no matter how careful you are. So, one of the first things you want to find out —and the boss will probably tell you before you have to ask—is where the fire extinguishers are and how to use them. Then, if there is a fire, work fast, but don't lose your head. Most fires can be handled without serious trouble if you get them before they get away from you. But there's a right way and a wrong way about fighting a fire, like doing anything else, so you want to take time enough to figure what you ought to do.

One thing to keep in mind is that a fire can be *smothered* out quicker than any other way, if you can get at it. You can often put out a fire in the filler opening of a car in a few seconds by throwing a wet rag over it. And smothering or beating out the flames with a coat or blanket is about the only way to handle burning clothing. One more general precaution is, don't use water on oil or gasoline fires, because it will more than likely cause them to spread. If a fire does start, get the customers away from it and yell for one of the other attendants to help you.

Every once in a while, you'll read about a station that burns to the ground or blows up higher than a kite, during the night. The fact that it always happens

Don't look now, brother, but-

when there's no one around makes it seem very mysterious. It's really very simple, though. Gas fumes accumulate when the station is closed, and a spark from the air compressor—which was left on at night when it shouldn't have been—or from a poorly insulated transformer on a neon sign, set them off. The remedy is to leave nothing in the station at night that will give off vapors, and to shut off all electrical mechanisms.

Reading back over this chapter, I get the feeling that maybe I've sounded as if I thought service station attendants were a bunch of mechanical men, and that you sort of wound them up and pressed a few buttons when you set up a work schedule and told them how to go about the job. Well, of course, that's exactly the opposite of what I'm aiming to do. What I want is attendants that will do their own thinking. On the other hand, I don't care how smart fellows or girls may be, they can't do any intelligent thinking for themselves until they have something to start from.

I think you'll agree with me, that when you've got a job to do that's made up of as many little jobs as the job of a service station attendant is, you'll never get anywhere if you don't plan and organize your work. So, I put a lot of time into talking about how to schedule your work, not because I wanted you to do it my way, but because I wanted to give you a basis for working it out your own way.

No motorist is going to leave his bank account with you. A successful service station is kept going by making a little profit from every customer who drives in. The secret of success is getting a lot of customers to drive in a lot of times.

Application is the most important thing to know about petroleum products the where, the when and the why

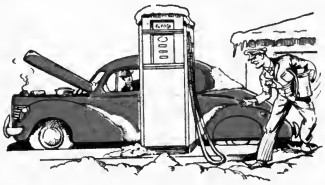
1. ALWAYS CONSULT THE LUBRICATION GUIDE.

2. IT TELLS THE GRADE OF MOTOR OIL TO USE—

3. AND THE EXACT CRANKCASE CAPACITIES OF ALL CARS—

4. AS WELL AS WHAT PARTS TO LUBRICATE. (ASIDE FROM THE STEERING WHEEL)—

5. HOWEVER, MECHANICAL CONDITION ALTER MOTOR OIL REQUIREMENTS—



6. AS DO SEASONAL CHANGES IN ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS—

7. BUT, COME HAIL OR HIGH WATER, USE THE DIP STICK—

8. AND YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL COME RIGHT BACK.

— of Course — "within practical limits."

"What I should know about petroleum products"

Whenever I get around to talking to the boys and girls who come to work for me about what they ought to know about the gasoline, motor oil, etc., they are selling, I keep remembering my first boss, Mr. McKane, and the dog he sold Mrs. Kipplander. As a hobby, Mr. McKane raised a few bird dogs. One day he had a couple of clumsy, half-grown setter pups down at the station when this Mrs. Kipplander came in to have her sport roadster lubricated. She was a sort of ample old gal, with considerably more time and money than she knew what to do with, and her chief occupation seemed to be getting knocked off by some high school kid in the first round of every ladies' golf tournament within 100 miles. Well, one of these pups got loose and wiggled over to Mrs. Kipplander, wiped his front paws on her skirt and gave her the business with those big, brown eyes setter pups are equipped with. It was a case of love at first sight, and Mrs. Kipplander drove out with a pup in addition to a first class lubrication job.

One day a few months later she came back. The pup was pretty well grown and he was a swell looking pooch, sitting up beside her on the seat. He sat up there straight and didn't try to get out of the car when his mistress did. You could see he'd had some sound instructions in dog etiquette. The trouble was, it turned out, Mrs. K. had decided that, now she had a bird dog, it would be nice to do a little quail shooting. So she was trying to

train the dog to hunt. "I can't understand it, Mr. McKane," she was telling the boss, "Red minds me perfectly around home and in the car, but the minute we get out in the field, he won't pay a bit of attention to me."

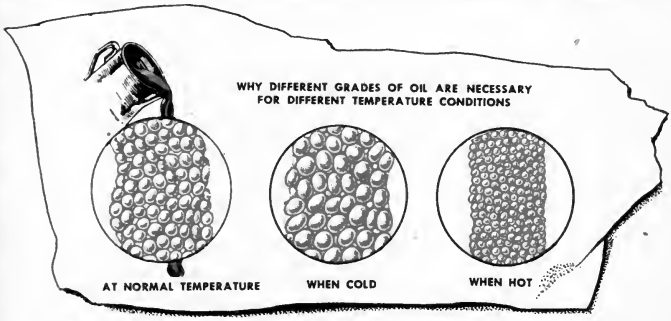
"Did you ever do any hunting, Mrs. Kipplander?" the boss asked her. She had hunted duck a few times with her late husband, it seemed, but she admitted that quail hunting was something new to her. "Well, that explains it," the boss told her. "The first thing you've got to do when you try to train a dog, is convince him you know more about what you're teaching him than he does." Mrs. K. turned Red over to a regular trainer and before long had the best bird dog in our section.

Well, I learned after a while that customers were a lot like that dog, Red. The job of selling them something was half done when I had convinced them that I knew what I was talking about. So, I've always told my employees that they at least ought to know enough about petroleum products so they could count on being able to teach the average customer something. Now, that doesn't mean that you need to be able to give a chemist lessons on oil molecules, or lecture to an SAE meeting on automobile engine design. But you ought to be able to tell Mr. Brown why he should change his oil oftener in the winter, even though he doesn't drive as much, or why the engine knocks when Junior, with an eye on a little profit for himself, puts third grade gas in the tank instead of the premium grade Pop gave him the money for.

There are, of course, so many things to learn about petroleum products that you could spend the rest of your life learning them. In fact, you wouldn't ever learn all there was to know, because petroleum chemists and mechanical engineers are finding out new

things about petroleum products and how to use them, faster than you could learn what's already in the books.

I don't say that to discourage anybody from trying to find out all they can. I just don't want you to get the idea that the simple facts about petroleum products are too deep for you to learn because you heard some expert spout off about catalysts, hydrogenation, solvent



The globules of an oil vary in size according to its viscosity; viscosity varies according to temperature. For this reason, different oils will have different size globules at the same temperature, or the same oil will have different size globules at different temperatures. This explains different grades of oil being used under different temperature conditions and to suit the condition of the engine.

extraction, isomerization, Ordovecian age crudes, or some other two-bit words. It's interesting to learn what some of that stuff means, but right now, what you ought to know—and what your customers want and expect you to know—is what oil, gas or grease to use and how and where and when to use them.

The first thing you ought to learn about petroleum products is all you can about the machines you're going to use them in. Now, before you conclude that the printer has got some words mixed up here, let me explain what I mean. Your station no doubt sells a very good grade of motor oil. I don't care what brand you're handling, if it comes from an established oil company,

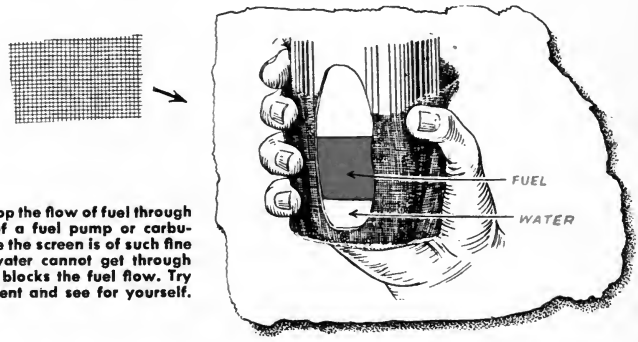
it's good stuff. But if you'd drop a little of it in your wrist watch, the watch would probably quit ticking before you had time to get the case closed, because even the lightest motor oil would be too heavy for a watch. The fluid friction or "drag" of the oil would use up the tiny bit of energy produced by the watch mechanism. In spite of the fact that you might have used the best motor oil money could buy, the fact still remains that so far as your watch was concerned the oil was a darned lousy "watch oil."

The point I'm fumbling around for is that when it comes to judging petroleum products, the best yardstick is "*How does it work?*" And after that, "Does it work any better than something that costs less?" "Quality" in petroleum products is something that has not yet been clearly defined even in a laboratory or proved by double page magazine ads. It's quality merchandise only when it does what it's supposed to do when properly applied to the right part of the customer's car. No matter how good a petroleum product might be, or how many syllables the advertising boys have been able to tack on the name of the method used to produce it, it's plain "NG" if you try to use it for some purpose it wasn't made to fit.

Facts worth knowing

What you need to know about petroleum products, then, is what they're capable of doing and how they act under the different conditions that may come up while they're doing it. Broadly speaking, of course, that's apt to include a lot of things that even the best chemists and engineers haven't got all straightened out to their satisfaction yet. Even if I only talked about what they more or less agree on, it would take a bigger book than this one. But let's start in and hit enough high spots here to give you a rough idea of some of the things you have to think about and should know.

Gasoline, of course, is one of your principal petroleum products. Its job is to supply the power to make an automobile run. Most of you probably know that it does this by "exploding" in the engine's cylinders and pushing down the pistons. As the piston goes down, it turns the crankshaft. This turns the flywheel fastened



Water will stop the flow of fuel through the screen of a fuel pump or carburetor because the screen is of such fine mesh that water cannot get through and thereby blocks the fuel flow. Try this experiment and see for yourself.

on the rear end of the crankshaft, that turns the transmission gears, which turn the drive shaft, which turns the final drive gears, which turn the axles, which turn the wheels. The wheels, naturally, are what makes the car move, but the whole motion started back in the cylinder when the gasoline exploded.

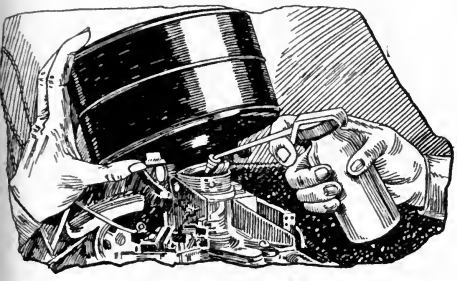
What explodes—or, as the technical books put it, what "burns explosively"—isn't that liquid gasoline you pumped into the tank. It's a gas which is a mixture of about one part gasoline vapor to 15 parts of air. This gas is formed in the carburetor, which sprays liquid gasoline into a jet of air, so it vaporizes and mixes with the air. This gas mixture is then drawn through the intake manifold into the cylinders by the "suction" caused by the piston moving down in the cylinder on its intake stroke. The gasoline travels from

the tank to the carburetor in liquid form, so unless it vaporizes pretty quickly, it won't mix with the air as it should and what the engine pulls into the cylinders through the intake manifold may be an uneven mixture. By that, I mean part of it may have too much air and not enough gasoline vapor, and part may have too much gasoline vapor and not enough air. Or, if the engine is cold, the mixture may not be a gas at all, but just air filled with a sort of mist of gasoline. For reasons that are too deep for an old service station operator to understand well enough to try to pass them on to you, that mixture of air and droplets of liquid gasoline doesn't ignite very well. So, you have an engine that's hard to get going when it's cold.

Another thing, if the gasoline doesn't vaporize the way it should when it hits the inside of the cylinder, some of it is likely to condense on the cylinder walls the same way moisture gathers on a glass of ice water on a hot day. So you have liquid gasoline in the cylinder to work down into the crankcase and thin out the engine oil. Of course, this condensing of gasoline on the cylinder walls happens mostly when the engine is cold, so it's worse in cold weather and when the engine is stopped and started often. Naturally, that's why the oil gets thin faster in cold weather or in a car that's driven with a lot of starts and stops. So, there's a good reason for changing the oil oftener in the winter and during gas rationing when most cars are driven on short trips. It isn't just somebody's smart idea to increase business in winter, or try to make oil sales take up some of the slack that rationing puts in service station profits.

Gasoline that evaporates too easily, means you'll lose considerable through evaporation, especially in hot weather. And it sometimes forms gas pockets in the

carburetor, gas lines, or fuel pump which prevent the gasoline from flowing from the tank to the engine. So, a properly refined gasoline will vaporize quickly enough for easy starting, but not so quickly as to form those gas pockets and cause what they call "vapor lock."



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

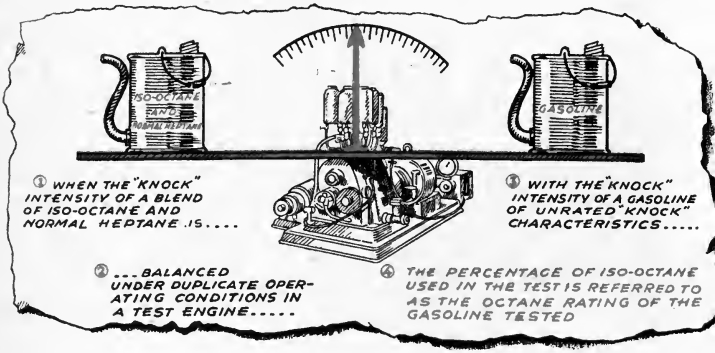
To break a "vapor lock" in a fuel line, remove the air filter and squirt a little gasoline into the carburetor. When the engine starts, gas vapor will be sucked through the fuel line and the "lock" will be broken.

Naturally, the rate at which gasoline vaporizes depends on the temperature, so the oil companies "tailor" their gasoline to fit the weather where and when it is to be sold. That is, for a warm climate and for the summer, they refine the gasoline so it has a little less lively evaporation rate, while in winter they step it up so it evaporates easier.

The point of this discussion of gasoline's "volatility," which is another way of saying its ability to vaporize, is that there's a reason why one gasoline will make a car start easier than another—and that reason is the volatility of the gas. It also has an effect on the way the engine runs, since you naturally get a smoother running engine if the gas mixture is even in all the cylinders. And that will give you better mileage.

If the gasoline vaporizes completely at fairly low temperatures, you'll have less gasoline condensing in the cylinder, forming carbon, and diluting the oil. It will help you sell intelligently, and help the customer

get the most value out of the gas he buys, if you know something about what goes on inside the engine and how the volatility of the gasoline you put in the tank affects the engine's performance.



The octane rating of gasoline measures its "anti-knock" character. High compression, high speed engines deliver more horsepower on high octane gasoline. In normal times, premium grade gasolines reach ratings as high as 85 octane. Regular grade fuels normally have octane ratings of 72 to 75, while third grade fuels have a rating of about 65.

The average customer who drives into your station isn't as much interested in what you put in his tank as he is in what his car does after the stuff is in. What I mean is, that so far as the customer is concerned, what he's buying is so many miles of driving, and he would be perfectly happy if you put hooch in his tank—providing you didn't charge him any extra and his car started easily, ran smoothly, had plenty of pick-up and the old oomph to take the hills in high, and got lots of mileage out of a gallon. Well, most of these things, which go to make up what we call the gasoline's performance, depend—except for the starting—on the octane, or anti-knock, rating of the gasoline.

Now, this gets us into something that's pretty deep in spots, even for chemists and engineers, but we'll try to wade around the edges enough to get an idea of what it's all about, without getting in over anybody's head. I don't know how many of you are old enough to have had any experience with the old time skyrockets we used to shoot off on the Fourth of July, because most cities won't let kids play with such things any more. Anyhow, you'd light one of those things and it would start up with a big "shoosh," leaving a trail of sparks from the burning powder, climbing several hundred feet in the air and landing a quarter of a mile away after it burned out. Once in a while, though, you'd get one that had the powder packed so it burned with a "bang" instead of a shoosh. The rocket would hop up in the air a few feet, very fast, but wouldn't go far, and would land with a "plop," shooting colored lights around the crowd and scaring everybody to death.

Something like that takes place in the cylinder of an engine. The normal way for gasoline to burn, or explode, is with a sort of steady push on the piston. But sometimes, depending on the kind of gasoline and certain other conditions, it will burn suddenly and violently, giving the piston a sudden rough shove and making a knocking or pinging noise as the force of the explosion hits the cylinder walls. This happens most when the engine is pulling hard, as when you step on the gas suddenly, or try to take a steep hill in high. When it happens, the gas is expanding faster than the piston is moving, and thus, the engine is not converting the full power of the gas into motion, just as the skyrocket that went bang didn't turn the full power of the powder into climbing because the powder went off too quick. The point to remember is, that when this knocking begins, the engine isn't running efficiently. Aside

How gasoline should burn in an engine

from the fact that it makes an annoying noise and is somewhat hard on the engine if it continues, it wastes gasoline and cuts down power, speed, and mileage. So, one thing the customer doesn't want is a gas that makes his engine knock.

As I understand it, the engineers don't know just what it is about gasoline that makes it knock under certain conditions. The last article I read about it said there wasn't any way you could test gasoline and find out whether it would knock or not without running it in an engine. But they have worked out a system for testing gasoline in an engine and measuring how badly it knocks. That's known as the octane rating system. The higher the octane number a gasoline has, the less the gasoline is likely to cause knocking.

Most gasoline these days* runs around 70 to 75 octane for "regular," 80 to 85 octane for "premium" grade, and about 65 octane for "third grade." The average car, under average driving conditions, will get along very nicely on regular, or 70 to 75 octane, gas. And some of the old timers will do all right on the third grade stuff. But a lot of the latest jobs will knock on the pick-up or hard pull unless they're fed premium grade fuel, because they have high compression engines that were designed to run on 80-or-so octane gas.

This business of compression ratio in engines is something that you ought to know about, because it's the main thing that determines what grade of gasoline a car ought to use. As you know, an engine works with a piston moving up and down in a cylinder. The piston goes down and sucks a mixture of gasoline and air into

*I ought to add here that these figures are a little high for gas available to John Q. Citizen in wartime. Aviation gas takes most of the higher octane stocks, so you and I have to get along on a "regular" that may average less than 72 octane and a "premium" that may not go over 76 octane.

the cylinder. Then it goes up and "squeezes" that mixture into a small space between the top of the piston and the cylinder head. Naturally, the farther away from the cylinder head the piston is when it reaches the bottom of its downward stroke, the bigger the space inside the cylinder is, and the more of the gasoline-air mixture it will hold. And the closer the head of the piston comes to the cylinder head at the top of its upward stroke, the smaller the space inside the cylinder becomes, and the "tighter" the fuel charge is squeezed to get it in.

Now, without going into a lot of technical dope, that I'll be perfectly honest I'm not any too clear on myself, we'll just say that the smaller the space you can cram an explosive charge into, the more force the explosion is going to have when it goes off. Again, if you ever played with firecrackers when you were a kid, you'll understand what I mean. When the powder was all packed tight inside the firecracker, it would blow a tin can sky-high, if you set it over the firecracker. But if you cut a little hole in the firecracker, so powder wasn't tightly packed in, it would go off with a sort of a "poof" and hardly move the can.

For this reason, engine designers have been working for years towards engines that would pack that fuel charge tighter and tighter into the top of the cylinder. Or, in other words, they increased the engine's compression pressure by reducing the space between the cylinder head and the piston crown when the piston was up. The relation between the space when the piston is up and the space when the piston is down, they called the engine's compression ratio. That is, if an engine had four times as much space in the cylinder when the piston was down as when it was up, it had a 4:1 compression ratio; 6 times, 6:1, etc.

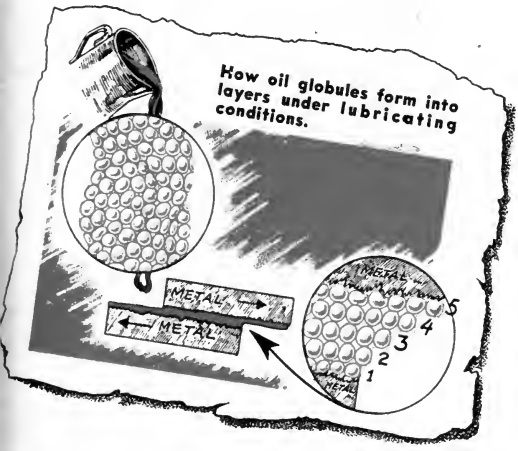
If you're still with me here, maybe we can go a little farther, and then I hope we'll be out of the technical woods for a while. The thing that stopped the engineers from increasing the compression ratio more and more, wasn't a problem of engine design, but the fact that when compressions reached a certain point, the engines would knock. And that wasn't the fault of the engine, but of the gasoline. So, the oil and automobile companies got busy and began to develop gasolines that would stand more compression without knocking —that is, gas with a higher octane rating. The improvement of engines and gasoline have sort of leap-frogged along. The refiners would put out a higher octane gas, and the engine designers would build a better engine to get more power out of that better gas, and so on.

That brings up another question that always comes up sooner or later when you're selling gasoline. Just what does it mean that most of the regular and premium gasolines sold today are "leaded" gasolines? That means they have had their octane rating stepped up by the addition of a chemical. The one most used is tetraethyl lead or "ethyl fluid." A very small amount of it is mixed with the gasoline at the refinery. We don't know just why it does it, but it slows down the speed of the explosion when the fuel in the cylinder ignites, so it will work at a higher compression without causing the engine to knock.

It doesn't change any of the other qualities of the gasoline, so it doesn't make the engine start any better and it won't "clean out the carbon" as a great number of car owners used to believe when the knocking stopped after they put a premium gas in an engine that was all carboned up. What actually happened was that the higher octane gas let the engine run without knocking, in spite of the carbon. That's about all you

need to know to answer questions about this leaded gas. The chemicals themselves are practically colorless. The reddish color of most leaded gasolines comes from dyes mixed with the gasoline to identify it as containing tetraethyl lead. We might add here that gasoline is normally practically colorless, so when you find it in any other color—such as red, blue, or green—it's been colored. The coloring does no harm—and is used only to identify the particular brand or grade.

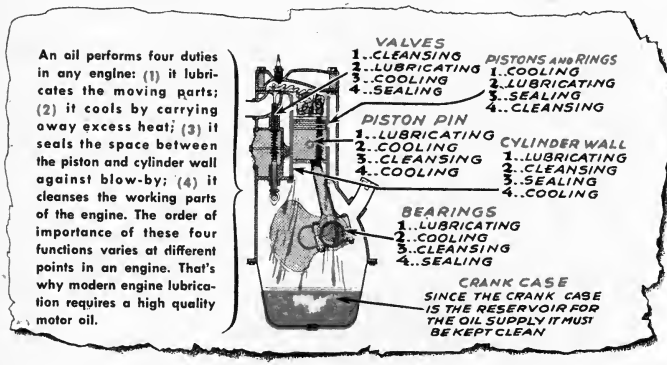
The chances are, you aren't going to be discussing the effects of compression ratios and octane ratings very much with your customers. But you will have to



The adhesive properties of an oil cause it to adhere to the metal surfaces. The cohesive properties of an oil cause it to hold its body together. Thus it has the ability to keep moving metal surfaces apart, even under pressure, thereby substituting fluid, friction for solid or rolling friction. Fluid friction requires less energy to overcome.

know the answers about what those facts have to do with the way the gasoline acts in a car, if you're going to be able to give your customers efficient service and answer their questions intelligently. Of course, you'll have the charts that tell what grade of gas a car should use. But you can't answer Mrs. Jones by just pointing to a chart when she comes in with her new car and says, "The salesman told me I ought to use premium grade

in this car, but I hate to pay two cents more a gallon." You've got to know that if the job has a high compression engine, say over 6:1, and has been tuned up on premium gas—as it probably has or the salesman wouldn't have brought up the subject—the engine isn't going to deliver top performance on regular gas—not even pre-war regular. So, you'll want to tell Mrs. Jones,



"I think you'll be better satisfied in the end if you use the premium, Mrs. Jones. You'll get better mileage and snappier performance, for that's the grade the engine was designed to use for greatest efficiency."

Of course, you ought to know that most such engines can be re-tuned so they will run on regular with only a slight drop in performance. You'll want to mention that to Mrs. Jones if she feels too bad about that extra two cents. The good-will it will get you will be worth more than any possible slight added profit on premium gas. At the same time, if Mrs. Jones' high-school-age son rolls his 4th-hand jalopy in for a couple of gallons, you ought to know that your regular is as good as he needs. That's not because the kid isn't interested in smooth performance and long mileage. But the old can

doesn't have a very high compression ratio and will burn regular gasoline without knocking and a premium grade won't make it run a bit better, since all it has that the regular hasn't is a higher octane rating — or anti-knock quality.

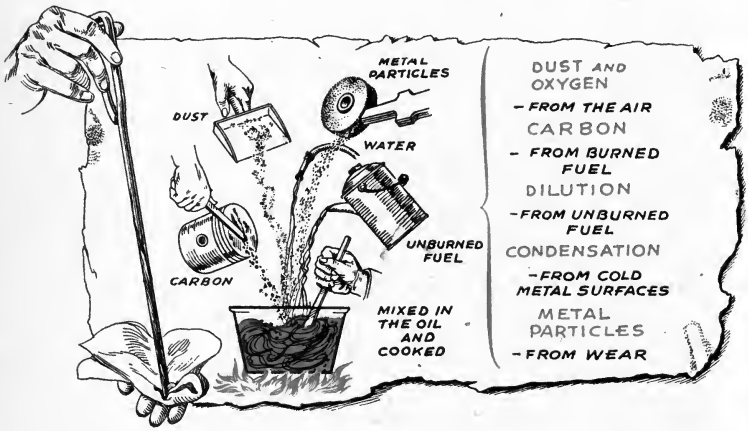
The next best seller after gasoline in a service station is, of course, motor oil. It's just one of maybe a dozen lubricants you have to sell, but it's the most important, not only because of the volume sold, but because it's got more than anything else to do with how long a car's going to last, and how little the customer is going to have to spend on repairs. So, I always have felt one thing around the station a fellow sure ought to know something about was motor oil.

As we said at the start of this chapter, the only thing that determines whether any petroleum product is any good or not is how it does the job you want to use it for. So, we might as well start in here by taking a look at what the job is that the oil is supposed to do.

In the first place, the job of motor oil—or any other lubricant—is to reduce friction. Now, here's another place that we could take time off and write another book if we wanted to, and would still be nowhere, because there are a lot of big research laboratories spending important time and money trying to find out just what friction is and what causes it and how to prevent or reduce it. So, I guess maybe it's a little too

You don't have to sink a man to the bottom of the ocean to drown him — just hold his nose under. And you don't have to stop lubricating a car to cause trouble — just miss a few points. To know the where, when, and what of lubrication, consult the lubrication charts.

big a job to take up here. We'll just say that friction is the sort of drag you get when you move one object over another one. It's what you get when you rub your hands together, and what Junior gets on the seat of his pants when he shoots down the slide in the park. Your hands get warm when you rub them, and Junior's britches wear out when he slides, because of friction.



When the oil on the dip stick is dirty, it is because dust, metal particles, dirt, and water from condensation have contaminated the oil. The heat of engine operation literally "cooks" these contaminants and the oil into "sludge."

There's always friction when two objects in contact rub against each other. How much friction depends on a lot of things we won't take up here. But there are a lot of parts moving over each other in an engine, and the rest of an automobile, so there's a lot of friction, a lot of heat, and a lot of wear. If you run water over your hands as you rub them, you'll notice that you get considerably less drag and practically no heat. So, a long time ago, they found out that if you could get a layer of fluid between the moving parts of any piece of

machinery, you could eliminate a lot of friction, cut down the heat, and reduce the wear. In a nutshell, that's what lubrication amounts to—just keeping the moving parts from coming in contact with each other by keeping a layer of fluid between them.

In an automobile engine, the business of lubrication is not quite as simple as—well, squirting a little oil on a squeaky door hinge. The motor oil has to form a film to keep the parts from rubbing on each other, but it also has to do other things if the engine is going to run. One of the other things it has to do is to form a seal between the piston and the cylinder wall, so part of the force of the explosion won't blow by the piston instead of helping to push it down.

The oil also must circulate over the engine parts and carry away the heat. That's more important than you might think. For instance, test engines have been run for long periods with soapy water in the crankcase instead of oil. This mixture didn't provide very good lubrication—that is, a very slippery film between the moving parts—but it did keep them cooled pretty well and the engines ran just about as well as they did on oil, but they did show signs of extra wear. Now, don't get any wild ideas about saving money by using soapsuds instead of oil for your car. The trick is only good in a laboratory, where they can rig up enough apparatus to keep the soapy solution flowing through the

Playing guessing games may make you popular at a party but don't expect your customers to appreciate your sense of humor if you use the same methods of selecting motor oil for their cars — use your charts.

engine. Even then the heat of the engine evaporates the water too fast and turns the soap into a gooey mess that has to be constantly cleaned out. Oil's still the best.

A fourth job the oil has to do is wash the dust, dirt, carbon, and gummy stuff off the moving parts. That all sounds complicated, and I'll admit it isn't simple. I wish there was time here to go into this a little more and explain just how the oil does all these things at the same time. For the present, though, you'll just have to take my word for it because, as you'll see later on, it explains several things that happen to the oil.

oil works hard in an engine

You read a lot of technical stuff about oil, and a lot of advertising, and you're apt to get the impression that the lubrication of an engine is a highly complicated chemical process, and if everything isn't just right—the oil made by the so-and-so process out of such-and-such crude—your engine will develop everything but athlete's foot and pink toothbrush. If you want the real low-down on what motor oil does in an engine, I can only suggest you read the "*Service Man's Guide*," that I mentioned before. The fact is that all the engine cares about is that there's always a film of reasonably clean oil between the moving parts, and so long as it has that it will do all right, regardless of what the boys in the advertising department may think about it.

Now, I don't want to give you the idea that I've got something against advertising and the fellows who get it up. After all, they do a good job. And it's an important job, too, because advertising performs a real service in educating the customer to take better care of his car. What I'm complaining about it that so much advertising of motor oils confuses the simple fact that the only thing anybody needs to be concerned about in a motor oil is whether that oil can keep a film between

the moving parts of an engine, and keep those parts clean, under conditions that exist when the engine is running. Naturally, to do that effectively, the oil does have to have certain qualities. To mention just one: An oil that "breaks down" and forms a lot of goopy sludge isn't going to flow and get between the moving parts like it should. So what they call the oil's "stability" is important.

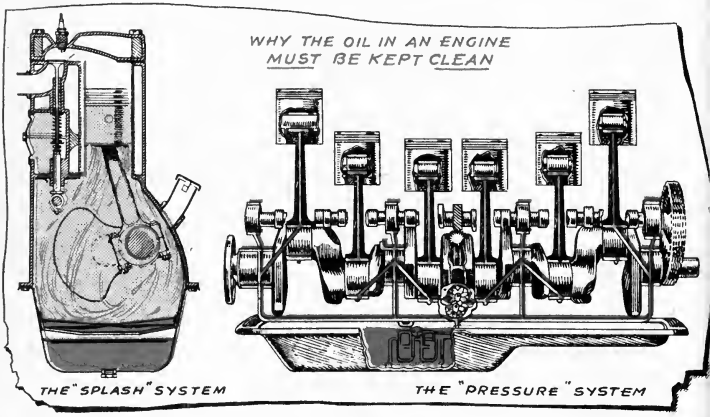
Incidentally, there isn't anything to the very common belief that because an oil looks dirty it has necessarily broken down. An oil has to get dirty if it is going to clean dirt out of the engine, for the same reason that you can't scrub the floor without getting the water dirty. If an engine, its air cleaner, and oil filter, are in bad shape, it will dirty up the oil with unburned gas, carbon, and dust, no matter how good the oil is. Another thing; some of our very best peacetime motor oils are treated with chemicals to make them pick up and hold dirt, so they'll clean the engine better. A good oil like that gets dirty looking lots faster than a poor oil that actually is breaking down.

Of course, there's a lot of difference in oils. There are any number of different specifications the oil ought to meet if it's going to be a product you can conscientiously recommend that a customer put in his engine. But most of those specifications are something for the refiner to worry about. And the established refiners do a good job of worrying about them, too; for practically any motor oil put out by a good company will do its

When filling the crankcase of a car, be sure you know its capacity. Different makes and models of cars have different crankcase capacities. Too much or too little oil can cause trouble. Don't guess. Consult your charts.

job of keeping that oil film on the engine's moving parts, if you do your job right by putting the right grade of that good oil in the customer's engine.

Along in the first of the book when we talked about a sound knowledge of the products you sold being



Oil must pass through many small and complex passages to reach working parts of an engine. If the oil is contaminated, these small passages may become clogged and the flow of oil to some vital part is retarded. This is particularly true in the crankshaft passages because the retarded flow of contaminated oil will starve the bearings. When this happens, bearing failure may follow. Therefore oil should be changed every 1,000 miles, not necessarily because it is worn out, but in order to get the accumulation of carbon and abrasives that have been deposited in the oil by engine operation which the filter has not the capacity to remove.

important, we mentioned the fact that there were different grades of oil and that it was important to use the right grade. We'll go a little farther with the matter of grades of oil here, though, so you'll have a little better idea of what it's all about. Of course, you know when we talk about light and heavy oil, we aren't talking about how much the oil *weighs*. We're talking about whether the oil is "thick" or "thin," in the same way

we would call a soup "thin" if it had a lot of water in it, and "thick" if it had less water, and more beans or solid stuff.

The technical name for this "thickness" or "thinness" of a fluid is "viscosity." Thick or "heavy" oil has a high viscosity, and thin or "light" oil has a low viscosity. Naturally, a light or low viscosity fluid will flow faster than a heavy or high viscosity fluid—that is why water flows faster than cold molasses. So, they found a long time ago that you could measure the viscosity of any liquid by finding how long it took a certain amount of it to flow through a certain sized hole.

When I first started in the service station business, all our motor oil was marked light, medium, heavy, etc., according to whether it had a low, medium or high viscosity. That might have been all right, except that each oil refiner had his own ideas as to what oil ought to be called light, or medium, or heavy. Sometimes one refiner's medium oil might actually be heavier than another refiner's heavy. So, unless you stuck to one brand of oil, you could never be sure just how heavy or light an oil you were going to get. It made a headache for the automobile manufacturers, too, because when they recommended light or medium or heavy oil for one of their cars, they could only hope that when the customer asked for the recommended grade, he got something fairly close to what their engineers had in mind.

The experiences of some folks have given them the idea that the average service station starts to lubricate a car by greasing the steering wheel. Be sure the steering wheel is wiped off and that the upholstery is not spotted with oil. It pays.

So, the Society of Automotive Engineers and the oil manufacturers finally got together and worked out a system for grading and labeling oil that would mean something definite. What they worked out is known as the SAE System and nearly all oil sold is labeled according to that system and manufacturers make their recommendations according to SAE numbers. Under the system, oils are graded by numbers SAE 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70, instead of light, medium, heavy, and so on—the lower the SAE number, the lighter the oil. To be given a certain SAE number, the oil's viscosity at a specified temperature, measured by a standard test, must fall within certain limits. That way, everyone can be sure that all oil labeled SAE 30 is going to have very close to the same viscosity or "thickness," no matter who made it.

The right grade of oil to put in an engine, as we said when talking about it earlier in this book, depends on several things. The most important thing is that the oil be light, or thin, enough that it will flow and get in between the moving parts just as soon as the engine starts. When you stop an engine and let it stand, most of the oil on the various parts drips off into the crankcase, so until the lubrication system can bring the oil up from the crankcase to the moving parts again, those parts are going to run nearly dry and you'll get a lot of friction and wear. In fact, most of the wear an engine gets is in the first few minutes after it is started. That's why it is important for the oil to be light enough to flow quickly.

Light oil cools the moving parts better, because it flows faster and generally it does a better job of keeping the inside of the engine clean. It doesn't do so good a job of sealing the space between the piston and the cylinder wall, though. When this space isn't sealed

well, the engine is likely to "pump oil," which means it will use more oil than it should. So, there's a limit to how light an oil can be used. It can't be so light it "won't stay in the engine," as the boys say. Its got to be heavy enough to do a reasonably good job of sealing so the engine won't use too much of it.

Unfortunately, a lot of customers are a little too fussy about their engines using a little oil. They like to brag about how they never have to add oil between changes. Naturally, nobody wants his car to be an "oil hog," but I once heard a famous engineer say that if an engine didn't use *some* oil there was something wrong with it. It is true that a new engine, or one that's just had a new set of rings, won't use much oil, but when an engine gets a little worn, the chances are that it's going to use a little more oil unless you put in a pretty heavy grade. The trouble is that if you use an oil that's heavy enough to stop an engine from using any oil, it is too heavy to flow between closely fitted parts quickly. So, it's a good thing to keep in mind that it's a lot better to let an engine be a little bit greedy in the matter of using oil, than to cure it by putting in an oil that makes it wear out faster.

Of course, I know the station has complete, up-to-date charts showing just what grade of oil to use in every make and model car or truck that's likely to come into your station. All this talk here about what grade of oil to use doesn't mean that you should ignore

When Banker Snavely and Sam the "short-haul man" drive in at the same time for a crankcase oil change, be sure you take into account the mechanical condition of each engine and consult your charts before selecting the oil.

those recommendations and start out on your own. The reason you ought to have some of the dope about what the right grade of oil means is that no chart in the world can tell the whole story, and there are times when you should use your head as well as the chart. To begin with, those recommendations—even those for models four and five years old—are based on what the engine needed when it was new. I used to think that was all wrong because no engine was new very long after a car got out of the factory. Then I learned that the dangerous age in any engine's life is the first few thousand miles, so I began to see why the manufacturer was interested in getting the dope on the charts about the right oil for those first few thousand miles while the engine was getting broken in.

After an engine has been run long enough to wear a little, it's usually safe to put in a little heavier oil than the chart shows for a new engine, but if you are sure that the engine is using too much oil, better tell the customer to have his repair man check it over. I understand that there has been some talk about revamping motor oil recommendations to call for a heavier oil at, say, 10,000 to 20,000 miles. Even that wouldn't tell the whole story, though, because some engines that have had good care and haven't been driven too hard might still be fairly "tight" at that point, while others might be worn "loose" a lot sooner than that.

The general rule is that the best grade of oil for any engine at any time is the lightest grade (the lowest SAE number) that the engine can use without too much oil having to be added. What's too much usually depends on how much the customer is willing to pay for—within reason, of course. It's a safe bet to follow the manufacturer's recommendations as shown on the charts until you or the customer know that the engine in question

is using too much oil. And then don't overdo it. Remember, you can't replace worn-out parts with oil—no matter how good the oil is.

Nearly all motor oil recommendations will list one grade for winter and a slightly heavier grade for summer. Usually, they mean by "winter" when the outdoor temperature is below freezing, and the rest of the time is classed as "summer." The reason for this is that the colder oil gets, the thicker it gets. If the oil in the crankcase gets cold enough, it may be too thick for the lubrication system to handle. After the engine is started, it could use just as heavy an oil in winter as in summer. Usually, though, the summer grade will get too stiff in cold weather and the engine will be hard to turn over. Besides, there will be quite a lag between the time the engine starts and a full flow of oil begins to reach the moving parts. Which, of course, isn't good.

oil must be "seasoned"

Most refiners make what are called "winter oils." These are usually SAE 10 and SAE 20 grades that have been specially treated or refined so they don't get too stiff at zero temperatures. They are marked 10W and 20W, and are usually recommended for cars that are going to be exposed to extremely low temperatures, though they are good all 'round winter oils, too.

The next big volume seller in the average station is gear lubricant. This is used in the transmission and differential housings, as you no doubt know. Gear lubricants are actually lubricating oils. That is, they are fluid at ordinary temperatures. In fact, there isn't much difference between the type of gear lubricants known as "transmission oils" and motor oils except in viscosity. And many SAE 40 or SAE 50 motor oils of high quality won't differ much, even in viscosity from SAE 90 transmission oils, especially if both are made by the same refiner and by the same process. This, of

course, doesn't apply to the EP types of gear oils, which we'll discuss in a minute, because they contain special chemicals to give them extra "load carrying ability" and other qualities that straight mineral oils wouldn't have. Gear oils are numbered by an SAE system, like that used for motor oils. The grades most used are SAE 80, 90, and 140.

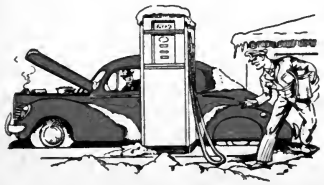
The gear lubricant's job is the same as that of any other lubricant. That's to keep a film of oil between the moving parts. It would seem like a fairly simple job when you first look at it. The gears are enclosed in a housing and you fill the housing with gear lubricant. The gears run in a bath of the lubricant, so presto, you've got your oil film between the gears. In the early days, it really was just about as simple as that. The gears were fairly big and not fitted too tight. You used a pretty heavy lubricant that stuck to the gear teeth, and there wasn't much to worry about except checking up once in a while to see that the gear lubricant hadn't leaked out.

In the newer cars, though, it's something else again. There's a lot more power in the newer engines, and all that power has to pass through those gears to drive the car. If they made bigger gears to carry that added load, they'd have to make the car higher to get room to put them in. So, they began using a different type of gear that was smaller in over-all size, but had more tooth surface so it would carry a bigger load. Then the fun began, for the pressure between the gear teeth in these new gears, especially the type called "hypoid" gears, got so tough that it squeezed the lubricant out from between the gear teeth. This resulted in metal-to-metal contact and, naturally, friction and wear, and sometimes an actual welding of bits of metal from one tooth to an opposite tooth.

The result was that the oil companies developed what they called "extreme pressure" gear lubricants. These were regular gear lubricants with special chemicals added to them. The heat and pressure caused the chemicals to form a tough film on the gear teeth, which couldn't be squeezed out, so the gears were protected. The gear oils containing these chemicals are usually labeled with the letters EP after the SAE number—that is, SAE 80 EP, etc.

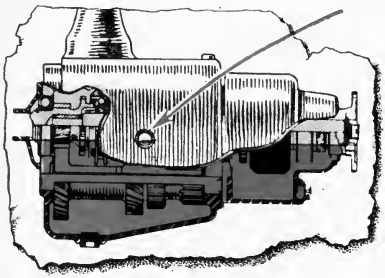
When these EP lubricants were first used, they had to be made in several types. Some kinds of gears needed a lot of the chemical in the lubricant and a lot of the chemical wasn't so good in other types of gears. In fact, some transmissions couldn't use the EP lubricant at all, because the chemical would corrode the bronze bushings, if any. You had to stock three or four different types of gear lubricant, each in three or four grades, if you wanted to be ready to take care of every car with the lubricant it was supposed to have. As a result, the average lubrication department had more drums than an American Legion parade, and the lubrication charts had so many different recommendations and warnings that it took a Philadelphia lawyer to find the right answer.

Lately, the situation has been getting better. A lot of the oil companies developed what they call an "all-purpose" gear lubricant. It has a different chemical, I understand, than the old EP lubricants, so it's safe



When there's drifts of snow
And it's forty below
And the doors are bolted tight,
When the motorist moans
As the battery groans,
Then choose an oil that's "light."
— *Anonymous.*

to use in any type of transmission or differential and is also "powerful" enough to protect the hypoid gears you find in differentials of most newer cars. Some stations will now carry the all-purpose type of gear lubricant and a straight mineral gear lubricant — usually called transmission oil — that has no chemical at all in it. Others, though, may have what is generally known as just an EP gear lubricant, and a special strong



Like the differential, the transmission too can be "overfilled." Overfilling may result in excess lubricant being forced through into the clutch or up the gear shift lever into the car — particularly during summer operation.

EP lubricant, usually called hypoid lubricant, in addition to the straight mineral type of transmission oil.

You want to follow the lubrication charts closely when you're selecting the gear lubricant to be used. One reason is that the customer usually knows less about gear lubricant than he does about motor oil or gas, and won't be able to tell you what type and grade he is using, so you're strictly on your own. Besides, you can cause the customer considerable trouble if you don't put in the right type. A general rule to follow is, don't put a straight mineral oil lubricant in the differential of any recent model. It probably isn't "strong" enough to stand the pressure. And don't put a hypoid type in the transmission. The transmission usually has some metal in it, aside from the steel in the gears themselves, that may be damaged by the action of some of the chemicals used in the hypoid

type gear lubricant. The all-purpose type can usually be used safely in the transmission, but frequently the straight mineral type will do just as well and be a little cheaper. The best way is — don't guess — refer to your charts. They give you the right answers.

One thing to remember is that the chemical used in any of the EP lubricants is gradually "used up," so the lubricant eventually has to be changed just like engine oil. For this reason, the customer can't drive on and on, just letting you add a pint or so to the differential when it gets low, unless he wants to risk damage to the gears. At one time, all manufacturers recommended a lighter gear lubricant in winter than summer for both transmission and differential. Now, many of them say, stick to the same grade — usually SAE 90 — the year 'round unless the car is being driven in zero or below weather. That seasonal change automatically took care of getting the gear lubricant out before it got too dirty and worn. But now, you have to remind the customer about it when he has his car in for a lubrication job.

The other petroleum products you ought to know something about are the greases. Greases are used for the same purpose as any other lubricant — to get an oil film between moving parts. The only reason for having a grease at all is that there are a lot of places around any piece of machinery where there isn't any way to make an oil — not even a heavy gear lubricant — stay put. I shot a lot of grease into a lot of auto-

Let a few drops of oil flow from the dip stick onto a piece of white cloth. The oil soaks into the cloth and the dirt remains as evidence that the oil is contaminated. Of course, a more effective demonstration can be made on a white vest. The upholstery, as a rule, is a little too dark.

mobiles before I found out that grease isn't just "hard oil." Actually, it's a mixture of what they call a "metallic soap" and oil. The metallic soap acts like a sponge and soaks up the oil. When the grease gets in contact with the moving parts, the heat and pressure act sort of like squeezing a sponge and the oil is released to do its job. I don't suppose the people who first used grease for lubrication figured it out that way, but the use of grease is just a method for holding the oil in place.

Some facts about greases

One oil company salesman told me once that there were several thousand different types of grease made regularly. Most of these are for special purposes other than lubricating a car and nothing for you to be concerned about. By using different soap bases and different grades and types of mineral oil, they can get almost any type of grease they want. Some may be so soft it will almost pour, and some is so hard at normal temperatures that you can hardly cut it with a knife. Some kinds of grease may be smooth and buttery, and other kinds sticky or tacky, and some very stringy. Some of it will dissolve quickly in water, and then there are waterproof greases that won't dissolve even in boiling water. A lot of greases have other materials in them, such as graphite, talc, or asbestos fiber.

A few years ago the station that wanted to do a first-class lubrication job on all cars and trucks had to carry more different kinds and grades of grease than a drug store had pills. Today, though, most of the cars have been designed so two or three kinds of grease will do the job. In fact, a lot of parts that used to use special greases are so designed that they are lubricated at the factory and don't require any additional lubrication. Others use motor oil or gear lubricant.

Most points on a modern car will be lubricated with what is known as chassis or pressure gun grease. It's used in a pressure grease gun for most chassis points. That's how it gets its name. It's a soft "tacky" grease, which will handle easily in a pressure gun, and is made so it will cling to the moving parts. Most of the newer chassis greases aren't 100% waterproof, but they resist cold water pretty well and won't wash off easily.

Of course, you'll use more chassis grease than any other type. After that will come wheel bearing grease. Its most important quality is that it has a higher melting point than chassis grease. It won't melt and run so easily when it is exposed to heat, as it is—since the wheel bearings are close to the brake drums, and these get pretty hot when the brakes are jammed on suddenly or often. It is used in both front and rear wheel bearings, and in other places, such as some clutch release bearings and distributor shafts.

Most modern cars also require a special steering gear lubricant. It's semi-fluid and, like a gear lubricant, usually contains added chemicals to give it EP properties. In fact, it is very similar to gear lubricants and some companies recommend the use of their mild EP gear lubricant for steering gears, instead of a special steering gear lubricant. The EP property is needed in some steering gears, because there's a lot of pressure developed when the road shocks come back through the wheels and steering linkage to the steering gear.

One way to get a customer to come right back is to give him such good service he enjoys driving in. Another is to do your work in such a manner that he comes right back to raise hell. The former way results in less wear and tear on the nervous system.

There are still a few cars that take a special grease for the universal joints, so most stations still stock what is called universal joint lubricant, though some companies recommend the same grease as is used in wheel bearings. This is made so it will cling to the U-joints and not be thrown out when the joint turns at high speeds.

Another special grease that you'll probably find in the station is waterproof or waterpump grease. It isn't used often, for today most water pumps have better bearings and seals so the lubricant doesn't come in contact with the water. In those where there is danger of the grease getting to the water, this type of grease should always be used. It won't dissolve in boiling water. A grease that does would soon coat the whole cooling system and make the engine overheat.

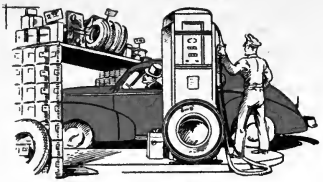
In the earlier days, cup grease was a big seller, because most cars had many points lubricated with the old-fashioned, screw-down grease cup. This usually took a grease that was a little stiffer than the modern chassis grease. You may find a little of that in the station, too, for the benefit of the real old jobs, though very few cars have grease cups any more.

I could go on and on talking about special greases, but I have to stop somewhere, and you won't have to deal with most of the others. Greases are graded according to consistency or stiffness, by a scale called the National Lubricating Grease Institute System. The scale runs from 0 to 6. Chassis lubricant is usually Grade 0 or Grade 1. Wheel bearing and water pump greases are much "stiffer." The lower the NLGI number, the softer the grease, and the higher the number, the harder the grease. The different tests don't need to worry you, because, like the other lubricants I talked about, the refiners do a good job of keeping their greases up to standards. Most of the greases are stocked

by the station in not more than one or two grades. When there is more than one grade, it's usually just a matter of lighter grade for extremely cold weather, so you don't have much of a problem in selecting the right grade, particularly if you use your charts.

There are other products sold in the station, but I won't go into them here for there isn't much you need to know about them except when to use them, and that's set up by the lubrication charts. Brake fluid, for instance, goes in the hydraulic brake system, and is used for nothing else. Incidentally, you don't want to use anything but brake fluid in hydraulic brakes. Oil, even if used only temporarily, will cause plenty of trouble. You'll also have a special fluid for shock absorbers, though you may have that in a couple of different grades. Be sure you use the right grade always, for the shock absorbers are designed for fluid of a certain viscosity, and won't work right on any other.

Personally, I always thought it was interesting to know something about how the different products were made, something about the nature of the different crude oils they were made from, and a lot of things like that. Of course, that's pretty technical stuff and something that you and I are likely to get lost in, around about the first turn. So, I'm not going to try to go into any of that in this book. In case you're interested, though —and a lot of the folks who have worked for me were —there's a book I've already mentioned once or twice, put out by the same people who are publishing this one, that has a lot of good dope on the nature of petroleum products, and how they are made and tested. It's written so even I can understand it, and lots of stations have copies of it. I don't get paid any extra for plugging it here, but it's called "*Service Man's Guide to Automotive Lubrication*," in case you're interested.



1. ACCESSORY DISPLAYS HAVE THEIR LIMITS —

2. EVEN THOUGH THE CUSTOMER MAY SEE THEM —

3. IT'S STILL UP TO YOU TO BE ALERT FOR POSSIBLE NEEDS —

4. SUCH AS TIRES —

5. WINDSHIELD WIPER BLADES —

6. POLISH AND WAXES, ETC.

7. BY USING THE CORRECT APPROACH —

8. AND EXPLAINING THE MERITS OF THESE PRODUCTS —

9. PROFITABLE SALES SHOULD RESULT.

always, to be sure — "within practical limits"

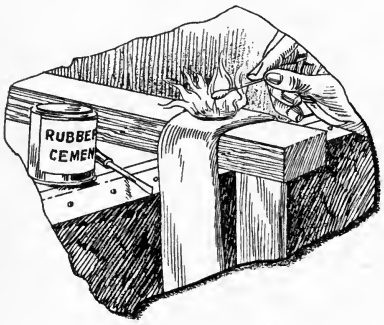
"What I should know about selling tires, batteries and accessories"

I can easily remember when every general store and a lot of grocery and hardware stores had their gas pumps out in front. I'd be willing to bet that in the earlier days of the automobile, most of the gas sold came through places that were primarily in some other business. Sometimes when I look around at some of the service stations today, I wonder if we aren't getting back to that, what with service stations running lunch counters, selling groceries, and stocking a lot of merchandise that isn't even remotely connected with automobiles.

Now, I'm not going to go into the matter of whether that's sound business or not. Personally, I always felt it was hard enough to run a service station right, without trying to branch out into the night club racket or the department store business. Still, one of the best-run service stations I know anything about has a little grocery store right in the station building. It sells a lot of groceries and brings the station a lot of business. A lot of people who drop in for a can of beans or a loaf of bread on Sunday, or at night when the regular groceries are shut, buy their gas while they're shopping for food.

Then, there are the big chain stations run by the tire companies that are doing a swell job of selling everything from bathing suits to house paint. As I say, I don't know whether this is good for the average sta-

tion or not. All I know is that the business seems to be heading in the direction of taking on a lot of side lines. Gas rationing has had a lot to do with it. Some stations

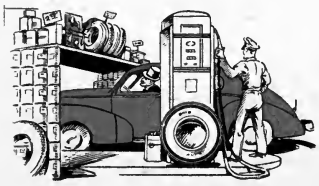


"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

If an old and leaky tire patch is hard to remove, coat it with rubber cement, light the fumes, and let it burn for about 10 seconds. Another way is to heat the old patch in the tube vulcanizer for about a minute. By either method, the patch will peel off more readily.

got kind of panicky when their gallonage began to drop, and grabbed anything they could peddle to make a dollar. I don't think *that* kind of business is here to stay, but those big chains are run by smart merchandising men, so there is probably something to the idea of service stations selling things besides gas and oil, and we may all of us be doing more of it sooner or later.

But what we're interested in here isn't stuff so far off the beaten path of service station business as liverwurst and bathroom scales. We're interested in what is often called the TBA—tire, battery, and accessory—business.



Keep accessories, tires, etc., prominently displayed for the benefit of the customers who drive in, but don't let your ingenuity get the better of you. Leave enough room next to the pump island for a car to get within reach of the hose.

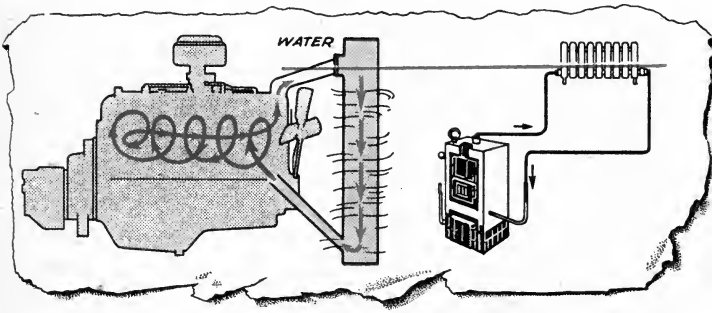
Usually, that involves the handling of merchandise more or less directly connected with the car, which motorists have come to depend on their service station to supply. Tires and batteries need no introduction. The accessory part of the department covers about everything else that might go on or in a car, from radiator cleaner to spark plugs, heaters, and radios. The TBA business can be built into an important part of any station's sales volume. That fact makes it worth your while to listen and learn a little more about these various items and how they're sold.

To sort of simplify matters a little, so we can talk about the subject without going into too much detail, we might split TBA merchandise into two groups. The first we might call replacement items, and the second might be classed as added equipment. The replacement items include things like tires, batteries, spark plugs, fan belts, and the like, that the car has got to have to run, but that eventually wear out and have to be replaced. The extra or added equipment would include fog lights, heaters, radios, spotlights, etc., that are nice to have, and frequently are really necessary, even though the car will run all right without them.

The reason for dividing them up this way is that there is an entirely different procedure in selling the two classes of merchandise. It's one thing when you can show a customer the fabric shining through the rubber of his front tire, and point out what might hap-

You don't have to be "Hawkshaw," to detect things that a car requires. Just be observant. When the hood is up, see if the fan belt is worn; whether the filter cartridge should be changed; or if the radiator and heater connections are leaking. Remember your job is to "look for trouble."

pen if that tire would let go some Sunday afternoon when he was rolling along with the wife and kiddies in the car. And it's something else again to sell him on the joys of having Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatra serenade him over the car radio as he's hurrying home,



The water in a cooling system of a car circulates from engine to radiator and back again, much like the circulation of water in a home heating plant. If the water level in the radiator is permitted to drop or the radiator gets clogged, the volume of water being circulated is not sufficient to remove the "waste heat" and the engine overheats. That's why it is important to keep the radiator clean and maintain the proper water level.

wondering what the little woman is going to say about his being two hours late for dinner again.

The first thing you need to learn about selling this merchandise is, of course, just what you have to sell, and what it's good for. That's not as elementary as it sounds. Even small stations frequently stock a surprising number of different items. And it's remarkable how few people know, for instance, that a radiator hose may look all right and not leak and yet be swollen and coming apart inside so it slows down circulation and blocks radiator tubes with loose bits of rubber or lining fabric.

After you know what you have to sell and what it is to be sold for, the next step is to find a need for it.

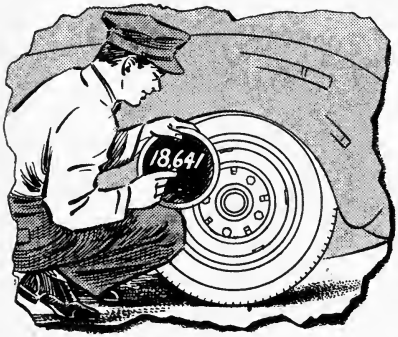
That's mostly a matter of keeping your eyes open while you service the car. It's one of the main reasons why it's always smart to follow through on the complete service routine, even though you know the customer thinks he only wants a dollar's worth of gas. Look at the tires for worn spots and lost valve caps. Have the customer switch on the lights so you can check for burned-out bulbs. Take a look at the wiring and spark plugs. Feel the radiator hose to see if it's soft and soggy —which means it's rotting on the inside. That's what I call "corrective service" and it not only leads to replacement sales, but it does the customer a real favor, too. For so long as the car runs, the average driver won't bother to check those things, and wouldn't know how to check them, even if he wanted to.

I can't take time to go into details of finding the need for replacement items, or of the points to bring out in selling each item. The need for replacing worn-out tires or broken down batteries is pretty obvious. And the reasons for replacing them are easy to make plain to the customer. It's not so easy to spot cracked spark plug insulators or damaged ignition wires, or to explain to the customer why they cut the car's performance, but if you keep your eyes open and ask questions, you'll learn.

The selling arguments for nearly all the products I've grouped as replacement equipment are safety, economy, and what you might call side-stepping future

It's no credit to you if you point out something as obvious as a missing tire. But if you show a motorist that the tread is wearing on one side and explain why the tires should be rotated, he'll appreciate the suggestion and think a lot more of your ability.

trouble. These are all points that hit close to home with any customer. That makes selling easy if you just put yourself in the customer's shoes and talk sincerely about the real risk he is taking by driving smooth, worn, tires. Or about how engineering tests have proved he is wasting gas when he drives with bad plugs that can't give a good, hot spark every shot. You don't have to do



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"
After remounting tires on a tire rotation job, mark the date and mileage on the inside of the hub cap with chalk or crayon and tell your customer you have done this so that both he and yourself will always know when the next "switch" should be made.

a fancy, high-powered selling job to convince a man that he ought to replace that old battery which won't hold a charge. Just remind him that he doesn't want to get stuck with a car that won't start some cold morning when he's late for work. All you have to do is give him the facts.

It's always a help, of course, if you can get the customer to get out of the car and take a look for himself, whenever you're trying to sell him a replacement item. I had one boss who wouldn't try to sell anything unless he could get the customer out of the car to see what he was talking about. If he found a frayed fan belt, he'd say, "Have you got time to take a look here, Mr. Jones?"

If Mr. Jones had time to look, the boss would explain how a belt in that condition would slip, so the fan, water pump, and generator wouldn't turn over the way they should. This would cause the engine to run too hot, and the battery charging rate to drop. And he'd usually end up with a sale. But if Mr. Jones was in a hurry, the boss would often not even mention what he wanted the customer to see. I sometimes thought that was carrying things too far, but you'd be surprised how few customers didn't have enough curiosity in them to make them want to find out what the boss was looking at.

Right now, of course, it's especially important that you keep your eyes open for the little things that it takes to keep cars running efficiently, and to prevent breakdowns and repairs. I haven't planned to put too much in here about the effects of the war on the service station business. But the fact is that the war has a tremendous effect on everything connected with motoring. Even if the war ended before you saw this book, I think a lot of the things we're learning about service now are going to be useful for a long time.

For instance, I don't think — and people who ought to know back me up on this — that you're going to be able to stop on your way home from celebrating the unconditional surrender, and buy yourself a new set of tires. And I don't think a lot of motorists who have found what a set of tires can really do when you take care of them, are going to slap on a new set like they

When a worn windshield wiper stares you in the face, tell the customer about it and see how quickly you can install a new one. A worn windshield wiper is like a leaky roof. They both should be taken care of when it's not raining in order to have them in working condition when it rains.

used to, whenever the side walls get a little dirty. They've got used to having you watch their tires pretty carefully for them, and they'll expect it even after they can buy new tires again.

For the present, then, your job of keeping an eye open for chances to sell such replacements as tires, batteries, oil filter cartridges, and the like, is a lot

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

If the serial number of a tire is hard to read, rub the side of a piece of chalk over the surrounding sidewall. The indented numbers being darker will then stand out in contrast to the white area.

more important to the customer than it ever was before. It isn't stretching the point to say that an oil filter that isn't working because the cartridge is loaded with sludge, and should have been replaced, can be the indirect cause of a burned-out bearing. A clogged filter will let the oil get dirty, and dirty oil can clog the oil lines, and clogged lines can cause burned-out bearings. Spark plugs ought to be easier than ever to sell, and it's your duty to try to sell them. It's an established fact that dirty, cracked, or worn-out plugs do cut down gas mileage. And you know what that does to the customer's gas ration coupons.

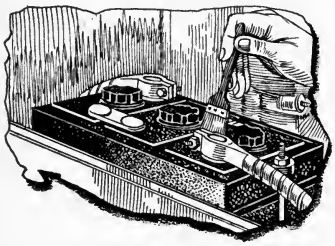
Under wartime conditions, most stations make tire inspections, and switching the customer's tires on the wheels to even up wear is a regular part of the service. This gives you a swell chance to get your share of the tire business, and the even more important business of

selling recaps. You want to be especially on your toes to see that your customers don't run their tires too long before recapping. That's got to be done before the tire carcass is worn or damaged. The average customer doesn't understand this any too well, which is all the more reason why you should make it a point to find out all you can about recapping and when it ought to be done, so you can pass it on to your customers. And that's not just because you want to be helpful either. There have been plenty of stations that had to go out of business because they ran out of customers since the war started. And you don't want that to happen to you. So you're just looking out for yourself when you do everything you can to keep your customers' cars rolling.

That's enough of that for the present. For a change, we'll play like "happy days are here again" and you can call up the jobber and have him send you down a radio or fog lamp, while the customer waits for you to put it on. Most stations sell accessories. A lot of them have built up a mighty profitable business out of them, too. It always seemed to me that a service station was a perfectly logical place to sell accessories. The customer always has his car with him, and he's thinking about his car and what it needs. Besides, if he is a "regular," you have a chance to talk to him oftener than the car dealer, or any other type of store handling auto accessories.

If a customer will let you demonstrate your polish on the fender of his car, step up and do your stuff. By contrast with the unpolished part, the polished section will look like a million dollars. From then on, it should be easy to sell either the polish or the polish job.

Outside of the tires and batteries, and similar replacement items, most accessories simply add to the customer's driving comfort, convenience, and pleasure. That's your slant, then, in selling radios, heaters, etc. Pick out the things a new accessory will do to make driving more pleasant for the customer, and use your imagination in telling it. Fit your story to the customer. If you're talking to a salesman who's got to do a lot of driving alone, remind him how the radio will break



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Clean corroded battery terminals with a solution of common baking soda and water, dry, and coat with a mixture of baking soda and transmission lubricant (one box of baking soda to a half gallon of lubricant, thoroughly mixed).

the monotony of a long trip. The man with a car full of kids would be primarily interested in a heater because it would keep the car warm so the youngsters wouldn't get the sniffles if their coats came unbuttoned, or the baby kicked the blankets off. And the doctor could easily be shown how a good spotlight would make it easier for him to read house numbers when he's making a night call, or find his way around some farmer's barnyard when it's darker than inside a black cat, and the farmer's too busy taking care of his sick wife to meet Doc with a light.

Selling accessories is just a job of finding what the customer needs, then making him want to buy it. You've got to know what you have to sell, and what it will do for the customer. That means you have to study the accessories the station sells. Most of them will

have some descriptive literature with them. Read that, to find out what the manufacturer thinks about the product. Then, many stations will have a Chexall Accessory Manual. That gives a lot of dope on what accessories are available for different cars, the correct sizes and fittings, etc.; and how to install and service them.

The best thing is to do a little thinking about why you'd like to have a particular accessory on a car of your own. I remember my dad used to tell a story about the village half-wit who found the mayor's cow when she had wandered off. The mayor asked him how the heck he ever found the cow way back in the brush. And the kid said, "Shucks, it was easy. I just thought where I'd go if I was a cow, and then I went there, and there she was." Well, what you'd like on your own car — within practical limits, of course — is going to come close to what the average motorist might like on his, so use your imagination. Tell the customer what the accessory will do for *him*.

Incidentally, there's no better way to sell anything than letting the customer see how it works. Lots of accessory manufacturers arrange displays so their products can be mounted and operated, for that shows what goes on when the product is in operation. If you can set some of those up around the station, it helps to get the customer to look at and handle the accessory. Often as not, he'll sell himself, when he can see for himself what it will do for him or his car.

If you know of some service that a car needs, the motorist will be glad to know about it, too. There's no use in being timid about telling a customer what his car needs. Pointing out service and accessory needs is an indication that you are on your toes.

The motorist will not resent being told what his car needs - provided you use intelligent methods of arousing his interest -

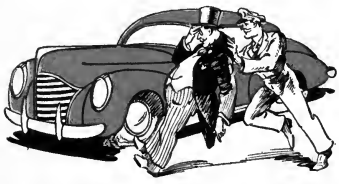
1. IN A MUCH NEEDED WASH JOB —

2. OR A CRANKCASE OIL CHANGE —

3. A FILTER CARTRIDGE REPLACEMENT —

4. OR A COMPLETE LUBRICATION JOB —

5. SPARK PLUG CLEANING OR RENEWAL —



6. TIRE ROTATION (BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE) —

7. OR A DIRTY ENGINE THAT NEEDS WASHING

8. A FAN BELT, BATTERY, OR ACCESSORY REPLACEMENT.

And don't forget that efficient performance is what makes a sale stay sold - "within practical limits"

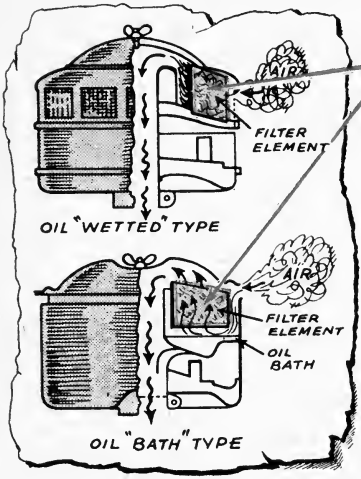
"What I should know about paid-for services, and how to sell them"

I always have thought that service stations were well named. When you get right down to it, service is your principal merchandise. Of course, most of your volume is made up from the sale of gasoline and motor oil, but even those sales are made up to a big extent of service. You don't just measure out five gallons of gas and hand it over to the customer like a grocer does a sack of flour. You've got to find out whether the tank will hold five gallons, and then you've got to put it in the tank for him without spilling it over or forgetting to put the filler cap back on. You've got to see if the customer needs oil, and decide how much and what grade, and then put it in the engine.

Of course, we don't usually call that service. The station records show it as gasoline and oil "sales." But just the same, it is *service*, the same as washing a car, lubricating it, or charging a battery. The difference is that the customer pays for the gas and oil, and the service which goes with it is thrown in. With a lube job, he pays you for putting the lubricant where it belongs, instead of for the material used. At least, that's what he thinks he's doing, though naturally the price of the job has to include the cost of grease and other lubricants used.

In this chapter and the next, however, when we talk about "service" we'll mean only those things that

the customer usually thinks of as services. They include a lot of things, from a complete lubrication job to putting on the customer's new license plates for him.



WHY OIL FILTERS MUST BE REMOVED AND CLEANED

Air filters are constructed so that all of the air that reaches the carburetor must pass through the filtering element. Obviously it must be kept clean or the flow of intake air will be restricted and the engine will lose power. The oil "wetted" type is cleaned with solvent and the filtering element is dipped in oil and replaced. The oil "bath" type is cleaned in the same manner and the dirty oil in the bath is replaced with a clean supply.

Some of them the customer expects to pay for, and others he expects to get free. In this chapter we will hold the discussion to services that the customer normally pays for.

What services you offer depends a good deal on the size and equipment of your station. Some stations do about everything a service garage does, except major repairs and overhauls. Those stations are few and far between, though, and we'll take up only the services

You might sell a wash job by saying — with gestures — "How about scraping a little of this mud off the old tub?" But you'll probably have better luck with something like: "A wash and polish would make this car look bright and new again. Have you time for us to work on it today?"

an average station is equipped to give. This includes complete lubrication, of course, battery service, tire service, washing and polishing, radiator cleaning and rust-proofing, spark plug testing and cleaning, as well as numerous minor services such as washing and re-oiling air cleaners, refilling shock absorbers, etc.

make your service worth paying for.

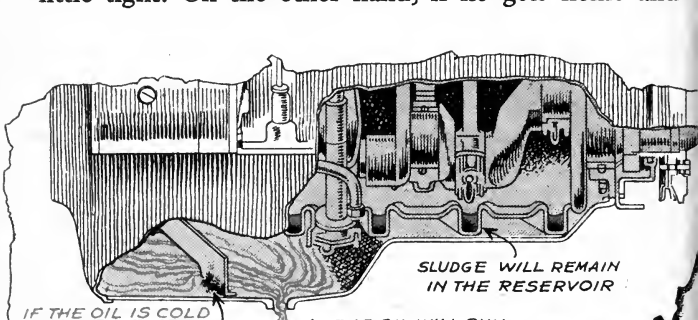
All cars need all these at one time or another. That makes every customer who drives in, a potential buyer of all your services. In other words, every motorist has to buy these services from somebody—assuming, of course, he doesn't do them himself, and usually he can't because he hasn't the special equipment needed — so your sales job is making him buy from you.

Actually, everything you do in the station should be a part of the job of selling service. Before a customer is going to let you lubricate his car, he's first got to be made to feel that you'll do the job right. You can go a long way toward proving you can do it right, by simply doing in the right manner all the little services you do for him when he buys a tankful of gas or a quart of oil. If you go through the service routine as we outlined it, and perform each step thoroughly, you'll give the customer the impression that you know your business.

The standard service routine includes about every free service the customer expects, and some he isn't likely to be thinking of. Naturally, that gives him the idea that you know your business, and probably know where all the points that need lubrication are on his

You can't learn much about the condition of the oil in the crankcase by the use of the dip stick, but you can learn a great deal about human nature if you use it as a d(r)ip stick.

car. If you wipe the windshield really clean, he's much more likely to feel that you will get clean grease through the shackle bolts and not just give it a couple of squirts and let it go at that, if one happens to be frozen or a little tight. On the other hand, if he gets home and



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Drain the oil when the engine is hot because the oil is "thin" when it is hot and therefore will flow out faster. Running the engine to get the oil hot will thoroughly mix the dirt with the oil; thus more dirt will be carried out of the engine when it is drained. If this practice is followed, the new oil will not be so rapidly contaminated by residue that otherwise remains in the bottom of the pan. Be sure also to tell the customer why you are draining the engine when hot.

finds a low tire, which you forgot to mention, he will probably figure that you won't check the differential lubricant level if he doesn't remind you of it.

I don't like to seem to be harping on one string all the time, but here we go again. The most important feature in selling service is to first know what your service is and what it will do, and then keep your eyes open for the need of it. A good many drivers have their oil changed while their cars are being lubricated. When

you're checking the oil and finding out about when it was changed last, keep that fact in mind.

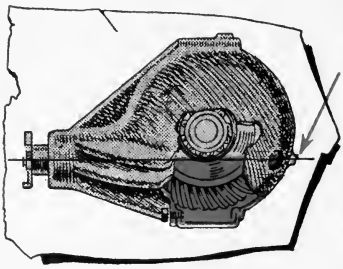
If the oil has been in there for 1000 miles or so, there's a chance that the car hasn't been lubricated for 1000 miles either. It won't hurt to ask. If it has been 1000 miles since the last lubrication, you might point out, "Mr. Smith, the manufacturer recommends that this car be lubricated every 1000 miles. He isn't as interested in getting service stations more business as he is in being sure that you get satisfactory service out of your car. It must be true, then, that a lubrication job every 1000 miles is the best way to get repair-free service and long life out of your car. Would you like for me to take care of it for you?"

There are other ways you can tell, of course, that the car ought to be lubricated. Squeaks you hear when the customer drives in, or when you joggle the springs a little, mean that some points need lubrication. Sometimes you can tell by the dirty, dried grease around a spring shackle bolt, or steering linkage joint. Get the boss or some of the more experienced men to tell you the signs. When it looks like the car ought to be lubricated, ask the customer to let you do it. After all, you won't sell much unless you *ask* the customer to buy.

The same system works with other kinds of service. I can't go into all of them here. It wouldn't help much, because so many of the things you have to be looking out for are hard to describe on paper. You need a car

Removable filter cartridges are not as easily removed as the advertising sometimes indicates —especially if they have been in service for several thousand miles past their useful life. Better have an old timer show you how it should be done.

in front of you, with someone who knows the ropes, to point things out. But there are tell-tale signs that show the need for almost any type of service. If a battery tests low and the cables are all green and corroded, it's a safe bet the battery needs charging. When the radiator seems unusually hot, and the water looks sort of thick and rusty, you very likely have a client for a radiator flushing and rust-proofing job.



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

The filler hole in a differential indicates the correct lubricant level. The differential should be filled just to—not over—the level of the bottom of the hole. To avoid overfilling, which may lead to excess lubricant working into the brake drums, remember that it is possible to force too much lubricant into a differential and that the lubricant will expand in volume when it gets hot with use.

You may feel now that there are too many things to think of all at once, but you'll be surprised how quick you can get the knack of looking for things, once you give a little study to learning what it is you ought to be looking for. And it all pays off. Even if the customer doesn't buy your service right then, he at least knows you're looking out for his car and know your business. If that doesn't do anything but make you feel a little more satisfied with yourself and your job, it's worth doing. And the chances are good that the customer will think of you and your station when he decides to buy the service later.

Of course, there are many cases when the motorist will agree that his car needs something—a lubrication job, or a wash and polish—but plans to get it somewhere else. Then, you've got to go to work on him and prove that you can do it better than anyone else.

You might mention to a customer who comes in regularly for gas that it might be more convenient for him to let you look after his other needs. There's a lot to be said about letting one station take care of a car. Cars have their special personalities just like people, and you can do a better job for him, if he gives you a chance to know his car. In that way, there's a lot less chance of missing something. You can keep a record of what is done, and when. Then the customer won't be so likely to be driving with worn-out lubricant in his differential, for instance, because someone, who didn't know when it was changed last, checked the level and found it OK, so let it go at that.

One of the best ways I've found of convincing a customer that you can perform such a service as lubricating his car to his satisfaction, is to try to get him to watch you work. You can't always do that, of course, so do the next best thing, and tell him how you go about it, and show him the equipment you use. We'll take the problem of selling lubrication service, to show what I mean. To do a lubrication job right, on a modern car, means upwards of 25 or 30 points have to be lubricated. This may take half a dozen or so different types of lubricants and several different guns or dispensers.

It's natural enough that the customer—especially one who knows what it takes to get a good job—is going to wonder just how you or anyone else is going to know all the answers about what lubricants to use and when

Some motorists like to watch their cars being lubricated. This should give you an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the thoroughness of your work and also sell other services or accessories that may be required — but it is also the worst time for you to do things the wrong way.

and where and how to apply them. He may figure you're a nice, bright fellow, who no doubt can catch on quick if you have a chance to work on a particular make and model automobile. But what do you know about his car? He doesn't want you to use it as a proving ground to find out how it ought to be lubricated, so you have to show him that even if you haven't worked on a car like it, you have the dope and can't go wrong.

Your station will have lubrication guides and charts that show all the information needed to lubricate any car or truck, and possibly tractors, too. These are supplied by the various oil companies to all their dealers. Most of them today are prepared by the Chek-Chart people—the same ones that are getting out this book—so the charts are usually known as Chek-Charts. These charts show diagrams of each make and model of car made in the last six years. They show every lubrication point, what type and grade of lubricant to use, how much, and how often to apply it, and any special or tricky features involved in lubricating that particular car.

Show him the Chek-Chart for his car. Anybody can take a look at it and see that if an attendant can read and knows how to work a grease gun, he can hardly go wrong. You can show him, too, that the lubrication guide, in addition to the various charts, includes a lot of general instructions and practical suggestions regarding how to apply lubricants efficiently. You can men-

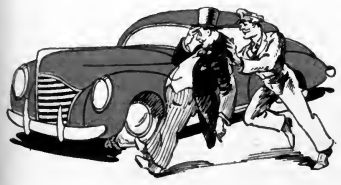
If you get right down to it and show the motorist that he's losing good, non-replaceable, rationed gasoline on every mile driven with dirty spark plugs you will find a ready sale for your spark plug cleaning service, which will also pay you actual profits for selling replacement plugs.

tion the fact that every single recommendation regarding his car has been checked and OK'd by the manufacturer, till the information is as right as the best engineers in the world can make it, and you follow it to a gnat's eye. In other words, use the Chart from start to finish in your sales talk. Prove you know how to do him the best lubrication job he can buy, before he has a chance to wonder if you know your stuff.

You want to show him then that you have the equipment needed to carry out those recommendations, and know how to use it. Here's where a clean, neat, lubrication department—or "lubritorium" as the advertising people like to call it—is a help. If the place is all straightened up and clean, you can take a customer in there and let him see and handle the equipment. Even ladies won't be squeamish about taking a look, if the place isn't messy and greasy. Show the customer how many different guns and tools it takes to do the job right. Show him you have the lubricants the manufacturer recommends. Well, in other words, *show him*, so when you get through, he's got to admit that he can't buy a better lubrication job.

and don't call it a "grease rack"

Roughly, you use the same system with any other service. You don't have the detailed guides and charts to show him in connection with battery service, for example, but you can show him your equipment and explain how it works. That means, naturally, that you have to take a little time and find out how it works,



Tire rotation has always been good practice; now it is a necessity. Tell your customers when "It's time to switch." He may collapse on your hands if he finds his tires are "shot." But to know when to "switch," you must keep date and mileage records. Watch also for indications that wheels need realigning.

yourself, but it will be worth it. I tell you there's nothing equal to the satisfaction you can get out of selling a man something he didn't expect to buy, by proving to him that he needs it, and that you can supply it better than anyone else.

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Keep a paper-towel dispenser o the pump island. Use these hand towels to clean windshields, hol under the dip stick, and simila jobs where cleanliness is a fac tor. This practice saves cleanin cloths which, if partly soiled o greasy, leave a greasy film o the windshield that no amoun of rubbing will remove.

Of course, all this sales talk is good only if the station and you and the other boys can back it up by delivering the kind of service you've described. I wish it was possible to go into the details of doing these various service jobs. But we haven't time, and besides you can learn them easier right in the station. The boss, or some of the other attendants, will be glad to tell you and show you how things are done, and you can always learn faster by actually doing the job than you can by merely having someone tell you.

There's just one warning I want to include here. I've seen more service ruined and more service customers

Dirt on the outside of an engine keeps the heat in and makes it run hot. That's why an engine should be washed periodically. Many motorists are grateful if this is called to their attention — but don't make your sales demonstration too forceful.

lost by little things that don't look important than by downright poor service. I mean things like doing an A-1 wash job, including vacuuming the carpet and upholstery, and then tracking grease on the floor mats when you get in to back the car off the wash rack. Or forgetting to use a fender cover, so you get grease on the finish when you're lubricating the points under the hood. Or leaving greasy fingerprints on the bumper when you joggle the car to see if you've got all the squeaks.

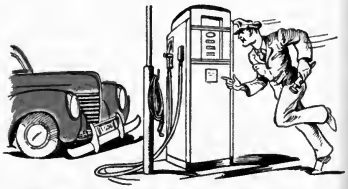
They don't amount to much, but they annoy the customer. And it's just plain silly to let the effect of an hour's careful and conscientious work be ruined by ten seconds' carelessness. Maybe the customer shouldn't be so fussy, but after all, it's his car and he's paying for the work, and he somehow figures that gives him the right to squawk if things don't suit him. So, within practical limits, you don't want to give him anything to squawk about. As an old boss of mine used to tell me when we'd be putting the finishing shots on a lubrication job—you don't want one little squeak to "give the bird" to a whole lubrication job. So check up on the little things before you turn the car back to the customer. A squeak's a squeak to him, even if it is only a loose license plate or something else that wasn't even a part of the lube job.

A good way to make sure that your customer will have confidence in your ability to service his car is to let him see you working on it—provided you're sure you can perform the service without scattering your tools and the car's "innards" all over your station.

The little things you can do with a [pliers] [wrench] are what the public doesn't expect and always appreciates

1. TIGHTENING A LOOSE LICENSE PLATE WILL SEND THEM OFF HAPPY.

2. THE USE OF A LITTLE DOOR "EASE" WILL ALWAYS DELIGHT THE LADIES.



3. MANY A BUMPER COMES IN ON A NUT AND A PRAYER—BE READY.

4. TIGHTEN A LOOSE BATTERY CLAMP, AND THE NEWS WILL BE BROADCAST.

5. A FEW TURNS OF A SCREWDRIVER ATTRACT FAVORABLE ATTENTION.

6. A SMOOTH OPERATING WIPER WILL BE REMEMBERED—

7. AS WILL A FAN BELT ADJUSTMENT—

8. OR A TIGHTENED RADIATOR PETCOCK.

Yet, even these services should be performed "within practical limits"

"what I should know about Goodwill services and the profits they assure"

I don't suppose there is any other business where the public expects and asks for as much free service as they do around a service station. It used to annoy me plenty when I had to drop something I was doing and run out to put some air in little Johnny's football or squirt some oil on the squeaks of little Mary's doll buggy. I say it *used* to annoy me. It doesn't any more. Maybe that's because I've been in this business long enough to see little Johnny grow up and send the fleet of trucks from the bakery where he's working down to my station for gas, oil, and regular lubrication. Or because I've got several little Mary's who make their husbands drive clear across town, even with gas rationing, to buy gasoline from old Uncle Bill. Or because I know some of today's crop of kids who always insist that "Pop" bring his car to my station because they like me.

Another thing I found was that not many people will ask for favors if they don't like you. While you might have your days when you're convinced that nobody appreciates anything you do for them, I think you'll find out that in the long run, doing a guy a favor usually gives you a slight edge—other things being equal—when that guy has some favors to pass out. It doesn't always work out that way, of course, but the average is pretty good.

Anyhow, we can't stop now. We've put the emphasis on SERVICE in the service station business so long that people expect it, even if that service includes a handful of road maps for a trip that will be made on somebody else's gas, or the loan of a tire tool to put a tire on they bought out of a mail order catalog. But I wouldn't recommend stopping all this free or goodwill service if I could. I'm convinced it gets business, and

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

To remove the bugs from a radiator, blow from the back with an air hose. If the radiator is equipped with thermostatic shutters, make sure they are wide open when this is done. Point out to the motorist that a clogged radiator makes his engine run hot and the best prevention is a radiator "bug screen."

it at least gets you a lot of friends. And that's one of the compensations of this business. Unless you're an awful grouch, you make friends in spite of yourself.

So, we might take a look at these goodwill services as we move along, and see what about them. I read a manual recently that called these free services "tip services." I don't know whether I agree with that name or not. I don't, if what they're talking about is stuff like when the barber gives your face a few extra pats with after-shave lotion, and then carefully gives you your change all in nickels and dimes. Or the way the Pullman porter brushes away that dust that isn't there, so you won't forget his tip when you get off the train. If you're doing these extras in that spirit, forget them. On the other hand, I kind of like the idea of these goodwill services being the station's way of tipping the customer. If that's what the manual I mentioned meant, then "tip service" is OK with me.

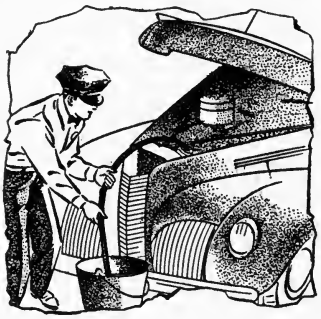
Anyhow, I've always looked on these services as doing the most good when you made them something that the customer wasn't expecting. That's not always easy to do, because the public expects a lot. But if you keep your eyes open and use your head, you can discover lots of things to please the customer. One boy that used to work for me always carried a pair of pliers and a small screw driver in his pocket, and he hardly ever let a car go out without tightening or adjusting something on it. He'd usually wait until he'd given the customer his change, and then he'd say, "If you've got a second, I'll tighten that rear license plate. It's a little loose." Or maybe the hood squeaked a little and he'd put a drop of oil on the hinge. Again, he'd test a door handle and ask, "Got time for me to fix this?" Then he'd give it a few seconds' attention, try it to see if it worked better, smile, and say, "OK, now, come back again." It didn't amount to much and it didn't take much time, but it sure pleased the customers. I had dozens of people tell me how they liked to have Tom wait on them because "he is always so interested in my car" or "he sure knows his business."

you tip the customer with service — and he'll tip you with purchases

There are a lot of ways you can work in unexpected extras. It doesn't have to be confined to little mechanical services like Tom specialized in. For instance, there are always people stopping in the station who want to know where to eat, or stay over night, or maybe get some work done on their car.

There are two reasons why a motorist appreciates the tightening of a loose license plate. First, he ordinarily doesn't expect it. Second, he rarely has the tools handy to do it himself. When you render this little service, mention it casually, and your customer will drive off happy.

Now, I could just recommend a place that I knew would be all right, and drop the matter there. That's all they asked for, and all they expected. It happens, though, that I've been in business here so long that I



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

When a car needs the anti-freeze solution "strengthened" by an additional quart or two, but has a full radiator, you will find it is often easier to syphon off a quart or two of the old solution with a short piece of hose than it is to get at the radiator petcock to draw off the required quantity.

know someone personally in half the restaurants, hotels, tourist homes, and garages in town. So, instead of just sending the customer on his way with the information he asked for, I make it a point, whenever I get the chance, to call up the hotel myself and find out if they have a room available, or get hold of the garage and tell them I'm sending a customer of mine in that I want taken care of promptly. Or I'll phone the restaurant and ask them to have a high chair ready and some strained soup warmed up for the baby. It only takes a minute, but strangers appreciate it, especially when they're folks who aren't exactly used to traveling and are a little backward about trying to get around in a strange city.

You'll be surprised how much a lady appreciates a little non-staining lubricant on the fittings of a door that is hard to close. It just takes a few moments, and yet may be the very thing that will make her a steady customer. Grease or oil on door parts will have the opposite effect.

While on the subject, I want to say that you should make it part of your job to know the answers to questions that customers, especially strangers, are likely to ask. Study the road maps, and the maps of your city and neighborhood, so you can give accurate and clear directions. It's harder than you think to give directions to someone who's driving over a road he's never seen before. It may be all right to tell someone who's familiar with the vicinity to turn to the right at the first street before he gets to Glotz Putty Knife Factory—you can't miss it because they have a 15-foot putty knife over the front door. But that won't do any good to the stranger who will have to drive past his turn to find Glotz and his 15-foot putty knife. So, do a little practicing in getting directions clear in your own mind, so you can tell them clearly to others. You want to find out about road conditions, too. Sometimes road repairs mean long detours, or rough going, and that might make another route better than the one that's usually used.

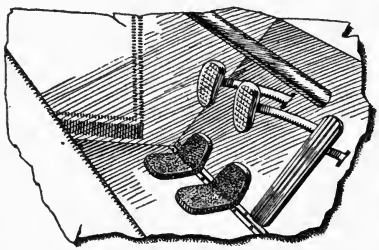
Help: don't confuse the customer

Incidentally, use your head, too, when you're passing out information about restaurants and hotels. Don't recommend a hamburger stand to a couple in a chauffeur-driven limousine. And don't suggest the Ritz-Astor Persian room to the owners of a five-year-old sedan filled with tired kids.

I can't begin to think of all the various things that can come under the head of good will services. Some of the common ones are the things you usually do when

If you're on your toes, you'll notice a loose bumper and tighten it. Then, if you mention casually that it is just a little "tip service" in appreciation of his business, a customer will generally see that you continue to get his business.

serving a car, such as cleaning the windshield, wiping off the license plates, etc. Most stations make it a practice to fill the tires for anyone who drives up to the air tower, even though the driver doesn't want anything else and expects to do the job himself. And they check radiators and put in water and test the anti-freeze solution for motorists who are going to drive down to the drug store for radiator alcohol.



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Holes that have been made by the heel of a shoe in a rubber floor mat below the foot pedals can be neatly repaired with a small tire boot cemented in place. A similar repair can be made on a carpet floor mat by having the boot stitched down.

When new license plates are due, we always ask everyone who comes in the station if we can't take off the old plates and put on the new ones for them. In the winter we always offer to put on or take off tire chains. A wash job with us always includes vacuuming the seats and carpets, and emptying the ash trays. Customers usually expect that. But they are always quite surprised and pleased when they find we do the same thing after a lubrication job, too. There's no end to the little things you can find to do, if you really

A loose battery hold-down clamp can make a smooth running car sound like a candidate for the scrap drive. Give the nut a few turns. Ask the customer to let you know if that doesn't stop the rattle and then try to keep him from talking to his friends about the kind of service you render.

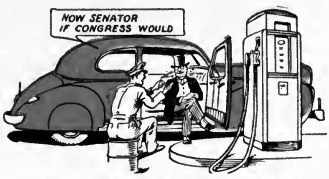
want to do them. And believe me, it pays in good will and future profits.

So far as possible, let the customer see you do the extras for him. After all, that's not as selfish as it sounds. The average person really gets a kick out of feeling he's getting a little special attention. So, why deny him that pleasure? If you can't do that, at least let him know, tactfully, that you've done it. This chap Tom, I mentioned a little bit ago, would say something like, "I put a little stick lubricant on the door latch, Mrs. Jones. Will you try it and see if it works all right now." Or, "Before you go, let me make sure I didn't get any ashes on the floor when I emptied the ash tray."

What I mean is you want to make the customer think, "Gee, what a swell guy! He did all those extras for me and he acts like it was nothing at all." You're not being tricky when you just sort of hint you've done more than the customer expected. It really makes the customer feel good to know you've done something special for him. At the same time, nobody likes to be reminded he's been done a favor, so you can't just come out and say, "Lookie what I did, Mr. Brown." I admit it isn't always easy to handle the situation gracefully, but it's easier, though, when you get in the habit of feeling that you really want to do a little more than you're being paid for, and that what you want the customer to know isn't so much what you did, as the fact that you were really glad to do it.

If a door handle, window lift, or bumper is loose, be nonchalant. A couple of turns of a screw driver, wrench, or pliers properly applied will have the ladies thinking you're "the grandest man — so interested in my car," and that brings them back for gas and oil and other things.

1. MOTORISTS LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED AND CALLED BY NAME.



2. THEY PREFER TO DO BUSINESS WITH A PERSON WHO KNOWS.

3. THEY ALWAYS APPRECIATE LITTLE COURTESIES EXTENDED TO CHILDREN.

4. A NEAT APPEARANCE MAKES A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION—

5. AS DO ORDERLY, WELL-KEPT SURROUNDINGS—

6. ESPECIALLY IF YOUR ATTITUDE IS SOLICITOUS AND COURTEOUS.

7. MOTORISTS USUALLY BUY WHAT THEY ARE SHOWN—

8. BUT AT TIMES THE MERITS OF A PRODUCT MUST BE AGGRESSIVELY PRESENTED.

9. AND, AS A MEANS OF GETTING NEW BUSINESS, IT IS AMAZING WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HOME SOLICITATION.

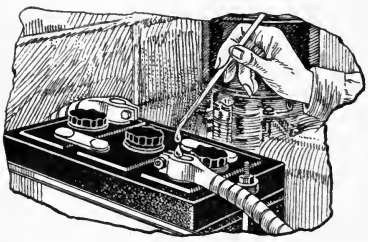
- But, as I have said before - "within practical limits"

"What I should know about the public's buying habits"

One tough lesson I had to learn when I first started working in a service station was that customers had been in existence a lot longer than service stations. I used to get a lot of wonderful new ideas about how a station ought to be run—at least they seemed wonderful to me at the time—and it used to burn me up when the boss would say, "Yeh, Bill, it sounds good, but the customers just won't go for it." Now it happens that that particular boss was no old moss-back sort of a guy either. He wasn't much older than I was, and he was on his toes. He tried out plenty of new ideas, including some of mine. It was just that he had learned the hard way that human beings are kind of set in their ways and it was easier, within practical limits, to sort of ride along with them, taking them as they come, without trying to make them over too much.

Now, don't get me wrong. I don't take the view that what's good enough for your dad is good enough for you. And I don't think many customers feel that way either. They expect you to keep the newest and most improved products and use the latest equipment and service methods. They'd quit you if you didn't. I don't mean you have to plug right along in the rut and do everything the same way all the time. I mean that human nature has certain basic traits and human beings have certain habits, and you might as well admit

that. Plan your operations to fit the public's buying habits and the little quirks of human nature, instead of bumping your head against a stone wall by trying to make the human race fit your ideas of how a station should be run. In other words, instead of trying to work over human nature, take it as it is and make it work for you.



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

At times you will have to install a rental battery at a customer's home or on the road. Sometimes the battery terminal bolts are "frozen" and refuse to budge. And perhaps you've overlooked bringing along a squirt can of penetrating oil. In such a situation, use oil from the dip stick. Used crankcase oil is a fairly good substitute for penetrating oil.

When I got to this chapter, I asked the people who are putting out this book if they didn't think it would be a good idea to get some real smart merchandising expert to do this part about the public's buying habits. After all, I said, there's a lot of psychology and one thing and another mixed up in this, and I'm just a rule-of-thumb kind of bird. All I know is some things work for me and some others don't. I don't know till I try what's going to suit my customers and what isn't. And then I don't know why they liked it or why they didn't. Let's get someone who can tell the readers what goes on under the customer's hat, that makes him come in your station instead of going across the street. But they said, "No, Bill, you're on your own. The people who we hope are going to read this book have the same problems you have. They can get plenty of expert ideas from the 'head office.' The trick is to make them work in their own stations."

Well, that sort of leaves me on a spot. I'd like to give you a connected story, and reasons why customers act like they do. But I just don't know why. So, I'm going to set down a few things I've noticed about the public's buying habits, as they happen to come to me, and hope they'll give you some place to start from in figuring for yourself how you can make the customer's likes and dislikes work for you.

One important public buying habit is that people kind of like to do their buying in the same place. When you're trying to build up a business with regular customers, you have human nature on your side, once you get the customer coming. It works the other way, too. The customer who has just dropped in is probably in the habit of buying somewhere else, so you have to break that habit to make him a regular customer. That is, you've got to make trading at your station so attractive that the customer's desire to do business with you is stronger than his habit of doing business somewhere else.

Now, it always has been my idea that the main reason we do get in the habit of patronizing one lunch room, or one barber, or drug store, or one service station, is because we get kind of used to it and feel more at home there. One of the best ways to get a customer in the habit of coming to your station, then, is to make him feel at home. You read a lot about the importance of learning to call customers by name. I agree that it's doggoned important. I don't agree, though, that the

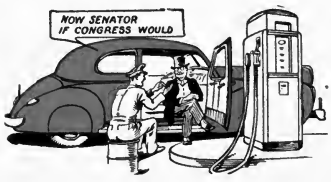
Remember, there's a difference between being sociable and making your work a social affair. Know your customers by name, but don't try calling the good-looking ones "Toots" or even by their first names. Be pleasant but not familiar.

main reason the customer likes it is because it flatters him, and makes him feel important. It may do that. But it always seemed to me that when an important citizen, who was known all over a couple of states, grinned like a kid with a new baseball glove when one of my boys said, "Good morning, Mr. Johnson," the second time he came in the station, it wasn't because the said important citizen was flattered. It was just because it made him feel at home and among friends.

Make human nature work for you

If you've been on the job more than a day or two when you read this, you're probably already thinking of some sourpuss you've had to wait on that didn't answer when you said "Good morning" with your best glad-to-see-you smile. There are, of course, customers that you just can't get to respond to friendliness. They are going to be grouchy, no matter what you say or do for them. It's a temptation, of course, to get them told. But don't do it. I don't mean you've got to be meek and humble and take a lot of unfair criticism or abuse. But life's too short to fuss with guys like that.

Anybody can flare up and talk back when someone tries to start an argument, but it takes a smart man to keep out of one. As long as you can smile and be pleasant, you're a better man than he is, no matter how loud he yells or how much he gripes. So, handle the grouches just the same as the friendly ones. Except, of course, if a customer lets it be understood that he doesn't want a little pleasant conversation along with his gas and



If a man wants to talk a little, talk with him. But let him know that you know a few of the answers. He more than likely wants to talk to you to get some information about his car — not your views on post-war planning.

oil, it's his privilege to do without it. Don't annoy him.

Speaking of arguments. There naturally are times when customers come up with squawks about something. No matter how good your products and service are, there will be occasional complaints. If the customer thinks he has a kick coming, it's better for all concerned if he gets it out of his system. After all, he may be right. Even if he isn't, this country has done business on the basis of "the customer is always right" for so long, that most of us have come to believe it, especially when we're the customers. But whether he's right or wrong, reason with him. Don't argue. There's a difference between saying, "It can't be our gasoline that makes you car hard to start," and saying, "We haven't had that complaint before, Mr. Growler. Has the ignition been checked lately?" In one case you've practically called him a liar, and in the other you've laid the groundwork for correcting the hard starting. And that's what he's more interested in than just proving your gas is lousy.

In handling complaints, of course, you have to know what you're talking about if you're going to reason with the customer. If you don't, you'd better just admit it and call the boss if he's around. If you don't know what you're talking about, the only way you can win is to shout a little louder than the customer. And you probably won't win even then, because after all, how much ahead are you if you do win the argument and lose the customer?

Some service stations even inflate bicycle tires for the kiddies. But stay within practical limits. When little Imogene starts making a nuisance of herself, call a halt, or you'll be doing her toy repairs at the expense of work that is more profitable.

Let me remind you again, you'll get a lot more satisfaction out of your job if you take the time to learn something about your merchandise, what it does, and why, so you can talk intelligently and reason logically. And then, don't be sure you know it all. There's always a chance that even the book — yeh, even this book—could be wrong. I've always found that I didn't very often have to concede that the customer is always right, unless I'd first put myself on the spot by acting as if I couldn't be wrong. If you give a little and take a little, there are mighty few customers that won't come at least part of the way to meet you, unless you'd argued them into a spot where their pride wouldn't let them back down.

We talk a lot about buying habits, but sometimes it seems to me that buying isn't exactly a habit with most people. We think of a habit as something you do more or less unconsciously. I've known a few women—and one or two men—who didn't seem to be able to resist roaming through the stores and buying things, but I think most of us sort of have to be egged on in one way or another, before we buy.

Anyhow, I know you won't sell much in a service station, unless you ask people to buy. And it would surprise you how often you can make a sale by just asking. Maybe it won't always be as simple as it was with a friend of mine. This fellow was the salesman for a pipe organ company. One day he made a sort of

Sure, a neat appearance makes a favorable impression, providing you don't act as though you're kept around just to make that kind of an impression.

good-will call on a wealthy businessman who was on the committee that was buying an organ for a church. He didn't have any idea of trying to sell an organ, but he talked to the man for over an hour, and when he left, he had an order to install a $25,000 organ in the man's home. I guess my friend thought he was dreaming, for before he left, he said, "Mr. X, I'd like to ask just one question. Why did you buy this organ?" "Well," replied Mr. X, "I guess I've always wanted a pipe organ. You just happen to be the first man who ever asked me to buy one."

As I say, it isn't always quite as easy as that. You'll get turned down oftener than you make a sale. But it's a good thing to keep in mind that for the most part, the public is afflicted with a sort of buying-inertia. They have to be prodded along a little and reminded of what they need and what you have to sell.

That's the reason, of course, why merchandise displays and signs are always useful. Those things just amount to another way of asking the customer to buy. It's good business, then, to use your station windows for displays. Usually, there's space around the driveway, on the pump island, and in the lubrication department where effective displays can also be put up. The main idea is to keep all displays where they can be easily seen and to make them attractive and interesting.

There are a few simple rules about displays that you ought to keep in mind. In the first place, you want your

It's easier to pick up a water can and put it where it belongs than it is to pick up a customer who has fallen over a water can that has been left where it doesn't belong. The water can may not be able to say what it thinks—but the customer certainly can—and will.

displays to be seen by as many people as possible. Most people coming in your station don't get out of their cars. So, to catch them, displays have to be on the pump island, in the station windows, or in the driveway. That means, too, that your displays have to be visible for some distance. A single big display is easier to see than a lot of small ones. That's the reason mass displays—that is, a neat stack of canned oil, anti-freeze, etc.—are good.

Rest rooms are an important part of a successful service station. Just keep them clean and orderly. They'll speak for themselves as well as for your products and services. (I hope none of you is innocent enough to believe that this illustration is suggesting that you hire a rest room doorman.)

Displays serve another purpose, too. Most stations don't have much storage. Merchandise may have to be stocked right in the station office or the lubrication department. So, arrange your surplus stock in attractive mass displays. It's usually best practice to confine displays to one type of merchandise. Don't mix polish and anti-freeze with canned oil. It's confusing to the customer. On the other hand, it's a good stunt to feature related merchandise in one display—such as polishes, cleaners, waxes, polishing cloths, etc.

Another point that shouldn't be overlooked is that displays, no matter how good they are, have to be changed or they lose their punch. Anything loses its power to create interest, when you get used to seeing it. Naturally, displays should be kept clean. Don't use battered or shelf-worn merchandise, and make it a part of the regular station routine to see that the displays are dusted and kept straightened up.

Even if you don't have something to put in its place, don't keep a display after it's lost its "eye appeal." Dirty, ragged banners, or rusty, faded signs and cans just make the station look run down. And a seasonal display that's carried past its season only looks silly. A display of anti-freeze and heaters, left standing in May, looks just as funny as a "20 degrees cooler inside" sign on a movie does, when the wind is whistling through your top coat.

At times it is advisable to "talk up" the merits of your specialties, but don't force anything on a customer against his or her will. Yours is a "repeat" business — not a "one time" business — a service station is the place to use the courage of your convictions — not brute force.

Merchandisers recommend a short sales message with every display. A display of polishes and cleaners might say, "Car Finishes Easily Beautified and Protected." An anti-freeze display could read, "Sure, Economical Anti-Freeze Protection." A good rule to follow is that the message should feature one or two principal selling points and not be longer than seven words. People always wonder "how much?" when they start to consider buying anything, so it's a good idea to include easy-to-read price tags on merchandise where the price isn't familiar to everyone. They aren't so important on something like oil, where the customer usually knows about what it will cost, unless you're making a special price on quantity sales.

Your displays ought to feature merchandise that fits the season—anti-freeze, batteries, and heaters in winter; polish, fan belts, and insect spray in summer. And, it pays to feature merchandise and services being featured in the company's advertising.

One final point to remember about the public's buying habits is that the average customer resents being "sold" and the easiest word in the English language to say is "No." So, your whole sales approach should be built up to make the customer think he's buying in-

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

When draining anti-freeze from a radiator at the end of the winter period, it should be kept clean and not wasted. This may be accomplished by the use of a small hose slipped over the small end of a funnel. The funnel is held under the petcock and the end of the hose in the container.

stead of you selling. And your conversation should be worded so the customer has the least possible chance to say, "No."

For example, you have a customer whose spark plugs have plainly been in service a long time. The insulating porcelain is blackened or cracked. He needs a new set of spark plugs, all right. Now, you can say, "Mr. Brown, can I sell you a new set of spark plugs today?" Mr. Brown immediately thinks, "Uh, huh, trying to sell me something," and his answer is—nine times out of ten—"NO" in capital letters. And that is usually that.

However, if you said something like, "Did you know, Mr. Brown, that a new set of spark plugs in this car would pay for themselves in a few months out of the gasoline you'd save?" you don't put him on his guard because you haven't mentioned selling anything. He

may realize that you're leading up to it, but at least you haven't waved a red flag at him. He's pretty nearly got to answer you and it's against human nature to admit you don't know something, without wanting to make the other fellow prove he does know. So, if he says "NO," he'll usually make you explain why they'll save gas. If he says "Yes" and doesn't buy the new spark plugs, he'll feel he's made himself look sort of silly by admitting he doesn't care if his car wastes gas. So, study your sales talks, listen to how the others in the station sell. And don't stir up the customer's natural sales resistance and then make it easy for him to refuse to buy.

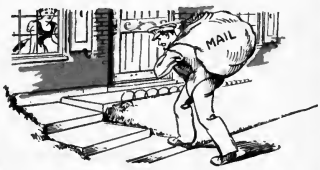
In this same connection, we might add one more point. People are just naturally bargain hunters. Most of the time they don't go for bargains because they want, or have, to save the money. Usually, it's because it makes them feel like they're smart buyers. That's why your line with the bargain hunter shouldn't be to run down his bargains, or try to meet cut-rate prices yourself. Show him that your merchandise or service is even a smarter buy. Show him that he's getting more value for his money at your price, than he'll get from a bargain buy. To do that, of course, you have to really know your merchandise and service and your customers, as well as the merchandise and service offered by your bargain-pushing competition. It takes facts, not just claims.

Remember good home solicitation is not having tea with Mrs. Jones (her husband may be narrow-minded), but an honest attempt to present your service story under the most favorable conditions.

1. IT'S A GOOD THING TO FRATERNIZE WITH NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS MEN—

2. AND TO ACQUAINT NEIGHBORING BUSINES HOUSES WITH YOUR PRODUCTS.

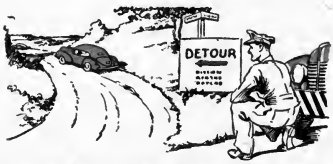
3. YOU'LL BE SURPRISED AT WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HOME SOLICITATION —PROPERLY TIMED—



4. ESPECIALLY IF FOLLOW-UP POSTCARDS ARE USED—

5. AND YOUR MAILING LIST IS KEPT UP TO DATE.

6. ABOVE ALL, DON'T OVERLOOK 'PHONE CALLS AS BUSINESS GETTERS.



7. KNOW ROAD CONDITIONS AND WHAT IS TAKING PLACE ON THE HIGHWAYS.

8. CULTIVATE THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHILDREN.

9. AND CASH A MINIMUM OF RUBBER CHECKS.

Of course, there are certain limits within which these things are practical.

"What I should know about business practices"

I said somewhere before in this book that I like the service station business. I've had a lot of fun working in and running a service station. Chances are when the day comes when I have to retire to the old rocking chair, I'll miss the smell of gasoline and the chug of the air compressor. But I'm not kidding myself about one thing. I wouldn't be running this station if I didn't have to make a living.

In other words, I'm in business to make money, and so is every service station, or railroad, or hot dog stand. In any kind of business, making money is a process of buying or creating merchandise or services and selling them to someone else. If you can sell them for more than they cost you, plus your expenses of doing business, you make a profit. That is, you make money. Otherwise you don't. If you want to make more profit, you have to make more sales, or reduce your costs, or, better still, do both.

I mention that because we hear a lot of talk about business methods. Sometimes you get the idea that they involve an office full of bookkeepers and stenographers and a lot of adding machines and filing cabinets. But they don't. Business methods are hardly more or less than applied common sense. You buy and you sell and you keep records of what you do. The records are important so you can tell what the score is. You

can't apply common sense to buying unless you know what you have and what you need—that is, what you think you can sell. And you can't sell at a profit, unless you know what your stuff costs you, and how much it costs you to sell it.

Putting the facts down keeps your record up

The most essential record for your station is a bookeeping system. I imagine most of you who are reading this book aren't station managers yet. Maybe you won't have anything to do with the records to begin with. Most of you will have a certain amount of paper work—inventory, job tickets, sales summaries, and the like—that will be part of your job. So I hope you won't skip this section just because it sounds as if some of it only concerns the boss or station manager. You can do a much better job of the paper details you have to do, if you have a sort of general idea of how they fit in the picture.

The average station, of course, doesn't need a very complicated bookkeeping system. In fact, it's usually better if the system is very simple. Few stations are big enough to hire a regular bookkeeper, and I know from experience that an amateur can mess up a complicated set of books so he's liable to know less about his business when he gets through than he would if he hadn't kept any books at all. Most oil companies have very good bookkeeping systems worked out for their dealers. And there are publishing houses that get out complete sets of books and record forms, ready to use, for practically any type of small business. So you won't have any trouble getting a ready-set-up system that fits your needs.

Of course, I hardly need to tell you that no system is any good unless you keep it up. If it isn't accurate and up-to-date, it isn't of much value. The purpose of any station records is to give you an idea of what's

happening in your business, in time to do something about it. Naturally, you will catch on pretty quick, if your pump quits delivering gas, that the tank may be empty. And when your checks start coming back from the bank marked N.S.F. you'll get the idea that you aren't making any money. But it's a lot smarter to have an inventory that shows your gas is running low, in time to get the tank filled. And it's better to have an income statement — the accountants call it a profit and loss statement—so you'll really know whether your station is making any money and when and how much—than to suddenly discover that you're broke. It's true you might go broke, even if you did keep a set of books, but at least you'd know you were heading in that direction while you still had a chance to do something out it.

One of the important decisions that any business man has to make is what to buy—or what services to offer. You don't want to buy merchandise or purchase equipment to render any type of service that you can't sell, so your first step is to find out something about your market. The company supplying your products can usually give you a pretty good picture of the average station's market. By analyzing the records of hundreds of stations over a period of years, they know how much gas an average station ought to sell. They can also show you that if you sell 1000 gallons of gasoline, you ought to sell so many quarts of oil, so many lube jobs, and so many spark plugs. It's what they call

Every station owner should fraternize a little with neighborhood business men, but not at the expense of proper attention to his own business. To date, no one has been able to figure out a substitute for work as a means of building a business.

"balanced selling" and it's a mighty effective way of getting the best sales volume out of your market. Naturally, you won't hit those figures right on the nose, but a study of them will give you par for the course—something to shoot at in planning your purchases and organizing your selling efforts.

I know a lot of stations that make surveys of their own "market area." That is, they estimate how much territory around the station they can expect to draw customers from. Then they visit the homes and businesses in the neighborhood, find out who has cars, and what kind. I've done that myself. Usually, I get some bright high school kids to make the survey for me. They often know a lot of the people and the fact that they are kids, and not working for me regularly, prevents the people they call on from thinking it's some kind of sales stunt. With that sort of dope on hand, you can begin to organize your business on an intelligent basis. You can tell what you ought to stock and what services you ought to feature.

After you've got going, of course, your sales and inventory records will tell you what you ought to buy and when. You want to have enough merchandise on hand so you don't lose business by being out of stock. At the same time, you don't want to have such big stocks of anything that you've got *all* your money and credit tied up in merchandise. I might say here, that you don't want the temptation to get a little better price by buying in extra large quantities to get the best of you. Any smart business man knows that if he's going to make money, he's got to buy at the best price he can. But if you've got to borrow money to buy a tank car of gasoline that it may take you six weeks to sell, the interest on your loan is apt to eat up most of the cent or so a gallon you saved, and evaporation

smart buying and smart selling go hand in hand

loss may cost you the rest. On the other hand, you don't want to pass up a quantity buy that you *could* move at a profitable rate, if you put a little extra steam behind your sales effort. In fact, I know several station managers who often buy a little on the heavy side, because they think a big stock keeps everybody selling a little harder. So, be a smart buyer, but don't outsmart yourself. Buy in quantitites that you can sell—if you put your best effort behind it—within a reasonable period.

Normally your inventory records will start out with showing the stock you have on hand. If you add to this what you buy, and subtract what you sell, the record should show what you have in stock. And it will usually come close. However, you'd better make an occasional double check, by actually measuring or counting the stock just to make sure. The gas pump ordinarily records the amount of gasoline sold, while the job tickets on lubrication jobs will show how much lubricant you're dispensing. It's hard, though, to keep a running record of chassis grease, etc., and it runs into too much paper work to record every quart of oil put in a customer's engine. So, what they call a "physical inventory"—that is a count or measurement of all the merchandise in stock —is necessary to keep your records accurate. The gas tanks ought to be "sticked" every day, even if you don't have them refilled that often, because you lose a lot of gas in a hurry, if your tank springs a leak. About once a week will be enough for inventories on other items.

If you are going to solicit business from neighborhood business men you may as well take along a gas pump as have a pint or so of grease smeared over your clothes and hands. In either event, the chances are you won't get the business.

Another important set of records is your customer file. Most oil companies furnish their dealers with a simple card index system. This provides a card for each customer, showing his name, address, and 'phone number, and the make and model of his car. Below, there is space to show what services you performed each time his car was in the station and when the car is due for service again. You ought to make out such a card for every lubrication and oil-change customer and for the regular gas customers, even though they get their other services somewhere else. The way the system is handled is to make out a job ticket for every service job. Make out the job ticket when you do the job, no matter how small it is. Don't trust your memory. Once a day it should be a part of somebody's regular duties to take the job tickets and put the information on the file cards. As I said before, since I've had girls working for me, I usually give them that kind of work. They are a little bit handier and more conscientious about it. And, naturally, they can do it better than some of the heavier work.

A good customer file can be the best business builder you can have, if you use it. Like any other record around the station, it's good only so far as you keep it up to date. When it's up to date, it gives you a record of what a customer needs when he drives his car in the station. Of course, it's to the customer's interest to keep his car serviced, but mighty few of them do, unless someone reminds them of it. So, when a customer comes in, it's a good idea to take a quick squint at his card record and if it shows he ought to be due for an oil change, remind him of it. Maybe he won't buy right then, but maybe he will. He'll at least feel kindly towards you for taking an interest.

Of course, it has been proved over and over that one of the best ways a station can build up a regular, steady business is to use the customer record system for a mailing list. All the oil companies supply inexpensive advertising material for the dealer to mail out to solicit lubrication jobs, winter and summer servicing, oil changes, etc. You can do a whale of a lot to your profits at very little cost if you let the postman do a little selling for you. Check your files at least once a week and make a list of the customers whose records show that they ought to be due for an oil change or chassis lubrication. Then see that they get a postcard inviting them to come in. If the first one doesn't get results, follow it up with a second or third. And if they still don't come in, get on the telephone.

There's another job I've turned over to the girls. I let them take care of the mailing of cards, and in their spare time they go over the lists and jot down the telephone numbers of those we haven't been able to get a rise out of by mail. Then the girls call them up and ask "how come long time no see." The average girl has a more pleasing telephone voice than a man, and for some reason, people, particularly the men, aren't so likely to hang up on a girl as they are on a man. So, even before I had girls working in the station, I used to try to have a nice smart high school girl come in after school and do a little telephone soliciting for me. It worked pretty well, too.

Home solicitation pays, but don't get the idea that people will welcome you as a long-lost friend. However, if you explain how and why you can render better car service, they will at least look upon you as an aggressive business man.

One thing I was never quite able to understand was why so many service station managers were satisfied to just open the station and wait for customers to come in. It isn't much of a job to get a list of names of automobile owners in your area. Then you can take those names and spend a couple of evenings a week drop-

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Pick out tacks, nails, glass, sharp rocks, etc., from tires while a car is on the lift. Place these in an envelope and hand to the customer with a note explaining where they came from and the amount of possible savings to him at 75c per flat. Also point out how many lubrication jobs this saving will pay for. The practice will increase your service reputation and sales volume.

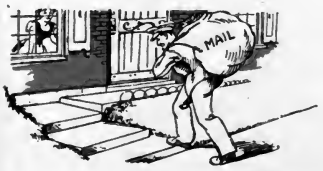
ping around at these owners' homes and doing a little selling. You'd be surprised how much business you can drum up that way. One reason it pays off so well is that so many station managers won't take the trouble to do it. That makes the prospective customer feel that maybe if you are interested enough in his business to take your evening to come around and ask for it, you'll probably appreciate his business enough to do a first-class job for him.

When you start out, get yourself dressed up in your regular clothes. A lot of people just won't like the idea of your sitting down in their living room in your statoin uniform. After all, you're making a business call, so dress like a business man. See that you're shaved

and your hair is brushed and shoes shined. Look good enough that you won't be ashamed to step in anybody's home. It's a good stunt to take a pocketful of road maps, or some other little useful piece of advertising, along. A man can't be too grouchy with someone who wants to give him something. Remember how many doors the brush salesmen have opened with a brush that cost them a couple of cents.

Plan what you're going to say before you start out. Build your story around the fact that you can do something for the prospect that makes it to his interest to come to your station. You could say that you just stopped by to get acquainted, but you'd just be fooling yourself. I think it's better to come right out and say what you really want to do is to get the customer acquainted with the best station and service in town. You may be a very likable fellow, but it's doubtful that you have such a winning personality that the prospect will come around to your station just for the sake of seeing you again. He will come to your station, though, if you sell him on the idea that you can give his car better care and serve him more conveniently than somebody else.

Lubrication service, I have found, is usually the best foundation to build your business on. I don't know exactly why, but a motorist will usually pick up his gas wherever he happens to be when the gage shows low, and he may buy his oil the same way. Yet that same



Remind your customers it's time for an oil change or lubrication job, and explain why regular car service reduces operating costs. Advertising that announces some product or service pays dividends. Any other kind of mailing only makes the postman more round shouldered.

chap is likely to shop around a little bit for a lubrication job, and other things being equal, bring his car to the same station for that work each time.

That's the reason I always had my best luck featuring our lubrication service when I did my house-to-house canvassing. I'd take the lubrication charts along and try to get a chance to tell the prospect how we did a complete lubrication job, and how careful we were to follow the car manufacturer's recommendations at every point. There are very few people who really enjoy having a stranger pop in in the evening, when they are in the midst of a favorite radio program, so your call will probably get results about in proportion to how snappy you make it. That's why it's best to have your story in mind before you push the doorbell button and speak your piece and get on your way.

Don't try to sell everything to the same customer every time

That doesn't mean that you want to memorize a sales talk and sing it out like a school kid on commencement day, but have it organized in your mind so you can get to the point. Be courteous and friendly, even if the prospect's greeting is not as warm as it could be. At the same time, don't be too apologetic about breaking into his evening. After all, if your service is really as good as you say it is, you're doing the fellow a favor by telling him about it. So, you don't need to feel that you're intruding when you knock at his door and ask him for his business.

No matter what business you are running, sooner or later you run up against the question of credit. You're interested in two forms of credit. One is the credit extended you by the oil company or the bank, and the other is the credit you extend to your customers. I won't take up much time talking about the credit extended you, because that is pretty much fixed by the standard practices of the company you're doing busi-

ness with. It's the general practice of the oil companies to sell gasoline on a cash basis. That's because they usually fill your tanks every day or so, and gasoline has a rapid turnover. You sell most of it for cash, so you don't have much money tied up in a stock of gasoline and there's not much excuse for your asking for credit.

Lubricating oils and greases are a little different. The turnover isn't so fast and you have to have a fair stock of different types and grades to do a good lubrication job, so you may have considerable capital tied up in proportion to your daily sales. So, the oil companies usually help you out by extending monthly credit on such merchandise, if you're a reasonably good risk. The main thing to remember in this connection is that your credit is one of your most valuable business assets, and you want to keep it that way by meeting your bills as they fall due. If you can't do that, you better take a look at your books and ask yourself what's wrong with your business methods.

The thing you're most interested in is the other side of the credit picture—the credit you extend to your customers.* When I first started in business for myself, my former boss said, "Bill, if you want to stay in business and avoid a lot of headaches, just be careful how you let the other fellow run his car on your money." I've always considered that pretty sound ad-

*This is another phase of service station business that war has changed. Government regulations have restricted retail credit sales, but intelligent handling of credit business has been important in the past and probably will be again.

Be sure to keep your customer list up-to-date — and let these customers know, by sending the right kind of advertising matter on oil change and lubrication service to the right address, that you have their interests at heart.

vice, because that's really what you're doing when you extend a customer credit. Of course, when I'm talking about credit, I'm not thinking about the *credit card* business that most stations do in normal times. That's practically cash business, because you get your money right away from the company and the company is responsible for investigating the card holder's credit, making collections and taking the rap for any losses. The thing that concerns you is the customer who "runs a bill" at your station, with you extending the credit, making the collection, and losing the money if he doesn't pay off.

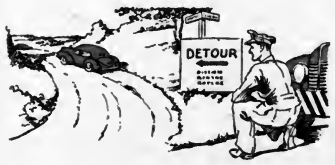
I don't think there's any doubt about it that the average service station should do as little of this latter type of credit business as possible. I don't mean you should be hard-nosed about it and if a customer finds he's left his money at home in his other pants, you should refuse to sell him a little gasoline. But the average station's margin of profit or capital isn't enough to tie a lot of it up in accounts receivable, no matter how good they are. You've got to have cash to buy gasoline and meet your payroll, and you and the family have to eat.

On the other hand, credit business, within practical limits, is a good way to build up a list of regular customers. If a man has an account with you, he is not likely to drop in for a little gasoline here, a quart of motor oil there, and a wash job somewhere else. Most people have a little sense of appreciation that makes

Making telephone calls is a good way of getting business, but don't make customers stand around while you're 'phoning to prospects. An actual customer in a station is worth several possible customers at the end of a telephone line.

them give you the business in return for your giving them credit. Besides, it's more convenient. It's easier for a customer to write a check now and then than to unbutton the overcoat and dig out the old wallet every time he comes in. And it's mighty nice for the Mrs. to be able to stop by and have a little gas put in the family buggy without cutting into the grocery money, or for Dad to be able to send Junior down to have the car lubricated some evening after school without bothering to leave the money for him when he went to work in the morning. Besides, other stations do credit business, and if a customer wants to do business that way, he'll go somewhere else if you don't accommodate him.

You've got to use your head in doing credit business, though. First, you've got to hold it down so you don't have too much money tied up. Second, you've got to confine it to customers who will pay off on time. That means you need to know your customer before you give him credit. Usually you can find out from the local retail credit bureau how he pays his bills. Mostly, though, you've just got to apply common sense. A man who owns his home or has lived in one place and held one job for quite a while is less likely to forget to pay you than the rolling stone sort of guy who's always moving and changing jobs. It doesn't always prove anything, but pretty often the fellow who spends a little money taking care of his car is a better credit risk than the one who spends nothing except what he has



For the duration, it looks as though there will be a little less touring done, but that's all the more reason why you should know road conditions, etc., so as to be able to intelligently advise a person who asks for directions.

to have to run the car, and always has to be "sold" an oil change or a lube job. The customer who uses his car for business is also usually more likely to handle his bills on a business basis than the one who just uses his car for pleasure.

When you open an account for a customer, don't be backward about coming to a clear understanding as to when you're to be paid. That's just good business and doesn't mean you don't trust him. Then, when the account is due, don't be afraid to ask for your money, if he doesn't pay up. If he's honest, he won't resent it.

Cultivating the friendship of children can be a business help especially in suburban communities. But it's a good idea to pick out the children who are old enough to be able to tell "Pop" what a fine fellow you are.

And if he isn't, you don't care if he does resent it. Credit customers that don't settle up within a reasonable time should be cut off the credit list. Don't go on carrying the guys who won't pay, just because they are nice fellows. The gas you put in their cars costs you money just the same, whether they are old friends or not. Maybe it will lose you a customer to stop credit, but you'd better lose a little business than go on donating free gas and oil. You can get another customer, but you can't get more gas from the bulk plant unless you can lay the money on the line.

Speaking of credit, you're likely to run into the occasional customer who wants a little credit and suggests he leave his watch or spare tire as "security." Usually, I don't do that kind of business. After all, I'm not running a pawn shop. Besides, if the guy really intends to pay you, he'll probably pay you whether he leaves any

security or not. If he doesn't, the chances are good that the security is "hot" and you're only making trouble for yourself if you take it on. So, if a man makes me that kind of a proposition and there's not too much money involved, I usually say, "Mister, I'd be a heck of a guy if I wouldn't trust a man for a few gallons of gas. Keep your watch and pay me the first time you're by the station." I lose some money once in a while, but I also make a lot of friends. And the money I lose I just charge off to advertising or experience.

"Thou shalt not cash rubber checks and stay in business." However, if you "know" your customers, you'll *know* whose checks to cash — and cashing checks for the right people creates good will and results in profitable business.

There are a lot of other things I could include here about the business end of running a station. Part of them are things you could use right now, even if you aren't the manager of the place. But we've got to stop somewhere. I want to leave just one idea, though. A service station attendant is sort of a cross between a business and a professional man. You're selling merchandise like any retailer, but you're also selling advice and service like a lawyer or a doctor. Don't neglect either part of your business. Be friendly, accommodating, and helpful. Use your knowledge of your products and mechanics to help your customers get the most out of their cars. At the same time, remember you're in business. Don't forget you've got to *sell*, you've got to collect money for your merchandise and services, and you've got to keep records of your operations, so you can know whether you're making money and why and how much—and if not, why not.

1. HIRE PEOPLE WHO CAN MEET THE PUBLIC — GOOD MIXERS.

2. THOSE WHO ARE MECHANICALLY INCLINED ARE PREFERABLE.

3. MAINTAIN A THOROUGH TRAINING PROCEDURE —

4. AND ESTABLISH RULES OF COURTESY AND DISCIPLINE.

5. AVOID UNNECESSARY EMPLOYEE TURNOVER —

6. BY INCENTIVE WAGE POLICIES.

7. ABOVE ALL, SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR THE HELP.

8. IT WILL BE REFLECTED BY THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PUBLIC —

9. AND, IN TURN, IT WILL INFLUENCE THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE TOWARD YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOURSELF.

These examples may be a little extreme. It may be better to do things "within practical limits"

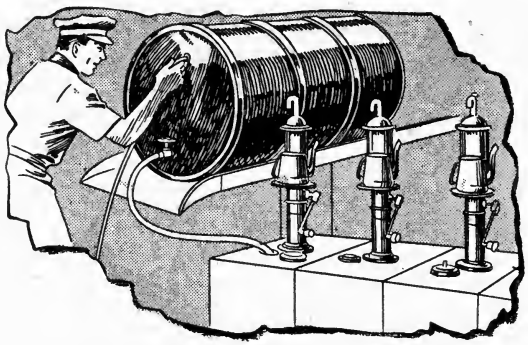
"What I should know about hiring, training and rewarding help"

From what the publishers of this book tell me, it's going to be read by a lot of folks who are new in the service station business. In fact, I've talked all along with the idea in mind that I was trying to put my story across to boys and girls who were just starting out in this work. So, when I begin talking here about hiring and training, I feel sort of like a magician telling the audience how he does his tricks before the show starts. But, as we said before, the purpose of this book is to help you become a good service station man —or woman—and that doesn't stop with your just working for somebody who's going to tell you what to do all the time.

I hope a lot of you will soon be managing or owning stations. In fact, I try to train the people who come to work for me so they can run stations themselves. Naturally, I like to keep one set of attendants as long as I can. But I'd lots rather have employees working for me that can and want to learn to run their own stations, even if they don't stay with me so long, than a gang that will stick with me till they're old and tottery, but will never learn enough to be left on their own.

The first, and most important, part of the job of hiring help is to pick the right people. It's a hard job to tell anyone how to do that, too. I've been hiring service station attendants for a good many years, and

I still get fooled plenty of times. It's a difficult thing to boil down to a set of rules, because human beings don't fit any set of rules you can set out. Sometimes I think it's best to sort of trust your intuition, though I don't like the word. But sometimes you just feel that



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

The heavy lifting involved in the process of transferring oil from drums to dispensers can be avoided if the drum is placed on a lift and raised above the level of the dispenser. The draining of the oil from the drum, an especially slow process in cold weather, can be speeded up by providing a small bung plug with a tire valve. Substitute the valve equipped plug for the one in the barrel and force the oil out with compressed air. An extra faucet for the large drain plug attached to a length of hose serves well to direct the oil from the drum into the container.

an applicant for a job is going to work out all right, even though he doesn't seem to measure up to any rules. That's not as much guess-work as it sounds, though. Usually, the person who can make you feel that way, even when he hasn't got anything you can put your finger on, has got that something that makes people like him, and that's a valuable quality in a service station attendant.

As near as I can put my finger on what it takes to make a good service station attendant, the following are the things you want to look for: First, a nice appearance is a big asset. That doesn't mean you want matinee idols or glamour girls, but you do want them neat and wholesome looking. Most important of all, is a pleasant personality, and the ability to get along with people—all kinds of people. Usually you can spot that ability during your first interview. If the applicant seems friendly and anxious to please, he's probably got the sort of personality you're looking for. Your service station attendant has got to do a lot of selling, so he needs to be able to talk and express himself. He doesn't necessarily need to have a radio announcer's voice or a senator's oratorical ability. In fact, I steer clear of the ones who seem on the gabby side. However, you do want someone who can say what's on his mind.

So far as previous experience goes, I look for the ones who have had some sales experience, clerking in a store, for instance, or any other job where they had to meet people. Even selling experience is less important than a friendly smile and an agreeable personality, because I never believed that there was such a thing as a born salesman. A little mechanical experience—or at least a liking for tinkering around with things—also helps, because it makes it easier to catch on to the mechanical end of the job. But that part is easier to learn than how to meet people. Of course, service sta-

By all means, hire people who are the right kind of "good mixers." Choose people who can meet the public; who understand human nature; who have a little sound philosophy in their make-ups. A cocktail mixer — no matter how popular he may be — is no good in a service station.

tion work isn't easy. There's some fairly heavy work involved and it takes you outdoors in all kinds of weather, so a prospective service station employee ought to be reasonably healthy, though he doesn't have to be a circus strong man.

I don't set any hard and fast rules for education. After all, Abe Lincoln didn't have any diplomas. I kind of like to have boys and girls with a high school education, though, because the chances are anybody who isn't interested enough in his future to get himself that much education these days, isn't going to be very interested in making the most of a job. It doesn't always work out that way, though. One of the smartest boys I ever had working for me was a kid from "the other side of the tracks" who had to quit school when he was in the seventh grade. But he had knocked around enough to know what an education was worth, and he was doing a swell job of getting himself an education the hard way, by reading everything he could get his hands on.

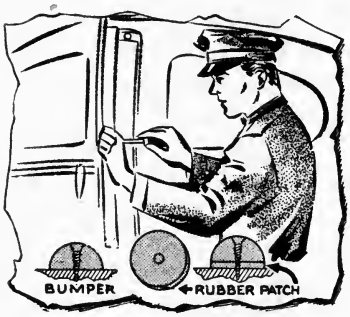
People who come to work for me always think it's funny because when I interview prospective employees, I spend more time telling them about the job than I do asking them about themselves. That's not just because I like to talk, though my wife claims if I ever lose my voice I'll be dead within 24 hours. I think the best way to get started on the right track is to have a new employee know as much about me and the job as I want to know about him. Now, you don't want to overdo that, of course. When you're interviewing people about a job, be sure to give them plenty of chance to tell you about themselves. You can find out a lot about them if you let them talk. And it makes them feel better and more at ease.

The main points I like to put over with someone that I hope is going to go to work for me, is that working in a service station is a good job, any way you look at it. Usually, the work pays as well as, or better than, most types of work that the same amount of ability and experience will handle. You may find a few station managers who like to shave their payrolls too close, but most of them realize that they make more money in the end if they pay well enough to get and keep good attendants. I've always found some kind of commission or bonus deal gets results, too. An attendant who's friendly and on his toes can do a lot towards increasing the station's business, so it's only fair that some kind of a deal be set up so he profits from the additional business his efforts produce. I won't go into the details of commission or bonus plans here. The best idea is to get together with the oil company representative and get the dope from him about plans that get results in other stations, and then talk it over with your gang and select the one that fits your needs best.

Usually it's best to base your commission plan on total station sales. That way there are no hard feelings among attendants on different shifts, or those assigned to housekeeping jobs, where they don't get as much chance to sell. Naturally, your commission or bonus plan has to be set so it really means something in the old pay envelope. By that I mean the requirements mustn't be so high that it takes a record breaking business to earn a couple of bucks in commissions.

If your employees "walk out on you" just as soon as they get a better offer, don't lay all the blame on the other fellow. The chances are a hundred-to-one that you are primarily to blame.

Another thing I always point out is that service station work is healthful. It's outdoors to a great extent, and includes enough physical work to give you the exercise you need to feel good. It's pleasant work, too. Usually, the boss works right along with you. That gives the job a friendly sort of atmosphere that you



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

Annoying door rattles can often be eliminated by building up the bumpers with one or more layers of cardboard, old inner tube or cold-patch rubber cut to fit. Remove the bumpers, cut the "build-up" material to size, and then replace the bumpers with the material inserted between bumper and door frame. This raises the bumpers to their original height.

don't get working in a big outfit where you're just a number on a time card to your superiors. Then, of course, you meet a lot of people. Most of them are friendly and interesting. Some customers are a little hard to get along with at times, but most of the time you'll find them in a pretty agreeable mood when they drive in. They'll usually meet you half way if you're friendly and pleasant. Some of the best friends I've got are people I never knew until they began coming to my station.

No matter whether you want to stick with the service station business or would rather get into something else, a service station job offers you a future that's just as good as you want to make it. If you want to stay in the business, there's always plenty of chance for you to work up to managing a station. That isn't a bad job in itself. Besides, when you've learned how

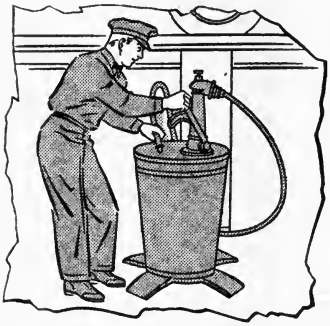
to run a station profitably, you can always get a station of your own if you really want it. It doesn't take a heck of a lot of capital to buy a station. And once you've proved you can run one, the oil companies and the banks will usually be pretty reasonable about extending you the credit you need to get going on your own, especially if you've saved up a little nest egg that you're willing to bet on your own ability to make good.

Another thing to keep in mind is that all the oil companies are looking for bright young fellows to develop as station supervisors and company salesmen. Working in a service station not only gives you the training you need to handle jobs like that, but gives you the contacts with the oil companies that you couldn't get any other way. So, as I said before, no matter how you look at it, working in a service station is a good job and one that you can use to climb just as far as you've got the stuff to go. So, make the most of it by doing your job to the best of your ability and learning all you can.

If you've read this book up to this point, you probably are pretty well convinced by now that there is a lot more to service station work than just knowing how to pump gas and make change. You may be feeling just a little discouraged about whether you'll ever be able to learn all the answers. This book has been planned to try to give you a few of them, but nobody knows any better than I do that a whole shelf full of

An employee should have two types of training: (1) How to *service* a car; and (2) How to serve the public. Be sure that the employee don't get the two mixed—even unintentionally. Remember, the public's reactions are governed by the employee's actions.

books isn't going to teach you how to be a good service station attendant. I hope this book will help. I think it will if you put what you read here with what your boss and fellow employees can teach you and show you, and then use the brains God gave you. How much other training you'll have depends a lot on what station you're going to work in.



"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

It's always a good idea to pump at least one "shot" of gear lubricant back into the container *before* you start pumping it into the transmission or differential unit, especially if the customer is around. This practice shows the customer that he is getting his money's worth, and "short measure," resulting from poor pump operation, will also be avoided.

Under normal conditions, most of the oil companies hold district training schools for new service station employees. If you have a chance to go to one, you certainly don't want to pass it up. Usually, the course lasts a week or two and includes lectures and discussions, as well as actual instruction and practice in using the different types of equipment around a station, and in carrying out the various jobs. If you're working in a company station, or one they lease to an independent operator, you'll ordinarily get a chance to take a training course. Some companies will also train any new employees their dealers want to send them, and I often send my newcomers in for a training course. Right now, the war has sort of upset these training schools for a lot of companies, but they'll probably be back in operation again when the war is over.

I naturally do a lot of training right in my own station. I don't think I know it all by any means, but I feel I know more about my station than anyone else, so I like to put on the finishing touches, even when I've got an employee who has had a company training course, or has worked in a station before. In fact, as I said when I started out, this book is pretty much just setting down on paper the sort of talks I try to have with the men and women who work for me. The main thing I try to do—and what you'll try to do when you are assigned the job of breaking in a green employee—is to put over the reasons why we do things in a certain way. I like to have these new employees ask me questions and argue about the way we do things. It shows they're doing a little thinking, and that's what I want.

I start out, of course, by telling new employees what they are supposed to do and how to do it. Then I show them how to do it, and have them watch and listen while the other employees and I do it. It doesn't hurt to let new employees loaf around a little bit the first day or so, and catch on to what is being done. As soon as possible, though, I get them started doing things themselves. Maybe they won't do it right the first few times, but it's been proved over and over that the quickest way to learn how to do anything is to actually do it, after, of course, you know what you are supposed to do, and WHY you are supposed to do it.

If you want the respect of your employees, you must treat them with respect. Their attitude toward you is a reflection of your attitude toward them — and the public is quick to detect a "bad atmosphere" in your business.

That WHY is mighty important. It ties together and makes sense out of all the instructions and demonstrations that otherwise are just words and motions.

But don't make your assistance an annoyance

After the employee gets along where he can do things on his own, I make it a point to check his work. Not with the idea of standing over him and looking for an opportunity to find fault, but so I can learn something myself as well as point out his mistakes. I don't just stop there. I have the employees check each other. And I have them check me. If one of my gang didn't feel perfectly free to tell me he thought I was doing something wrong, I'd feel that I'd slipped up somewhere and hadn't put over the spirit of cooperation that I want in my station. One thing I try to make everyone who works for me understand, is that I don't think I know it all or ever expect to. I know I can learn from them, and I hope they can learn from me. If we all work together and try to help each other "listen and learn," we're going to have a better station and have a lot more fun working in it, and all of us will make more money.

Before we close this section about hiring and training, we had better take a look at something that's sort of new in the service station business. That's the fact that a lot of stations are using women for service attendants and even station managers. At the time this is written, of course, most people think of women service station attendants as purely a temporary and emergency proposition. I wouldn't know about that. All I can say is that I want to take my hat off to the gals who have stepped into the service stations and done a swell job keeping the cars rolling at a time when there just weren't any men around to do it.

They've not had an easy job doing it either. In the first place, mighty few of them have had any experi-

ence with work of that type. They had to learn from the ground up. And they had to overcome a lot of prejudice on the part of station owners and also the public. Lots of customers enjoyed the novelty of having a good-looking girl wait on them, but a lot of men were sort of embarrassed at having that same good-looking girl doing for them what looked like pretty rough, dirty, or heavy work.

Anyhow, I've got girls working for me now, and there are other girls in thousands of other stations. I don't know how all the rest of the station managers feel about it, but I'm satisfied with my girls, and I gather from the oil company executives I talk to, that the girls are working out OK for others, too, when they're the right girls and someone has gone to a little trouble to get them started right.

I found that girls who have held jobs where they had to meet people: clerks, waitresses, etc., are usually good bets. Girls with stockroom, factory work, or even house work experience are good, too—providing they have the intelligence and personality to meet people—and they're often less squeamish about work that gets their hands dirty. The main thing to remember is that the girl is taking over a man's job, and you want a girl who will handle it like a man—not one that expects to make a sweet smile and a pair of big blue eyes take the place of brains and a willingness to learn and hold up her end of the station duties.

A man with a mechanical sense is an asset around any service station. However, he should also have a certain amount of horse sense.

So far, I've kept enough manpower in the station to handle the lubrication work, tire repairs, battery service and most of the other heavy jobs. I understand some stations use girls for that work, too, and a lot of them do it as well as any man. However, I don't think most girls will be really good at jobs of that kind, and the public is inclined to resent seeing them do such

"TIPS WORTH TRYING"

A squirt can full of brake fluid is a handy thing to have around. A drop of this fluid in the locks of the doors, trunk, gas tank cap, and spare tire prevents them from "freezing up" due to rust or ice in cold weather.

rough work. So, I've split up the work in my station, as I've mentioned before, and have the girls handle more of the paper work, telephoning, housekeeping, etc., in addition to the regular pump island service, while the boys do the heavy jobs.

When girls come to work for me I tell them that outside of the heavy work, they are going to be treated just the same as the men. I pay them the same and they work the same hours—except I try not to have them on the late shift, for the simple reason that I'm a little old-fashioned about young gals going home alone late at night. Outside of that, they're just "one of the boys" and we've got along swell on that basis. The girls like it better that way, for most of them are pretty proud of their ability to do a man's job without asking any favors on account of their sex.

The girls get the same kind of training in my station as the boys do. About the only difference I've found is

that the girls seem to be more interested in the *why* of different operations and procedures than the boys. Often I can show a boy how to do a job and that will be that, but a girl won't seem to catch on until she understands why she is doing it. So, I make it a point to explain why doing a certain job a certain way makes it easier to do the job right. Naturally, most girls have had less mechanical experience than the average man. You've got to show them more carefully, and give them a little more chance to practice on jobs that involve the use of equipment and tools.

I usually find most girls are a little more afraid of making mistakes than the boys are. That means that you want to take them along slowly, encourage them, don't lose your patience when they don't do a thing right the first time. Make them understand that you have confidence in their ability to catch on after they've had a little practice. And, for the love of Pete, don't make fun of them when they make mistakes or ask questions that may seem pretty silly.

For the most part, I have no rules for girls around the station that are any different from the rules for all the rest of us. I don't want the girls to use too much make-up or nail polish. But the only reason is, that the service station is a business place, and a girl made up like she would be for a heavy date looks out of place in a service station, just as she would in a department store or business office. I ask them to lay off the

Certainly, every employee has his hand out for the "dough-ray-me." But the successful service station operator institutes "incentive wage policies" which is a business term meaning that when the boss makes more money, the employees make more, too.

jewelry, for the same reason, and because it's likely to get caught in an engine fan, scratch the car finish, or hit a "hot" wire and give the girl a shock.

The only other rule is about smoking. I don't let any of my employees smoke when they're waiting on a customer or working on a car. And I insist that the girls do their smoking in the rest room. It's all right with me—and with most people—if a girl wants to smoke, but just a heck of a lot of customers haven't got used to the idea of girls smoking on the job. So, I explain to my girls that we've got to humor the customer on that point, and ask them to do their smoking out of sight.

Naturally, we could do another whole book on a program for training service station help. But I doubt if it would do anyone any good. I've never found two employees exactly alike. I just have to take them as they come and work with them until they learn their jobs. I don't like that word, "training," anyhow. It always sounds to me like teaching a dog how to sit up and beg for his dinner. I'd much rather have a boy or girl just listen and watch and ask questions and use their own good brains to figure out the best way to handle the job, than try to work out a set program.

I know this book doesn't have all the answers, and I doubt if any training course does. The answers will have to be worked out in your head to fit your particular needs. All I can do for you is to give you something to start from, and help you when you get stuck. Learning is up to you, no matter what you're trying to learn. The sooner you understand that, the sooner you're going to be able to "listen and learn" — learn how to be a good service station operator, or anything else you want to be.

we hope you found your reading time well spent

The Editors Have Just a Word

When the boss told us he had a new idea for a book on service station operation, one of the group remarked in a hoarse whisper, "Here we go again, boys." That was before we met Bill Olsen. Today, Bill's manuscript was handed to the printer, and we have had a chance to relax, reflect, and discuss what we have learned by listening to Bill. Frankly, we are sold on Bill because he is plain, wholesome, and sincere. In fact, Bill is just the tonic we needed. Above all, Bill has caused us to think and, in so doing, we have arrived at a clearer understanding of our own objectives than we had when we started this job.

Among other things, he has taught us to look upon a car as something eager, trustworthy, and animate—something with a normal life span—something that can be weakened, crippled, or destroyed, as readily as the human body. He has taught us that a car *must* be cared for, protected, and kept in vigorous "health." A car is not just an assembly of metal parts to Bill, nor will it ever again be to us, now that we have learned to know Bill Olsen.

Yet, what is more important, Bill has given us an insight into and understanding of the human side of service station operation. For this, we owe him a lot—for when the veneer created by the hard necessities of life is laid aside, and the sympathetic and understanding nature of humanity is revealed, we take a different view of our fellow man, and a clearer view of ourselves in relation to others.

To sum it all up, Bill is a philosopher, and here are just a few more samples of the product of his inimitable mind which we believe are worth your while to read.

• • •

"Experience has taught me that it's good practice to hit your stride and go right ahead, deliberately and with con-

fidence. That grand old Negro scientist, Dr. Carver, spoke words of wisdom when he said, 'Start where you are, with what you have, and make something of it.'

"Since the days when I was confused by my dad's telling me to 'look for the good in people, and you'll bring out the good in yourself,' I have acquired some understanding, some experience, and a great deal of respect for the human race. By the same token, I have acquired a measure of respect for myself, and in so doing I have come to the conclusion that confidence is a great thing—confidence in one's self, in the future, and in one's fellow man.

"On the other hand, I think Boss Kettering was right when he said, 'An expert is just an ordinary mechanic away from home.' In other words, if a fellow has too much confidence in relation to his ability, he has to keep moving in many fields to keep people from catching up with him. I've found that I can learn from my own experience, and from the experience of others, and that the latter is the easiest way. I have learned that my superiors and the company I work for want to help me succeed—not because they love me (Heaven forbid), but because they are intelligent enough to know it's to their own advantage to do so. But regardless of the reason — I profit.

"I have learned that it pays to listen when I am being told something for my own good, and that any instructions I receive from people capable of instructing me are given because of a sincere desire to help me. I have learned that, although I may not agree with the way they say it, I certainly can profit by listening to what is said, and trying to apply it for my own benefit.

"In other words, I have learned to listen, think, and learn, and to consider my opinion of myself a great deal more important than the opinions others may have of me; but I have also learned to keep that opinion to myself."

• • •

To Bill's homely philosophy, there is nothing we can add except that the fellow who remarked, "Here we go again," when the boss outlined his plan, is the one who is writing these closing remarks, in behalf of all who have worked on the production of this book, and have enjoyed their work. We, also, have "listened and learned."

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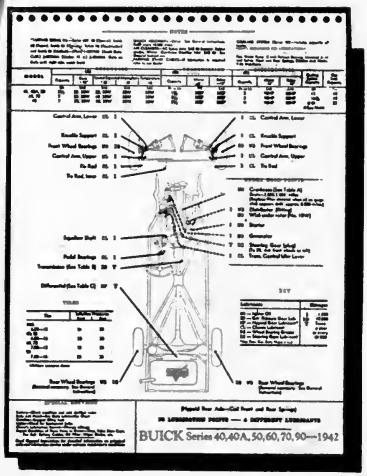

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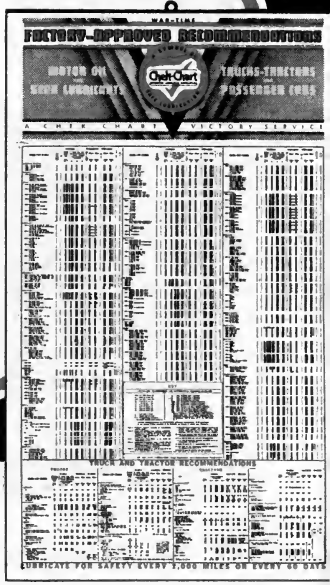

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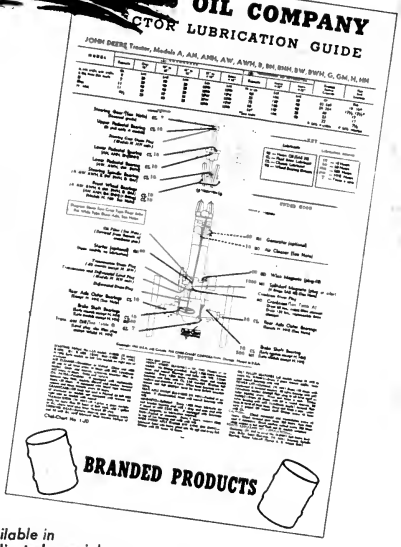

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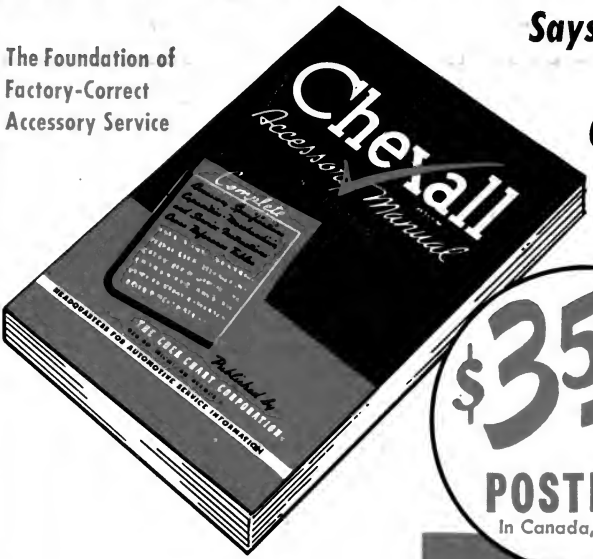

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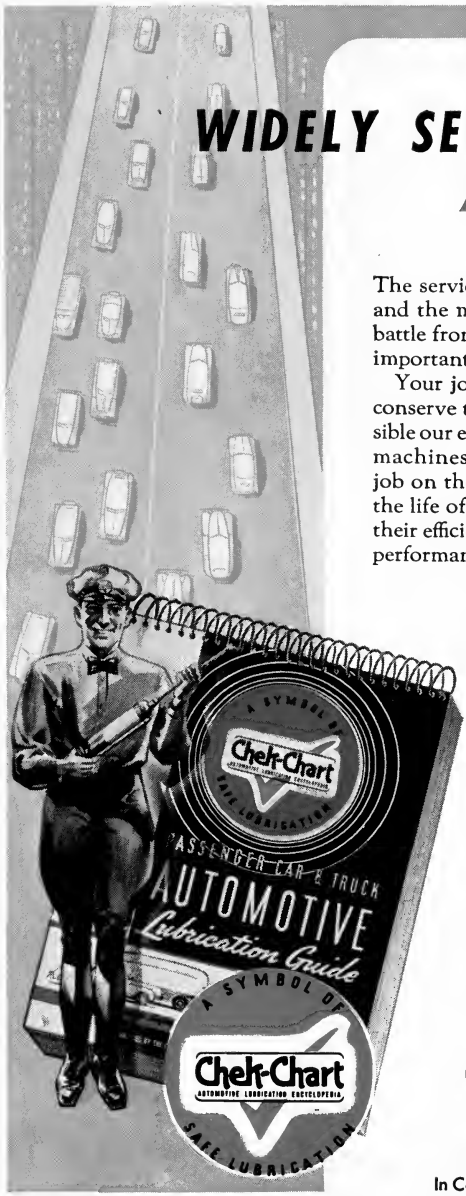

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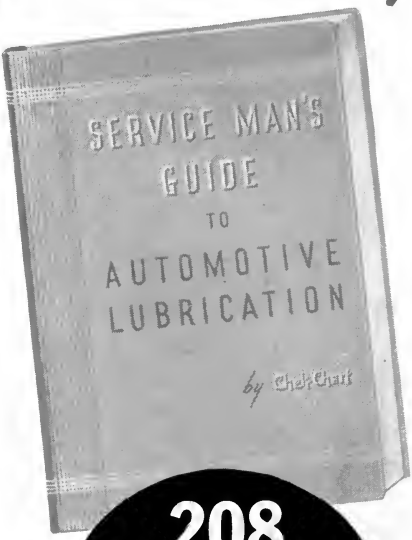

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