

part. Now if I hadn't been a half hour late to lunch that day . . ." And he would tell again the accident of timing that led to Prest-O-Lite, and because it was the source of all his magic, to me the story was always exciting and new.

This happened back in 1904, before I met Carl.

So punctual that the restaurant clock might have been set by him, Carl left his shop each day at twelve for Pop Haynes'. He would explain, "If I don't get there in time, there isn't anything left for me to eat." This day he was detained and did not leave until twelve-thirty. On his way out of the garage he saw an angry old man loading a tank into a battered car. It was Fred Avery.

"I've left this tank burning in your shop for weeks and you haven't even taken the trouble to look at it," Avery told him angrily. Carl tried to pacify him. "Why, the boys were afraid to touch it—they said they were afraid it would blow up. What's it for, Mr. Avery?" Avery's voice cracked with frustration. "What's it for? It's a tank of compressed gas that'll light up automobiles so people can drive at night!"

Carl forgot about lunch. "Why, I've been wishing I could see where I was going when I drive nights," he said excitedly.

Night driving was dangerous in those days, particularly for a driver with Carl's poor vision. Cars were lit by carriage lamps, and carried a kerosene lantern for an emergency, because the lamps blew out in a stiff wind. Carl knew that as automobiles attained greater speed, the old-fashioned lamps would blow out even more readily.

The idea of being able to drive at night interested Carl so much that he asked Fred Avery to let him retain the invention and investigate it, and Avery consented, not too willingly. The old man was completely discouraged. He had secured the French patent for compressing gas in a tank for lighting purposes. The formula had been first manufactured as a signal gas for buoys and lighthouses. Avery had invested his meager capital to secure the rights to the chemical, and he had been peddling the invention from town to town in his battered car, hoping someone would invest in it. "I'm tired of the whole scheme," he told Carl.