

# THE SUNDAY SUN

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## EDITORIAL

### Little guy beats Big Oil, sheiks

Virginio Mendonca of Chelmsford is no Albert Einstein, but he has done more to end America's dependence on foreign oil than President Bush and Congress' 535 lawmakers, including Sen. John Kerry.

Who is Mendonca?

He is a 44-year-old former automobile mechanic who today can tell every Arab sheik to stuff their \$48 barrels of oil where the sand meets their toes. He's also capable of doubling over in laughter each time he passes a gas station with a sign promoting a fillup at \$2 a gallon.

Mendonca's curiosity and ingenuity pushed him to convert a 1986 Jetta Volkswagen to run on used vegetable oil. He gets 44 mpg with the vehicle. Even more amazing is that Mendonca rides around for free — the used vegetable oil comes from restaurateurs who otherwise would have to pay to get rid of it, because of environmental controls.

Now if a car can run on used vegetable oil, one has to ask a simple question: Why won't the U.S. government require automobile manufacturers to develop vehicles to do the same?

Big Oil is huge only because of the rich profits the industry generates. And the oil lobby has such mesmerizing control on Washington politicians of both parties that American research is cut short from developing renewable energy sources. Few politicians have the courage to stand up to Big Oil, even though many of them rail against the industry at election time.

Mendonca, however, shames them all.

Mendonca's conversion scheme was inspired from the book, *From the Fryer to the Fuel Tank*, by Joshua Tickell. After self-educating himself, Mendonca bought a fuel-line conversion kit developed by another innovator, UMass Amherst graduate and Greasecar company founder Justin Carver. It took Mendonca 18 months to modify his Jetta, and now it's on the road — zipping along on french fry drippings.

American servicemen have had to fight three Middle Eastern wars since 1991 to thwart dictators and terrorists and to keep our gluttonous thirst for oil from going dry. While their bravery and blood are worth the risk of liberating oppressed peoples and securing our national safety, no American should die on a battlefield for oil — especially when America has the brains and brawn to develop new energy sources.

The sad history of the past 14 years is this: America's consumption of foreign oil has increased substantially since the first Persian Gulf war. Our politicians have not heeded warnings to curb our foreign-oil appetite. If this insatiable demand continues, America is doomed to keep the Middle East's supply flowing to our shores. It is a vicious circle. Furthermore, our leaders fail to see is a collision course brewing with China. The Asian giant's economy is exploding, and its demand for imported oil will soon outstrip America's. Nothing good can come from a China-U.S. competition for oil.

Virginio Mendonca is an American citizen who has taken the matter into his own hands. For the cost of a \$750 conversion kit, he has snubbed his nose at Big Oil barons, greedy sheiks and do-nothing politicians. Even better, his conscience is clear that no U.S. servicemen will have to die in a desert for Mendonca's freedom to drive his car.