FROM THE BENCH BY CHRIS WICKERSHAM

New Developments in the Model A World

As our Model A's get older we find the components are getting harder to repair. Luckily, with the availability of very good replacement parts, we are able to replace or repair most of the components that are essential to making our Model A's operable. Components like generators, starters, water pumps, and radiators have been available for many years. We have options if we want to replace the transmission and we can now even purchase new reproductions of the original Model A wheels. However, there is one component that is getting harder and harder to repair, and that is the engine.

There are very few Model A engines that have not been rebuilt at least once and most have been rebuilt several times. Now that the engines are in the order of 90 years old, it is getting to the point where more and more engine blocks are not rebuildible. A lot of engine blocks are cracked, rusted out or damaged beyond repair and rebuilders have to reject a lot of the engines sent to them as not repairable and used engines that are rebuildible are getting harder and harder to find. Some owners have installed an engine from a Pinto but this conversion has proved to be less than satisfactory. Conversions using other engines that are better suited usually involve a lot of custom fabrication which is well beyond the capability of most owners. In the future, what options will we have to keep our beloved Model A's on the road? We may have the answer sometime this year as there are currently two projects in the works to make new Model A engines.

Engine Block from Tod Buttermore

We should not actually refer to these projects as building new engines. What is being done is to manufacture a new block, crank and rods. All the other components that make up a complete engine are currently available.

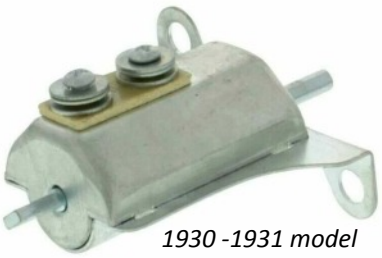
As reported in the January Spoken Wheels, Terry Burtz, a long time MAFCA member from Campbell, California, has been working since 2007 to produce a new engine that looked just like an original on the outside but with 5 main bearings, a balanced crankshaft and full pressure oiling. Terry actually had made some sample castings but the project was put on hold in 2015 because of problems getting good production castings. This last fall, Terry teamed up with a man who does business in China and they have been working with a company that makes engines. It appears the project is once again active and Terry may have finished components available sometime later this year.

Tod Buttermore, from Salem, Ohio has also been working on another Model A engine project for the past several years. Tod owns a CNC machining company and has extensive experience manufacturing finished cast iron and cast aluminum automotive parts. Tod's company is currently making a replacement Ford FE V-8 engine block and is also doing all the machine work on the Model A high compression heads for Snyder. Todd does all the pattern development and tooling in house and has been working on the Model A project as his time permits. While the project has not been his highest priority, progress is being made. Just recently Tod reported that he had cast iron and cast aluminum Model A blocks pored at the foundry he uses. He says so far they look good and very shortly he may have a finished machined cast iron Model A block. He will be making 3 and 5 main bearing versions of his engine, both with full pressure oiling and other internal improvements but the exterior will look just like the original Model A.

This is all good news for our hobby. You can find updates on the Ford Barn website for both of these projects. Being able to obtain new, high quality, engine blocks and internal components will allow us to build good engines and keep our little cars on the road for many years to come.

Tech Tip

When lubricating the chassis of your Model A, be sure to put just a drop of oil on each end of the shaft that goes thru the stop light switch. This is especially important for the '30-31 models where the switch is mounted on the frame cross member where it is subjected to water and road grime. A little oil will help keep the switch from sticking and not closing when the brakes are applied.



1930 -1931 model stop light switch