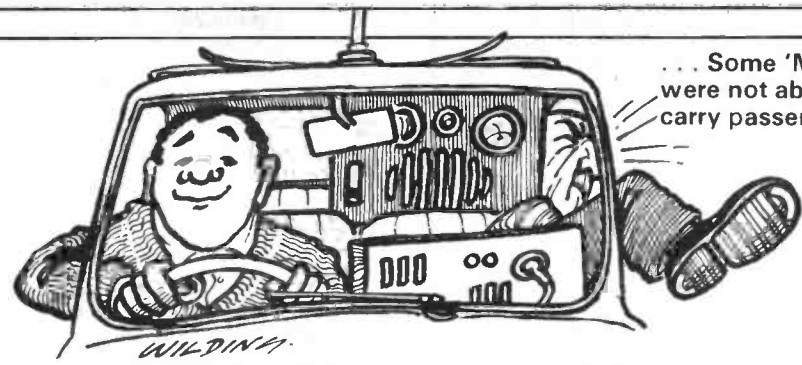
thing was about 12 feet long, and the coil was in the middle, which, to make the antenna anything like efficient had to be about 10 inches long by about 3 inches in diameter! This was for 'top band', the loading coil for 80 metres was the same length but about two and a half inches in diameter.

I had this monstrosity (?) mounted on a half section of a ski rack on the car roof, and the total height from the top of the antenna to the ground was something like 20 feet. Apart from hitting the undersides of bridges on occasion, you can imaging the looks that I received, never mind the remarks, as I drove along. I have been mistaken for a BBC TV detector van, a secret type of policeman and other less polite descriptions. One made the antenna oneself, and wound the coil also, and the various hints and tips which went around at that time to help you wind the coil or tune the antenna would have filled a book.

The distance worked with top band mobile varied with the time of the day, as do the conditions for base station working today, but I well remember the thrill of working an amateur in Guildford when just outside Birmingham on the way home to London. That, to me, was mobile 'DX'. Another thrill that I recall was working a 'W' in New York from my car when driving round the North Circular Road in London. This, of course was at a later date, and with a mobile SSB rig. The controls of the 'COMMAND' sets were not engineered for adjustment when driving the car, and



. . . Some 'Mobileers' were not able to carry passengers . . .

as a rule, particularly on 80 metres, I had to draw into the side of the road to tune the transmitter up, before calling 'CQ CQ FROM G3RDG stroke MOBILE'. At that time and with the 'COMMAND' transmitters, a carbon microphone was necessary, and I have to this day the adapted telephone headset with the carbon mike projecting to curve round in front of my mouth. This was before the days of noise cancelling mikes.

Power Problems

Of course, current consumption of the rig was quite a consideration. Since the circuitry was all valve, there were the heaters of the valves to think about and some means of providing the high tension voltage of about 220 volts DC for the screens and anodes of the receiver valves and about 400 volts at 200mA for the pair of 1623 transmitting valves. In my case this was achieved by means of a rotary converter, a most inefficient means of doing it. Basically, it consisted of a motor running at 12 volts DC (from the car battery) attached to and driving a dynamo which generated the necessary voltages. Of course the current drain from the car battery was considerable, and many a time I have stopped by the roadside so that I could keep the engine running at a good speed and keep the voltage up. A far cry from today when my Yaesu FT480R draws barely 3.5 amps on transmit with an input to the antenna of nearly 30 watts on high power. And that with a physical size no larger than a car radio.

Nevertheless, I feel, perhaps with nostalgia, that we had more fun 20 years ago than one gets today when operating mobile. To go and buy a 'black box' (and don't think, any of you, that I look down on the modern rigs), put it in the car, and get excellent transmission and reception without any trouble, seems to me to take away the excitement of the hobby. But perhaps I am wrong, and only looking at it from a point of view of 20 years ago.

At all event, all that I can do is to wish all you mobile operators more power to your elbow, whether using old-fashioned rigs with heavy current consumption and bulk, or the latest all singing all dancing box from Japan. . . 73's.