

Cool Tips, Hot Spots and Red Bow Ties

New Guide Offers Behind-The-Scenes Look At Valet Parking

(NAPSA)—Herb Citrin has safely parked thousands upon thousands of vehicles but it's the one that got away that still haunts him.

It was the summer of 1965, and Citrin—already a legend among parking attendants for having introduced the uniforms, the white-glove service and the name “valet parking” two decades earlier—got a frantic call from a garage manager.

“One of our valets forgot to set the brake on a vintage 1937 luxury coupe in what kids used to call ‘cherry condition,’” recalls Citrin, now 83 and a consultant for Valet Parking Services in Los Angeles, a company he founded in 1946. “It rolled down an incline and ended up in 15 feet of seawater.”

Fortunately, mishaps like that occur once in a lifetime, if that. As John Van Horn, editor and publisher of *Parking Today*, an industry trade magazine, puts it, “Most valets are exceptional drivers because all they do is drive cars all day.”

And the number of valets is growing.

Today, valet parking is no longer just for red carpets and country clubs. As greater convenience becomes a factor in our increasingly active lives, the car attendant is now on hand at health clubs, hair salons, sporting events, doctors' offices, even grocery stores and cinemas. According to the National Parking Association, an estimated 200,000 men and women currently work as parking attendants in the United States. That's a lot of red bow ties!

To understand what drives America's professional parking attendants, automaker Lexus has chosen the launch of its all-new ES



One of an estimated 200,000 parking attendants nationwide, a valet at The Peninsula Beverly Hills waits to give a Lexus key back to its owner. Visit www.LexusValetGuide.com for an entertaining and informative behind-the-scenes look at the world of valet parking.

350 luxury sedan to introduce *The Lexus ES Insider's Guide to Valet Parking*. The guide is a behind-the-scenes look at what happens once a car disappears into “Valet Land”—from the secrets valets don't share with anyone, to the parking do's and don'ts every smart driver should know.

“Valet parking is a common ritual, but there's not much information about it,” said Bob Carter, Lexus group vice president and general manager. “The guide actually turned into a bit of an homage to parking attendants everywhere and uncovered both some humorous and useful information for drivers.”

What's considered a good tip? Who uses valet parking? A survey on parking habits, conducted for the Lexus guide by Kelton Research, found that, on average, 61 percent of Americans use valet parking. The survey also found that Americans tip valets an average of \$3 per vehicle.

Nationally, Northeasterners rely on valets the most. And, surprisingly, speed isn't much of a factor in customer satisfaction, the survey found. Americans are willing to wait up to an average of nine minutes for the valet to return their cars before becoming impatient, though younger drivers will wait only five minutes before getting antsy.

To examine regional differences on the valet scene, Lexus dispatched journalist David Hochman to report on parking habits and traditions in four cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and New York. Hochman even spent a day “undercover” as a parking attendant learning valet lingo (e.g., “Holy Roller: As in window roller; a stinky car”) and the valet's mantra: “Smile, open door, greet, give ticket, rinse, repeat.”

The guide also offers valuable advice from Martin Stein, president of the National Parking Association. Stein urges drivers to take notice of any attendant before handing over the keys. He encourages drivers to look for corporate uniforms and professional-looking valet signage, while checking to see if keys are securely managed.

Citrin, meanwhile, is happy to report that 99.99 times out of a 100, valet attendants abide by the same basic principle he introduced at the first of what would become tens of thousands of valet-parking locations across America. “You give us your car,” Citrin says with a proud smile any car owner would find reassuring. “We get it back to you safely.”

The Lexus ES Insider's Guide to Valet Parking can be viewed and downloaded free of charge at www.LexusValetGuide.com.