

Fuel For Thought

The Fuel Manager Quarterly Newsletter - April 2003
Comprehensive Computer Programs for Petroleum/Propane Dealers

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Our thoughts and prayers are with the troops in Iraq. We wish them all a safe and quick return to their homes.

FM News

Be on the lookout for the latest FM update. You will either receive it in the mail or by e-mail during the month of May.

Customer Highlight

Talk about all in the family...Martisdale Guadalupe Gas in Martindale, Texas has seen three generations of Bierstedts involved with the company. Father, Hilmer, began the business in 1947; Son, Tommy, came on board in 1972 and took over the reins in 1999, and Grandson, Kevin joined in 2002.

Tommy has seen a lot of changes in the propane industry in the over 40 years he has been around the business. According to Tommy, "Probably, the biggest improvement has been in the trucks. The larger capacity tank require fewer trips to the storage and more

options are now available when ordering a new delivery truck."

Doris Allen, Office Manager said she loves the speed in which FM produces monthly statements. Back in the 1980s, Doris can remember hand typing all the customer statements. At first, Doris was a little apprehensive about using a computer, but after expe-



riencing the ease and many benefits, she says she "definitely would not go back to pen and ink." Doris also said she appreciates the fact that "support is just a phone call away. It just eases your mind to know you call talk to a real person for assistance" .

Martindale has been using FM and the General Ledger since 1998. Continued success to Martindale Guadalupe Gas!!

Questions and Answers

Question: I need to give my FM mailing list to someone else. How do I do it?

Answer: You must first go through the label setup routine. From the Main Menu, Go to #2, Report Menu, then G, Print Customer Labels. You must choose the Selective option. Then type Y by each customer that you want included in the "label" file. Be sure that you SAVE the selected customers. You would then copy the arlabsav.dbf file from the FM directory to a floppy disk or CD.

Question: What's the purpose of the Sale or Usage Report (B on the Reports Menu)?

Answer: The report allows dealers to determine how much of a product their customers are consuming. The report can be run for individual months or for a date range from the combined history file. Up to six different products can also be shown on the report at one time. One of our dealers said that the report helps him track his rental tanks.

He knows if his customers are not buying product from him, they must be buying it somewhere else.

Question: I know customer account information is there, but I can't find it. What do I do?

Answer: Always reindex files if data appears missing or in the wrong account. (From the Main Menu, go to #1, Account Maintenance, then R, Reindex Files Menu, then A for All.) Temporary power loss or a surge of electricity can cause data to be misplaced.

Lessons from Life

by Reverend Purnell Bailey

For many years, a farmer plowed around a huge rock in one his fields.

He had become frustrated with the rock. It had broken a cultivator and two of his plows and was taking up valuable space in the field. One day the farmer made up his mind to dig it out and be done with it!

When he placed a long lever under it, he discovered that the imposing rock was less than a foot thick and could be loosened with just a little effort. With the help of one other person, he put it in his wagon and hauled it away.

It is that way with so many obstacles in life. Our troubles burden us and we stand in awe of them. We ask ourselves, "Who can do anything about that?"

Prayer can give us a better perspective on our troubles. When we pray, we are in the presence of the CREATOR, the ONE who is all powerful, and we soon discover a different attitude. And many of these troubles turn out to be like those of an elderly lady who, when reviewing her life, exclaimed, "I've had a lot of trials in my time . . . but many of them never came to be!"

In the world we shall have tribulations but be of good cheer. I

have overcome the world!
JOHN 3:16

Business Tips

Use the features of FM to keep on top of your customers. Run the Aged Trial Balance report often and use it.

Remember the older an account balance becomes, the less likely you are to collect. Print the Delivery Report before working a route. This report will print the last delivery and last gallons delivered, as well as, the account balance. Review this report, then contact problem customers before making the next delivery.

Don't overlook the ability to print past due notices and specific aging messages for your customers. A good strategy if you print statements at month end is to send late notices mid-month. Use different messages on statements and late notices for greater emphasis.

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