

## **SANT AUTOMOTIVE NEWS** VOL X, NO.3

“WHAT, ME WORRY”  
A.E.N.

### ***The good, the bad, and the ugly***

The good news is that it may never be cheaper to buy a new car. The bad news is that no one wants to lend you money to do so. Things may get ugly. Citing high fuel prices, low consumer confidence levels, and tightened credit, the world’s largest Chevrolet dealer, Bill Heard Enterprises, went out of business last week. At its height, Heard Enterprises, which operated 13 dealerships in seven states, reported annual revenues of about \$2.5 billion. Heard reported to have sold over 40,000 new vehicles last year. Further, on October 1, Reuters reported that nearly one in five new car dealerships could close in the next year or so.

“The Big Three’s” captive finance companies are suffering right along with other financial institutions; they are in line for \$25 billion in federal aid, and they in turn are tightening their own credit standards. Dealers across the country report that they are being hit by the double whammy of lower traffic plus the inability to obtain financing for their customers. Financing problems are exacerbated when customers try to trade out of their existing car loans as many would be buyers find that they are “upside down” on their current vehicles. (Note to would be lenders: be wary of quickly depreciating collateral, especially if it is on wheels.) The *St. Louis Business Journal* reports that local dealerships are feeling the pinch and that many expect to see annual sales drop significantly. It looks like a good bet that not all of the local dealerships are going to survive. (Remember Feld Chevrolet?) If you happen to have a wad of cash on hand and aren’t tempted to put it to a useful purpose, now may be the time to buy.

As *THE SANT AUTOMOTIVE NEWS’* financial correspondent, Greg Damon, sees it, “We really have two choices:  
A) we can cry like little girls and wait for the government to save us like the financial and auto industries are doing or, B) we can put on our big boy pants and survive this mess on our own...cut unnecessary expenses and extend the useful life of our assets. In other words, ‘maintain our damn cars.’ Did I mention that if this bailout passes, I think that all of these Wall Street punks, auto industry execs, and car dealers should have to wear dresses?”

So there you have it.

Greg’s real smart. So I’ve been told.  
He has a wrench that’s solid gold.

### ***Putting the Plan into Action***

# **SANT AUTOMOTIVE** “A Trusted St. Louis Tradition”

According to the Car Care Council, the most common cause of breakdowns is cooling related. Coolant should be checked and changed periodically with care taken to test both coolant protection and pH levels. Further, check the structural integrity of cooling system components including the radiator, water pump, thermostat, plus all belts and hoses. On the other hand, let's not overlook the importance of lubrication. Of course, we're talking here about engine oil, transmission fluid, and differential fluid. When considering these items, it's good to remember this rule of thumb: “change the fluid when you're supposed to.” Each of these services is relatively inexpensive, and repair related to a lubrication failure can be prohibitively expensive. So we've got relatively inexpensive versus prohibitively expensive.

On the third hand, what the hell good is lubrication going to do if you can't get the ol' engine fired up to begin with? Let's talk battery and charging systems. Without getting too technical, if your alternator charges your battery properly, if your battery holds a charge, and if you don't leave your lights on, you are probably in pretty good shape. Remember that factory installed batteries usually last about three or four years, and alternators shoot craps whenever they feel like it. We recommend testing these systems annually and cleaning and tightening battery terminals in the process.

We're kind of running out of hands, but what good does a car do for you if it will start up and run but can't stop? If things get really tough, you can live in it and have some heat as long as you direct the exhaust away from your vehicle, but we were thinking more about the utility of some sort of braking device. The considered advice of Sant Automotive is that you should have at least such one operational device, two if you either park on a hill or would like some sort of backup.

Finally, you've got other issues like wheel bearings, air conditioning, fuel and air filters, heating, power windows, steering tires, lighting, radios and the like. For a car to operate properly, this stuff should be working as well.

“But Dick,” you ask, “... how am I supposed to know when to do all of this stuff? Even if I did know when to do this, I've got two cars that I need to worry about plus the one that my daughter just needs to get back and forth from her job late at night. I can't worry about all of this stuff.” Fear not, we'll take care of it for you. If we haven't produced a vehicle maintenance chart for you, or if you would like one for an additional vehicle, let us know, and we'll be happy to produce one at no cost to you. If we have produced one, it should be attached to this award winning newsletter.

## ***Heard on the Street***

A local competitor of ours is advertising a chance to win two tickets for an upcoming Rams game. This is outstanding news as the phrase “a chance to win” implies that there is also a chance not to win. Sant Automotive is willing to match that deal and to even up the ante. If you bring your car to Sant Automotive before Thanksgiving, we promise that we will not try to give you any Rams tickets.

***SANT AUTOMOTIVE*** *"A Trusted St. Louis Tradition"*

---