



October's column on female customers brought some interesting responses, opinions, and a suggested solution for dealing with older female customers. Thought you might like to know what three females in the industry thought about it, and about the issue being discussed.

Ann Elliott of Elliott's Auto Ser-

vice in Salem, Oregon writes:

I appreciated your October editorial, both as a shop owner and member of this industry, and also as a woman.

Many greetings that offend are offered with the best of intentions....Perhaps we are becoming culturally more aware of subtle improprieties...Parts manufacturers and distributors need some prodding to set aside their practice of using scantily clad women in their promotional advertising to the repair industry. Although the technique may attract attention, it does little to sell quality products or services, and greatly demeans the entire industry.

Free Clinics

Trish Lloyd of Lloyd's Professional Auto Service in Lake Panasoffkee, Florida is ASE certified and runs the business with her husband Curtis. She writes:

What inspired my letter...was your observation that more young women are participating in the service of their cars.

Here's what we see down here in our neck of the woods—OLDER WOMEN. Lots and lots of them who haven't decided for themselves to be involved—but have been forced to do so because of the death of their husbands. They show up at our door with horror stories that start with lines like, "Ever since my husband died...(or) I don't know a thing about this car, my husband used to handle it all...."

And so it goes from there.

Many have taken their cars to So-and So's garage...paid lots of money, and still have the same problem.

So we decided to do something about it. We are in the process of starting an Auto Awareness class

for women only. We hope to draw the older crowd and professional working women, but any woman is welcome. Classes will be free, the only requirement is that they drive and own a car. Classes will cover things like what NOT to say when taking a car for repairs, how to explain what they think might be wrong, and how to check their own fluid levels.

We want them to put the hoods up themselves and know what they're looking for. We want them to know what they're signing when they put their name on the dotted line of the repair order. Hopefully they will feel a little more confident and in control...If they can act like they know what's going on it will be less likely that they will get ripped off.

Wish us luck. This will be a community service kind of thing and hopefully a goodwill service from a profession that usually has grease on its name. If any other readers are doing something like this, or want to know how it works for us, please write us at this address.

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Oops

Finally this letter from Melinda Lidke of E&M Motors in Stuart, Florida:

In the June issue of Import Service I was disappointed to read in your column a reference to an engine as a "her." Using the female gender to refer to an inanimate object such as a car, car part, boat, or other possession typically owned by men insults women by indirectly suggesting that they are also a possession.

I am sure your usage was unintentional, but I hope that you will discontinue this usage.

As a woman and an independent auto repair shop owner (17 1/2 years), I have come to know many independent shop owners through my active membership in the Automotive Service Association. I can tell you that this topic has come up many times at seminars and meetings. Both women and men in the industry are becoming more conscious of sexist language and do feel insulted by its use.

Please accept this as sincere, constructive criticism...Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Thank you for your letters. It appears that we all have certain ingrained habits, prejudices, and wrongly accepted practices which need constant review.

—By Ralph Birnbaum