



Tom's Tidbits

Here at the shop we've always tried to be good corporate citizens, but since the Supreme's last decision "corporate citizen" has taken on a whole new ugly meaning. This farce cannot stand in a country "of, by, and for the people." We're about to air a new commercial on KPOJ addressing this subject, so please listen for it! In the meantime, you'll find an article from me this month on Toyota's cars and future as their slow-motion recall continues. We'll also bring you up to speed on the events we've been sponsoring and tell you how you can get involved. Finally, we have an article that explains why we can't answer people who call us asking for a "price on a 60K service". The weather may be teasing us with Spring, but there's no teasing here in the world of "Your Car Matters", so come on in and enjoy!

Make a great day,



Falling In Love... With A Groundhog

The lowdown on two February holidays

We all just survived Groundhog's Day, but amidst the parades, gifts, relatives, and stress it's too easy to forget the true meaning of the holiday. Think you know everything about our friend the whistle-pig? Well, can you name at least three other aliases for a groundhog? What's the science behind the temporal paradox in the movie "Groundhog Day"? What's Rachel Ray's recipe for Groundhog Cookies? Here's an opportunity to brush up on everything marmot, including GROUNDHOG CAROLS for FREE DOWNLOAD.

Groundhog Day from A to Z- http://blog.al.com/techcetera/2008/01/web_surfing_groundhog_day.html
Battle of the Groundhogs- http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/01/celebrity_groundhog_staten_isl.html
Official Punxsutawney Phil Groundhog Website- <http://www.groundhog.org/>
Bizarre American Holidays- <http://library.thinkquest.org/2886/>
Why do groundhogs have a day of their own?- <http://wilstar.com/holidays/grndhog.htm>
Groundhog Day- Breakthrough to the true self- <http://www.transparencynow.com/groundhog.htm>
Temporal Loops- http://www.crownedanarchist.com/timeloop.htm#Groundhog_Day_Causality_Loop_Intro
Free Groundhog Carols- <http://www.box.net/shared/cca9363wo0>

February is home to another holiday as well, virtually unnoticed amid the hoopla surrounding Groundhog Day... Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day is traditionally celebrated on February 14, but actually it reaches its peak of frenzy on the afternoon of February 13 when millions of wild-eyed and panicky men invade drugstores, convenience stores, and grocery stores across the country. They take this special time on their way home from work to search for the pre-printed greeting card, gooey and fattening blob of chemicals, or nearly dead plant that is most likely to fend off the wrath of the woman they love. Ahh, romance. Contrary to popular belief, Valentine's Day may not be entirely a creation of greeting card companies. Its history may go back as far as Saint Valentine, who, just before he was martyred on February 14, 269AD, left a note for his jailer's daughter signed "From your Valentine." In actuality that story's probably hogwash, and the whole deal probably is a sham by the greeting card companies. If you want to find a less cynical treatment of the holiday here are several great sources of information...

History, video, quotes- <http://www.history.com/content/valentine>
History and traditions- <http://www.pictureframes.co.uk/Saint-Valentine.aspx>
History and traditions- <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/valentinesdayhistory.html>
Links to crafts, recipies, party ideas- <http://holidays.kaboose.com/valentines-day/history/val-history.html>
Not like it used to be- <http://wilstar.com/holidays/valentn.htm>
Valentine phobias- <http://www.brownielocks.com/valentinehistory.html>



Don't Eat Off This Menu

Why menu service is not the best service

It seems easy to grab a newspaper, circular, or direct mail piece and find a coupon offering everything you need for your 30, 60, or 90-thousand mile vehicle service at a price you can't resist. Sound familiar? Our service advisers deal with the fallout from these offers at the counter daily. You're led to believe that pre-packaged maintenance bundles are the same as an intelligent maintenance program. They are not. Menu service can leave the customer with a false sense of confidence that their vehicle is in top shape when it really has unaddressed issues. In menu service, perceived value is high, but real value is not.

Good service is not delivered by a menu. Thorough inspection, advice based on confirmed vehicle condition, and complete records management are the cornerstones to address your vehicle's real needs. Not all cars age or wear the same way, and the actual value of many service bundles may be questionable at best. The 30/60/90K canned service packages are based on an average car in average conditions, so they reflect what an average car will probably need. We do use factory recommendations as guidelines in our interval services, but we also take the opportunity to perform our deepest inspection and identify what your vehicle actually needs. This interactive service allows us to prioritize your actual needs based on current, pertinent, and relevant facts.

The inspiration for this article came from a local dealer offering a pre-packaged 60K interval service for \$559, including a limited inspection, oil change, air filter, cabin air filter, and a tire rotation and balance. All these items are listed in the factory menu for 60K service, but other items also on the factory menu were listed as "other services possibly needed at additional cost." (Of course, not all interval service menus are the same. Each dealer has their own pre-packaged list of services based loosely on the manufacturer's recommended intervals, so there could be differences between dealers.) Many dealers perform the menu item services whether they are needed or not, then call to sell you the additional, needed services they find while doing the menu. This is just one major difference between us and the dealers. We call after the inspection to discuss and prioritize your needs before doing the work. We know you work hard for your money and need to spend it logically, so we tailor your interval service to fit your needs and your pocketbook. Your budget should have the greatest positive possible impact on your vehicle, not our bottom line.

In most cases we can offer you the same major maintenance interval services at a better price *and* provide unmatched quality and attention to detail. For comparison, we estimated how much we would charge to provide this list of services for a typical 2006 Toyota Camry. We found that if we inspected the vehicle, if we determined that the services were needed, if you agreed they were needed, and if we performed the work, then **these same services would cost less than \$380.00, a \$180.00 savings over the dealers special coupon price.** (Don't believe us? Make us prove it. Check out this month's coupon offering to meet or beat any local printed dealer offers.) Beyond that, our clients would have the value of premium materials, our 24-month/24,000-mile warranty, a detailed vehicle history updated to reflect current conditions and remaining needs, and individual attention from a knowledgeable professional. Our clients would know exactly what they bought, why, and what services need to be done next so they could budget for future vehicle maintenance appropriately.

We realize that your time and money are valuable and a bargain-priced service package can sound enticing, but while price is critical, our goal is value. Tom Dwyer Automotive is committed to the best possible service for your vehicle, offering the best possible prices, impeccable service, and top-of-the-line technicians and equipment. We can't provide value by using menu service, so we'll stick with the reliability and value of a good inspection, reasonable recommendations, and informed clients. So, if you ask us "how much is an interval service" don't be surprised if you get this answer...

"We don't blindly follow the interval menu service system and install parts needed or not or skip needs not on the menu and therefore we don't offer a canned price for an interval service for you. To provide you the best value we perform the inspections first, compare the findings to the factory interval recommendations, call and consult you with the services that are really necessary, prioritized by the physical inspection. At this point we can provide accurate cost estimates and completion times. This method delivers far better care for the vehicle, more accurate service tailored to your vehicle's needs and more often than not this method delivers a lower cost than canned interval services."



Tom Talks Toys

A quick note on the Toyota recall

I'm not ready to join Ray LaHood and tell you to immediately stop driving your new Toyota. I'm also not on board with those that think this latest problem for Toyota spells the end of their reign. There are plenty of examples that show even the worst problems can be overcome. Audi had its own unintended acceleration problems in the late 1980s and is now one of the world's largest luxury car makers. We can thank Audi for the shifter interlock we now have on our vehicles. In a more recent challenge Ford has recovered from the disasters involving its Explorer, as has Firestone, the maker of the tires that failed on the Ford SUVs.

Toyota's shifting positions have given pause to critics and I have been wondering if "saving face" will end up causing more trouble for the automaker in the long run. According to Hiroyuki Yokoyama, general manager of Toyota's customer quality engineering division "We did not intend to cover up the issue" but so far, Toyota has declined to reveal complete and specific details of the causes and "fixes" for either of their recent problems affecting the 2010 "[drive by wire](#)" throttle vehicles and the Prius "[brake by wire](#)" models, nor given a precise timeline on when it concluded there were defects, began work on the solutions and made the necessary changes on the production line. The original runaway acceleration problems were blamed on bunched up floor mats and Toyota issued a recall to fix those loose carpets. Now we see a recall for the same symptom with a new solution; the drive by wire accelerator pedal assembly. So which is it? Bunched carpets or bad throttle assemblies? Or is there another deeper problem that Toyota is not talking about? Programming or controller hardware problems?

Things are bad enough and now comes the Prius brake problem to add to Toyota's troubles. We are not hearing a lot of answers on this one yet either. Maybe the two issues only relationship is Toyota's new and hard to accept lack of quality control or other weaknesses caused by their rapid growth on the road to market domination.

Auto industry analysts say Toyota is now in serious danger of suffering a long-term hit to its credibility and reputation. Whether consumers see these defects as isolated one-time problems or systemic defects will determine Toyota's fate.

No one knows for sure how long the damage will take to repair at Toyota. I hope that saving face won't cause Toyota to plunge deeper into negative market reaction. Come on guys... give us the straight story and get the vehicles fixed. Further investigations are planned by the [NHTSA](#) and a pair of hearings scheduled on Capitol Hill.

I still know that Toyota is one of the premier manufacturers and I will drive and own their products with pride. I'll keep you posted if my opinion changes.



An Evening Out With Tom Dwyer

A report back on our evenings with Illahee and Bright Neighbor

Last month we told you about two events we were supporting, the Illahee Lecture Series and the Bright Neighbor Community Rally. Do you ever wonder what goes on with the Portland glitterati after the lights go out? This month, we'll dish the dirt on these star-studded celebrity evenings!

The First Congregational church was packed as several hundred people settled in for the first speaker in the **Illahee Lecture Series**, author Jonah Lehrer on the neurobiology of decision making. Jonah talked about some of the fascinating "flaws" in the way we think, such as how our expectations of a cola's brand influence the taste, or how we manage to avoid contributing to our 401k even though we know it's the smart thing to do. The Illahee group summarized the content of Jonah's lecture much better than we could in these two articles: <http://illahee.wordpress.com/2010/02/03/thinking-our-way-out-of-the-apocalypse/> and <http://illahee.wordpress.com/2010/02/01/jonah-lehrer-on-power/>.

If you missed Jonah, there's still plenty of time to pull up a seat to this all-you-can-eat buffet of knowledge. The next speaker is Peak Oil expert Richard Heinberg on Monday, February 22, followed by

Wes Jackson on Power, Change and Food - 3.15.10

Maude Barlow: Water Warrior - 3.27.10

Jessica Jackley on Power Change and Money - 4.12.10

Robert Greene on The Nature of Power - 4.26.10

Gary Snyder, Jerry Franklin, Ursula Le Guin on The Power of Nature - 5.18.10

The **Bright Neighbor Community Rally** took us in a slightly different direction, as we left the theoretical world of brain chemistry for the real world of what individuals and communities can do to make a difference. Randy White, founder of BrightNeighbor.com, opened the evening with an introduction of three companies (Dave's Killer Bread, Blossoming Lotus Restaurant, and Tom Dwyer Automotive) and how they are implementing sustainable ideals in their everyday business. Things quickly moved from what other people are doing to what we could do ourselves, as Randy explained two major Bright Neighbor initiatives. The first is a plan to have people all over Portland "host" a free fruit or nut tree. The trees are paid for by contributions (Tom Dwyer Automotive sponsored the first 40 trees in the program) but supplied FREE to the host, who registers the location with Bright Neighbor and agrees to notify them if they move or the tree becomes damaged. If this sounds interesting to you, volunteers will be getting together on March 27 to prepare the first batch for planting. Details are at BrightNeighbor.com.

"Worm Island" is another unique program that made its debut on Tuesday. Worms double in population every 90 days and are voracious consumers of paper and food waste. And although few people know it, they are in high demand both here and abroad, selling for more per pound than King Crab. Randy outlined a plan for decentralized (and surprisingly lucrative) farming of worms in basement tubs across the city. If you'd like to take part, either as a worm farmer or by buying a share on Worm Island, the info is at <http://www.communitymachine.com/>



Drew's Kitchen

Dried Tomato Casserole

Here's a great recipe for the unpredictable month of February. Not too heavy, not too light, but whole and hearty. Plus, it's a great recipe for a make-ahead main course that will save you some kitchen time.

(2) 9 oz pkgs refrigerated four-cheese or beef ravioli
½ to one 8oz jar oil-packed dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese (6 oz)
1 ½ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
8 eggs, beaten
2 ½ cups milk
1-2 Tbsp snipped fresh basil or Italian flat-leaf parsley

- Grease a 3-qt rectangular or oval baking dish
- Place uncooked ravioli evenly in dish
- Sprinkle evenly with tomatoes
- Top evenly with cheeses, set aside
- Whisk eggs and milk together until combined
- Pour over layers in dish
- Cover, chill overnight
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees,
- Bake, uncovered, about 40 minutes or until top is golden and center is set
- Let stand 10 minutes before serving
- Sprinkle with basil just before serving
- Makes 12 servings



News To Make You Furious

Blackwater...THE Military Industrial Complex

One of the bedrock principles that still differentiates us from Third World thugocracies is the idea that our military is under civilian control. Our Founders thought that giving the power to declare war to Congress and leaving the power to wage war to the President would keep us from getting entangled in foreign adventures. More importantly, if the military owed its allegiance to "we the people" it would be less likely to be used against us domestically, an idea reinforced after Reconstruction with the Posse Comitatus act.

Well, guess what? There's a way around that little road bump. Suppose there was an army that was owned by a private company? Then, the private company could be contracted to do anything that our army couldn't or wouldn't do because of pesky laws, public outrage, or professional pride. If you recognize the danger represented by an American-trained army that fights for money rather than duty, is commanded by a private citizen, and isn't even restrained by the UCMJ when overseas, then you're probably already furious. If not, then get ready to learn about Blackwater, now "Xe Company"...

The U.S. Training Center is Blackwater's boot camp, famous for its "...ability to deliver hard hitting, effective training experiences for military, security and law enforcement professionals as well as civilians." Check out <http://www.ustraining.com/new/index.asp> to see if the Blackwater Experience is for you.

Is Blackwater in Pakistan?

<http://pakistaniaat.wordpress.com/2009/09/15/blackwater-xe-international-in-pakistan/>

Blackwater, Sharia Law, and a World

Court <http://neynsn.wordpress.com/2008/06/20/blackwater-sharia-law-and-a-world-court/>

TIME article on Blackwater

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1667338,00.html>

Blackwater basics set to heavy rock soundtrack

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJUEULWEP9c>

There's a lot of good reporting on Blackwater from Jeremy Scahill. Here's an article about Erik Prince, Blackwater's owner, being implicated in murder: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090817/scahill>

More from Scahill:

Book- [Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army](#)

Video- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqM4tKPDIR8>

Video- <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8353942004369311258#>

Video- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uP_m4m62lfi