

into a discussion of gasoline engines, convincing me that I was in the company of a nut or a genius. It was a most embarrassing situation for me. He bombarded me with questions that my better judgment told me were best left unanswered, and finally I was forced to tell him that as an authority on the subject, I was America's best advertising solicitor.

"Well," he shot back good-naturedly, "what I really wanted to see you about was this. I'd like to subscribe to your magazine, but I haven't got the two dollars to give you right now, and I was wondering if you would take my order, and wait for the money until the first of the month, when I get paid off!"

Then and there the name of "H. Ford" was entered on the subscription lists of *Cycle Age*, and I made a most inglorious exit, saying to myself:

"I don't care whether that guy ever pays up or not, because it's worth two dollars just to get away from him!"

Far back in 1900, I didn't realize how good a risk "H. Ford" was.

Today, I'd gladly trust him for a good many million dollars, for as you've probably already guessed, the H. Ford of that boiler room was none other than Henry Ford himself!

Within the next year or two, before he had girded the globe with autos and when his name was yet to be a synonym for transportation even in the farthest outposts of civilization, I came to know him better; so well in fact, that he made a second request of me, which, unfortunately, I did not grant.

He pleaded with me to invest \$5,000 in a company he was about to form, but lacking the vision of Henry Ford, the foresight of the Dodge brothers and Jim

Couzens, I answered in the negative. It proved to be the most expensive "No" I ever uttered!

The stork had brought a son to our home, and ever since his arrival, Mrs. Wagner had been insisting that we buy an abode of our own. In fact, she had assumed command of the family exchequer, and through careful handling, had hoarded \$7,000 toward the purchase price.

Conversing with Henry one afternoon about our respective families, I happened to mention that "Ma" Wagner had piled up this bank account. Ford seized me by the lapels, and began his "sales talk."

"No, Henry," I told him when he was forced to pause for breath, "I can't do it—can't ask 'Ma' to gamble her home against your dream. If the money were mine, it would be different. But she has sacrificed to save it. If she lost it now, I'd never forgive myself."

Those words cost me in the neighborhood of \$25,000,000—and a billion or so in regret—every time I count my small change and wonder if my straw hat, so flawless of form and color in May, will weather the sun and rain until September.

Ford already had constructed a sometimes workable gasoline buggy, but more years went by before he was able to raise the \$28,000 with which to launch the Ford Motor Company.

And right here seems a most appropriate place to insert one of the many Barney Oldfield tales that are deserving of perpetuation.

Barney, like myself, once had an opportunity truly golden to ally himself with Henry Ford, whose favor he, a recruit from the bicycle race tracks, had won by taming the fire-breathing monster that its own owner could not at the moment master—Ford's historic 999,