

Daily Herald

AUTOFOCUS

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SECTION 9

AutoSunday

Pickup truck tires should be inflated to maker's specs

Q. I'm an old "farm boy." I remember driving my tractor that needed only 10 pounds per square inch (air pressure) in the large rear tires full of calcium-chloride solution. I currently drive a four-wheel drive Silverado pickup. It's my understanding that, for a given size of a tire, the air pressure needed depends on the weight the tire is loaded.

Why then for example does a pickup truck, where the weight is heavy on the front tires and extremely light on the rear tires, does the manufacturer recommend the same pressure on all four tires. It doesn't make sense to me. I have 10-ply Michelins all around. They are rated at 80 psi full-load. I drive the truck unloaded — just recreational driving. So I keep the front tires at about 45 psi and the rear tires at 35 psi to compensate for the difference in loading. What are your thoughts on this?

A. I understand what you are saying; riding around in an unloaded pickup truck with 80 pounds of air in the back tires might feel a little bit like riding on a basketball. Assuming you have the factory specified tires on the truck, I always recommend inflating the tires to what the placard on the vehicle recommends for tire pressure. I am sure the manufacturer is taking into account the load carrying capabilities of the truck.

If you had lower air pressure in the back and loaded the truck and forgot to adjust the air pressure back up to account for the load, you could put yourself and others at risk.

This statement comes right out of my All-Data technical information: "When you inflate the tires to the recommended inflation pressures, the factory-installed wheels and tires are designed in order to handle loads to the tire's rated load capacity. Incorrect tire pressures or underinflated tires can cause the following conditions: vehicle handling concerns; poor fuel economy; shortened tire life; and tire overloading."

Even though it seems counterintuitive and your truck may ride a little harder, I do not recommend adjusting the tire size, load rating and pressure to anything other than what the manufacturer of the vehicle recommends.

Q. Your Sunday column in the Daily Herald caught my eye — as it always does — and I wanted to add to your database. I have a 2000 Jaguar S-Type that has almost 90,000 miles on it. It has a similar electrical problem to the one that you described in the column but with a slightly different source. Mine is located in the ignition switch.

Several mornings I came out to the car to find the battery dead for no apparent reason. The steering wheel had returned to the driving position during the night and the doors had unlocked. I finally found out what was happening. When I would leave the car, the ignition would turn itself back on in the cabin. The steering wheel returned to the driving position, the sound system came back on and the dash board gauges activated. This, of course, would cause enough electrical use to draw down the battery over a period of several hours.

I have been able to partially solve the problem by turning all of the interior accessories off before switching off the ignition and pushing the key firmly into the switch as I switch off the ignition. It sometimes takes several tries to get the ignition switched off, but by turning off all of the interior accessories, I have reduced the electrical draw enough to save the battery if it does switch back on.

Additionally, I am on my third transmission in this beast, so I wonder why I love the car. It will, however, be my last Jaguar.

A. You are a good sport, I am not sure most people would have such a good attitude after putting up with so much grief and expense with their car. While these higher-end cars are nice to drive, they do come with a price and sometimes it is significant, not only the purchase but also the upkeep.

Q. I have a 1999 Dodge Grand Caravan. I've recently been told that the strut towers are rusting through. The driver's side is worse than the passenger side. It's an expensive repair. What are my options?

A. I wrote about this topic a couple months back and it stirred up quite a bit of interest. This particular problem is quite common and can be repaired. The parts are available from Dodge. However there are some special tools needed. It requires a full day with quite a bit of disassembly. The cost is just under \$1,000 for both sides. We have performed this on several vans, including our own customer shuttle van, and it has worked out great and given us many more years of safe use.

• Douglas Automotive is at 312 S. Hager Ave., Barrington, (847) 381-0454, and 7218B Virginia Road, Crystal Lake, (815) 356-0440. For information, visit douglasautomotive.com. Send questions to underthehood@dailyherald.com.

To fuel his passion, he slowly signed away his company to gain operating cash

By STEVEN REIVE
For Wheelbase Communications

His name is more of symbol now, even though a sign displaying that name measures just over five-feet tall.

"David Dunbar Buick," the sign reads. "Buick Motor Company."

The dark green sign with the golden letters and the familiar name is one of the first things you see on a trip inside General Motors' world headquarters on Atwater Street in downtown Detroit.

Except for the sign, Buick, the man, is all but forgotten now. Yet what he built, and what ultimately led to this global empire that inhabits five shimmering towers of a glass superstructure known as Detroit's Renaissance Center, cannot be underestimated.

In a roundabout way, Buick, a bathtub maker, built General Motors. Not that he ever could have anticipated where his tiny inventions would take the automotive world.

The Buick Motor Division, and in some measure General Motors, takes its name from David Dunbar Buick, a Scottish immigrant born in 1854.

His father, Alexander Buick, emigrated to the United States with his wife and son when David was just 2 years old. As a young man, he eventually settled in Detroit where he began manufacturing plumbing materials.

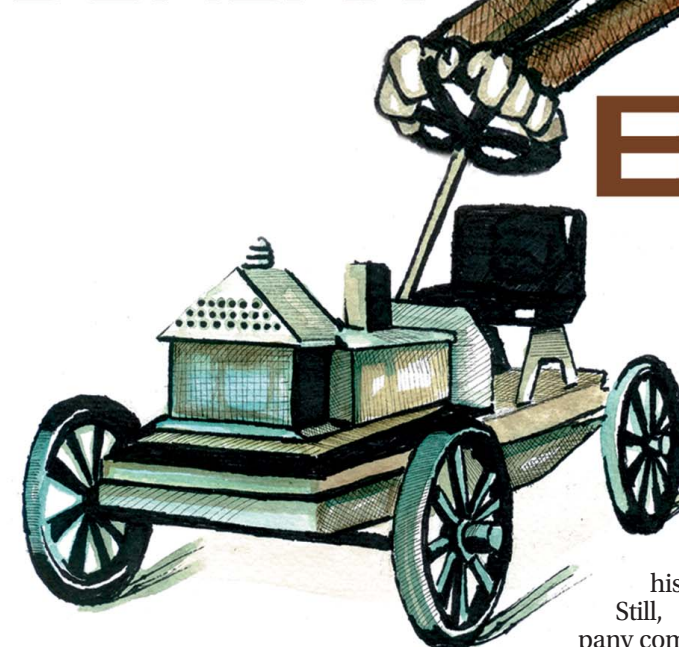
Along with his partner William Sherwood, Buick's success was largely due to his patented process for bonding porcelain to iron, a process that helped fuel the craze for white porcelain bathtubs.

But Buick wasn't all about tubs. In 1899, after becoming engrossed in this new technology known as gasoline engines for automobiles, Buick established the Auto Vim and Power Co. to produce engines for farm and stationary use. He sold his plumbing business for \$100,000 to raise capital for his new venture and began tinkering with using the engines he produced to power four-wheeled vehicles.

Two years later, he founded the Buick Manufacturing Co. to make engines for various carmakers and to make cars himself. But his path would prove harder than even he could have imagined.

Buick was a great plumber and a whiz of an inventor, but he

DAVID DUNBAR



BUICK

Pro Files

Automotive heroes and legends

One of the two had to go and it was David Buick.

In 1906, at age 52, Buick severed his last link with the company and returned to Detroit with his wife and son.

The company went to the top as Buick's life bottomed out. In 1908, Durant acquired Oldsmobile and Cadillac to form General Motors. Chevrolet joined in 1918. Britain's Vauxhall was acquired in 1926 and Germany's Opel some years later. Buick production reached 100,000 cars a year in 1923 and surged.

And David Buick? He died of cancer on March 5, 1929. At the time of his death, he was working as an inspector at a Detroit trade school. Buick, the man, was all but forgotten.

Millions of cars bearing his name and crest have rolled off production lines since, yet he was involved in making only 120 of them.

Briscoe wrote in 1921 that had Buick been able to keep his shares in the firm, they would have been worth more than \$10 million at that time. Their value today would be almost incalculable.

Today, a green sign is all that remains.

• Steven Reive is a feature writer with Wheelbase Communications. He can be reached on the Web at www.wheelbase.us/mailbag.php.

wasn't a very astute businessman, nor was he very personable.

Described as generally irritable and cantankerous, he exhibited an amazing propensity for losing complete financial control.

Within two years of opening his business, Buick built his first car, but his advanced designs left the company somewhat overextended. Strapped for cash, he borrowed \$5,000 from a friend, Ben Briscoe, who didn't doubt Buick's ability as a craftsman but was wary of his business abilities.

When Briscoe heard that a company in Flint, Mich., 115 miles from Detroit, was thinking of starting up car production, he persuaded Buick to team up with them. The firm, the Flint Wagon Works Co., was impressed with Buick's car and borrowed \$10,000 from a local bank to settle the debts.

The Buick plant was shifted to Flint, but the deal left Buick with little say about the company's dealings. Essentially, Buick had

signed away his future.

Still, the company completed 16 cars in 1903 and 34 in 1904, all experimental machines at \$1,200 each.

But Briscoe's money was also gone within a year. As before, the company was deep in debt and unprofitable.

On Nov. 1, 1904, after having driven a Buick car for two months and noting that it could climb hills and run through mud like no other car, William Durant took over the company and recapitalized it with Buick as president.

Durant was the owner of Durant-Dort Carriage Co., the largest maker of horse-drawn carriages. Durant did not like automobiles, but he was a visionary and knew a self-seller when he saw it.

Six weeks later, Durant attended the New York Auto Show and came back with orders for 1,108 Buicks.

Durant was a go-getter. Like Henry Ford, he knew the industry's future would depend on speeding up production and cutting assembly costs. Buick, on the other hand, was a craftsman who regarded each car as a unique invention.

Stylish Volkswagen CC creates a sleek persona

By ANN M. JOB
For The Associated Press

The 2009 Volkswagen CC has four doors and front and back seats that can accommodate 6-foot-tall passengers. At nearly 16 feet in length, it's longer than a Honda CR-V sport utility vehicle.

But VW officials insist on calling the new-for-2009 CC a coupe, which is normally the label for a car with two doors and a cramped back seat.

Maybe VW noticed that Mercedes-Benz was able to blaze new marketing ground — and snag sales — by calling its four-door, luxury CLS a coupe a few years ago. Perhaps VW executives just wanted to give their best-looking Passat makeover a distinct persona.

Whatever the reason, the new VW CC is a decidedly stylish car with sleek, coupe-like shape and German road-handling traits. It's also a comfortable ride — a nod to what CC denotes: Comfortable Coupe.

Starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, is \$27,480 for a base, manual transmission, front-wheel drive CC with the same 2-liter, turbocharged, four-cylinder engine that's in the Passat. Starting retail

At a glance

Price as tested: \$41,630
Engine: 3.6-liter, double overhead cam V-6 with VVT
City/highway fuel consumption: 18/27 miles per gallon
Length: 188.9 inches
Wheelbase: 106.7 inches
Curb weight: 3,628 pounds
Built: Germany

price for a CC with automatic is \$28,580, and the starting MSRP, including destination charge, for a CC with the same 3.6-liter, six-cylinder engine that's in the Passat is \$38,990.

The CC uses the Passat's platform in both front-wheel and all-wheel drive forms. But the exterior is different and beautifully done, with crisp lines and flared wheel wells on the sides and a roofline that's definitely coupe-like.

Overall, the CC is longer — by 0.6 inch — than a Passat. The CC also is a tad lower to the ground and 1.4 inches wider than a Passat.

But interior space isn't intruded upon, with even 6-footers able to sit in the back seats without heads brushing the ceiling. Just be aware



ASSOCIATED PRESS/Courtesy of Volkswagen

The 2009 Volkswagen CC has four doors, but is marketed as a coupe.

that rear-seat passengers will have smaller window views out the side because of the sizable pillar that's at each edge of the back window.

The test CC had VW's VR6 engine and plenty of power — 280 horses and 265 foot-pounds of torque at a low 2,750 rpm. The engine was mated to a six-speed automatic.

Acceleration came on steadily, but there was a bit of an artificial feel as the foot on the accelerator seemed perceptibly linked to electronics, rather than raw engine power. The sensation was

a bit of refinement mixed with electronic manipulation of engine response, and it left me feeling isolated from the car's workings. Engine sounds, while acceptable, were hardly sporty.

It's impossible to ignore the CC's wonderful interior craftsmanship. The test car, with a Cornsilk Beige two-toned interior, was a looker that impressed people. Once inside, everyone commented about the quality look and feel of materials, even the plastics, and the ride was quieter than they expected.