

# Lining up to save a buck

BY BRANDON BAIN  
STAFF WRITER

K.C. Armstrong drove 136 miles from Collingswood, N.J., to West Babylon in his Chevy Suburban to rescue two fluffy white sheepdogs that a resident could no longer take care of.

As he drove down Sunrise Highway yesterday, Armstrong just had to stop at Mike's Super Citgo, he said.

"I was flying by and I saw the price and I said, 'I wonder if that's a mistake,'" he said.

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the West Babylon station offered regular grade at \$2.15, with plus and supreme also \$1 less than usual.

"I wondered if they didn't have enough threes and put up a two," Armstrong said. "Then I said, 'This line means it's not a mistake.'"

Citgo owner Mike Abizeid said the idea for selling cheaper gas hatched when his priest, on Good Friday, mentioned on a WBAB/102.3 FM show that Abizeid might be willing to do it.

Abizeid talked to the priest and agreed it would be a good way to promote the business and help others. It earned him a certificate of appreciation from Babylon Town Supervisor Steve Bellone and made him something of a celebrity.

"I don't mind taking a hit," Abizeid said as several grinning customers thanked him. "I'm doing this for my community. ... I'm hoping to do it again."

During the sale, which WBAB promoted, the station pumped about 10,000 gallons.

Nearly 300 cars, most SUVs and minivans, arrived early to

fill their tanks.

About 90 cars an hour lined Sunrise Highway and looped around Hubbards Path into residential streets. Customers, many on their lunch break or on their way to a late shift, passed time playing with their kids or talking to strangers.

Many in line said they couldn't remember the last time they saw gas at \$2.15. Some could finally afford to upgrade to super.

"I can't believe I'm waiting in line to pay \$2.15 for gas," said Leslie Salaniti, 40, a homemaker from West Babylon, who watched old home movies in her GMC Denali. "I never thought in our lifetimes we'd see this again."

At 2 p.m. sharp, Paula Earley, 52, a school bus driver from West Islip, was the last car to get the discounted gas.

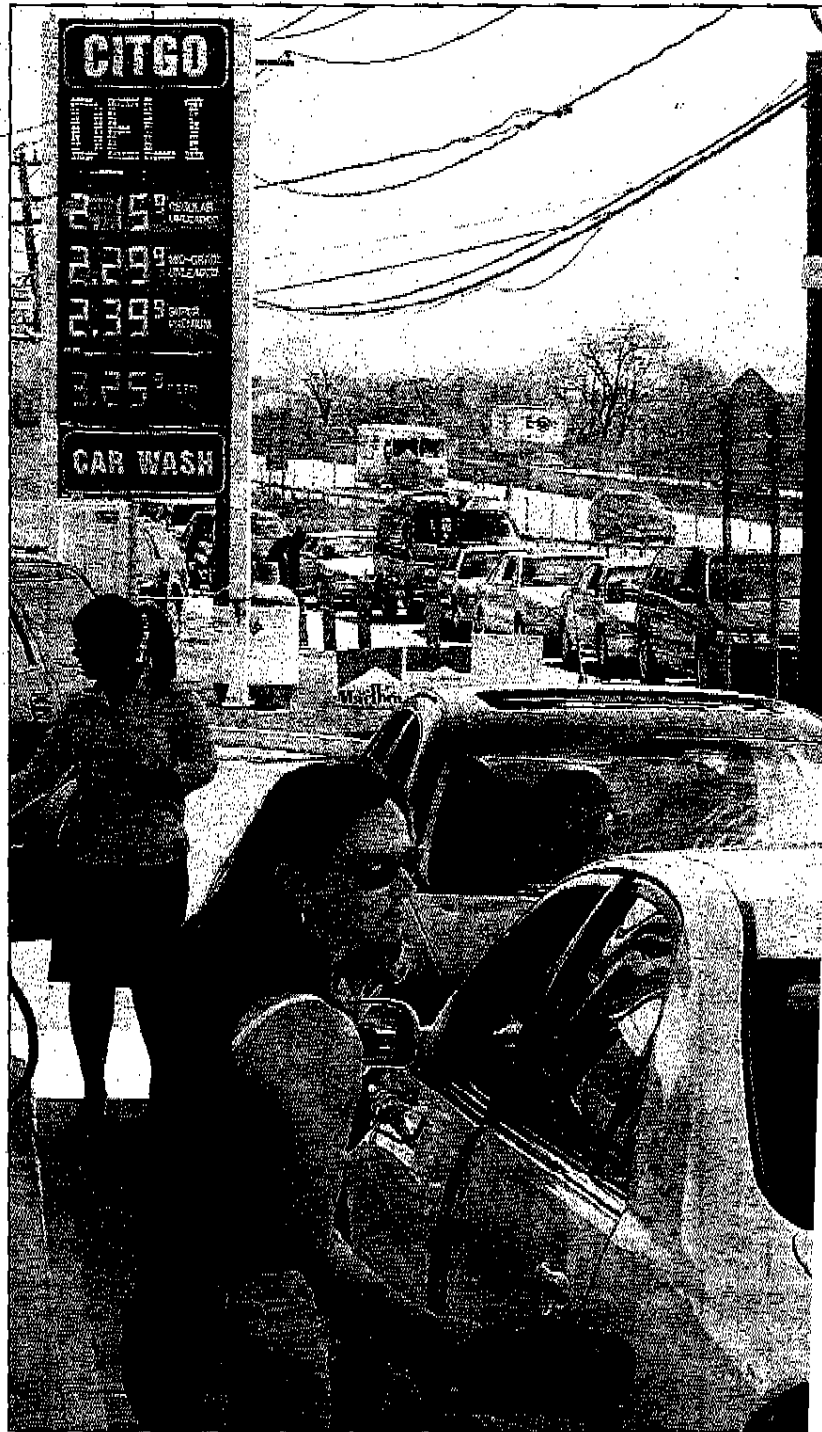
"I was gonna go get my husband's truck instead, but it's a good thing because I wouldn't have been on line," said Earley, who heard about the sale on the radio and left work early.

Attendants cut the line off, leaving a few dozen cars out of luck. "I feel bad," Earley said, looking back at the SUV behind her.

Within minutes, prices shot back up to \$3.15 for regular. Some cars in line peeled off, some tried charm to win an exception — to no avail — and others were too low on gas to leave.

"It just felt like any other day," said college student Ryan Storz, 20, of West Babylon, who arrived after class and missed the deal. "Any other day, it just goes up that fast."

## THE DRIVERS



Linda Simone of Lindenhurst grabs discounted fuel at Mike's Super Citgo

# There's no premium on drivers' complain

Robert Perks watched and waited as the cost of the gas pouring into his truck rose past \$66.

"It's a lot of money to fill this thing," said Perks, 32, who was gassing up his GMC Sierra at a Mobil station in Rockville Centre yesterday. "I'm going to stop it at \$75."

Exxon Mobil Corp. reported yesterday that its first-quarter earnings grew 69 percent, to \$8.4 billion. The announcement

came three months after the company reported net income of \$36.13 billion for 2005 — a record for a U.S. company.

Perks, like several other Long Islanders interviewed at two Mobil stations on Sunrise Highway yesterday, said the high prices at the pump seem unfair.

"I don't think it's right, you know?" said Perks, a Nassau

County police officer who lives in Bethpage. "I think they should give it back to the consumer."

At both Rockville Auto Boutique and Anton's Car Care Center, the cheapest per-gallon price yesterday was \$3.15.

As he filled up a van, Edward George noted that Exxon chief executive Lee Raymond's retire-

ment package was reportedly \$400 million, even as prices rose at the pump. "The administration in Washington, they should be pressuring these guys," George said.

Rob Hochhauser of Merrick agreed the federal government needs to step in. "Mr. Bush, Mr. Cheney, they have to take a stand on this," Hochhauser said. "The prices are out of hand."

Angela Louttit, 36, of Lyn-

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## THE DILEMMA

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