

# Past zany inventions rival today's safety features

By Jim Williams

A flood of indignant letters poured in when last Thursday's Daily Nebraskan appeared without "Pit Stop" in its usual obscure location.

I'm pleased to say the column was missing only because I was ill—pleased because now I can stop writing all those indignant letters.

While bed-ridden, I read a stack of strange automotive-history books. I was amazed to discover how much today's driver owes to geniuses of the past.

**On the shoulders of giants**  
The most remarkable of these was Abbot Thomassi Grifo-Bandini, often called "The Da Vinci of the Automobile." And with good reason, for Grifo-Bandini's notebooks and diaries contain amazingly accurate sketches showing he invented almost every device essential to the modern car—in 1663!

The brilliant 17th-century Italian is credited as the originator of wheel covers, power windows, fake woodgrain, the tilt steering wheel, vinyl roofs, the opera window and deluxe interior decor.

Like too many inventors, Grifo-Bandini couldn't see the importance of his work, and grew disenchanted. Under his last

drawing (something amazingly like a power moon roof), he scrawled a phrase that translates "Enough of this pig manure" and quit to become a highway robber.

Where would we be today without the talented Fischer brothers, Don and Danny, of Minneapolis? Don, known today for his 1924 invention of the locking gas-tank cap, modestly gives credit for inspiration to Danny, who invented the siphon hose in 1923.

And how about that great stride in social justice when The Honorable Rupert Petty of Mound City, Mo., developed the first speed trap in 1916? And the accomplishment of talented 17-year-olds Jack van Horn and Julie Yeager, who installed the first fold-down rear seat in Jack's dad's Rocket 88 in 1953?

Every driver should be grateful to Ellis D. Mockman, Professor of Psychedelic Science at the Free Karma Institute of Los Angeles, whose 1961 experiments led to the invention of the Environmental Protection Agency's gas mileage figures and the 55 miles per hour speed limit.

**Reality intrudes**  
Ridiculous, right? Well, look at what some real people are doing to "improve" our cars.

The September 1974 issue of *Car and Driver* mentions Australian Sir Arthur Gordon Rylah, voted the Excalibur Award of the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council for his contribution to auto safety—the world's first (and, I hope, only) mandatory seat-belt use law.

Then there's home-grown nut Sen. Charles Percy, who wants to save our lives by asking car makers to mark speedometers only to 90 m.p.h. Above that, the senator wants the red-lettered warning, "Extreme Hazard!"

Isn't progress wonderful?

## sports shorts

Paul Grosscup, fraternity tennis champion, beat independent tennis champion Tom Satele 12-6 to win the all-university intramural tennis championship.

Grosscup represented Beta Theta Pi in the double elimination tournament. Allen Fen, residence hall champion, also played in the semi-finals of the all-university tournament.

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Anyone interested in the Alumni Crew Club is asked to write Peter Zandbergen, club director, at the Crew Boathouse, 1000 N. 16 St., 68588.

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Twenty five participants competed in the Nebraska State Air Pistol team

championship last Saturday at the UNL rifle range.

Tom Hasenyager, club president, said the match served as a good promotional project for the rifle club and the Physical Education Dept.

Competitors in the match ranged from junior shooters (high school age) to professional shooters. One reason for the match, Hasenyager said that the match gave junior shooters a chance to compete in a registered National Rifle Association match and receive classification.

He said the opportunity given the junior shooters will help to support the club in the future.

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