

Is That Mark's Socks?

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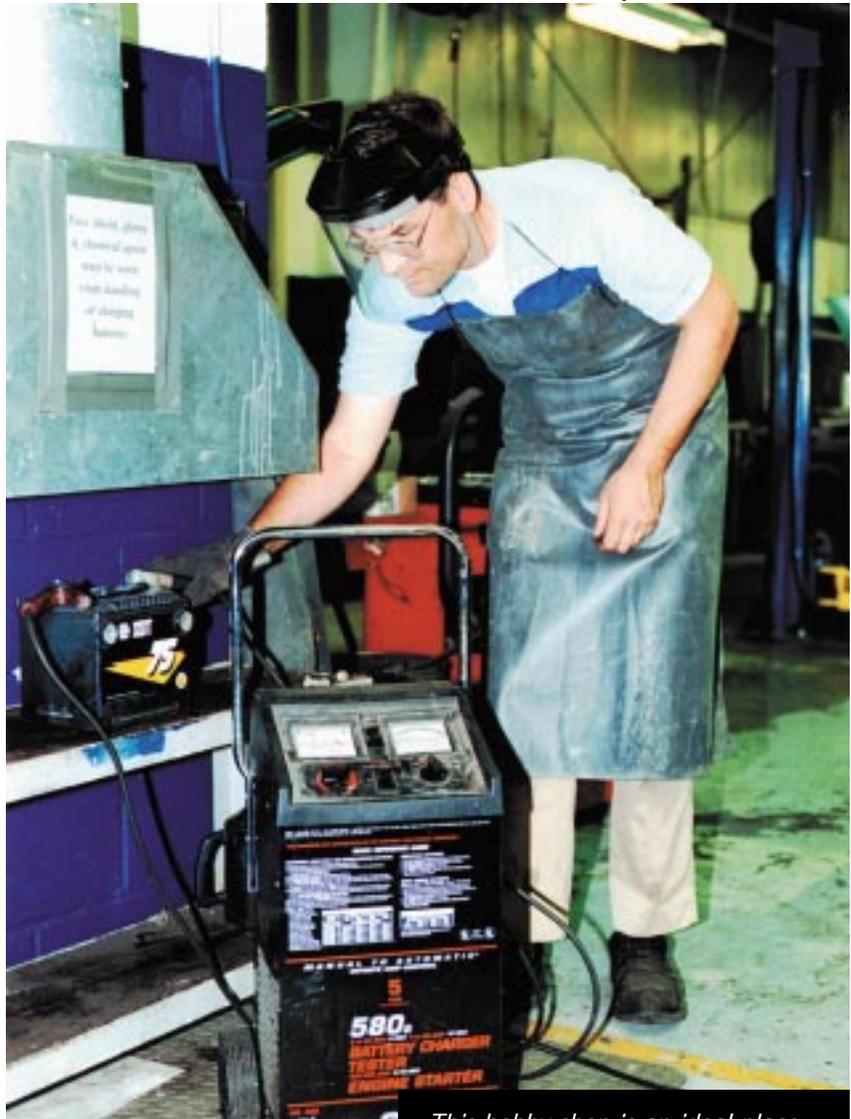
Photo by PH2 Matthew J. Thomas

I arrived home from work one afternoon and smelled a strong odor of rotten eggs as soon as I went into my house. Could it be my good friend Mark left his dirty socks at our house, or had I forgotten to put some food in the refrigerator?

Following my nose, I went into the garage, where the smell got stronger. Then I saw a stream of battery acid running down my workbench.

A week ago, I had set a spare car battery on the bench and hooked a charger to it. I hadn't given them any more thought and relied on the charger to automatically turn off when the battery was charged. Now, I realized the charger had malfunctioned, and the battery had been charging all week. I turned off the charger and started cleaning up the spill. Even after I removed the power from the charging unit, the battery continued to boil.

Because of the age of the battery and its charging cycle, particulate matter had built up in the bottom of the battery. This build-up caused a short between the lead plates. I called the city hazmat team for advice on how to get rid of this battery, because I was afraid it would explode. They told me it would be safer for them to pick up the battery and dispose of it themselves. Even though it cost me a few bucks to have them do this, I felt I really had no alternative. That's the price I paid for being careless. ❏



This hobby shop is an ideal place to charge a battery. It offers protective equipment, an exhaust hood over the battery, and a charger that automatically shuts off when the battery is charged.