

A Woman Driver's 'Disaster'—and 'Salvation'



Reporter Linda Lee Landis concedes that she does indeed have a flat tire.



Wearing her work gloves, she begins the task at hand.
 [TRIBUNE Staff Photos by John Bartley]



Kneeling on the mat she had in her trunk, Miss Landis removes the hub cap.

BY LINDA LEE LANDIS

ASK ANY WOMAN if she knows how to change a flat tire and she'll look at you as if you've been out in the sun too long. It's a dismal situation for a woman to find herself in, and unfortunately, most of us don't know the first thing about what to do.

Last week, it happened to me. I could suddenly feel the thud, thud, thump and the car pulling to the right. Luckily I had just read and followed the Allstate Motor club's admonition to lady drivers to equip their cars for just such an emergency.

It had advised us to carry in the trunk a usable spare tire, a four-way lug wrench, in addition to the wrench which came with the car, work gloves, a trouble light or flares for night time flats, a rubber mat to kneel on while working, a small board to put under the jack which also came with the car, packaged moistened paper towels, clean rags, and a hefty screwdriver.

I found the work gloves and the rubber mat the most helpful items of all because they kept me clean. The only commodity the motor club overlooked was good muscle tone. That's what I needed!

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If you find yourself in a similar situation, here's what to do. After you've thoroughly scanned the horizon and determined that no help is coming, open the trunk and get your supplies out. Put the jack under the bumper and pump it with the wrench which came with the car. Pump it just enough so the weight of the car isn't on the tire anymore, but not so high that the wheel will spin around when you're trying desperately to get the lug nuts off.

The lug nuts are really like screws, but they call them lug nuts or lug bolts on a tire. For heaven's sake, don't lose them! The motor club advises that you use the hub cap as their receptacle.

After you get all the lug nuts off with the four-way spinable wrench [whew!], jack the car up a bit more; pull the tire and wheel off, and with a heave and struggle, get the spare tire on. Give the tire a good kick if it doesn't fit. Besides getting it into its rightful place, the kick will relieve you of any frustration you might be experiencing. Take five and mop your brow.

If at this point anyone offers to help, assume an unperturbed countenance and a quiet air of dignity and refuse it, for most of the work already is done.

Watch it when you start putting the lug nuts back on. Secure each in its place the first time around, then go back and tighten each with the same amount of pressure; they should grip the wheel equally.

The rest is anticlimatic. After you pump the car down, remove the jack from



She's into the home stretch now with the good tire about to be put on.

under the car. Throw the hubcap into the trunk along with the other tools and have the service station attendant put it on afterwards when you have your tires checked and the flat tire repaired. Use the moistened paper towels and rags to clean up.

It really wasn't the grueling task I imagined it would be, and unless we've all overestimated the chivalry of the American male, you won't get very far into the job anyway.



After jacking the car up, she removes the lug nuts.