

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
By George Schmidt
Mishicot, Wisconsin

CONFESSIONS AND CONFUSIONS

Most of us are likely to be much more liberal about non-stock modifications made to a collector vehicle if the change is simply a "bolt-on" addition or substitution that can be installed (and removed) without extra cutting, welding, drilled holes, etc. on the rest of the car. One example would be the installation of brighter headlight bulbs. In the late 1930's these were readily available to fit many pre-sealed-beam units, and can sometimes still be found today. Sockets were nearly all of the familiar 1/2-inch diameter, some accepting the usual bayonet pins and some requiring a three-hole "prefocus" collar on bulb base instead. Also, when using any of these bulbs for replacement, be sure that the two filaments inside new bulb are aligned similarly to the original ones, whether side-by-side type or straight in-line type. These two bulb types also had the two contact buttons on base aligned differently.

Probably headlamp reflectors will need to be checked and cleaned at the same time. To brighten, use only a mild silver polish, and a radial (not circular) polishing motion. If reflector surface is bad, re-silvering may be necessary. Recently a bright aluminum refinishing process for reflectors has been offered which is said to be much more durable than silver, but of course is not original.

Sealed beams arrived in fall 1940, and the #4030 lamp was the original, standard—and apparently only—sealed-beam

headlight unit available for Hudson and other U.S. cars during 1941-54. Though perhaps an improvement over some separate-bulb headlamps (not all), its light output was little more than marginal even when introduced, particularly for any long-distance night driving. By the 1950's it was distinctly obsolete, but continued to appear on new cars since it had been duly "approved" by all 48 separate state governments—usually not an easy process.

Cars with 12-volt systems introduced in the mid-'50's featured a somewhat brighter sealed-beam headlamp, the #6012, and an equivalent 6-volt version, #6006, was offered at the same time. This is still the usual replacement lamp for 6-volt cars, and is adequate for most general driving if properly aimed, and with correct voltage maintained. For completely authentic appearance when a restored '41-54 model is to be displayed, however, purist owners may wish to keep a good pair of 4030's at hand, since unlike later sealed-beams, they do not have the three molded bosses on outside of lens which are intended for use with some modern aligning equipment.

During the 1960's, accessory shops and catalogues offered several better-quality imported headlamp units for replacement, notably the Marchal Optiques from France, and others from Lucas in England and Bosch or Hella in Germany. Any of these would extend the range of visibility for safer night driving—and of course not all states regarded them as legal. Both 6 and 12-volt versions were available, and usually both 7-inch and 5 3/4 inch sizes. Most had replaceable inner bulbs, although the outside of unit was sealed-beam shaped to fit U.S. mountings. Current draw of most of them, especially in 6-volt form, was

also quite heavy, and the use of a good-quality 6-volt headlight relay, preferably with its own breaker or fuse, and fed by a #10-gauge or heavier wire, was definitely advisable.

Most of these imported lamp units claimed not only greater light output but also better control of the beam pattern. Some were also available as accessory long-range driving lamps and/or high-powered foglamps, 6 and 12 volt. Except for shorter bulb life in some cases, they were usually satisfactory if properly mounted and aimed, and then used with due regard for other drivers on road. It is reported too that a few owners have tried installing aircraft landing lights on their vehicles. These provided great long-range vision for the driver, if possibly blinding most other motorists in the county.

The next step in headlamp evolution, developed (as usual) in Europe, was the quartz-halogen lamp. It has a bulb made of clear fused quartz, which does not melt or soften as easily as ordinary glass; and a halogen (generally iodine) is used inside the bulb, since it is much better than vacuum or plain argon gas in preventing evaporation and loss of tungsten from the hot filament. Both these features combined allow practical operation of the filament at much higher temperatures, thus producing more and whiter light, and at the same time reducing the wattage required per candlepower produced. Made in both separate-bulb and sealed-beam types, quartz-halogen units today are available for practically all 12-volt vehicles from sports cars to farm tractors. Many offer extra bright illumination even on low beam, although this of course requires an extremely sharp cutoff line at the top edge of the beam. On one German

unit, particularly, this cut-off is so drastic that it can sometimes appear to resemble a dark moving object or shadow out ahead of the vehicle, at least until the driver becomes accustomed to the effect.

It is true that low-beam performance is especially important in routine driving. One sign of present congestion is the fact that, on the average, the normal driving (high) beam represents less than 25% of total headlamp usage. This is also evident from bulb burnout rates.

Despite the current popularity (and lowered prices) of quartz-halogen lamps, this writer has not found any which are made for 6-volt use. Perhaps a reader can help. We would also like to know about headlamp and lighting problems (if any) encountered on Hudson-built models of all ages. Please write and tell us. Probably the strangest example seen to date was the "restored" '48 Super 6 coupe which had its underhood headlight wiring replaced by thin 18-gauge plastic-insulated wire (perhaps the only one of the dozen-odd inauthentic bloopers on the car which was actually hazardous).

A curious item in the 1946-47 Hudson parts book is "BO 166019: Dimming resistor kit-headlamp. (Service) All." One wonders whether the early-type sealed beam lights ever needed any additional dimming. Has any reader seen or heard of such an accessory device installed on a post-1940 U.S. car? The book also lists an alternative sealed-beam unit (part no. BO 209989; bulb no. not given), for export-model Hudsons only.

Recently a full-color ad announced the introduction of Danbury's expensive 1:24 scale model of the 1940 Ford. Text of ad mentions the car's "elegant teardrop-shaped headlights that blended smoothly into gently

rounded fenders"—but the model is pictured with a sealed-beam headlight conversion! Such conversion kits, including chromed adapter rings, were of course commonly available after the war to fit Fords and many other cars, including (if memory serves) some Hudsons and Terraplanes. As with many other aftermarket items, this too is a part of automotive history. . .but it is hoped that any HET owner who has one of these kits in good condition will be content to keep and display it in its box, rather than on an otherwise authentic car.

"Rugged" Suggestion: Although most rubber front floor mats include a soft underpad for longer life, better feel, and quieting, the rear floor carpets in most Hudson stepdowns do not. A layer of thinner underpad material, preferably sponge rubber, for the rear rug (including driveshaft hump or not, as desired) is a real improvement, even if not original. Often, too, an old rug will look somewhat better if it is reversed front to rear. Carefully remove the rug retaining screws under front seat (these need not be replaced). Check condition of the rear floor and cardboard silencer material at the same time. Rubber under-padding can be laid in place without cementing, and it can also be used with the trim strips at either side of front seat, if they are of carpeting.

Let's hope everyone in HET had a better spring and summer this year than I did. My Hudson was neglected while I spent five weeks in the hospital. Admittedly, the nurses weren't bad looking, and the food was O.K.—but I told the surgeon that when I put a new transmission in my car, at least the car would run without limping feebly about for a month or two afterward.

I arrived home in July, and

was able to finish and mail this article. Also managed to attend the annual Appleton, Wisconsin old-car show on July 17 with a friend. This is reportedly the largest free-admission old-car show in the state, although owners showing their cars pay an entry fee. Among the hundreds of attractive vehicles, we unfortunately were able to find only four Hudson products; but these included a brightly painted Essex, a beautiful '51 Hudson convertible with power windows, a rodged '47 sedan—and Bob Patzer's black '52 Hornet, painted as an exact reproduction of Marshall Teague's famous "Fabulous Hudson Hornet" stock-car racer. Although Bob makes no claim of total authenticity (the interior, for example, is '53), the exterior is based exactly upon original photographs supplied by Mrs. Teague. Custom-painted T-shirts were also available at the show, and the vendor of these had a racing-Hudson pattern which allowed him to furnish Bob with a matching T-shirt depiction of the car, including Teague's number, "6."

One problem when attending a car show of this kind is the depressive effect which one experiences upon heading home and having to face again the endless stream of current-model shapeless de-chromed under-sized nothing mobiles on the road. Those may be endurable under ordinary circumstances, but can be a real downer just after one has spent a happy afternoon with genuine automobiles.

A possible fuel-system problem has also been mentioned by Bob Patzer. His '52 Hornet is not merely a stationary display piece, but is a faithful (and fast) road car which has been driven long distances in many parts of the U.S. (usually attracting especial attention in the South). The

present writer is not an advocate of modern liquid fuel tank liner products for old cars, but they may sometimes be necessary in cases when neither replacement nor proper soldered repair of an old tank is practicable. Bob points out, however, that some

of these liner products, especially the older ones, are partly soluble in alcohol, so that if a "gasohol" fuel is used, they will gradually disintegrate into small rubbery bits which will soon clog the fuel line, pump, filter, and even the carburetor. To make matters worse when travelling, trendy laws in some parts of the country make honest alcohol-

free gasoline practically impossible to buy in those areas. Later-type liquid tank liner compounds may be more alcohol-resistant, and this should be checked before using them. However, the long-term effects of alcohol upon older fuel pumps, carburetors, etc. are questionable at best. Reader comments invited.
