

The History of a Successful Trade Association, Part 11

by Phil Singer



In the December 1962 edition of Automotive Retailer it was announced that ten new members had joined the ARA the previous month, and no fewer than 34 had signed up between July 23rd and August 31st. The growth of the ARA in its first decade of existence had been phenomenal and as 1962 came to a close it looked like the trend would continue. And why not? The value of the Association to its members was unquestionable.

Japan's Datsun bids for share of B.C. car market

Attracting attention on the roads of British Columbia in late 1962 were the "Bluebird" and "Fairlady" models from a Japanese auto manufacturer so new to Canada that they were still rarities. Joe Kuzik's Rotary Motors, at 60 West Broadway in Vancouver, had been selling Datsun cars since August and by the end of the year had already sold enough of them to be optimistic about their appeal to the Canadian market.

Made by Nissan Motor Company, the Datsun brand represented part of only a foot in the door by the Japanese automobile industry, but they were able to sell competitively here despite Canadian austerity, which confronted them with a total of 27.5 percent in duty.

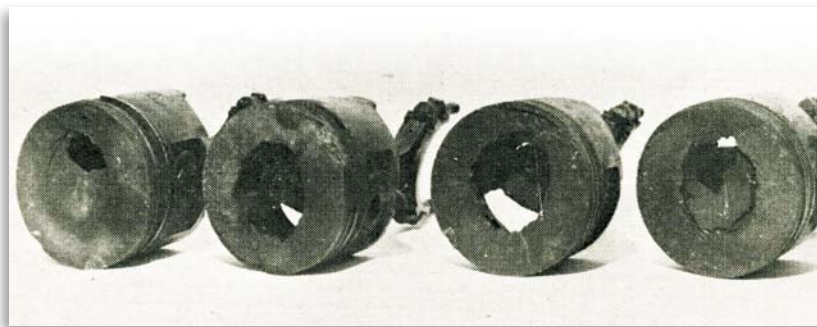
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were about half Canadian, as much of their steel parts were made from Canadian iron ore and the Japanese workers ate bread and noodles made from Canadian wheat.

Burnaby MLA Harry Bloy owns one of these rare Datsun Fairladies. I met Harry at an automobile meeting function. We discovered have something in common: we talked about collector cars, as I have a Dodge Dart Swinger.

Caveman tuning

The ARA's publication, Automotive Retailer not only served as a communication tool to inform members of automotive issues and Association business, but it was also an educational tool. The January 1963 issue featured an article on the dos and don'ts of supercharging, a popular method of pouring on the power, but which could pulverize pistons when not administered by an expert. The photo of a set of pistons with holes in them illustrated what can happen as a result



Piston damage caused by one mistake piled on another.

of "caveman tuning" – ignorance of other modifications akin to supercharging an engine. This piston damage was nicknamed a "compound fracture", as one mistake was piled on top of another. Hi-boost on top of high compression with no attempt to modify spark advance resulted detonation smashed piston crowns. The article warned of the problem and gave suggestions for work-arounds.

ARA President & CEO Dale Finch races funny cars with superchargers plus nitrous gas and he'll tell you about low compression pistons and other factors that make it a fun day.

Common Dependence

In an editorial comment, the ARA pointed out that retailers and manufacturers share a dependence on government action (or suffer from the lack thereof). Both want politicians to create a business climate that fosters a freer and expanding retail market, less bound by restrictive influences.

"On both the provincial and federal level," the editorial explained, "what is done in legislative halls can help or hinder you. Through your trade association you have a voice, loud and clear, that will be heard in Victoria and Ottawa whenever your interests are affected. You couldn't do it alone." Nearly 50 years later, we couldn't say it any better!

New Blood

Were young people being attracted to the industry and into the ARA in the early 1960s? 20-year-old Wane Hamilton, of Brentwood on Vancouver Island was made manager of the Brentwood Texaco Station after Carl Richmond retired for health reasons. The youth had worked for Mr. Richmond for more than two years.



Here was yet another example of the ARA providing a voice for its members, not just airing grievances, but also offering solutions.

More business advice from ARA

“Too many retailers either do not understand the Mechanic’s Lien Act, have forgotten about it, or are just too busy (careless?) to make proper use of it. This costs you money,” the ARA reminded members in early 1963, and this still holds true today so it is worth repeating:

1. You MUST have the customer’s signature approving your repairs. Whenever a customer does not pay in full at the time of taking delivery of the repaired car, get him/her to sign the bill acknowledging the amount of indebtedness
2. Make out the proper lien form. Do NOT USE stationery company forms, or the wrongly worded forms supplied by some bailiffs.
3. Be absolutely sure you have the correct serial number; this is the key to getting your lien properly recorded.

Call the office of the Automobile Retailers’ Association for assistance. It’s one of the member services the association provides.

You can’t keep a good man down

After convalescing from a serious illness, long-time ARA field representative Reg Thomas was out of the hospital and would soon return to work, announced the Automotive Retailer in February 1963.

Gas prices a hot topic

Manipulation of gasoline prices was an issue bubbling to the surface in early 1963. It was evident that industrial, commercial and off-brand accounts were able to purchase gas at an unreasonably low prices and as a result, the price paid by motorists was too high. The ARA spoke on behalf of the retailers, saying that the industry opposed any form of government “takeover” of the industry or undue regulation. Instead, the Association suggested a “Gasoline Handling Act” that would assure fair pricing for the motoring public by, among other measures, evoking a “prohibition against any form

of consignment-commission arrangements designed to control pricing or fixed dealer margins.” Here was yet another example of the ARA providing a voice for its members, not just airing grievances, but also offering solutions.

Quality Swedish import car takes out Canadian papers

Volvo of Sweden would become the first manufacturer from outside North America to make automobiles in Canada. The Swedish firm announced plans to convert a former sugar refinery in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia to an automobile assembly plant and applied for tariff concessions to get the project underway.

Volvo (the word means “I Go” in Latin) was one of the 100 largest industrial firms in the world outside the United States at the time. In addition to its automobiles, it makes trucks, farm implements, aircraft engines, tools, printing presses and marine and industrial engines. The first Volvo car ever sold in Canada was in 1957, in Vancouver.

ARP publishes flat rate manual for import cars

In February 1963, the Automotive Retailers Publishing Company began taking advance orders for an Import Car Flat Rate Manual that it would soon produce. The book would cover service and repair flat rates for 34 makes of imported cars and could be ordered for five dollars.

One of the 17 new members to join the ARA in February 1963 was Marpole Radiators. Gary Closter bought Marpole Radiators in 1980 and merged with Ash Khosla at Paul’s Radiators in 2001. Ash had purchased Paul’s Radiator in 1985.

Deeley Takes on New Lines

Takeover of Mercedes Benz distribution in Canada by the Studebaker organization would result in closure of the big Mercedes Benz operation on West Georgia in Vancouver by April 1st 1963. From that date on, Mercedes owners and buyers would be served by Fred Deeley Ltd. on West Broadway.

Fred Deeley Ltd., a name almost synonymous with the British Motor Corporation line in North America, was the newest outlet in B.C. for Studebaker cars and the addition of Mercedes made it something of a United Nations of automobiles. ... Canadian made



The latest in communications technology advertised by B.C. Telephone Company in 1963: the teletype machine and the radiotelephone.

light you can carry them.”

B.C. government eyes compulsion in certification of mechanics

In April 1963 the ARA reported that the British Columbia government had taken a big step toward compulsory tradesman’s certification. The Apprenticeship and Tradesmen’s Qualification Act had now been amended to provide for the compulsory certification of tradesman at the discretion of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council with respect to the designated trades throughout the province.

In the words of L. R. (Leslie) Peterson, Minister of Labour and Education, the amendment was designed to promote “the principle that all persons working in designated trades should be competent.”

In a speech in the House, Mr. Peterson expressed the government’s disappointment that voluntary certification of tradesmen had not worked. He observed that the province of Ontario had also tried voluntary certification but later made it compulsory because of lack of participation. Therefore, he concluded, the handwriting was on the wall for B.C. Does this sound familiar? (HST)

The Minister declared: “Persons requiring the services of tradesmen should have some assurance that those people are fully qualified and competent to do the skilled work required. Without belaboring the proposition, thousands of dollars are wasted on automobile repairs alone because of the inadequately trained auto-mechanic. The wasteful cost of unsatisfactory workmanship in all trades would be incalculable.”

The government advised the Automotive Retailers’ Association that it had no plan to make mechanic certification compulsory at this time. And before it would be made compulsory, application would have to be made for it and the trade given ample notice. It was obvious from Mr. Peterson’s remarks, however, the direction in which the Government was leaning.

Fast forward to 2010 and the ARA is still working with the government on the idea of compulsory licensing for automotive technicians.

In the next installment of this series the ARA expresses its opinion on discounts for insurance companies and prepares for its 1963 Annual General Meeting and Convention.

Editor’s note: Phil Singer has been an active member of the ARA for most of his 40+ years in the BC auto industry. He is also an advocate for auto apprenticeship programs and has served as an advisor on a number of committees for auto trades training. More recently, Phil has begun serving the ARA as a consultant for the Mechanical Repair Division.

Last fall, Phil took over writing duties of this series on the history of the ARA begun by the late Ron Baldwin. This is Phil’s fifth installment. ■

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Studebakers, American-made Avanti, British made Austin’s, and soon German-made Mercedes Benz.

The pioneer firm was founded 50 years earlier (now 97 years ago) by Fred Deeley SR. Mr. Deeley started with a bicycle and motorcycle shop on Granville Street and took on the Austin line in 1931 at a time when small cars were considered impractical in this part of the world.

NATA and ARA active on gas marketing issues

In March 1963 the National Automotive Trades Association (NATA) issued a “Plea for Action” pressing for relief as abuses in the gasoline marketing industry worsened. NATA outlined five steps toward free enterprise for small business in a brief submitted to the Minister of Justice on Ottawa.

Meanwhile, in the final hours of the 1963 session of the B.C. Legislature, members voted unanimously to accept MLA Cyril Shelford’s motion to consider a Royal Commission investigation into petroleum marketing in the province.

One third of vehicles tested fail safety inspection

Vancouver’s famed Motor Vehicle Inspection Station was now going into its 25th year of operation, after having inspected more than five million vehicles. During the 48th inspection period (September 4, 1962, to February 18, 1963) the station inspected 117,742 vehicles. Almost 30 percent failed the test the first time through, an indication that nearly one third of the vehicles on Vancouver streets required some manner of repair to get them into safe running order. The biggest cause of rejection was faulty headlamps. Other causes were (in order of frequency) inadequate service brakes, steering mechanism, number plates and rear plate light, stop light, muffler and exhaust system, parking brake, etc. During this inspection period, virtually one half of the vehicles passing through the station were over five years old.

New communications devices

B.C. Tel advertised new communications devices (contraptions?) in the pages of Automotive Retailer: the teletype machine and the radiotelephone. The teletype machine boasted speeds of up to 100 words a minute and the radiotelephones were touted as being “so