

MY MODEL A QUIT RUNNING, NOW WHAT DO I DO?

Now that spring has arrived, most of us are looking forward to enjoying our Model A's a little more and may be even getting in some serious touring. I am sure we have all done the required maintenance on our Model A's and we are confident that there will be no mechanical problems or break downs, however, keep in mind that our cars are almost ninety years old and unexpected things can happen. A properly restored Model A that has been well maintained will usually be very dependable and can be driven many thousands of trouble free miles but what do we do if the engine starts to run poorly or just completely quits and we find ourselves sitting on the side of the road? Unless there has been a catastrophic failure such as a stripped timing gear or broken crankshaft, most problems are either electrical or fuel related and eliminating one or the other will greatly speed up the necessary repair process and shorten the time it takes to get back on the road.

If your engine starts to run poorly or just completely stops, first check the obvious such as fuel in the tank, the coil wire falling out of the coil etc. If nothing is found, check for spark by removing the coil wire from the distributor and placing the end about 1/8 inch away from a head stud nut. With the ignition switch "ON", crank the engine and watch for spark to jump between the coil wire and the head stud nut. If no spark is observed, look for a problem with the ignition system such as a loose or broken wire, burnt points, a failed condenser etc.

If you do have spark, proceed with checking the fuel system. Most fuel related problems that occur with a Model A that had been running well but all of a sudden starts to run poorly or not at all are usually caused by a restriction in the fuel system. So first check for fuel flow to the carburetor. If your Model A is equipped with a cast iron sediment trap either on the firewall or in the case of the late 31's, on the carburetor itself, open the drain valve and watch for a continuous steady stream of fuel. For cars using the glass bowl type filter, close the fuel supply valve under the dash, remove the fuel line at the carburetor and then open the fuel supply valve and watch for fuel flow. You may want to catch the fuel in a container and not allow it to run onto hot engine components. If there is little or no fuel flow or the flow starts strong but dwindles down to a trickle, check for a clogged fuel system, dirt or rust in the lines, valves or fittings. Fuel flow problems can even be caused by something as simple as a plugged vent hole in the gas cap. If there is a good flow of fuel to the carburetor, close the fuel supply valve and remove the drain plug from the bottom of the carburetor and then open the fuel valve and check for a good flow of fuel thru the carburetor. Occasionally, the problem is within the carburetor itself.

When stopped on the side of the road, it is important to remember to quickly determine if the problem is either ignition or fuel related and then proceed with the diagnosis and execute the proper repair. Do not just guess and start changing parts. Do a few quick checks first.

TECH TIP

I recently ran across a problem I had not seen before. The Model A was equipped with a Model B intake and a newly rebuilt "B" carburetor. The engine ran fine around town but would starve for fuel when running on the freeway. After checking all the usual things that would contribute to fuel starvation and finding nothing, it was determined that the problem was in the carburetor itself.

Upon disassembly of the carburetor, it was found that the float valve installed was a "Grose" ball type valve with a very restrictive internal fuel passage. An original needle and seat type float valve was installed and now the Model A runs fine, both on surface streets and in overdrive on the freeway. In researching this problem, I found that there were a lot of incorrectly made ball type float valves that found their way into the market. When using the ball type float valve, be sure it is not one that was incorrectly made with a very restrictive internal fuel passage.



Original Zenith design
needle and seat float valve



Replacement Grose design
ball and seat float valve