

Daily Herald

AUTOFOCUS

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AutoSunday

Electrical issue may be related to ground wire

Q. I contacted you several months ago regarding my Nissan Maxima and its heater blower working only on high speed. I followed your advice and replaced the resistor, which corrected the problem. Thank you very much.

My new problem is a short on my son's 2003 Saab 933. The right rear taillight has repeatedly stopped working. My son replaced the blown fuse several times and sometimes it worked for a

while and other times it blew almost right away. He took it to the Saab dealer who charged him \$300 and said it was the bulb. This repair lasted a day and my son took it back and they took another stab at it.

I don't know if they found anything but charged him a lot more than the first time and said they checked the whole electrical system and could not find a cause.

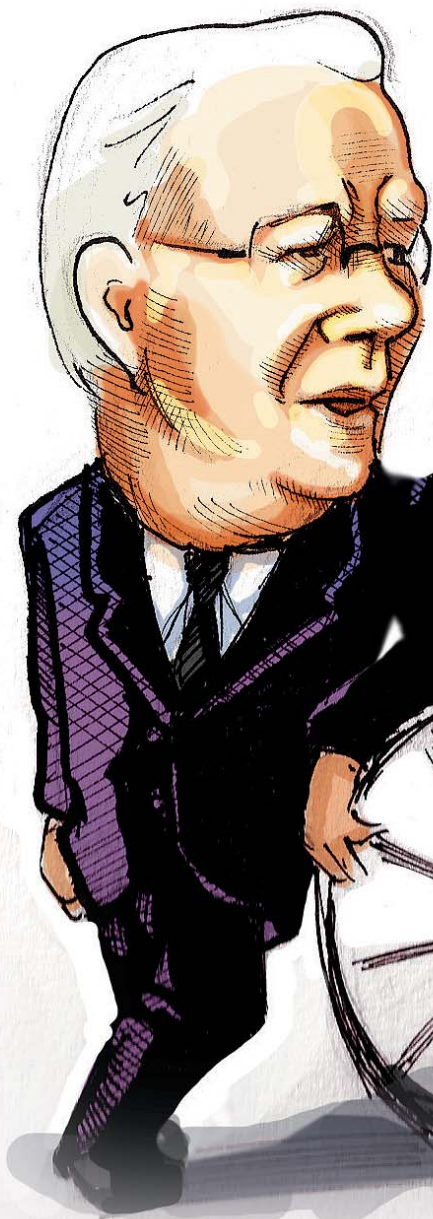
It was turned over to me. I checked the bulb sockets and found one loose bulb. I reinstalled the bulb, replaced the fuse and it worked about three months. Since then he has replaced a blown fuse a few times, which makes the light work for different time periods. My question is has your shop had any similar problems with Saabs or do you have any suggestions? He has gotten several warnings from the police for defective lighting. Any help or advice would be appreciated. I realize electrical problems are hard to diagnose without seeing the car.

A. I am glad my advice helped you on the Nissan. It's a little tougher to guide you on the Saab without seeing the car and knowing exactly what the dealer repaired. I would make sure that there is no corrosion on any of the sockets and be sure that you have a good ground. Study the wiring and make sure that none of the wires are rubbed through and contacting to ground. Where did you buy the bulb? We have been seeing some issues with inexpensive bulbs. Make sure it is the right one and that it is high quality. The other bit of information you will want to research is if there is anything else on that circuit that could be causing the problem. I hope this helps and thanks for reading Under The Hood.

• Visit douglasautomotive.com. E-mail underthehood@dailyherald.com.



Doug McAllister
Under the hood



CHARLES B. KING

ADAM YOUNG/
Wheelbase Communications

Imagine, back in 1896, watching this man drive along a Detroit street ... in a vehicle with no horse

By STEVEN REIVE
For Wheelbase Communications

Pro-Files

Automobile legends and heroes

Charles B. King had a dream, the way Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac had a dream in 1701 when he landed on the banks of a river and first put foot on land that would one day become Detroit, Mich.

King's dream was simple: it was movement; it was velocity; it was a way of life that changed everyone else's way of life in the bustling and growing city of Detroit.

Historians talk about the influence of Henry Ford, but few remember the King.

Maybe it was because he was so different. Maybe it was because he was a renaissance man in the truest sense. Or maybe it was because he grew so tired of accomplishments (boredom, perhaps), that moving on was the only stimulating aspect in life.

King loved so many things: painting, designing, writing poetry, playing music and engineering interesting inventions. "A visionary," the Detroit Free Press once called him.

But few knew he was the first person to design, build and drive a car on the streets of old Detroit. He was one of the most technically knowledgeable pioneers of the early automotive industry and one of a handful of men who could envision the car transforming life in a city that would be known for cars.

Maybe that's the greatest secret of King: had he not visited Chicago, then moved to Detroit, it may never have become the "Motor City."

But, in a way, it was a miracle King

ended up in Detroit anyway.

Born in California in the mid-1860s to a father who was an Union Army general in the Civil War, he received his training in mechanical engineering from Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. He had a million ideas of what to do with his life.

King moved to Detroit in 1889 at age 21, but it was only after a visit to the Chicago Exposition in 1893 that he realized a way to channel his ideas.

There, he spotted Gottlieb Daimler's self-propelled carriage. If you could imagine after hundreds of years of horse-drawn wagons, there was suddenly no horse.

King set about to build a horseless carriage of his own and upon learning that New England's Duryea Brothers, Charles and Frank, had already built and tested an automobile, there was no time to waste.

On March 6, 1896, 10 years after Carl Benz patented the first gasoline-powered automobile in Germany, and three years after the Duryea Brothers' first vehicle, Charles King became the first driver of a gasoline automobile in Detroit. Everyone knows about Ford's Model T, but Henry Ford was riding a bicycle at the time.

Three months before Ford took the wheel, King had his own momentous first drive, a spin that began when he steered his vehicle down St. Antoine

Street to Jefferson Avenue, and then swung north on Detroit's famous Woodward Avenue to Grand Boulevard. After that, he turned around and headed home, only to be greeted by a police officer who threatened to ticket him for disturbing the peace.

The drive was accomplished in full view of hundreds of spectators who were thrilled with what they were seeing.

Residents woke up to the Detroit Free Press story: "The first horseless carriage seen in this city was out on the streets last night ... It is the invention of Charles B. King, a Detroit, and its progress up Woodward Avenue about 11 o'clock caused a deal of comment, people crowding around it so that its progress was impeded. The apparatus seemed to work all right, and went at the rate of five or six miles an hour at an even rate of speed."

"I am convinced," King told the Detroit Journal, "that, in time, the horseless carriage will supersede the horse."

King served as a mentor to Henry Ford, Ransom Olds, Jonathan Maxwell, Henry Joy and others. In fact, he provided parts, instructed and assisted Henry Ford on his first Quadricycle at the same time King worked on his own car.

In 1903, King became chief engineer of the Northern Motor Car Co., where he designed the two-cylinder "Silent Northern" automobile that featured numerous innovations and the first running boards.

On the 1907 Northern, he designed air brakes, an air-controlled clutch and

other innovations for which he was granted patents. He was wildly successful, but boredom was starting to show.

Five years later, King left the company and spent two years in Europe studying automotive design. He returned to Detroit in 1910 and launched the King Motor Car Co. The King "Eight" (V-8) was billed as "The Car of No Regrets."

In fact, at the New York Auto Show in 1912, the King automobile was the only one to feature left-hand steering, which soon became the industry standard. At that time, he already had more than 40 automotive patents to his credit.

That year, however, he left his company, devoting his time to working on numerous other experiments and inventions.

Said King to a colleague: "I've done what I wanted, now I want to be stimulated again."

Some 20 years later, after numerous other projects and inventions, he returned to his automotive roots and became a founding member of the Automobile Old Timers, the original name of what was to become the Automotive Hall of Fame.

It was an effort to remember the early days of the auto industry and to honor its pioneers and leaders. This year he will be inducted into that institution. Not that he would care. There were too many pictures to paint. Too many things to create. And too many songs to play.

• E-mail Steven Reive at www.wheelbase.us/mailbag.html.

Dodge refines its macho Ram truck with posh interior

By ANN M. JOB
For The Associated Press

Can a macho pickup truck also be refined and sophisticated? Yes, if it's the redesigned-for-2009 Dodge Ram.

The full-size pickup that's known for its brawny, big semi-hauler-styled front end has a smoother ride now, thanks to a unique-for-a-big-truck five-link, coil spring rear suspension.

The Ram interior is spruced up with luxury touches such as soft-to-the-touch dashboard plastic, nicely textured ceiling material and shiny, silver-colored accents set against attractive faux wood trim.

For the first time, the new Ram even offers a carlike back seat, with reclined seatback and good-sized cushions,

At a glance

Price as tested: \$46,720
Engine: 5.7-liter, pushrod Hemi V-8
City/highway fuel economy: 14/20 miles per gallon
Length: 229 inches
Wheelbase: 140.5 inches
Curb weight: 5,550 pounds
Built: Fenton, Mo.
Destination charge: \$900

as a new Crew Cab model is added to the 2009 lineup. The Crew Cab provides a roomier back seat than the Ram Quad Cab does.

But the Ram's macho attitude hasn't disappeared. The 5.7-liter, Hemi V-8 has more power this year — 390

horsepower — and the Peterbilt-styled front end is bolder with a domed hood and mean-looking grille. Even the Ram logo of a sheep's horns is bigger than ever before on the tailgate.

Starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, is \$22,170 for a 2009 Ram with two-wheel drive Regular Cab, 210-horsepower, 3.7-liter V-6, automatic transmission and 6-foot-long pickup bed. Starting retail price for a 2009 Ram with four-wheel drive is \$26,625, and it comes with a 310-horsepower, 4.7-liter V-6 and automatic.

A major competitor, though, has lower posted starting retail prices. The 2009 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 Regular Cab truck with two-wheel



ASSOCIATED PRESS/Courtesy of Chrysler

The 2009 Dodge Ram 1500 rides noticeably smoother from the jittery bounciness of earlier Rams.

drive, 195-horsepower, 4.3-liter V-6 and automatic starts at \$19,550, and a four-wheel drive Silverado base model is \$22,790.

The Ram's aggressive styling

and Hemi V-8 are hallmarks. But buyers now have three choices of passenger compartment — two- or three-passenger, two-door Regular Cab, five- or six-passenger, four-

door Quad Cabs and five- or six-passenger, roomier four-door Crew Cabs that are good for families.

Rear-seat headroom and hip room are increased slightly in the Crew Cab vs. the Quad Cab. Legroom is the biggest gainer, going from 36.8 inches in the Quad Cab to 42 inches in the Crew Cab. Rams are offered with choice of two- or four-wheel drive, three engines and two bed sizes.

The test Ram was a new Crew Cab, and the ride is noticeably improved from the jittery bounciness of earlier Rams. The solid rear axle is still there, helping to ensure towing capacity of as much as 9,000 pounds, but the rear suspension now uses sophisticated five-link connections and coil springs.