

Mr. Dougie Berman
Subject: July 27 program--whitewall tires

Dear Mr. Berman:

We are long time listeners and the local sponsor of Click and Clack on NPR station KVLU at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. When I heard the response to a question to a lady from Seattle about a tire problem with her 1994 Ford Explorer original equipment Firestone tires, I was appalled and outraged. The lady asked about her tires becoming white on the sidewalls, when they came on the car as black sidewall. The response was that she probably had curbed the tires too much, thus exposing the white layer beneath the black veneer. They suggested that she install some "curb feelers" to give an audible warning. When the caller asked about where to take the car for a tire inspection, one of the Magliosi brothers advised her not to take the car to a tire shop, as they would just want to sell her a new set of tires. Rather, they suggested that she take it to a mechanic who would not have a vested interest in selling tires. The lady also asked if there was any possibility of the steel cord coming through the side of the tires in question.

I thought perhaps that this was just a gag question, since the tires were obviously thirteen years old, at least. In any event, the mention of Ford Explorer and Firestone original equipment tires should set off all sorts of alarms. Perhaps Tom and Ray are ignorant of the fact that sidewalls of these tires are not steel, but polyester cord. Their biggest blunder was in the erroneous advice given to her as to where to take the tires for a professional evaluation. Why on earth did they say that a mechanic would give her better advice than a true tire professional, one who is acquainted with tire conditions and damage analysis? This makes as much sense to say that if the check engine light is illuminated, you should take the car to an quick oil change shop, or a tire shop, because they do not have a "vested interest" (or even a scan tool) to make a proper diagnosis. My wife said that based on that logic, the next time we have a problem with the furnace, she will call the pool service or termite inspector. Surely these last two folks do not have this dreaded "vested interest".

I am 76 years old, and have been involved with the tire business since the summer of 1942. In the past, I was a member of the ASE Board of Directors, representing all of the tire stores in the U. S. In addition, our shop is ASE certified. Individually, I have ASE certification in in steering, suspension, brakes and driveline categories in both passenger and HD truck categories. We have two ASE Master Techs in our shop. Modern Tire Dealer magazine has published several articles which I wrote about tire and automotive service in the past. On several occasions, I have been engaged as an expert witness on cases involving tire and auto service problems. The

welfare and image of a tire service professional has always guided my efforts in this business that I love so well.

Mr. Berman, we have been a sponsor of Car Talk on Radio Station KVLU for over two decades. However, we are rethinking that support in view of the gratuitous insult to tire dealers everywhere embodied in the remarks made by your two MIT graduates this past Saturday. At best, the comments made by the Magliosi brothers were unthinking and ill considered. Others have used the terms "asinine" and "ignorant". Regardless of the adjectives, none of us in the automotive service business need this unjust and unwarranted criticism. As an industry, auto service personnel get far too many poorly researched and agenda-driven programs and articles in the media as it is.

After you have reviewed the broadcast transcript, I would appreciate your comments.

Yours very truly,
Jerry C. White
East Texas' Oldest Tire Dealer