

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

How's your car holding out? Good for another 20,000 or 40,000 miles? Good for another year or two, anyhow? And when you do replace it, will you be shopping for a smaller, light-weight automobile that gets good mileage? Or are you hoping to move up to one of the larger, more luxurious cars when you trade?

According to the Mass. Energy Office which has researched the just-passed Carter Energy Bill, there's some bad news for people planning to buy big cars in the future. Uncle Sam, Jimmy Carter and Congress have finally figured out how to get Americans to take seriously the need to conserve gasoline.

The name of their game is "Hit 'em where it hurts, in the pocketbook." Beginning with 1980 automobiles, there's going to be a tax on "Gas Guzzlers". The point-of-sale tax will be added to the price of any new car not meeting the newly created fuel economy standards set up in the energy bill. The tax will be included by manufacturers in the sticker price of the car.

As early as next fall, if you buy a 1980 model year auto, if the fuel economy of the model type has been tested to deliver at least 14 mpg but less than 15 miles per gallon, you'll pay a tax of \$200; if it gets at least 13 mpg but less than 14, you'll pay a \$300 tax; and if it gets less than 13 mpg, you'll be

taxed \$550.

Unless the following models have improved gas consumption in their 1980 models, and unless you don't object to paying the gas guzzler tax, you'll want to look for different cars to buy: Plymouth Volare, 13 mpg; Cadillac Eldorado, 11 mpg; Dodge Monaco, 13 and 11 mpg.

In 1980, if you think you must have a big car, you could consider the Lincoln-Mercury Continental Mark V, 14 mpg; the AMC Matador, 14 mpg; Mercedes Benz MBilyV (450), 14 and 12 mpg; Chrysler, 14 and 12 mpg; Ford, 14; and Porsche, 14.

But you'll steer clear of the Plymouth Fury, 11 mpg; and a Cadillac Limousine, 11 mpg. While some of all of the cars are rated as gas guzzlers for 1979 models, some of them with smaller engines do have higher miles per gallon ratings.

If you wait for a 1981 model year, and if Detroit hasn't yet licked the problem of building better gas mileage into its products, the tax will be higher.

If the car you buy is rated as getting 17 mpg, or better, you'll pay no tax. With a rating between 16 and 17, the tax will be \$200; between 15 and 16, \$350; between 14 and 15, \$450; between 13 and 14, \$550; and if what you buy gets less than 13 miles to the gallon, the tax will be \$650.

And you haven't heard nothin' yet. By the time you're ready to buy a new 1982 model, the car must be rated as getting at least 18.5 mpg to escape the gas guzzler tax. The tax rises to \$950 for a rating of at least 12.5 but less than 13.5, and to a whopping \$1200 for a car that can't claim 12.5 mpg.

The following year, four years from right now, you'll be forced to buy a car that's rated at 19 mpg to avoid the tax. If the new 1983 model year automobile you buy is rated at less than 13 mpg, gas guzzler tax will cost you \$1550, over and above the price of the car and its optional equipment.

The same sad story will affect model year automobiles in 1984, 1985 and 1986. For '84, search for a new car that gets at least 19.5 mpg or start paying heavy taxes on its gas guzzling tendencies. As much as \$450 if it's rated to give you 18.5 mpg but less than 19.5. And as much as \$2,150, if it can't be rated as delivering 12.5 mpg.

If there's a car manufacturer left, by 1985, who's not building fuel-economy cars exclusively, the buyer of any new model that gets less than 21 mpg pays at least \$500; less than 13, the additional charge will \$2,650.

And finally, if you can locate a single 1986 model year automobile that's not giving you at least 22.5 mpg, it will cost you a minimum of \$500 in taxes. If you can find one that's rated at less than 12.5 mpg, you'll have the conspicuous and dubious honor of paying \$3,850 on it.

There are presently, of course, dozens of makes of cars, new model years and older ones, that offer mileage much superior to those compiled above. Almost any medium-sized import will give you better mileage than those listed earlier, and a great many domestic car-makers are already offering the American public comfortable transportation and attractive mileage ratings.

The grand old '66 Buick Skylark I traded a couple of years ago gave me 16 mpg, even with a cold engine; in highway driving it was good for 20 mpg. In those model years, of course, there were no pollution control devices and those gadgets are being blamed for lower mileage ratings of newer Detroit product.

The small economy car that replaced the Skylark has lived up to its maker's promises, though; every 29 miles I drive around the mileage consumes a gallon of gasoline. When we're out on the highway, it clocks 39 miles everytime it burns one gallon of gas.

A friend looked at it skeptically the other day; she drives a Mercedes. "How fast will it go?" she asked.

"I haven't the faintest idea. I've never tried to find out because I'd get arrested for speeding. It's got really good pick-up, though, and is remarkably comfortable, even on a long trip." She didn't appear convinced.

The smaller cars have much to recommend them besides fuel economy. They're very maneuverable, even without power brakes or power steering. They're easy to park and great in traffic because they fit where larger cars can't possibly. In addition, they take up less room on the highway, and because they're lightweights, roads and highways receive less wear and tear.

They're fun to drive, too; you feel as though you're truly in complete control, not as though the car had a mind of its own and would operate itself, independently. It's easier to stay alert, to judge speed, and harder to be lulled into a sense of false security by the "living room comfort" of the road behemoths.

While it's completely true that when a small car is involved in an accident with a large heavy one, the occupants of the smaller vehicle are more apt to suffer personal injuries, if all the cars on the highways were of approximately the same size and weight, the odds would even out. Drivers of small cars, today, must take more defensive attitudes, avoid tailgating, operate more carefully, watch out for other drivers, be more courteous on the road, observe safe driving rules, and obey traffic safety regulations.

These are precautions all drivers should be taking, no matter what size auto they're operating. We could all benefit from a switch to smaller cars; meanwhile, those who do won't

how.