



50¢ AND THE CAP'S ON TIGHT!

I pulled into one of the super gas emporiums recently, slipped the credit card into the pump, filled the car up, and as I replaced the gas cap the above phrase flashed through my mind. Shades of Mr. Keander! A.F. Lawrence Keander of West Dennis owned a gas station on Route 28 where Harborside Gardens now stands. Whenever you pulled in for gas--no matter if it was only 50 cents worth--you got service with a smile, your windshield was washed, and he'd say, "50 cents and the cap's on tight!" Sometimes during the 1930's and 40's you were lucky to have 50 cents for gas.

Many gas stations started when national gasoline distributors installed a pump in front of the local livery stable or blacksmith shop. Early gas deliveries were made with horse-drawn tank wagons. The driver would transfer gasoline to the tanks in a five gallon can. Gas was then hand pumped up to a glass reservoir on top of the gas pump and drained into the automobile by gravity.

The first person to own an automobile in Dennis Port was Dr. David Ginn. He also owned the first gas pump--that being the only way he could have gas for his car. Ninety-six year old Edward P. Chase of Dennis Port said Dr. Ginn's gas pump was located behind the Ginn Block so it wouldn't scare the horses. DHS has a Ginn's Block post card showing the sign "STANDARD GASOLINE and auto supplies" with an arrow pointing towards the back. Newspapers of the day advised residents to get off the road, if possible, with their horse and buggy and let the noise and odor of the automobile pass by. Besides dispensing medicine Dr. Ginn also dispensed driver's licences. No driving tests required--just show up with the fee in hand and he'd issue the licence. Of course, this fee was sent up to the State House!

One of our family stories was of Uncle Simeon Baker of West Yarmouth. He was a chauffeur for Charles Henry Davis of "Seven Chimneys", Bass River. Mr. Davis was a co-founder of the National Highway Association and author of the numbered highway system and road maps. On Sundays Uncle Sim would motor over to Dennis Port in one of Mr. Davis' automobiles to visit with my grandparents, Nora and Owen Murray, and great grandmother Phebe Chase Murray. When he was ready to depart for Bass River my mother and her brother, Franklin and sister, Dorothy, would climb into the car and ride as far as Trotting Park Road where Uncle Sim would stop so they could get out and walk home--a little over a mile. Two years later grandfather bought a second hand open touring car and the novelty wore off.

In the early years the speed limit was 10 mph in the villages and 15 outside the village, unless otherwise posted. This was soon increased to 15 and 20 and by 1906 the state allowed 20 mph in the villages. Josh Crowell has a sign that was posted on the downhill side of Smith's Hill (now the northern end of Route 134 where it comes down to Route 6A and named for Elijah Smith Howes). It says, "Motor Vehicles - Speed not to exceed 8 miles per hour - in direction of arrow - Per order of Selectmen - This form of notice approved by Massachusetts Highway Commission". Josh says the sign going uphill allowed 10 mph.

Dr. Henry B. Hart of East Dennis owned the first auto on the north side. It was an Oldsmobile with a curved dash similar to a carriage or sleigh and was steered by a tiller--possibly a 1903 model. One of the earliest car enthusiasts of Dennis Village was Captain Calvin Howes. After he had gone to his Great Reward his Brush automobile with 1909 plates was still reposing in the garage. It was adopted by Bernard Eldredge who sold it to someone on the South Shore. One car that didn't need a gas station was the Stanley steamer, but going from village to village it usually had to stop at the local watering trough. In just a few years the fad took hold and every adventurous person who could afford it had one of the proliferating makes of automobiles and went racing over the roads of Dennis.

Legend has it that the first gas pump in Dennis Village was at Joe Hefler's blacksmith shop on the corner of Main and Nobscusset where Colonial Gasoline was dispensed, followed directly after World War I by a garage with pumps at the Whittemore House. That station featured Socony gas and was run by Earl "Chippy" Whittemore and Thomas Sherborn "Sherb" Howes. This later became the Dennis Garage, Daniel Leonard Walker and--firstly Dana Whittemore, secondly Paul McDowell, Props. I understand two books could hardly contain the stories from this Dennis Village corner. If only the pavement could talk!

Over in East Dennis the first remembered gas dispenser was Robert Nickerson who sold gas and oil from a one-car garage which, after World War I became Phillips Garage -- another Socony dealer. That site is now occupied by Grumpie's Restaurant.

A number of private homes and businesses had their own gas pumps. Nathan Crowell and J. Wallace Smalley of East Dennis had pumps on their property for use in their farm vehicles, as did Mr. William Crowell of Dennis. Margaret "Mig" Walker Maher tells of when she and Hope Crowell Hallett came home from school and--looking for something to do-- Hope said, "Pa, can we drive the car?" He said, "You have to fill the tank." So, they maneuvered the Model T Ford over to Mr. Willy's pump, topped off the Tin Lizzy and toured around the back pasture and fields, taking turns, all afternoon. When it came time to be licenced they had plenty of experience.

Some of the notable gasoline merchants on the south side were Paul Robbins of the Dennis Port Garage (now the 28 Club) who sold Tydol gasoline at 5¢ a gallon and Forzol batteries. He had to attend a week-long school in Boston to learn how to prepare the early batteries so they wouldn't explode. O. Thomas Murray sold Texaco gas on the corner of Main and Depot Street and Cloyd Pate ran the Tydol station on Main and Telegraph in Dennis Port--and who can forget the Pickerings in West Dennis?

I learned to drive at the age of 9 on a Model T open touring car -- when it would run. It was ancient and had been used hard when our neighbor, Carleton Ellis, purchased it for the bargain price of \$3.50. The cylinder head was broken and all four tires were

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CALENDAR

Mar. 13 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets at the Manse.
Mar. 17 Top O' the Mornin' to all on this St. Patrick's Day!
Mar. 20 3:03 A.M. Spring arrives. We thought you'd never get here!

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flat. Carl found the necessary parts in the dump and after a lot of toil had it running-- until something else needed attention. The cloth top was long gone and every time you sat on the seat was an adventure -- you never knew when a spring would let go. Every kid in the neighborhood learned how to drive that old car in the fields where the now defunct Barnstable County bank stands -- all the way up to Captain Johnny P. Edwards orchard (Stage Stop Candy) and back again -- over and over, and the thrill never wore off. The car would be loaded with kids stuffed into every nook and cranny, arms and legs hanging over the sides, and having the time of our lives. Donald McKenney taught me how to advance the spark, adjust the throttle and coax the old girl along. He also passed on "the fuel secret". If you couldn't afford gas -- at that time 10¢ a gallon --- one gallon of purchased gasoline mixed with several gallons of kerosene obtained from the oil drum at home would keep those old Lizzies running for several hours! Carl kept it looking pretty spiffy. He shook up some oil and gas in a Coke bottle and used it to polish the old car. He eventually sold it -- at a tidy profit -- for \$15.00!

HISTORICAL (HYSTERICAL?) DINNERS

The Dining for DHS program is sailing along with great success. A large number of people have participated either as hosts or guests and all have been immensely pleased to be in such fine company. Ye Olde Ed attended a dinner at the Josiah Dennis Manse hosted by Mr. and Mrs. James Coogan on what had to be the wettest night in January. The dinner was delicious, the company delightful, and somewhere in the shadows Josiah and Bathsheba were pleased to see the large number gathered around the table in their keeping room, although I suspect Bathsheba may have been a little bit jealous at the relative ease in which the Coogans produced all those courses. Among the many other hosts, with a different theme, was a Ladies Only Dinner on Superbowl Sunday with Brendon and Maureen Joyce. I understnad everyone there is ready to do it again. It seems the first thing on every menu was lots of laughter. Some dinners are still to be held and all are not booked solid. If you would like to be included in one of these fun affairs -- or if you would like to host one -- please call Jim Coogan at 385-2332. Many thanks to the generous people who have already raised \$1,560.00 for DHS.

A LUNCHTIME JOURNEY TO CHINA

The 19th Annual Mid-Winter Festivity was indeed festive. Our "regulation Saturday storm" turned out to be rain instead of snow -- for a welcome change of pace. The rains did not dampen the enthusiasm of our members and they arrived in large numbers to enjoy our time together and to hear Peggy Eastman tell of her very interesting trip to China as a delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. We came away thinking that if the other United States delegates were half as articulate as Peggy we, as a country, were very well represented. Peggy used some pictures she had taken to illustrate her talk and also displayed a large, eclectic collection of items she brought back from the conference. Many of the items had been made by third-world delegates to help finance their trip. Peggy's home will now closely resemble the nineteenth century homes of Dennis' deep water sailors who brought back all sorts of interesting things from their trips. The most important thing Peggy brought back was the fact that women of the world are united in the hope of making our world a better place for every individual to live, work, and prosper in peace. Thanks, Peggy, for an interesting, enlightening afternoon.

The very lucky winner of the lovely centerpiece was one of our newer members -- and the last one to arrive -- Irma North. Congratulation, Irma. I understand Irma got a lot of mileage out of that centerpiece. She shared parts of it with two shut-ins, and used the rest as a centerpiece on the coffee table when she was hostess at her church fellowship hour. That's Yankee thrift at it's best!

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