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HOUSTON CHRONICLE CUSTOM PUBLISHING GROUP

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GAS PRICES

COMPARING
GAS PRICES
THROUGHOUT
HOUSTON

\$2.44 Katy Chevron 875 S. Mason Rd.
\$2.50 Humble Shell 1245 Atascocita Road
\$2.50 Medical Center Shell 2302 W. Holcombe Blvd.
\$2.97 River Oaks Exxon 3802 Westheimer
\$2.60 Midtown Shell 3803 San Jacinto St.
\$2.32 Jersey Village Exxon 17438 U.S. 290
\$2.48 Willowbrook Shell 8255 Mills Road
\$2.60 Memorial Park Shell 2802 Washington Ave.
\$2.90 Montrose Chevron 922 W. Alabama
\$2.48 Rice Village Valero 5415 Kirby Dr.
\$2.44 Galleria Valero 5838 Westheimer
\$2.37 Pasadena Shell 3028 Shaver St.
\$2.20 Spring Chevron 802 E. Louetta Road
\$2.48 Sugar Land Citgo 10021 Texas 6
\$2.26 Tomball Sunoco 27015 Tomball Parkway

Prices on 11/7/2018

HIDDEN KILLERS

Grassroots campaign aims to get deadly Takata airbags repaired



Jeff Yip photo

About 2.5 inches in diameter and 9 inches long, this replacement airbag inflator comes with an extensive list of precautions, including never bringing into contact with electricity, storing above 200 degrees Fahrenheit or trying to repair, disassemble or incinerate.

By Jeff Yip

AUTOS CORRESPONDENT

Would you visit a shooting range or venture out into the field with a gun that has up to a 50/50 chance of causing serious injuries or killing you each time the trigger is pulled?

Federal officials warn that thousands of drivers and their passengers are taking similar risks driving certain 2001 to 2015 model year vehicles that have defective Takata frontal airbag inflators.

Airbags are designed to save lives, but heat, humidity and chemical degradation over time can cause the faulty Takata airbag inflators to explode with the devastation of a pipe bomb.

Tragically, Huma Hanif's family learned about the danger too late. In March 2016, the 17-year-old was driving her 2002 Honda Civic on FM 762 in Richmond when she was involved in what authorities described as a minor fender-bender — one that everyone should have walked away from.

But Huma didn't. Her Civic had one of the Takata airbags with the defective inflator and it blew, hurling shrapnel into the high-school senior's neck, inflicting mortal injuries.

The 14-year-old Honda had been purchased used and Huma's family said they didn't know about the nationwide airbag recall that targets an estimated 34 million vehicles equipped with the flawed Takata airbags.

Getting the message across that the defective airbags can hurt or kill is a massive problem — in Texas alone, more than 2.1 million defective Takata inflators have yet to be replaced, according to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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To sound the alarm, a special push called Operation Find & Fix was launched in October. Federal officials said the campaign is aimed at vehicle owners in Sugar Land, Missouri City and Sienna Plantation because those communities have a high concentration of older vehicles and the region's heat and humidity put those drivers and passengers at high risk. The project's mission is to boost awareness through outreach efforts and recall-check events at schools and places of worship, as well as involving auto collision repair shops and community organizations.

"What we're finding to make sure this succeeds is that it takes members of our own community," Heidi King, NHTSA's director, told the *Chronicle*. "People see me on the evening news and read the newspapers, but they really act and get their car fixed when they hear it from a parent, sister and brother, or hear it at work."

Becky Nelson, a spokeswoman for Airbag Recall, noted that a vehicle manufacturer may not know if a vehicle is still being driven or that it may be with its second, third or fourth owner. Even if the owner receives a notice, the recall's dire urgency is not getting through.

Nelson noted that there have been cases of automakers sending 20 recall notices and even dispatching someone to the owner's home and the consumer was still reluctant to act.

Hearing the news from a family member, neighbor or someone in the community is crucial, Nelson reiterated. The person-to-person strategy can be effective. During a 100-day period in areas of Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley where the same tactics were employed, Airbag Recall saw a 30 percent jump in dealership airbag repairs, checked more than 33,000 vehicles and discovered

Massive continues on J2

AUTO PRESSROOM



Ford photo

Is this Franken'stang, or just a new all-electric utility model with Mustang styling cues?

A Ford Mustang utility vehicle? You're kidding, right? Well yes and no, claim The Sleuth's sources. You won't be seeing some jacked-up Franken'stang in your rearview mirror, but a tall wagon with front and rear design cues that might resemble those of the current Mustang. The all-wheel-drive vehicle that's in the works for 2020 will apparently be a midsize five-passenger carryall. The to-be-named model will also be powered by twin electric motors instead of the Mustang V-8 engine that prospective buyers might be wishing for. The new utility model will be built on a brand new platform that Ford is prepping for a number of new electric models.

The tough-truck trend shows no signs of slowing down: Buyers of off-road-capable pickups must be ecstatic these days with a growing list of terrain-challenging models/trim levels to choose from. The most recent to come to Sleuth's attention is the Chevrolet Colorado Bison ZR2 that will be available in early 2019. As if the regular ZR2 isn't tough enough, the Bison's content list includes five hardened Boron-steel skid plates to protect various exposed components from boulders, tree stumps, etc. Available is an intake snorkel that keeps water out of the engine when fording deep rivers. As with the regular ZR2, the Bison can be had in extended and crew-cab form, either with the 308-horsepower 3.6-liter V-6 or the extra-cost 2.8-liter four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine.

Source: *The Auto Sleuth/wheelbase.com*

THE CLASSICS

1970 Pontiac brings memories of father, son bonding

By Vern Parker
MOTOR MATTERS

Dave DeMars recalls working by his father's side. An auto technician with a lifelong love of cars, his dad specialized in automatic transmissions and father and son bonded over a car chassis.

"He was a good tech and I learned a lot," Dave said.

Dave grew up on a farm in Wisconsin, and as soon as he could drive, Dave went for musclecars. After owning a 1969 Ford Torino, he got a 1970 Pontiac LeMans. "It was quieter but had more power," so he concluded, "Pontiacs run better than Fords." He also thinks they have a "nicer body style," and they come that way from the factory, without adding and changing much.

Dave married a woman who had driven a Bonneville since age 20. Talk about having something in common! When Dave got bored with Wisconsin winters he began looking for a winter project. He had sold his last GTO two years prior and was itching

for a car to fix up, as well as something to drive and have fun with. So when Dave got a phone call about a GTO hardtop, he was on his way to see it immediately. However, it

This vehicle was special, since in 1972 Pontiac did not even make the GTO convertible but had the GTO options available on a LeMans. The car also had bucket seats, dual exhaust, floor shift console, air conditioning, power windows and steering, tilt power seat, as well as power top and trunk lock.

needed too much major work to restore; he wasn't looking for a lifetime project. As Dave was leaving, the man remarked that his wife had a car to sell as well.

Not expecting much, Dave did a double take

when the garage door opened and revealed a Sundance Orange 1972 luxury LeMans convertible. It had GTO options, like a 400-cubic-inch engine and a Turbo Hydramatic 400 transmission.

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It took a month of negotiating, but eventually Dave bought the car. Meanwhile, he learned from the Pontiac Historical Society that only 311 LeMans Sport convertibles had been built, fewer with all the included options this car had. On a snowy winter Sunday, Dave and his two daughters and his brother drove home in the bright orange convertible.

However, before any story has a happy ending, there has to be a problem: the car wasn't in as good shape inside as it looked to



Motor Matters photo

This Sundance Orange 1972 luxury LeMans convertible has GTO options, like a 400-cubic-inch engine and a Turbo Hydramatic 400 transmission.

be on the outside. It had been hit in the front end and the radiator support had been welded and cobbled back together. The inner right wheelwell also had been welded. Dave set out to replace what needed to be replaced with "new old-stock" Pontiac parts. He also decided to repaint the car Cardinal Red, a standard 1972 Pontiac color, and added a hood tachometer and a rear spoiler.

Dave did all the work himself, except for the bodywork and the paint job.

Today the car is a "great driver," receiving compliments as well as trophies at Show-and-Shine car shows. One of Dave's daughters had her graduation picture taken with the car. Dave proudly drove his prized vehicle in a homecoming parade as well. He enjoys cruising with the top down, and

said, "It'll eat rubber as good as a four-speed." Although its mileage is only about 13 mpg, he said he still prefers the old V-8 engines to today's offerings.

He likes to be alone with his car early on Sunday mornings, top down and driving up into the hills and "listening to the motor purr." That kind of satisfaction makes all the years of restoration worthwhile, according to Dave.