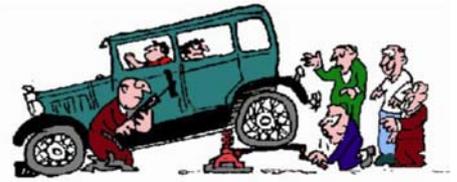




From the Garage -

by Paul Hunter



How to Check a Bad Condenser

While driving on a tour one day, your Model A produces a loud backfire and soon after, your normally smooth running engine starts acting up. After checking —things out, you're still not sure what the problem could be. Someone says, "Could it be the condenser?" Usually the reply is , How can one tell?

The course of action usually is to remove the condenser from the very hot engine compartment and just try to replace it with another one while not getting burned. Or, if your distributor has modern points with the condenser located inside the distributor body, the only way to change it is to replace the whole distributor. Not a simple job on a hot engine while on the side of the road.



A simpler way of checking if it's a bad condenser is to remove the distributor cap, body and rotor. Make sure the points are closed. Turn the ignition switch on and place the high tension wire (from centre of coil) about one-half inch from any convenient ground on the engine. Push points open with a screwdriver then close. The spark should jump the gap with a sharp crack and a straight line. The spark should have a blue tinge.

If the condenser is bad, the spark will still jump the gap, but will be thin and stringy and white in colour. Whenever in doubt, throw the condenser away, especially if it is a new reproduction condenser. These cannot always be depended upon. If you happen to have used condensers and want to have their condition checked, maybe your local TV or radio store will still have the necessary equipment to check them for you.

Why not try this while your Model A is running great. Then you will be able to reference what a good condenser's spark should look like. *Editors note - I have experienced this and changing out the condenser resolved all of the misfiring, we never stop learning.*

Keeping Moisture Out of the Distributor

Have you ever driven your Model A in the rain, and have it "act up?" This is exactly what happened to me while on tour with the Western Carolina's Model A Club. First the car began to periodically "skip." Then it began to really run rough, until it just died! The cause - moisture in the distributor. Well, this is a common problem in cars without electronic ignitions. Usually, the humidity level in the atmosphere is something the hot engine "burns" off before coming in contact with our distributors. But, when it rains, there is just too much moisture in the atmosphere and the inside of the distributor cap will begin to "sweat." This in turn causes moisture droplets to fall onto the points, thus interrupting the flow of electricity between the ignition coil and the spark plugs. Generally, if you can get the distributor dry, you can go on your merry way. But how to solve the problem before it happens is the real question. Nobody wants to try to stand in a downpour over a hot engine and try to dry out their distributor!



WD-40 is the answer! It was developed in 1953 by Norm Larson, founder of the Rocket Chemical Company, in San Diego, CA. WD-40, from the abbreviation "Water Displacement, 40th formula," was originally designed to repel water and prevent corrosion. Another little "tool" to keep in your arsenal! If every 3-4 months you will open up your distributor and spray the underside of the cap and down into the distributor and the tops of the spark plugs and the plug "wires," a rain shower will never leave you sitting by the side of the road waiting on AAA! (American Automobile Association)

Editor's note: This article is reprinted courtesy of the MAFCA web site. I would suggest that a can of WD40 or your favourite water displacement product is a must in your tool kit in the car.