

pleasure when the motorist spent half his travel time bogged down in mud or changing tires split by the rocks and roots that made traps of every roadway. Such misadventures could send Carl into streaks of cursing that drove my fingers to my ears. Nearly ten years earlier he had taken two friends in his first topless, unshielded car for a drive a few miles out of Indianapolis. They were caught in one of those sudden drenching storms that seemed to reach their peak of violence in the Middle West. Night dropped over them like a wet blanket. The car lunged along hub-deep in mud and the road turned to a torrent. They reached a fork in the road. Carl had no idea which way to turn in the rain. By a flash of lightning they sighted a white sign on a telephone pole. "Climb up and read that sign, Skip," one of his friends suggested.

In the darkness, beaten by rain, Carl managed to inch his way up the slippery pole. As he clung to it a flash of lightning revealed the drenched countryside, and by it he read the message on the sign: "Chew Battle Ax Plug."

Carl told this story many times, and always with a wry smile. That moment when he had clung to a swaying pole in the thunderstorm seemed to hold for him the complete absurdity of a country launched on wheels and with no roads and no signposts pointing the way.

Ten years had passed since that night, and America's roads were little improved.

Carl was giving America automobiles. He had given America light to guide them. At Speedway he was developing higher speed and dependable travel, urging his gift of freedom of wheels upon an America—that lacked roads.

On the big glass-enclosed porch at Blossom Heath, men gathered around the fire over lemonade or coffee who were the leaders of the automotive industry. Carl's soft voice sometimes grew tense, urging and arguing. I heard him say words like these: "The automobile won't get anywhere until it has good roads to run on. Why can't we build a highway across the continent from New York to San Francisco?"