

Oil Changes:

I know, I know, your thinking “what the heck is he writing about oil changes for?” Well classic car fans, an oil change is not as simple as it sounds. I can’t tell you how many times I have straightened out problems with cars that simply have the wrong oil in them, or oil that had been repeatedly changed while the engine is cold. Oil that is too light in these old cars will cause excessive leaks or excessive oil burning. When I hear that a person is having a quickie oil change shop do their oil changes, I cringe!

First of all, most of these oil change facilities use what ever type oil that is popular for a particular season. 10-30 in the summer and 5-30 in the winter. These days, there are so many choices for the consumer. I’m sure it’s quite confusing. There are the new cars from Japan and European countries that require 0-20 motor oil. There are American car companies calling for

anything from 0-20 to 10-30. For the record 0-20 to 20-50 is going from the thinnest to the thickest. The 0-20 flows great cold, and also does the trick when the engine is warm provided that your owner’s manual recommends it. In your 50’s or 60’s classic, it’s another story.



All of the newly rebuilt engines that I’m involved in use 10-40 Motor oil of good quality. I usually recommend that the oil is changed 500 miles after a rebuild and every 1500 miles there after. Classic cars are usually driven about 2000 to 4000 miles per year so, in a perfect world, I like to see oil changes in the spring and fall. In my personal every day cars, I use Mobil 1 and change it every 3000 miles. I use 10-30 in the Cadillac and 15-50 in the 97 F-250. I use thicker oil in the F-250 due to engine clearance as it has 233,451 miles (at this writing). In my classic cars with rebuilt engines, I use petroleum based oil if

the engine is equipped with a rope rear main seal, and Mobile 1 15-50 if the engine is equipped with a neoprene rear main seal. Synthetic oil gets to places regular petroleum based oil could never get. The chances of a rear main seal leak are greater with synthetic oil and rope rear main seals. These days, your newer cars have closer engine bearing tolerances which require thinner oil. Your classic car had looser tolerances when new which enabled them to run on thicker oil.

If the owners manual in your late model car says you should use 10-30 motor oil, don’t let anybody sell you anything different. Your classic car with a rebuilt or low mileage engine should run just fine on 10-40 engine oil. If your classic has over 100,000 miles, chances are you’ll benefit from 20-50. There are many things to consider when your getting your oil changed. First of all, never change your engine oil cold. Always change it hot so that all the sludge and contaminates get drained while still suspended in the oil. Make sure that the oil filter gets filled prior to installation. Many owners don’t realize the wear that goes on when someone changes the oil and installs an empty oil filter. The engine has no oil pressure for



about 30 seconds until the oil filter fills. Also, the rubber gasket should be coated with a thin film of oil prior to installation. That operation will allow fairly easy removal of the filter the next time the oil is changed. Use a good quality major brand oil filter. I use Motorcraft for Ford products, AC for GM products and NAPPA Gold for all others!



The other phenomenon that I see often is upper ball joint grease fittings that are never touched. Somehow, either the oil change guy thinks he's saving money by not greasing those or just doesn't want to bother. Make sure you watch that

procedure when you vehicle goes in for a grease and oil. Some older vehicles have grease fittings on the drive shaft u-joints as well. If your car was built before 1960, chances are there are grease fittings everywhere including the upper and lower control arm bushings, clutch linkage, rear spring shackles and more. If your car was built before 1935, grease caps and oil cups have to be filled as well. Another tid bit I have for you is the practice of over greasing ball joint fittings on your late model front wheel drive car. The wheel back spacing is usually great on front wheel drive cars. Meaning that the grease fitting and ball joint are outboard to the point where they are actually located inside the inner wheel area. When the lower ball joints on these vehicles are over greased, the grease comes out of the joint and lands on the inside of the wheel causing a front wheel vibration on the highway. Over time, all that grease solidifies causing all sorts of little weights on the back of your wheels causing out of balance conditions in the front wheels.

Rear end gear housings should always be checked to be sure they are full of gear lube. It's a good idea for the car owner to know if his or her car is equipped with a limited slip or positraction rear end. I have seen times when the car owner wasn't aware the car had a limited slip rear end. The way to tell, while your rear wheels are jacked off the ground, is

if you spin one rear wheel by hand and the other wheel simultaneously turns the other way, you have a regular rear end. If you spin one wheel and the other wheel spins in the same direction, you have limited slip or posi-traction and your rear end will require special rear end lube.



Other things I see are the lack of oil or lube on the door hinges, locks and strikers, hood hinges, hood latches and more. Years ago, an oil change and grease job required all of that plus the lube of all moving



parts on the car. Things were different then. A lot has changed since then and it's usually the consumers fault, believe it or not. These days, thanks to cut rate shops, people expect an oil change and grease job for \$20.00. I can tell you that, from my years of experience, you'll never get anyone to do a good job on your classic car for that little money. The old saying "you get what you pay for" applies here. The oil change is one of the most important tasks you will perform on your classic car. The bottom line is to find the right person for the job and pay him what he has to get, and chances are he'll do a great job.

Let me take this opportunity to tell you what is involved in an oil change and grease job on just one of the cars I'm involved in. Claude and Louise Poisson's '47 Chevrolet takes 7 quarts of oil at an oil change. The filter is a cartridge type which is getting harder and harder to find every year. It is located in a steel canister on the left side of the engine. After the engine oil is drained, the oil filter canister has to be drained through a small 1/2 inch pipe plug located on the bottom of the oil filter housing. When it's drained, the cover and gasket is removed and the cartridge is removed being careful not to drip oil all over the engine compartment. The canister is completely cleaned out and the flex oil lines are checked for leaks. The new

cartridge is reinstalled. Then a new gasket is installed on the spring loaded cover that has to go back together in exactly the right position so it doesn't leak. Then the engine is refilled with 7 quarts of oil.

Then, there are over 25 fittings to grease. There are grease fittings for every moving part in the chassis including the clutch linkage and the torque tube drive shaft. After that, both the standard transmission and rear end have to be checked for grease. Then the brake fluid has to be checked. The brake master cylinder is located under the driver's floor board so some disassembly is required! Then all four shocks have to be checked as they are filled with hydraulic fluid. To do the job right, it takes more than an hour as tie rods, king pins, and other items are checked as they are greased! Tom Beggan's '34 Pontiac takes longer as there are grease and oil cups to be carefully filled as well. It's no 5 minute task to say the very least!

The bottom line is that oil changes are important maintenance tasks that shouldn't be taken lightly. Care has to be taken that the proper oil and filter is installed. It's also important to check all safety items while the car is up in the air. Remember, a quality oil change is like good insurance... you shouldn't be without it! Till next time....

Happy Motoring,

Dennis Vieira

