



# President's Message

## At the heart of innovation

Stéphan Möller, President: PSSA

The clouds were hanging low this morning and the cold crept deep into the bone. An unearthly sound across the meadow sought everybody's attention. The women were wearing their thickest wool coats and rubbed their sore hands whenever they could sneak in a chance to do so. It was back breaking work to pull the plough through the hard trodden soil. Not even the harsh barks of the landowner manning the plough could avert their curiosity as the ungodly monstrosity was carrying a prim looking lady across the field without a horse in sight.

A few fell to their knees and made the sign of the cross to ward off the evil they were witnessing. No cry of desperation could stop the young child as she sped off in the wake of the coughing and sputtering half wagon, half buggy and the enticing lady that for an instant looked her sharply in the eye. Reaching the edge of the town the small girl started shouting "A witch! A witch is coming!"

A trace of an amused smile darted over Bertha's lips as she and her two sons flew over the open road. "It is exciting to be part of this adventure, so close to the end of the nineteenth century!" she mused. She felt the exhilaration of driving the thin edge of the wedge of the technology she knew would change the way of life.

As luck would have it though, the confounded machine backfired once and forced their progress to a screeching halt. Primly Bertha stepped down and inspected the moving parts. Nothing seemed out of place. She unfastened the brake and with the assistance of her two boys, pushed the carriage into town.

Fear started to loom at her periphery as the townsfolk started to gather and their open hostility became palpable through the cold morning air. With a short sigh of relief she recognised the sign of the town's pharmacy. Wading through water-filled puddles and mud, she reached the pharmacy. Hammering on the door to no avail, she realised with dread that the pharmacist was out.

Having warmed up to the prim lady, the little girl now standing close to Bertha, realised the town's pharmacist needed a few pints of ale to start the morning. Without breathing a word, she pointed to the tavern, as Bertha held her gaze. It was unheard of for a woman with repute to enter a men's tavern, especially this early in the morning. Hesitantly, she called into the tavern "Is the pharmacist in?"

Begrudgingly the pharmacist averted her gaze. "I am looking for ten litres of ligroin." Acknowledging her presence, the pharmacist looked her up and down and lamented "You won't get those stains out of that dress" as he turned around again and nursed his pint. Exasperated she replied "It's not for my dress, it's for my carriage."

Carefully Bertha filled the copper tank with the ligroin the pharmacist handed to her bottle by bottle. Her oldest knew the routine by now and after a nod of her head, he cranked the large flywheel. The carriage splattered and died again. After a huge heave, the engine caught and started to idle happily. She hustled her two boys on the carriage, and caught the little girl's eye as she climbed onto her carriage. A toothy smile greeted her. She nodded to the girl, engaged the gearshift and started rolling out of the town square.

It took Bertha Benz 12 hours to complete the 106km journey to her parents' house in Pforzheim. The pharmacy where she bought ligroin is considered the first gas station in history. She introduced her husband's invention to the world and changed our lives forever.

Over the years, pharmacists have been part of society, playing a pivotal role in its progress, whether through the promotion of health, or being the soul provider of chemicals to a visionary. I sincerely hope that a pharmacist plays such similar part in the progress of technology and the human race in my lifetime.

