FROM THE BENCH CHRIS WICKCKERSHAM

Bead Blasting and Sand Blasting Model A Parts

When doing a project on these old cars, one of the biggest chores is cleaning the parts. If you need to clean big old rusty parts that will be painted such as front axles, wheels, frames, fenders and bumper brackets, one very good choice is to have these parts sand blasted. Sand blasting will leave the parts clean and rust free and make repairs and preparation for painting a lot easier. In recent years, bead blasting has also become very popular. A lot of old car hobbyists have a small bead blast cabinet in their shop they find very useful for cleaning small parts.

While sand blasting and bead blasting are good for cleaning a lot of the components, these processes are not really recommended for parts such as the torque tube, rear axle housings and engine or transmission internal parts. You can sand blast a torque tube but then you have the problem of how to get all the sand out of the inside. Sand will find its way to the inside the torque tube and become imbedded in the old dried up grease and oil and it is just about impossible to remove all of it. Any leftover sand can find its way into the rear end bearings or gears and ruin a fresh rebuild. This is the same for blasting engine and transmission internal parts and castings. It is easy to clean a transmission case by sand or bead blasting but the abrasive will find its way into the pores of the casting and you cannot get it out. Many a project has been ruined because loose abrasive found its way into the working components.

After blasting, you can paint the inside of a casting with Glyptal to seal the pores but this is only successful if the casting is absolutely clean and free of any old grease or oil, which is just about impossible, or the Glyptal will not completely adhere.

One particular component that should never be blasted is the intake manifold. Almost all of these old manifolds have old dried up varnish and fuel residue in the passages that sand or beads can stick to. The new fuels that contain ethanol will dissolve this old varnish and residue and any imbedded abrasive can enter and ruin the engine. Even if you think you have the inside of the manifold clean of old fuel deposits, the sand or beads can also find its way into the pores of the casting.

Carburetors should also not be blasted. It is easy to take a carburetor apart and bead blast the inside to get rid of the old rust and grime but how do you get the beads out of all the passages? Bead blasting the bores of the butterfly shaft will leave it rough and the new shaft may not operate smoothly and will wear prematurely.

If you are working with sheet metal such as fenders or doors, be sure the sand blast operator is very familiar with blasting sheet metal. Done incorrectly, the sheet metal can be warped if too much pressure is used or the nozzle is held at the wrong angle or too close to the work. The surface of the metal can also be "work hardened" which makes future body work much more difficult. Other methods have been developed for blasting sheet metal parts that use less aggressive media such as soda, walnut shells or plastic.

One of the most successful applications for sand blasting is Model A wheels. There is almost no other way to get these old wire wheels really clean. Sand or bead blasting can make cleaning old car parts a lot faster and easier but use caution, blasting is not the best cleaning solution for every part of your Model A.

Tech Tip - Cleaning Small Rusty Parts

An easy way to clean small rusty parts, such as carburetor castings, is to use a rust dissolving solution. Good success has been achieved by first using Metal Kleener 2014 to remove any old grease or oil and then soaking overnight in Rust 911. These 2 products are bio degradable, are available in concentrated form and can be ordered online directly from the manufacturer, rust911.com .