Hudsonotes

By George Schmidt

Millennium Miscellany

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PUTTING AWAY one's Hudson over winter may be almost a practical necessity in some areas—notably where road salt is used—but it is also a bit sad, especially for the holiday season. Then too, a few days of cold-weather driving are valuable to make certain that components such as the starting system, carburetor, automatic choke, car heater, engine thermostat, etc. are in correct working order.

We have not conducted a *WTN* poll to learn how many Hudson owners still drain their cooling systems for winter storage, but it is likely that most of them simply keep a glycol (permanent) antifreeze solution in place year-round, as in most late-model Brand X's. This is probably the better way at present, provided the solution does not become so old that its anticorrosive ability is lost (especially important with the optional aluminum engine heads). Beware of any tiny internal leaks (at the head gasket, for example), which will acidify the solution. If the system is drained for longer-term storage, any remaining bits of moisture should be carefully dried out if possible, since they can be harmful.

During winter or longer storage, it is also suggested that the clutch and brake pedals be depressed occasionally, perhaps monthly or so. This may help avoid future problems with brake hydraulics or clutch corks. The battery may be removed and stored elsewhere if desired. It will be freeze-proof if kept well charged (please forget those legends about damaging a battery by storing it on a concrete floor). Putting the car up on blocks should not be necessary, but tires should be firmly inflated (a few pounds more than standard) for storage.

FUEL SYSTEM problems during winter storage have worsened in recent years. With the older, better-quality gasolines (for which the cars were designed), it was often possible to re-start the engine in spring with little trouble on whatever remained in the fuel tank. Sometimes a few squirts of fresh gasoline into the carburetor horn were helpful (best done outdoors, for safety reasons). These

older gasolines, with aging, usually lost some of their more volatile "light ends" (needed for easy starting) through evaporation, but chemical deterioration was minor.

A check of the bowls on fuel pump and accessory fuel filter for water and dirt was in order, perhaps also to be repeated after a few miles of driving. Humid air, along with many wide temperature changes during storage causes the greatest amount of water accumulation, in the fuel tank and elsewhere. Sometimes a can of "Heet" or a similar product, designed to absorb water and make it miscible with gasoline, was useful.

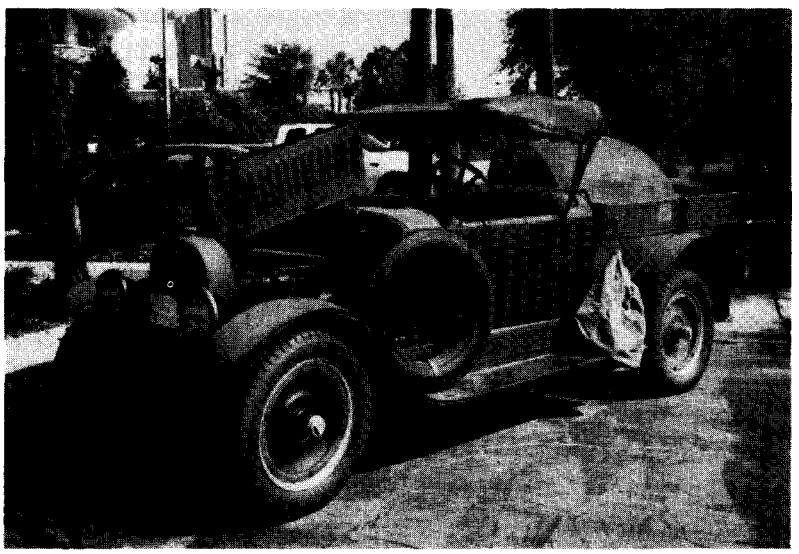
Present-day gasolines unfortunately are much less stable in storage, with a greater tendency to partially oxidize, thus polymerizing into a thick goo or gum or sludge which clogs the fuel system and carburetor. Premium-grade gasolines may be a bit less troublesome because of their higher detergent content.

SOME ADVISERS recommend storing the car with the fuel tank filled (less a gallon or so to allow expansion space). The advantage is that this helps to keep out air and moisture—though there are cases in which the entire tankful turned into a smelly jelly upon long storage.

Various gasoline stabilizers are available today as additives, intended mainly for off-season storage of collector vehicles (and all kinds of small-engine equipment). The best of these products actually inhibit the premature oxidation of fuel components. They need to be added to the gasoline before it deteriorates. Once the fuel has spoiled, there is no way to restore it (short of sending it back to the refinery, maybe).

Worst of all are the fuels whose use is compulsory in some areas of the U.S., thanks to "environmental" fanatics and their bureaucratic stooges. These fuels contain alcohol and similar compounds as "oxygenates." They are unstable and also overpriced (as a large portion of the Midwest noted this summer); and while they may or may not be "cleaner burning" (with some reduction in power output), they can all too easily cause dirty and damaged fuel systems, particularly during storage. It is claimed that some of the stabilizer additives can tame even these unholy mixtures—if so, it is a remarkable achievement.

LATELY I RE-READ several of Jack Kerouac's stories *(On the Road,* et al.) of the '50's. Though his work is still recognized by many as "literature," I suggest that anyone who would abuse a Hudson, as some of his characters do, richly deserves literary oblivion—or worse.



Roy Marks' "Grapes of Wrath"-style 1920 Hudson displayed at the 2000 National Meet.
Photo by Charlie Woodruff

Fans of John Steinbeck's writings probably also recall the Joad family's tough old Hudson Super Six in *The Grapes of Wrath.* After this story was filmed in 1940, a comic misfiring of Communist propaganda occurred in the Soviet Union when the film was imported and released there by authorities as a means of showing their people the degrading effect of our evil American capitalist system. What Russian audiences mainly noted from the picture, however, was that even these most downtrodden proletarians in the U.S. owned and drove automobiles (howbeit old and battered ones). The film was hastily withdrawn.

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What other storybook references to Hudson-built cars can you remember seeing? Please let us know.

A BAD HABIT of mine is neglecting occasionally to use a fender cover when leaning over to reach various under-hood components. Belt buckles can be especially destructive to paint, and perhaps this was also the origin of the late-'50's teenage fad of buckling the belt on jeans far to one side rather than at the center. Also, for most old car restorers, it is wise to complete all under-hood work on engine, accessories, etc. as much as possible before one applies the beautiful multi-coat lacquer refinishing job.

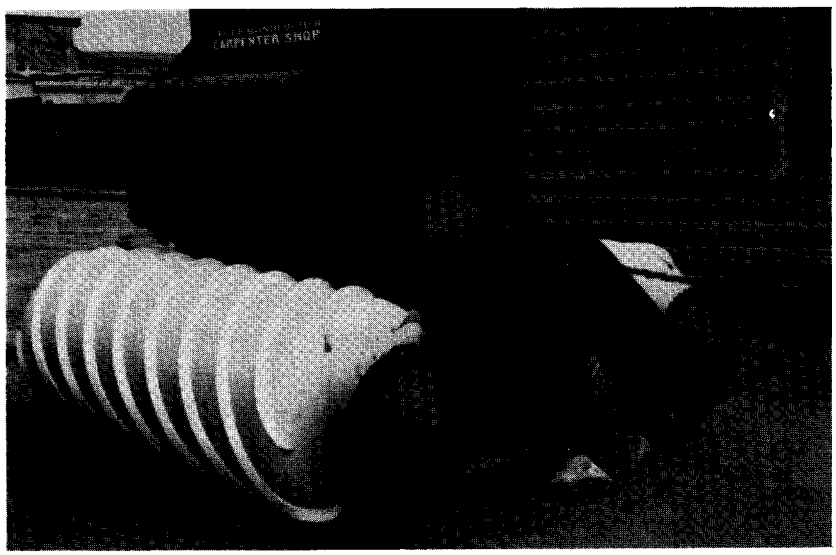
IN PRE-SNOWMOBILE (and mostly pre-snowplowing) days, one form of motorized winter conveyance was an automobile with caterpillar tracks fitted to the rear wheels and with the front wheels replaced by steering skis. Apparently there were homemade, aftermarket-kit, and custom-built versions of these, mostly circa the Teens or W.W.I era. At the low-priced end, Model T Ford conversions were not unusual, and in some areas were used for rural mail delivery. At the high end, a few Packard Twin Sixes (V-12's) were thus converted, including one for Czar Nicholas II. We have been trying to discover whether any Hudsons or other mid-priced cars were also converted in this way for severe winter use, but information is still lacking. Can any readers help?

MODERN ENGINES use connecting rods which have their bearing metal attached to replaceable steel shells. On Hudsons, the last older-type rods with bearing metal attached directly to the rods and caps were used on the 1952 Eights. Generally it seems that the later shell-type bearings can tolerate more high-speed pounding than can the integral or "poured" ones. One British writer as late as 1957, however, suggests a possible advantage for the older type: better heat transfer, for more uniform cooling. Possibly heat transfer was also a factor in the use of bronze (rather than steel) backing for the main bearings on many Hudson engines.

HUDSON'S FAMOUS cork-faced wet clutch discs, like practically all of the standard dry-type ones used on other cars, were made with a set of take-up or shock-absorbing coil springs mounted in the hub. Stepdown-era cork discs had six springs held in a partly spot-welded hub assembly, and some earlier ones used eight smaller springs in a riveted hub configuration. Both types appear interchangeable, but the later one allows a bit more "give" upon engagement. This usually offers smoother results, though there have been a few cases in which the later-type springs or spot welds have broken while the cork facings were still in good condition. One cause may be flywheel or pressure-plate surfaces which are not perfectly true, thus producing rough engagement and added stress.

For most standard dry-type clutches, "rigid" replacement discs, made without springs at the center, have been available for years, intended mainly for racing or other very hard use. However, it was a surprise to this writer long ago, c. 1970, when a Hudson 10-inch replacement clutch disc was ordered (from Unit Parts Co., Oklahoma), and arrived as a rigid-type disc with new corks but no center springs. (It was returned and exchanged for a standard one with springs.) We wonder whether any readers have seen one of these special discs for a Hudson clutch, and whether it was ever a factory item, or strictly aftermarket.

FOR PISTONS WHICH show some wear, but are not to be replaced, various corrections have been offered. One of these is the use of small spring-steel clips called "piston expanders." The clips, more or less U-shaped, are inserted from below, using special pliers or a similar tool, with their ends against the wristpin boss, and the curved portion pressing outward on the piston skirt. They were said to be usable with T-slot, slipper, or full-skirt pistons, aluminum or iron.



Homemade "snowmobile" on display at the mining museum in Butte, Montana.
Photo by S. Jackson

At a local Wisconsin car show here this summer, former HETer Wayne Lesjak had on hand and for sale a large assortment of these expanders, new-old-stock, to fit Hudson and most other 1935-55 U.S. engines. The maker's name was on the original orange boxes: Cam-Rite Mfg. Co., Cincinnati. These clips reportedly were sometimes used in an old engine without overhauling it, merely as a stopgap, but some were installed as part of an overhauling job.

One manual, *Motor Service's Automotive Encyclopedia* ('58 ed.) shows these clips and also lists several other methods of piston expansion, including special tools to "knurl" the piston surface and thus enlarge it slightly. Trade names included "Nurlizing" and "Kotherizing" (however spelled). Shot peening was also sometimes used.

Were any of these expansion methods of much practical use? Here, as with several other items in the column this time, we are hoping to hear from readers who may know.

ONE READER, Terence McMillan of Maple Valley, Wash., offers several comments in a recent letter. He notes that the not-very-common 12-24 screw thread size (see July/Aug. *WTN*) was also used on some auto generator "hot" terminals; and he mentions that a fine-thread version of this size, 12-28, is even rarer but still was used by Hudson at a few points, including (on some production) the retainers for '46-'47 front grille bars, and (according to the parts book) some fender aprons for those years. Unable to buy replacement 12-28 nuts, he finally found a 12-28 threading tap and some blank hexagon stock to make his own.

As for Hudson Oil (same issue), this reportedly began with the one station left to Mary Hudson, newly widowed in 1933, by her husband. From there it grew into a chain of stations in the U.S. West, selling only cut-rate gasoline. Mrs. Hudson became a millionairess.

About seatbelts and shoulder harnesses, Mr. McMillan states: "I could not agree with you more, and do not use them. Government-by-insurance-industry-and-safety-nazis is not something I will kowtow to just yet."

AT ANY RATE, the holiday season is again upon us, and I sincerely wish all Hudson owners and HET members a happy Thanksgiving, a truly merry Christmas, and the best of luck in 2001!

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George Schmidt can only be reached by mail; you are encouraged to write him at 451 Elizabeth Street, Mishicot, WI 54228.