

## Spring Has Sprung

Now that spring has arrived, we are looking forward to getting our Model A's out of the garage for some deserved exercise. It may also be a good time for an annual inspection and perform a little preventive maintenance. A Model A Ford in good condition is very reliable and a joy to drive. The last thing that we want is to experience a breakdown. Dealing with a problem while parked on the side of the road is much more difficult than if it would be if the problem had been identified and repaired during a scheduled maintenance session.

Normal oil changes and chassis lubrication should be performed on a regular basis. How often is determined by how our cars are used. Henry specified the engine oil should be changed every 500 miles but with today's modern oil formulations and how we use our cars, this may be way too often. Today's oil with detergent additives will help keep the engines clean. A good rule of thumb that I like to use is for normal local driving on a regular basis, you can change the oil every 1000 miles. If on a long distance tour, especially multi-day tours, the oil change interval can be extended to 2000 miles or more. If you rarely drive your car and when you do it is just very short trips around the neighborhood when the engine does not have a chance to get up to full operating temperature, a 500 mile or even a more frequent schedule may be appropriate.

One of the biggest factors that dictate how often you should change the oil is how often you run the engine for an extended period of time when it is at full operating temperature. The Model A engine does not have a good ventilation system and moisture, which is a result of the combustion process, can accumulate in the valve chamber and in the oil itself. To best prevent rust, oil sludge and contamination from the accumulated moisture, it is highly recommended that you have a thermostat installed in the cooling system. A thermostat will help the engine warm up faster and keep the engine at operating temperature which will help eliminate moisture. You will also find the engine will run better and the fuel economy should improve. All the better parts suppliers offer thermostats for the cooling system.

The choice of oil to use is up to the owner. Any oil you can purchase today is better than what was available when Henry made our cars. Multi weight, 10-40 or 20-50 oil work well. Original Model A engines do not require oil with zinc additive but using oils specifically



formulated for "classic" cars that contain zinc will certainly not harm anything. If you have an engine with upgrades to the valve train or is equipped with an over head valve conversion, oil with zinc may well be justified.

For my own cars, I use the least expensive petroleum based, multi weight oil available and then add a little zinc (ZDDP) additive. I do not recommend synthetic oil as they have a greater tendency to leak than petroleum based oil.



Frequency of chassis lubrication can also be extended. For most of our driving, an interval of anywhere from 2000-3000 miles is usually acceptable. If you have driven in a lot of rain or have forded a lot of streams where the chassis has been exposed to a lot of water, a shorter interval would be appropriate.

When you change or lubricate the chassis, always take a little time to check the steering gear, transmission and differential fluids and give your Model A general safety inspection. Check to be sure all lights are operating, look at the tires for excessive wear, take a general look at other under hood components such as the radiator hoses and fan belt and just generally go over the whole car. Occasionally, you will discover an issue that is easily taken care of in your own garage, may develop into a problem which could turn into a roadside repair or even a total breakdown that would require a trip home on the back a tow truck.

One of the best sources of information for maintaining your Model A is the "Model A Instruction Book, commonly known as the Owner's Manual. This little book has a world of basic information which I find very helpful. If you do not already have one, buy one and read it cover to cover. Even though you may think you know everything there is about a Model A, you will find something new that you were not aware of.

I also find the series of publications authored by Les Andrews to be very helpful. His first book, "Model A Ford Mechanics Handbook, Vol. 1", contains the most general information relating to normal maintenance and general repairs but the other two publications also have a lot of very good information.

Two new publications from MAFCA, "Tiny Tips, Vol. 2" and "How to Restore Your Model A, Vol. 10", are full of good information. I am sure you will find information and ideas about better and easier ways to repair and maintain your Model A. Tiny Tips is full of little tricks that I find very helpful. These publications are available

directly from MAFCA or from some of the better Parts suppliers.

Periodically take a little time to care for your Model A. You will find a lot of satisfaction in knowing your Model A is always ready and able to experience the open road.

