



A TIME TO DREAM

Welcome to our special Iowa Gas issue! By the time many of you read this, the original Gas Bash will be underway or about to begin, and for most of us, that signifies that summer—and with it the busiest season for automobilia collecting—is truly in full swing.

It seems only a few short weeks ago that our summer officially began. For Vermonters, that means Memorial Day weekend—that long-awaited weekend when danger of frost is finally passed. We plant our vegetable garden while I keep one ear glued to the radio broadcast of the “Greatest Spectacle in Racing.” The Indy 500 has been an object of friendly family wagering for decades now; before the race Dad and I divide the field and place our bets, nowadays over the phone rather than in person.

Each year, as I turn the soil and plant the seeds, I’m either exulting or cursing as the commentators report the latest blown engines, or the spins in turn three. The two events—spring planting and the Indy 500—have become inextricably linked traditions, and I expect they’ll stay that way.

We wouldn’t be reading *MOBILIA* if we didn’t all have traditions and strong emotional ties linking our lives with automotive artifacts—whether

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it’s the charm of an Art-Deco roadside diner, a scale model of your dream car, or the intricacies of a vintage gas pump. Those of us who focus on gas- and

oil-related collectibles often have powerful memories of highway travel across a long-ago American landscape: the glamour and prestige of the full-service attendant; the colorful advertising signs and filling station equipment. Many collectors once worked in the industry, or they seek out brands identified with their home town, state, or region.

Petroliana collecting is a hobby folks connect with emotionally—because it reminds them of a nostalgic past, but also because the myriad gas bashes, swap meets, clubs, and get-togethers make their here-and-now so much fun. Particularly in the summertime. And especially at Iowa Gas.

When we put together this month’s *MOBILIA*, we wanted to bring you a practical, market-driven look at what’s going on in this exciting and ever-growing hobby. We succeeded in that, I think, with market-assessments from experts Scott Benjamin and Leila Dunbar, a slew of special-interest features, a special gas-oriented “Roadside America,” and our trusty “Dear Mr. Petroliana” Q&A forum.

But in addition to all that hard-headed market stuff, I’m pleased to see that this issue has an unanticipated *emotional* impact—the entertainment value generated when you get smart and opinionated people talking about what they love best. “The General Petroleum Museum,” Carl Bomstead’s portrayal of Jeff and Susan Pederson’s move from hobbyists to business-owners, is a joy to read if you’ve ever dreamed of turning your passions into a vocation in the automobilia world. And Duane Carling’s memoir of the Depression-era Utoco station at which his father worked—in the days when it was indeed “The Only Light in Town”—is one of the most eloquent statements you’ll ever read of the experiences and artifacts which bind us to our family history, and that of our wider culture.

I think we’ve captured that extra energy that surrounds petroliana—the nature of the collectibles and the thrill of the hunt; the great and eccentric personalities of dealers and collectors; the garage sale find that turns out to be a four-figure treasure... To borrow Lee Dunbar’s phrase, Iowa Gas truly is a “Time to Dream.”