very sincerely yours:

THE corner was a tight one, a sharp turn, leading from concrete to asphalt with a nasty little bump in the juncture between the two materials. As each car charged through, it slid sideways on the sandy concrete and then hopped to the outside as it hit the asphalt. Finally one car, a light little Lotus, ran out of road. Hitting the juncture a quartering blow it flipped, slid along for about ten feet upside down, slammed into a sand pile and came to rest. The driver was pinned inside, unhurt but thoroughly trapped. Just as the car was righted it burst into flame. There was no sign of a fire extinguisher on the corner, not even a bucket of water. A flagman grabbed the required extinguisher from the cockpit but the pitiful little trickle of carbon tetrachloride was sufficient only to release a cloud of choking phosgene as it hit the hot metal. Scratch one expensive automobile.

This little drama occurred last spring at Sebring. It points up a lesson that should be taken to heart by every car-owner, driver and race official connected with *any* form of competition. It's a lesson learned though bitter experience on the dry lakes and at Bonneville. The lesson is simply this: when it comes to a gasoline or alcohol fire in a race car a carbon-tet fire extinguisher is worse than useless. The small units usually carried don't pack enough juice to cope with such a fire. Worse, the fumes released by carbon tetrachloride in contact with heated metal are deadly poison – a World War I gas known as phosgene. A driver trapped or pinned in a burning car could, perhaps, hold back a fire with a liquid extinguisher for a short while only to be gassed in the process. It could have happened at Sebring; it didn't because help was immediately available.

The answer, learned at Bonneville, Muroc and El Mirage, is simple: Carbon dioxide – CO_2. In the past few years CO_2 extinguishers have been standard equipment on every corner in all West Coast road races, at several points along all drag strips and at strategic points along the courses at Bonneville and El Mirage. Further, the smaller, five-pound units are required equipment in the competing cars. It is difficult to say just how many lives and how many dollars worth of equipment have been saved by these simple precautions but just one life is worth any trouble necessary to save it. The above is not meant to say that the carbon-tet extinguisher is useless in all cases – it isn't. Carbon-tet is excellent for small, open-air fires or blazes in places that can be evacuated immediately. However, as far as we are concerned, carbon-tet has no place in a race car except as a cleaning fluid.

* * *

In the past few months we have received literally hundreds of requests for information on "specials" – the backyard boomers we featured briefly in the April issue. Starting on page 32 is our first offering – one of the hottest small-bore specials ever built in anybody's backyard, Candy Poole's PBX. Karl Ludvigsen has torn the little bomb apart nut by bolt and, on the center spread, SCI's cutaway genius, C. O. LaTourette, has laid bare the bones.

* * *

Regarding the fourteen pages starting with page eight, we need make little comment. This is one of the most exhaustive pieces of research ever done in one jolt on the light, economy car trend. SCI's research staff drove every car mentioned but one and that one hadn't reached the U.S. as of presstime. This guide is no publicity pickup but a series of true SCI capsule road tests of each car mentioned. We have made no attempt to compare the cars but have evaluated each according to its individual merits. The reader as the prospective buyer can make the final evaluation and comparison according to his individual needs. We don't feel that it is incumbent on us to tell you *what* to buy but merely to present a handy guide to aid you in your choice, be it a 90 mph Volvo, a go-anywhere VW or that most minimum of cars, the 2CV Citroen. We've presented the facts and figures – *you* make the choice.

–john christy

SPORTS CARS ILLUSTRATED is published monthly by the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. Entered as second class matter at Post Office, Washington, D. C. with additional entry at the Post Office Silver Spring, Maryland, and Atlanta, Georgia, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

SPORTS CARS ILLUSTRATED subscription rates: U. S. and Canada–1 year $4; 2 years $7; 3 years $9. Pan American countries–add 50¢ per year. All other foreign subscriptions add $1 per year. Single copy 35¢.