

SSDA SERVICE QUARTERLY



March
1995
\$10

An official publication of the Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan

What a price!

A price this low and lines this long were definitely a rare sight in Kalamazoo on February 4. SSDA member Mert Frost lowered the price of regular gas to a rock bottom 54 cents per gallon for two hours to bolster support for the Western Michigan University basketball team. Frost made a deal with fans to sell gas for a price per gallon equal to Central Michigan University's score. WMU beat CMU 71-54 on February 4. As you can see from this picture, fans wasted no time lining up.

Mert Frost is featured in this issue's "In Pictures" on pages 14 and 15. Also, on page 19, we're spotlighting SSDA members Tim Mariner and Chris Demo, who have both added sandwich shops to their stations. If you are hosting a community promotion, grand opening or other event please call Amy Johnston at (517) 484-4096 and we'll put you "In Pictures."



Ferry rides and fudge

SSDA returns to Mackinac Island for Annual Convention August 10-13

Leave your car on the mainland and bring your desire to learn and have fun to Mackinac Island August 10-13 for the SSDA-MI Annual Convention. It's been five years since SSDA members traveled to the island, and in that time we've been up north more than once and in Lansing last year. However, based



on many requests, the Convention Committee decided it was time to go back to Mackinac!

Attendees will be staying at the Lake View Hotel, which is in the heart of the shopping district and just steps away from the water. The Convention Committee and SSDA staff are currently working on an exciting agenda that includes educa-

tion, entertainment and plenty of free time.

We're planning valuable workshops on both repair facility and c-store management. Our three nights will include the President's Cocktail Reception and Dinner, a sunset Dessert Cruise through the Straits of Mackinac and a Western Night complete with a barbecue buffet and country line dancing! Your afternoons will be free for golf, tours of Fort Mackinac,

shopping and other great family activities.

Watch your mail for more information and registration materials, or call Amy Johnston at SSDA (517) 484-4096. We're looking forward to seeing you on Mackinac Island, one of Michigan's most popular destinations. Don't miss the boat, sign up right away!



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Dealer Jerry Armstrong maintains business success by peering beyond the present.



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Service Quarterly is published quarterly by the Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan, 200 North Capitol Ave., Suite 420, Lansing, Michigan 48933. ©1995, SSDA-MI. Subscription price to all members is free. All other U.S. subscriptions, \$40 per year. Prepayment of \$10 is required for single copy orders. Subscription inquiries call SSDA-MI at (517) 484-4096. Address all single copy requests along with payment to SSDA-MI, 200 N. Capitol, Suite 420, Lansing, Michigan 48933. Postmaster: Please send address changes to same.

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President's Corner

Dennis Sidorski, SSDA-MI President

In tough times the strength of SSDA comes through

This is the time of year when we are reflecting on our business and personal lives. It wasn't long ago that we were making New Year's resolutions and now some of us are finding the difficulty in sticking with them. It's also the time when we're making decisions for the business year and deciding what should change and what should stay the same.

We always plan for, and try to create, a business plan for a prosperous year.

But with the current market conditions, it's a difficult period for many. From regulatory problems to pricing margins to employee retention, our marketplace can be very rough. Many wonder what can be done, or where

can they turn.

SSDA members know they can turn to each other. It's times like these when you need the support and business advice of fellow dealers. For other dealers it's a time when you can lend a hand for the good of the industry. This is just another way the Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan helps dealers in an ever-changing industry.

The SSDA offers members many benefits and programs to help a business become successful. Programs that increase the bottom line, reduce fees and lower rates with premium dividends are

all structured to help dealers survive and improve their business position. One of the strengths of the Association is the Annual Convention, where dealers can learn from each other and better their position in the industry.

As we are reminded of how important we are as a group, we must stay involved to make the SSDA stronger. One way a member can contribute to the Association, and help the dealer network, is by encouraging others to join. We all know someone whose business could use a little boost, and who would benefit from the SSDA and

its close network of dealers. Maybe it's the guy across the street or a nearby dealer who you have known for years. It doesn't take much to let them know the SSDA exists for their benefit and that joining would put them in touch with others facing the same challenges.

As we look down our list of New Year's resolutions and cross off the ones that now seem impossible, we should make sure the commitment to bring one new member to our invaluable network of dealers is still on the list.

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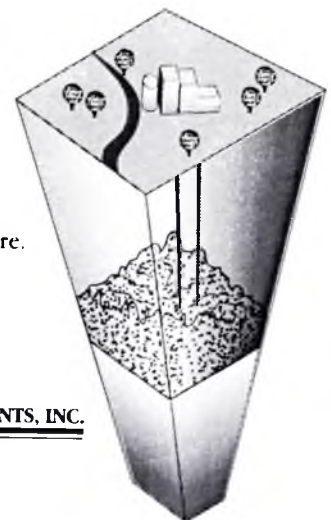
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Dealer looks beyond the obvious

By Amy Johnston

Dealer Jerry Armstrong is flipping through a photo album filled with "before and after" pictures of his BP station in Waterford. He points out the pile of rubble that is now the convenience store and the holes in the ground that are now the oil change pits in his service bays. It's hard to believe the clean, welcoming store front and repair area was a burned down fast food restaurant just six years ago. But Jerry has always looked beyond what is right in front of him.

Today he often predicts what service stations will have to do in the future to be successful. And he is adamant about changing with the times to give the customer what they want. For example, his oil change facilities were planned to help ensure his survival in an ever changing customer climate.

"I firmly believed at that time that fast oil change places were really taking away a lot of business from service stations," he said. "In order to compete, I had to offer the same thing."

Jerry still has his eye on the future. As he sits across from the two computers in his office, he explains how the future of auto repair will involve linking your office computer with the car's computer to diagnose any problems.

Jerry may be a seasoned professional with a passion for the business now, but he actually stumbled upon the gasoline retailing industry.

In the late 60's Jerry moved to Michigan from Tennessee with little else but ambition. "It was a deal where I didn't have any money. I was broke," he said. "I washed cars at a dealership and later they sent me to training (as a mechanic)."

Shortly after Jerry started working as a mechanic for a Pontiac dealership, he was drafted in the Vietnam War and then discharged. When he returned to Michigan, he decided working at a dealership wasn't for him. So in 1970 he went to work as a mechanic at a local Amoco station. In 1974 he became a partner in owning the station, and in 1980 he bought out his partner.

While he has been a station owner most of his career, Jerry is still a great mechanic above all else. It's a job he says he really loves. Maybe that's because working as a mechanic was how he met his wife Pam.

"I found him in the yellow pages," Pam exclaims with a laugh when asked how she met her husband.

Pam recalled how her car was snowed in and she found the station where Jerry worked in the phone book. When the tow truck arrived, Pam decided to have the car taken in so the transmission could be checked out. She remembers leaving the station with a new set of tires Jerry sold her.

"He sold me four tires which never held air so I had to keep coming back," Pam said. After the tires were replaced, she kept returning because Jerry was a mechanic she could really trust.

"I spent more time in his waiting room than I did at my apartment," she said.

Several years later, in 1984, they were married and

see *Dealer*

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Dealer Jerry Armstrong and his wife Pam in the coffee bar and candy area of his convenience store. The store also has a grocery section, cold drinks in coolers Jerry built himself and autocare supplies like antifreeze and oil.



Jerry Armstrong's BP was a fast food restaurant that burned down. This picture was taken when Jerry started rebuilding.



The former fast food restaurant now holds Jerry's c-store and repair shop.



Jerry's six pump islands sit on a corner right in front of a busy mall in Waterford.



Jerry, far right, near some of the diagnostic equipment in his repair area. The repair facility has two general repair bays and two separate drive up oil change pits.

FORMALITIES

- Started in the industry as a mechanic in 1968.
- Became a partner in an Amoco station in 1974. Became the sole owner in 1980.
- Opened his current Waterford location in 1989.
- A member of the SSDA since mid '70s.
- Married to wife Pam for more than 10 years.
- Daughter: Sherry, who is a nurse.

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Viewpoint

Terry Burns, executive director SSDA-MI

How many things are taken for granted daily at our businesses? Things like our location is clean and well-lit, gas will always be there, the coffee is always hot and fresh, the car will run right after we touch it, the cashier is well trained and courteous, and of course all dealers pay the same cost for gas.

We know that none of these can be taken for granted. From keeping the coffee hot to making sure there is gas in the ground takes a great deal of planning and organization. It is this type of work that no one sees. It is also this type of work that takes up most of our day. In today's market place the daily "chore" list can take eight hours, then we can get to the work we planned for the day.

Many of the things our Association does fall into the "take for granted" category.

What we take for granted often means more than anything else

Most of the time the best regulations on our industry have been those **not** imposed because of intervention by the Association. Our industry is overseen by almost every state agency. The amount of proposed regulation is unbelievable. One new proposal hits every location right at the **street price signs**.

It has been proposed that each county be allowed to levy an additional amount of gas tax to cover the cost of maintaining its highways. This would mean that at the intersection of 8 Mile and Dequindre (where Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties meet) the price difference

could be 5 to 8 cents per gallon just due to taxes.

Another scenario could be in the outstate area where gas volume is low but there are many miles of road to maintain. The county could impose a high tax in order to meet their costs.

This type of action would create havoc in the gasoline business. It would set up a potential black market for gasoline and a verification and tracking nightmare - all for the dealer to police. Also, the opposite of the desired outcome would take place. The county with the higher tax would lose volume to a nearby lower tax county,

causing the higher county to raise its tax further, and so forth.

We have seen what happens when this type of action is instituted. Cigarette sales at the Indiana border is one example. We don't need 83 county borders for gasoline.

SSDA is working with other associations in making sure the appropriate decision makers are informed about this issue. It is a big issue with us and one we won't let rest.

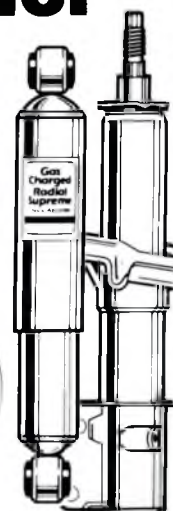
I hope this is another of the many regulations that we are able to fight off successfully so you never have to deal with it.

The next time you are asked "why should I be a part of the SSDA?" just go over to a well-lit part of your store, pour a cup of hot coffee and say "the reason I am a member of SSDA is because of all the things I take for granted."

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The *New* Secretary of State

hits the ground running

By Amy Johnston

Last August if you asked the political expert or the ordinary citizen who would be Secretary of State in 1995, the answer seemed to be an easy one: Richard Austin. Two months later political pundits and voters alike were backing away from their first instinct and calling a close race. In November, Candice S. Miller was elected Secretary of State in a narrow, but solid win over Austin. Not once did Miller doubt there would be a new Secretary of State this year.

Miller said she has always set her sights on higher office. Her track record proves it. She was elected a Harrison Township Trustee in 1979, and quickly became the youngest and first female Harrison Township Supervisor in 1980. After being re-elected two times, Miller ran for Macomb County Treasurer in 1992, and won.

Now just weeks into her new position as Secretary of

State, Miller readily acknowledges she has taken on a very full plate. She's also quick to say that she is a "high energy person" with a great team in place. "I surround myself with good people," she said.

Miller's high energy has boiled over onto the media, legislature and everyday citizens. She has already jump started several new programs. It's hard to dismiss that her enthusiasm is catching.

"This wasn't just a bunch of campaign lip service," she said.

The campaign was just the beginning. Miller now has to fill the seat of an impressive predecessor who over two decades turned the Secretary of State around. She said she has a great deal of respect for the last administration but the department can always be better. "The biggest room in my life is room for improvement," Miller said.

And the first place she wants to start is customer service. "I don't think it's hokey to say that you pay my salary," Miller said.

Since most citizens only have contact with the Secretary of State through the 181 branch offices, Miller said she is conducting a site by site survey of all branch locations to determine the most popular requests and the number of customers. She said currently some branches are overworked, while others are relatively slow.

Survey results so far show most people visit the Secretary of State to renew their vehicle registration. To reduce customer lines and make it easier for people to register, Miller said she wants to expand on the department's register by mail and fax programs.

Miller is also in the early stages of looking at a program which would let citizens renew their registration by phone. She said several states, including Wisconsin, already have such a service.

One of Miller's more prominent ideas though is changing the current blue and white license plates.

"We have so many beautiful sites and natural resources we should show off," she said.

Improving on Michigan plates further, Miller said she is working with a state legislator to introduce a bill that would allow specialty plates. These plates would cost more, but would let citizens show off their school pride with college/university plates like MSU, UofM and WMU.



Secretary of State Candice Miller behind her desk at the Treasury Building in downtown Lansing.

see *Secretary of State*

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News Briefs

OSHA delays asbestos standards compliance

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is expected to announce a delay in implementation of the

new asbestos exposure standards for brake jobs. The implementation date will be delayed from April 10 to July 10, 1995.

The delay will give OSHA enough time to issue new revisions to the final rule, including changes to brake

and clutch repair. OSHA has already announced they will permit the use of aerosol brake cleaners as full compliance with the new asbestos exposure standards. The aerosol cleaner can be used, like other methods, to meet OSHA compliance.

Dodson returns premium dividend to SSDA members

SSDA has announced that their endorsed workmans' compensation program through Dodson Insurance will be yielding a 13.5 percent premium dividend.

This program includes competitive rates and scheduled credits. It also rewards businesses owners who promote a safe working environment.

Participants will be receiving their dividends in late March.

If you do not currently participate with the Dodson Workers' Compensation program please call the SSDA at (517) 484-4096.

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Southeast Michigan redesignated by EPA

On February 13, 1995 EPA Administrator Carol Browner announced in Detroit the agency's approval of Southeast Michigan's application for redesignation. This approval by EPA makes Southeast Michigan the first major metropolitan area to achieve ozone attainment status following implementation of the Clean Air Act of 1990.

Among other factors, Detroit's ongoing AET testing program played a vital role in this redesignation effort.

In other news, the centralized AET program planned for Western Michigan has been put on hold by

the Engler administration pending attainment redesignation by the EPA.

Jobs Commission becomes state department

Governor John Engler recently signed an executive order providing for the Michigan Jobs Commission to become a permanent executive department.

"Making the Michigan Jobs Commission a department underscores my commitment to create even more good jobs for Michigan," Engler said. "In less than two years, the Jobs Commission has developed into the only comprehensive state economic and work force development agency in the country."

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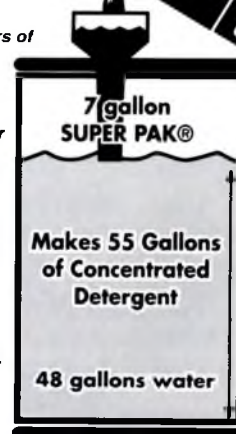
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Environmental Update

Dyck Van Koevering, SSDA-MI

Food service is one of the fastest growing additions to service stations nationwide. With this type of business comes extra licensing requirements for the owner/operator.

Both the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Michigan Department of Public Health (MDPH) have a hand in the regulation of food service establishments. In most cases you will need a license from only one or the other. What and how much you sell will determine which department will license your location.

In determining the percentage of sales, you only compute sales of grocery and direct consumption items. Beer, wine, liquor and gas are not included in this calculation. If **more than 50 percent** of your total sales are grocery items (cereals, canned goods, etc.) **and** you do not provide seats for customers, you need only to apply for a "Food Establishment License" from MDA. If **more than 50 percent** of your total sales are direct consumption items (hot dogs, sandwiches, donuts, etc.) **or** you provide seats, then you will be licensed by MDPH, which issues a "State Food Service License."

Those cases where an owner would have licenses from both departments would be limited mainly to situations where a dealer first opened a c-store, and later added a lunch counter. In such a situation, the dealer would keep his MDA Food Establishment License for the c-store, and MDPH would issue a State Food Service License for the lunch counter.

If you need an MDA Food Establishment License, the process is as follows:

1. Contact the MDA

Regional office nearest you. If you do not know where that is, or can not find it in the phone book, contact the MDA Food Division office in Lansing at 517/373-3333 for the number.

2. During that conversation you can make arrangements for an MDA inspector to visit your location, and an informational packet to be sent to you. Inspection of your location is a prerequisite to obtaining an MDA license, unless you are changing ownership of an already inspected location.

MDA Food Establishment Licenses cost \$15 for locations of 1,000 square feet or less, and \$52 for locations of more than 1,000 square feet. Licenses are good for one year, with a March 31 renewal and billing cycle. MDA randomly inspects licensed locations.

Should you need a MDPH State Food Service License, follow these steps:

1. Contact your local county public health depart-

ment.

2. Again, you will need to arrange for an inspector to visit your location to determine what you wish to sell and what food service machines you will be operating.

Your license fee will depend on the location of your store and square footage, and varies from \$50 to \$400. MDPH licenses are good for one year, with an April 30 renewal and billing cycle. MDPH inspects licensed facilities every six months.

For those falling under the MDPH operating in Wayne or Livingston Counties, there are additional requirements. For locations in Wayne and Livingston Counties, excluding the City of Detroit, the county public health departments require that one person from each location complete the Michigan Food Service Manager Certification Program. The program consists of a 16-20 hour class and final exam on food service management. Those passing the course re-

ceive a "Michigan Food Service Manager Certification" that is good as long as the certified person remains in the food service business. This program certifies the person, not the location, and is thus transferable as the person moves between employers. The Michigan Food Service Manager Certification Program costs \$125 per person in Livingston County, and \$199 per person in Wayne County. Contact your local county public health department for dates and times of the program. In Wayne County call 313/961-1800 and in Livingston County call 517/546-9850.

For those locations operating within the City of Detroit, the city public health department requires that all employees working with the food served obtain a "Food Handler's Card." To obtain the card, employees must at-

see *Food* pg. 21

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Membership

Terry Burns, SSDA-MI

Survivorship

An article in the December 17 issue of the *Detroit Free Press* proved again the value of the SSDA. The article detailed the termination of a dealer's franchise upon the death of the franchisee. Therefore, disallowing the spouse to continue operating the location. That action is exactly what the Federal law permits. However, Michigan law permits the franchisee to designate a successor. This law, adopted in 1990, is due to a substantial effort by the members of SSDA. Specifically under this law you can:

Designate a surviving spouse, child, stepchild, son-in-law or daughter-in-law as your beneficiary for the station if you die. In addition, you may designate a secondary beneficiary.

Transfer (sell) your franchise to a third party, with the company holding the right of first refusal except in the case of family members (spouse, children, stepchildren, in-laws) where the company has no right of refusal.

This legislation is taken for granted by many dealers, but without it the above occurrence would be commonplace. This was an issue well worth fighting for. It exemplifies the Association's commitment to Michigan dealers.

If you have not filled out a survivorship form, now is the time. Members who need a survivorship form please call the SSDA at (517) 484-4096. The time you take to fill it out will be well spent. The five minutes it takes could have changed the entire outcome of the station profiled in the paper.

Survivorship pays; MUSTFA still in limbo

MUSTFA

At the time of this writing no decisions have been made regarding MUSTFA. However, the number of proposals are endless. The proposals range from totally discontinuing the program to asking for an additional 3

cents per gallon tax to fully fund the present program.

The climate in the legislature does not lend itself to the 3 cent gas tax increase, so some type of middle ground is expected. The option selected most definitely will include private insurance along with state participation.

Also proposed by the DNR is a clean-up standard change. This change would include a risk based approach to clean-ups with more acceptable standards. This would expedite clean-ups and give owners/operators more options in determining how they can handle their sites.

Hearings are to be held beginning March 14 and members will be notified on the progress of this very important issue.

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Dealer cuts price

SSDA member gives a great deal on gas to WMU fans

One of dealer Mert Frost's regular customers turned to him while she was pumping gas February 4 and said "Mert you're crazy!" The many customers who sat in their cars in a line that stretched through a shopping center parking lot weren't questioning Frost's sanity, they were just waiting to save almost 50 percent on a fill-up.

Frost, a longtime SSDA member, joined with Western Michigan University as the official sponsor of the big WMU vs. Central Michigan University basketball game on February 4. And he made a deal with fans. Frost promised to sell gas from 4:30-6:30 p.m. for a price per gallon that was equal to the number of points CMU scored. The final score of the game: WMU 71, CMU 54.

Cars were lined up 40 minutes before the promotion began at Frost's two Kalamazoo locations. The lines never let up. Frost said he and his son, and partner, Jack had to cut off the line or they would've been selling gas for 54 cents long into the night. They were pumping 1,500 gallons an hour.



SSDA member Mert Frost



Vehicles pack face to face in the pumping area at Frost Standard on W. Main Street in Kalamazoo. Mert Frost said he sold 1,500 gallons of gas an hour during the two hour promotion.



Customers line up outside of Mert Frost's station on Michigan Avenue in downtown Kalamazoo on February 4, after Western Michigan University beat Central Michigan University in basketball 71-54. Frost sold gas from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. for 54 cents per gallon - equal to the number of points CMU scored. Shortly after 4 p.m. cars were already forming a line the length of two city blocks.



SSDA member Mert Frost shows his WMU pride at his station on W. Main Street in Kalamazoo. The Bronco's win over CMU gave fans 54 cent gas courtesy of Mr. Frost. Cars lined up at both the West and East sides of the station to take advantage of the great deal.

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Don't waste chance to use PMPA as your tool for change

The amendments to PMPA accomplish a number of long needed changes to the Act. The statute is still far from perfect. But these modifications have the potential for providing dealers with better opportunities to preserve the investment in their businesses. Among the changes is an addition to a crucial definition section. That fix will permit the states to prevent some of the more outrageous impositions on dealers.

As originally adopted, PMPA was intended to be the sole law regulating the relationship between dealers and suppliers. The U.S. Constitution permits Congress to adopt laws that supersede those of the states. Congress often does so, preempting state laws that are in conflict. On the whole, this system works well. It prevents the states from canceling Federal law by adopting laws that are not as strong. For example, Congress has adopted laws regulating the content of certain foods. The states cannot pass laws that permit including substances that Congress has forbidden.

As applied to PMPA, the Courts have found that the Act completely preempts all state law dealing with termination and non-renewal of franchises. Thus various state laws that attempted to limit the right of a supplier to end a franchise are unenforceable to the extent that they are dif-

ferent than PMPA. This has resulted in the invalidation of some outstanding state laws.

For example, an excellent Virginia statute was found to be preempted and unenforceable. The statute regulated a number of franchise terms, including rent (which was required to be "commercially reasonable"). But a restrictive court decision found the statute void. The court found that the statute restricted the circumstances under which a franchise could be terminated. PMPA did not require that rent be reasonable, only that the rent amount be determined in "good faith" and the "normal course of business." Hence, under PMPA, rents can be outrageously high. But the high rents are permissible if the rent was not adopted for the purpose of forcing the dealer out of business and was determined in a non-discriminatory manner. However, the Virginia statute added an additional restriction. And the court concluded that the restriction actually limited the ability of a franchiser to terminate or non-renew a franchise.

Many readers of the decision were appalled at the court's reasoning. It extended preemption in a manner that few could defend. Yet the decision stands as an example of how PMPA has been construed against dealers. And, without Congressional assistance, it would make impossible state regulation of fran-

chises.

Few dealers would argue that franchise regulation is needed. PMPA has been no help in resolving many problems dealers face. Rents have escalated out of sight. Many dealers have no control over the hours their facilities must be open. Dealers are sometimes required to post massive amounts of cash with their suppliers as "security." These deposits are usually kept without interest. They amount to free loans to the suppliers. These are but a few of the numerous legitimate complaints dealers have about franchise terms.

States have regulated franchise terms in other industries. There is no reason why states should be shy about protecting dealers. And the PMPA amendments may permit that regulation.

The amendments add new language to the definitions section. *A dealers' "failure" can no longer include a failure to comply with a franchise provision that is illegal or unenforceable under state law.* This language is intended to permit the states to determine whether a dealer's treatment is fair. As written, the drafters explain that states will now be able to determine when rents are no longer fair or reasonable; when hours are excessive; when deposits are unreasonable. The changes license the states to regulate franchises. This is a long overdue

change.

There is some considerable irony here. When adopted, PMPA was intended to even out regulation of franchise termination and non-renewal. The idea was to get the states out of the business of dealer regulation. But we have had a decade and a half of restrictive construction of the Act. So we must now return to the states for help.

Michigan dealers can hope that the legislature will view their problems with sympathy. But we have a lot of work to do in order to gain the attention of representatives and senators. We cannot hope to simply present a bill regulating rent or hours and have it adopted, much less signed by the Governor. We must be prepared to explain how suppliers have taken advantage of dealers; how rents have been used as a tool to control prices; how hours have been imposed on dealers to the extent that that dealers operate at a loss at times. We cannot hope to accomplish all our goals immediately or even soon. But the PMPA amendments have provided us with a tool that was not previously available.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. But we now have an opportunity to resolve dealer problems that the law withheld before. We should not waste this chance.



Irony of federal deficit

The incredible thing about the federal debt is that we actually got into this terrible shape by buying from the lowest bidder.

U.S. taxes not the highest

SSDA members, here's one item you should not share with your employees. The Tax Foundation, an outfit which tracks taxes of all types, learned recently that the U.S. taxpayer spends 33.4 percent of their personal income on a variety of tax levies.

Five other highly industrialized nations make larger forays into their taxpayer's wallets. It may help you feel a little better to know that Japan obtains 33.9 percent of its taxpayer's income. Britain hits its subjects for 40.2 percent of their income. Our Canadian neighbor removes 43.8 percent of an individual's income for a variety of levies, while Germany nips its taxpayers for 44.9 percent and France fleeces its taxpayers for 49.1 percent of their income each year.

It takes longer now to pay taxes

The Tax Foundation figures each U.S. taxpayer worked until May 3 to pay off their tax obligations. Consequently, it may interest you to know that in 1913, when the scorecard started, taxpayers worked until January 30 to pay their tax obligations. The "tax freedom" date has been extended every year. Using this basis of taxation, it would appear that we could eliminate our taxes by taking the first four months off each year.

Tidbits from taxes to computers

It would appear that our government's finances are being greatly influenced by economists, and according to George Bernard Shaw, "if all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion."

Unemployment rules change

Millions of Americans aren't working but thank God, they have jobs!

MESC Reforms change the formulas.

The Michigan Employment Security Commission is realigning the methods by which you will report, and they will pay, future unemployment benefits. In a recent publication by the independent Accountants Association of Michigan, the new MESC guidelines and, consequently some of the old, were reviewed. Some of the significant changes that you can look for are:

1. **BASE PERIOD:** Rather than qualifying on the basis of the most recent 52 weeks, the base period will be the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters. If a person is unable to qualify on that basis, then the last four completed quarters will be considered.

2. **QUALIFYING WAGES:** Rather than using a minimum of 20 credit weeks, wage records will use the total base period earnings. A person must earn at least one and a half times the high quarter

wages to qualify. (In other words, claimants must have earned at least \$900 in their high quarter and a total base period earnings of \$1,350 to qualify for unemployment benefits.) The (AEQ) Alternate Earnings Qualifier will continue as an alternate means of qualifying. However, earnings will be required in at least two calendar quarters.

3. **WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT:** Rather than using 70 percent of after tax earnings, MESC will use the calculation of 4.2 percent of the high quarter earnings plus \$6 per dependent (up to five dependents). This is a weekly benefit calculator. The maximum will be the same as under the current law which is frozen at \$293 per week at least until the end of 1996.

4. **BENEFIT DURATION:** Rather than 75 percent of credit weeks (subject to a maximum of 26 weeks), MESC will use 40 percent of the base period wages divided by the weekly benefit amount (subject to the same 26 weeks maximum).

5. **BENEFIT CHARGING:** Rather than charging in inverse chronological order, the separating employer (who pays at least \$938 or seven times the weekly benefit amount) will be charged with the first two weeks of benefits and the base period employers will be charged proportionately for any remaining benefit payments.

Want better computer management?

There is no such thing as a perfect solution. Every solution, no matter how good, creates new problems. And so it goes with your problem solving computer.

When you become frustrated with the performance of your computer, have you asked yourself how you can better manage time performance? Here are some suggestions for improvements, courtesy of "Communications Briefing."

1. Leave the computer on during the work day. Time spent waiting for your start up software to load is time wasted.

2. Use a screen saver to avoid "ghost images."

3. Combine tasks within the same program or use an all-in-one "Works" program. Switching among different applications wastes time.

4. When possible, save all your word processing for a single session. The same goes for the other programs that you use regularly.

5. Use templates for repetitive tasks. Prepare a document the way you want it and make copies to use as templates for the next letter, fax, etc.

see *Business* pg. 22

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- A.**
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Please send the application below to SSDA, 200 N. Capitol Suite 420, Lansing, MI 48933

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP	
I (we), by submitting this application and the payment of scheduled dues, hereby apply for membership in the Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan, Inc.	
BUSINESS NAME: _____	
BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____	
CITY: _____	MI ZIP: _____ PHONE: () _____
COUNTY: _____	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP: <input type="checkbox"/> CORPORATE <input type="checkbox"/> NON-CORPORATE <small>SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP PARTNERSHIP</small>
ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND A CHECK FOR _____	
PLEASE CHARGE MY MEMBERSHIP TO MY MC OR VISA (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE) CARD # AND EXP. DATE: _____	
PLEASE BILL ME	
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:	ANNUAL ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP DUES:
_____ \$41 monthly (electronic banking)	_____ \$25 monthly (electronic banking)
_____ \$480 annual payment	_____ \$250 annual payment
Add \$120 per station after four stations.	
_____	_____
Signature	Date
December 1994 SQ	

Let's do lunch

SSDA members add sandwich shops for increased sales

The term "gas station" hardly describes the businesses of many SSDA members. Dealers are adding or expanding c-stores and upgrading bays. And as part of the newest trend, they're adding fast food restaurants. SSDA member Chris Demo opened his Subway restaurant the first of the year and fellow member Tim Mariner opened a Blimpie Restaurant right before Christmas. Mariner said c-stores and fast food restaurants go economically hand in hand. "It's much less expensive to do one in a c-store," Mariner said. "A lot of your fixed expenses are already there."



Dealer Chris Demo's station sign in Clare.



Dealer Tim Mariner's station sign in Dutton, just south of Grand Rapids.



Tanya Hatmaker, manager of Tim Mariner's Blimpie restaurant, prepares a sandwich. The Blimpie restaurant is inside Mr. Mariner's c-store and offers three booths for in-store eating. Next to sandwiches and soups, the restaurant also serves breakfast.



The sign says it all. Chris Demo's Marathon station, right off the highway in Clare, features a Subway restaurant with in-store dining, an ice-cream shop, self-serve food items, like hotdogs as well as a complete c-store. Mr. Demo also recently added a bank machine.



SSDA member Chris Demo's Subway restaurant blends in well with his station, while maintaining the Subway identity with employee uniforms, neon signs and menu boards. The restaurant offers the complete Subway menu.



SSDA Board Member Tim Mariner at the counter of his Blimpie restaurant in his BP station in Dutton.

New Members

The Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan would like to welcome the following new members. These dealers are joining hundreds of others who realize that together we can ensure the success of the independent gasoline retailer.

•**Russel Banks**, Banks Oil, Lincoln Park. Mr. Banks has been a Marathon dealer since 1970. His station, which includes a self-serve c-store, is located in what Banks calls a "very supportive neighborhood" near Detroit. He said the market climate in his area is constantly changing, and that is one reason he joined SSDA. Mr. Banks said he joined to stay on top of all the new laws, especially in the environmental area. "There's no other representation for a dealer period," he said.

•**David Flannery**, Flannery's Mobil Service, Pleasant Lake. Mr. Flannery has owned his Mobil station with repair bays for eight years. He said he really likes the rural community of Pleasant Lake because it is nice and small.

Mr. Flannery joined SSDA to take advantage of the Blue Cross health insurance program and other member benefits.

•**David Taylor**, 13 & Crooks Sunoco, Royal Oak. Mr. Taylor started working at his Sunoco station as a "gas jockey" 14 years ago. He has owned the location for four years, and in that time he said they have tripled gas and repair sales. His station is an Ultra Service Center franchise with a c-store, repair bays and eight nozzles. He said he joined SSDA because he was impressed with what the Association was doing for dealers throughout the state. "Everybody I talked to could say nothing bad about SSDA," he said.

In Memory of

Our hearts go out to the following men and their families and friends.

Al Polich, 83, of Warren died February 1, 1995. Mr. Polich was a member of SSDA since 1948.

John Berezny, 69, of Flint died February 13, 1995. Mr. Berezny was a member of SSDA since 1951.

Jim Griffin, 68, of Madison Heights died February 13, 1995. Mr. Griffin was a member of SSDA since 1988.

Gregory Davis, son of Shell dealer Willie Davis of Detroit.

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The proposed specialty plates also include one with a view of the Mackinac Bridge. Miller said it has not yet been decided where the money raised from specialty plates would go.

While vehicle registration is the most visible function of the Secretary of State, it is not the only job Miller has her mind on.

"People will see me cheerleading in different areas," she said.

The Bureau of Automotive Regulation falls in Miller's lap. She said she has no immediate plans to make changes in that bureau. She is, however, interested in feedback, especially from members of the Service Station Dealers Association. Miller said open communication with involved citizens, like SSDA members, is the best way for her to guarantee she is doing her job right.

The Secretary of State also oversees the Bureau of Elections. Miller said this is an area she takes very seriously and she will be aggressive on election laws no matter what political party is affected.

"All partisan politics will be kept out of

the election process," she said.

There is nothing wrong with Political Action Committees, Miller said, as long as the public has access to campaign finance reports. She said the public has a right to know who is giving to campaigns and how much they are giving.

Then there are the "fun" parts of her job, like overseeing the Bureau of History, which is responsible for historical markers, the state archives, as well as the Michigan Historical Museum and all of its satellite locations. She said it's disturbing that most citizens have never visited the multi-million dollar Michigan Historical Library and Museum in downtown Lansing. In an effort to draw people in, Miller said her department will help coordinate the grand opening of the 20th Century exhibit at the museum — the first grand opening at the facility since it opened in 1989.

In looking back on her own campaign, Miller said it was actually a lot of fun. With the constant encouragement of supporters, she said she knew all along she would be the next Secretary of State.

tend a one to two hour class given by the City of Detroit Public Health Department. The cost of the class is \$5. Again, this card, which is re-issued yearly, certifies the person, not the location, and is thus transferable as the person changes employment. For times and dates call 313/876-4140.

SSDA also contacted the Public Health Departments of Kent, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, Ingham, Muskegon, Berrien, and Grand Traverse counties, none of which require any additional certification or licensing at this time.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this issue, please call the SSDA at 517/484-4096.

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Pam has become an important part of the business. It's a good thing she enjoys the work, because there's no tearing Jerry away from it.

"This is what he loves to do," Pam said.

Jerry passes along this affection for his work to employees and customers. He feels it's important to give employees a reason to want to work. Jerry offers his employees Blue Cross insurance through the SSDA, flexible scheduling and a tuition reimbursement program for any kind of post high school education. In taking that extra step for employees, Jerry recently took care of mechanic Bill Groves' two daughters when Groves' and his wife went to Las Vegas courtesy of a Tire Wholesalers distributor promotion. Jerry and Bill earned enough points for the Vegas trip with help from the SSDA/Tire Wholesalers program which gives extra points to SSDA members.

Customers also get Jerry's undivided attention, and most of the time they don't even know it. "I sit here with my office door open so I can hear what people are saying," he said. "In the garage if you just listen you can get a feel for what people are most often bringing their cars in for. I think the customer tells you what you should be doing."

Customer response must be great, because Jerry is in the process of hopefully opening a new location near Port Huron. He said while it's a chance for himself to grow, it's also an opportunity for his best employees to branch out and play an important role in the business.

Next to employees and customers, Jerry said another reason for his success is membership with SSDA. "We all

have to have our own organization that will better our industry and that is dedicated to our survival," he said.

Pam looks at the SSDA as a team approach that is essential in today's marketplace. "You can not stand alone in this world today," she said. "You have to contribute to your environment. This is a team world."

Jerry, who has been a member since the mid 1970's, added, "If it wasn't for the dealers association we wouldn't have a voice in Lansing, we wouldn't have PMPA, we wouldn't have survivorship, we wouldn't have reasonable workers' compensation..."

After reflecting on his career in the gasoline retailing industry, Jerry is ready to give the grand tour of his station. He starts by showing off the coolers he built himself because money was tight; then he walks over to the coffee bar which has been reworked more than once to meet customer needs; after pointing out the six pump islands outside, he walks through a door into the repair area which is complete with oil change pits, diagnostic equipment and rows of tires. You can see his pride in knowing he built this successful business himself, with help from Pam, employees, customers and the SSDA.

The SSDA is proud to have innovative businessmen like Jerry Armstrong as members. Jerry demonstrates the sharp mind, professional attitude and love for the industry that is so prevalent in all our members. On the side, Jerry is also a distributor for Compatible Software Systems and a Service Quarterly advertiser.

Business

from pg. 17

6. Upgrade your equipment. Buy more ram or a faster computer, with two to four megabytes of ram you can work in only one program at a time. With eight to 10 megabytes, you can run several different programs at the same time and switch back and forth as needed. Also, upgrade to faster computers. Switch to laser printers and

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Supplier Spotlight

ROYAL EQUIPMENT

Car wash supply company cleaning up after only 5 years

In 1990 Mike Reijonen started Royal Equipment and Supply out of a rental house in Kalamazoo. The office was in the living room, the garage served as the warehouse and Reijonen



Royal Equipment's booth at the SSDA Trade Show in Lansing.

made deliveries out of the trunk of his Mercury Cougar. "I moved out here on a shoestring," Reijonen said, sitting behind his desk in Royal's third location in the last four years.

Now, five years later his company is outgrowing its current location and Reijonen and Vice President Stan Brueck are faced with doubling both their sales and employees. It's a predicament that has blessed the car wash equipment and supply company each year they've been in business. Royal's sales tripled from the first to second year and have doubled every year since. That means Reijonen expects gross sales of \$6 million at the end of this year and an increase in employees

from 15 to 30.

Reijonen and Brueck know this kind of success is not just good luck. They pride themselves on a diverse product line and customer service that backs up their commitment to quality. "Service is our main focal point. If there is a problem with a car wash we want it handled as soon as possible," Reijonen said.

Royal Equipment representatives call every customer once a week to see if there is anything they need, whether it be a refill on soap or repairs. "We never leave the customer in a lurch," Reijonen said.

Royal is an exclusive distributor of the Mark VII line of self-serve and touch-free



Stan Brueck, left, and Mike Reijonen of Royal Equipment.

car washes for service stations. They also offer a diverse line of companion products including: Air Lift Doors, Ambi-Red Heaters, Nu-Towel, Cat Pumps, Industrial Vac, and Turtle Wax.

For more information feel free to call Mike or Stan of Royal Equipment at 800-526-1508.

TIRE WHOLESALERS

Celebrating 25 years of making the wheels spin

Twenty five years ago Ross Kogel started a one-man business in Southfield with a bit of ambition and lots of tires. Today Tire Wholesalers has grown to almost 50 employees, and customers all over Michigan.

Tire Wholesalers is exactly that, a dealers link to popular tires at an even more popular price. TW's inventory includes brand names such as Cordovan, Armstrong and Dunlop. They also carry shocks, wheels and other repair materials.

"We're there so the tire dealer can make a profit and still maintain a low inven-

tory," said Jon Meyers, marketing and sales manager for Tire Wholesalers.

Recently Tire Wholesalers teamed up with SSDA to make selling tires even more beneficial for dealers. SSDA members who are also Tire Wholesalers customers earn extra points toward TW prizes and trips. Tire Wholesalers started the point program as a way to thank their best customers. When a dealer buy tires they earn points, and those points can add up to a trip to Vegas, a fishing trip up north and other prizes. Now SSDA members get points just for being a member!

One of the biggest incen-

tives to buying through Tire Wholesalers is their customer service. A full staff is on hand everyday from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. to answer questions and take orders. Dealers can get their tires delivered within a week, if not the next day. TW representatives who travel the state are available for advice on selling and inventory

Kogel has said three factors are responsible for the company's growth: a strong

customer service program, aggressive marketing, and continued investment toward inventory during economic cutbacks in the rest of the industry.

Tire Wholesalers make being the "middle man" something to be proud of. They make it that much easier for a dealer to serve their customers. For more information on Tire Wholesalers call (810) 589-9910.



The Tire Wholesalers distribution center in Troy.

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