

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 433

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will encourage you to think for yourselves and weigh the evidence. Our text is Proverbs 18:17: **“The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”** While this Scripture is of universal application, for today's letter we will focus on electric vehicles. Before buying an electric car, please listen to all sides and consider the evidence.

My own experience with electric vehicles is quite limited. Some years ago our good friend Tim Taylor sold us two electric golf carts for \$300 each. On the advice of Butch White I had them equipped with a meter that would warn you when the batteries were about dead. Each cart had it's own battery charger and you grandchildren had a great time driving them. Each cart had six batteries, and when it came time to replace those batteries the cost for 12 new batteries was going to be \$1,800. So I sold the carts to Robert Gooch for \$100 each and bought a gas powered golf cart from Devin Chance for \$300. It was manufactured in the 1980s but still runs great. We have had it for over 10 years and I have spent virtually nothing on maintenance. Several years ago I did buy one rebuilt battery for \$49.95.

You may be surprised to learn:

- The first electric vehicle was put on display in Paris by Gustave Trouve in 1881.
- In 1893 another Frenchman, Charles Jenaud, founded the first automobile company. For years they only manufactured electric vehicles under the brand name “Jeantaud.”
- On Sept. 27, 1897 the Electric Vehicle Co. was founded.
- Also in 1897 US manufacturers Morris & Salom modernized New York's taxi fleet with the quiet and odorless Electrobat. 12 of these vehicles were used in Manhattan in Jan. 1897, but between 1897 and 1899 several hundred EVs were built.
- French racing driver Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat set a speed record in a Jeantaud of 92 km/h in 1899.
- Also in 1899 the Jeantaud went 140 km without charging.
- The EVC company was taken over by a syndicate in 1899 with the desire to have a monopoly on electric cars in major American cities.
- In 1899 EVC was the largest manufacturer of automobiles in the US but lost that position to Oldsmobile in 1901.
- In 1908 engineers at Siemens-Schuckert developed batteries that would provide ranges of from 60-80 km at 30 km per hour. This was considered acceptable performance at the time.

THE GAS POWERED CAR

- In Philadelphia in 1876 George Brayton displayed an internal combustion engine at the Centennial Exposition.
- On May 8, 1879 George Selden filed a patent for a gas powered automobile using the Brayton engine. His witness for the patent was none other than George Eastman who later became famous for the Kodak camera.
- Due to a series of amendments the patent process stretched out over 16 years but was finally granted on Nov. 5, 1885.
- Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Co. in Detroit, Michigan in 1903. Selden sued Ford for patent infringement and the court battle raged for eight years generating a case record of 14,000 pages.

- Selden originally prevailed but lost on appeal. On Jan. 10, 1911 Ford won the case based on the fact he used the “Otto” engine rather than the “Brayton” engine covered by the patent.
- In 1912 there were 6,000 electric cars sold but 82,000 Model Ts.
- In 1914 Edison and Ford formed a partnership and experimented with a new version of the electric car.
- Public interest in the Ford-Edison electric car was high but in 1917 the project was quietly put to sleep.
- One major problem with electric vehicles involved care for the batteries. Aron Gold observed in *Motortrend* “Even Salom and Morris, veterans of the trolley industry, thought battery maintenance would be beyond the scope of private owners. Maintenance required removing a 500 to 1,000 pound battery every few days to check the acid in each cell with a hydrometer, top off low cells, replace dead cells, remove the sludge from the bottom of the cell jars, and periodically clean or replace the positive plates. Charles Duryea, a dissatisfied EV owner who would develop America's first gasoline-powered car in 1894, complained that ‘a set of batteries was worse to take care of than a hospital full of sick dogs.’”

Of course, many believe we have no choice. We must “go electric” to save the planet. Of course, hearing these claims first, makes them seem less serious when a second opinion is considered. Truth, as you know, is not determined by “consensus”. In 1970 the “consensus” was that the earth was cooling. Ecologist Kenneth Watt observed that the earth had been cooling sharply for 20 years and feared a coming ice age. He predicted that the earth would be 11 degree colder by 2,000. In 1988, however, the “consensus” changed and Columbia University scientist James Hansen sued the government over the dangers of “global warning.” Today, the “consensus” for “cooling” or “warming” has been replaced by the “consensus” of “climate change”. This generic term is elastic enough to scare many into opposing fossil fuels with a religious fervor. Please, however, be open to a second opinion!

This word of wisdom from the Bible is still appropriate: **“The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”** PLEASE THINK FOR YOURSELVES!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce