

MERLE ANDERSON: Government 'myths' limit ethanol's full use

By Merle Anderson on Mar 8, 2014 at 4:14 a.m. Grand Forks Herald

CLIMAX, Minn. — Orrie Swayze from Watertown, S.D., and I have traveled many miles together as friends and American Coalition for Ethanol founding board members. We have gained a historical perspective on all that is called ethanol

I am certainly old enough to have such a perspective, and I always have wanted to team with Orrie to share our perspectives with others.

First, we must remember that Henry Ford favored E30 for his Model T. After that, what could go wrong, did go wrong as government teamed with oil, and — in a joint effort to keep ethanol out of gasoline markets — created misleading myths that E30 was illegal and would ruin engines: Government's gasoline mandate began.

Lead octane then poisoned our children unnecessarily for 50 years.

I want to throw the entire U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in jail because it has not enforced the law. The Clean Air Act as well as other federal laws phased out not only lead but also comparably hazardous benzene-associated octane to the maximum extent achievable.

EPA breaks this law because this hazardous and difficult-to-fully-combust octane still makes up nearly 25 percent of gasoline content and causes nearly all of gasoline's hazardous pollution.

Thirty percent ethanol can replace this octane. Plus, ethanol's tailpipe emissions are non-carcinogenic or relatively harmless.

Health risks are Swayze's area, and he also tells me that because of today's 10 percent ethanol-blend limit, our children unnecessarily will experience the effects of exposure to benzene-related octane — effects that include the increased incidence of birth defects, childhood cancers, asthma and so on.

We all should be mad that this happens just because auto, government and big oil interests created myths that have kept 30 percent ethanol from replacing gasoline's polluting, hazardous octane.

Interestingly, EPA requires oil's propaganda labeling on the pump, which says that E30 will damage standard auto engines. But EPA does not require any warning saying that gasoline emissions often damage children's health.

Another government myth is that it's illegal to use E30 in standard autos. But owners can legally choose popular E30 if there is, as EPA defines, a "reasonable" basis to believe emissions are improved.

I have traveled more than half a million miles using E30 or higher blends in my standard autos, and I have never owned a flex-fuel vehicle because I saw no need to.

Still another government myth is that dealers automatically void a standard auto owner's warranty if the vehicle has been fueled with E30. The Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act requires dealers prove to the owner that E30 caused the part failure — and that's a difficult if not impossible task as parts in both a flex and non-flex model are essentially the same.

Check with your dealer. Obviously, to date there have not been any legitimate warranty issues, or I would have been one of the first to know.

Then there's the government myth that standard gas station pumps cannot safely pump E30. I really chuckle at that one, because standard gas station pumps were the only pumps available when E85 was introduced nearly 20 years ago, and they still are safely pumping E85.

My dream is every American and all of agriculture — including our sugar beet industry — would have access to an ethanol market that is not limited by EPA and big oil's nonsense or the ethanol blend wall that has been in place since the first Model T was built.

Anderson was a founding president of the American Coalition for Ethanol.