

SUGGESTIONS NEEDED

HUDSONOTES

By George Schmidt

ALUMINUM HEADS for Hudson engines were available in most postwar years and some prewar ones, usually as a factory option. The advantage of aluminum (other than a weight saving) was the metal's superior conductivity, giving a cooler combustion-chamber wall and thus allowing a higher compression ratio and more spark advance for added power and efficiency (or if you prefer, greater tolerance for inferior fuel) without causing engine knock.

There also were disadvantages: aluminum has not quite the same expansion coefficient as cast iron, so that there were occasional problems in maintaining a good seal at head gasket with repeated heating and cooling. Another disadvantage was pointed out (in a long-ago letter) by Leroy Harris, Kansas: unless a suitable anticorrosive is used in the cooling water at all times, enough corrosion is likely to form internally to block most of the cooling passages in the aluminum. On an old car it is wise to remove the head and check this if it has apparently been running hot at any points.

The aluminum threads in spark plug holes can also be troublesome, due to seizing. Use plenty of penetrating oil and patience when attempting to remove plugs; and always use a special anti-seize grease on plug threads when reinstalling them (this also is helpful on iron heads). If threads in head are ruined, they can sometimes be repaired using a spiral device such as Heli-Coil. A newer, and perhaps stronger, insert device is offered by a company called Lock-N-Stitch [800-736-8261] for use on modern Fords with aluminum heads (noted for losing their spark-plug threads); but I have not discovered, whether this is also usable on aluminum-head classics

such as Hudson, 1940's Lincoln Continental, etc.

Note that because of the better cooling, aluminum heads generally use a slightly "hotter" spark plug than do iron ones, to help avoid fouling. Copper spark-plug gaskets (not solid type) may be preferred since they need a bit less torque than modern steel ones.

Today it is common practice in the Club simply to substitute a standard iron head for the aluminum one on an old Hudson. However, we'd especially like to hear from any member who is successfully using an aluminum head on his Hudson engine. Perhaps he has a few helpful tips and suggestions for us.

ALUMINUM WAS plentiful in the years after World War II. Although prewar attempts at mass-producing aluminum car bodies had not been very successful, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) later found itself with much surplus production capacity left over from wartime work. Along with seeking additional uses for the metal, the company even sponsored an interesting short-subject color film, *Unfinished Rainbows*, starring Alan Ladd as Charles Martin Hall (inventor of the first practical aluminum smelting method); and showcasing the industry's early history, plus ideas for the future.

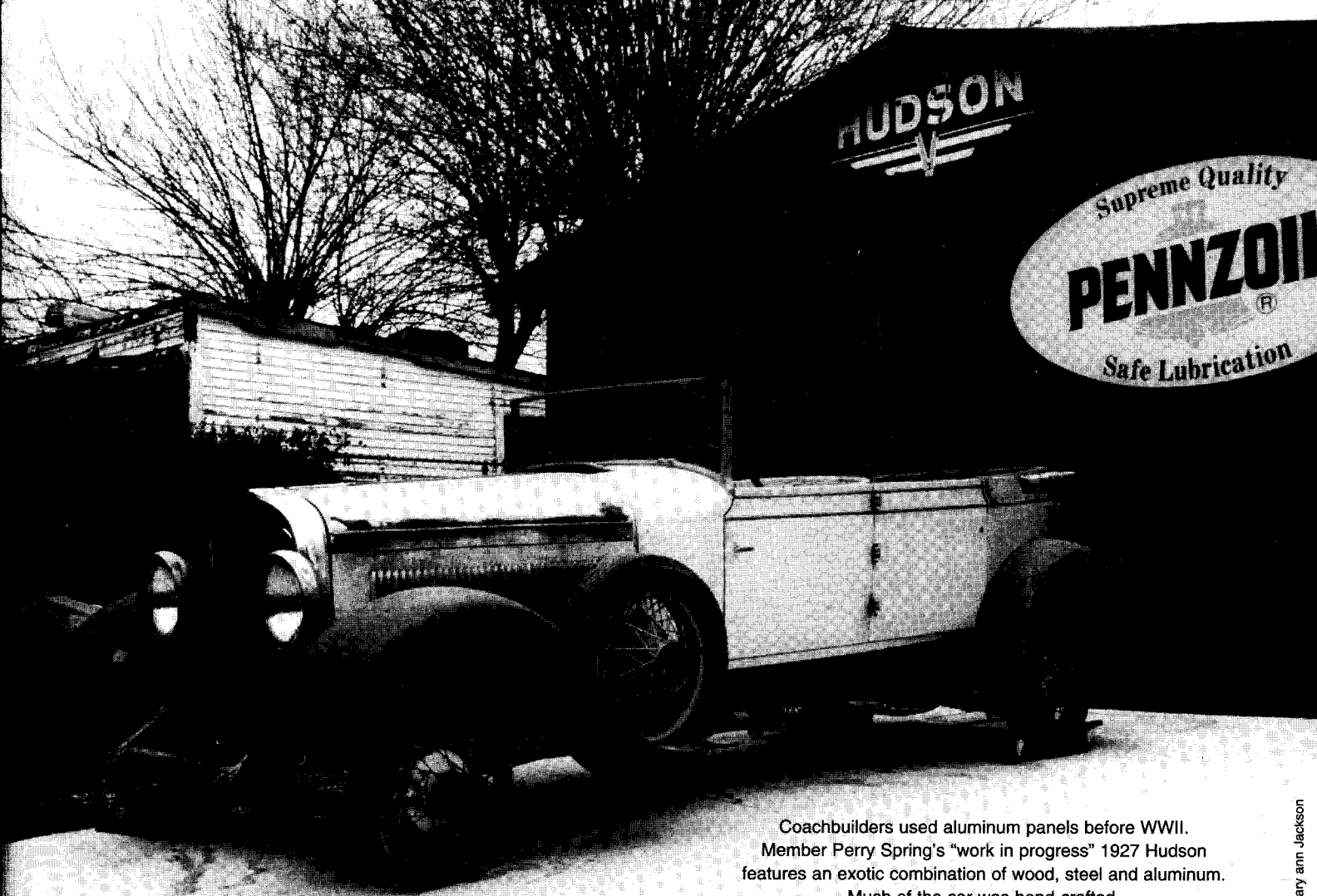
A number of Hudson suppliers in late 1948 and early '49 used aluminum for components such as headlamp buckets (Hall Lamp), radio shells (Zenith), intake manifolds (Bohnalite), brake master cylinders (apparently Wagner), and even the chromed outer rim on clock (mostly Lux). Nearly all of these items reverted to ordinary steel or iron on subsequent production,

however. Some Hydra-Matic transmission cases (GM) also were of aluminum, but only in later years.

TO HELP AVOID a minor oil leak (harmless, but messy) at the side valve covers on many Hudson engines, a present-day silicone sealer can be used to seal the cover, the internal baffle plate if any, and the cork gasket together when installing. It may not be necessary to use more sealer between the gasket and the engine block, instead leaving these free for easier removal when readjusting valves later. At breather pipe, a hand-cut leather ring gasket is preferable to the original cork.

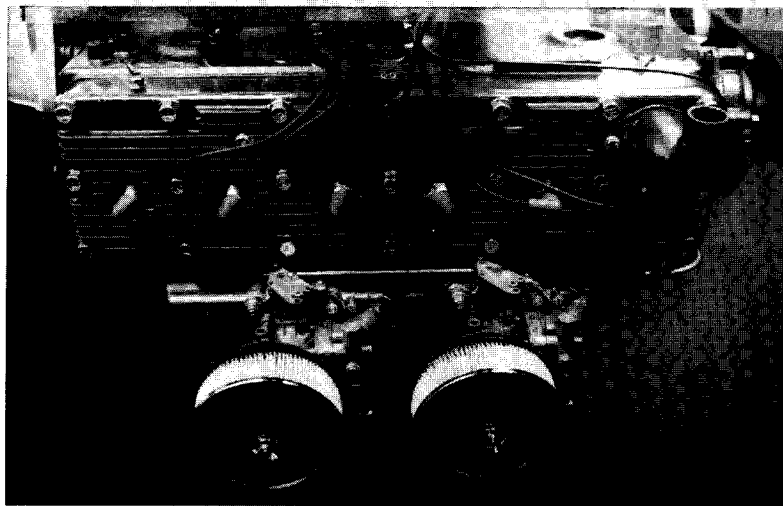
Oil filters as installed on some Hudson Eights and Sixes require flexible oil hoses rather than rigid tubing. Designed to withstand hot engine oil, these hoses had brass end fittings and were available in various lengths, but today are difficult to find. Do any readers know of a good source? At present, one of mine is a hose (same size and fittings) intended for use on a grease gun. Hope it is heat-tolerant.

AN OLD "KLAXON" (ah-0000-gahh) horn, with its own pushbutton, is about the only incorrect-period accessory that I've ever added to a Hudson stepdown vehicle. Back during the 1920's these motor-driven horns were made not only by the Klaxon company but also by Sparks-Withington (Sparton) and several others. They still add a note of comedy along with their warning sound. On most Hudsons there is space to mount an auxiliary horn on the flat horizontal surface at rear on the right front fender dust, shield, but a wide flat "fender washer" should be used at each



Coachbuilders used aluminum panels before WWII. Member Perry Spring's "work in progress" 1927 Hudson features an exotic combination of wood, steel and aluminum. Much of the car was hand-crafted.

Photo Mary Ann Jackson



Edmunds after-market aluminum head on a Hudson 308 built by member Norm Blackmer of Ontario, California.

Photo Sam Jackson

mounting bolt to avoid possible cracking of the sheet metal later.

Wiring for a 6-volt horn should be #14 or #12 gauge (use a relay if desired), and the pushbutton can usually be mounted inconspicuously at lower dash edge. Horn motor can be given an occasional drop of oil, making sure also that the commutator end brushes are clean and in good contact.

Usually an adjustment screw allows regulating of the sound from a near-scream to an almost sullen growl. In later years these horns were reproduced, and were available in 6- and 12-volt versions from J. C. Whitney and others, as was also a hand-powered version like those once used on horse-drawn carriages and sleighs and a few early cars.

THE PLASTIC "flushing tee" for heater hose misses being an authentic Hudson-era accessory by only a few years, I believe, since I first saw it in the early 1960's—evidently introduced by a maker of antifreeze. It usually is inserted in the return hose from car heater (to permit reverse flushing of heater core, without disconnecting hose). It has a threaded cap which can be removed, and a standard hose attached for pressure flushing. It also flushes the rest of the cooling system. If the plastic is unsightly on an old car, it can be sprayed with gray metallic paint.

AS SEVERAL READERS have observed, when driving Hudsons (step-downs especially), it is very easy to forget that these are now museum pieces, since they still are great cars just to drive (or ride in). The resulting state of automotive euphoria is generally

harmless provided one has not forgotten that some maintenance items are especially important on an old car: brake adjustment (manual); proper fluid levels (including steering box and cork clutch), fuel, and lubricants (at all lube points, including front and rear wheel bearings); correct engine valve clearances, patient engine warm-up, functioning accessories, accurate wheel balancing and alignment, healthy shock absorbers, and sufficient tire pressure... to name just a few. Also be ready for all of those extra stases on the road.

Has your Hudson been seen at car shows or parades this year? Such exposure is important (and fun), and should not be limited to Hudson-only events. We also hope your Hudson has been on at least one longer trip this season, since it is certainly better adapted—and more comfortable—for this use than most other vehicles of its era. (It's also better than most squashable and sardine-sized models of the present.)

Please write and let us know, and we'll try to give you a line or two in *WTN*.

IT'S ALWAYS gratifying to receive a complimentary *Hud-Nut News* (Chicago-Milwaukee Chapter; Terry Johannes, ed.). The May issue includes a reprinted news column, evidently from 1930's, showing a backup light set into the hubcap of the rear-mounted spare tire on a '32 Essex Terraplane, and citing Melvin Sturdly, Montana, as the inventor. Heading of column is "Believe It or Don't"—and I don't, since the backup light reportedly was invented in the early 1920's by C. Harold Wills for his new Wills St. Claire car. But this fact was probably not well known, since so few were built. Also in the May 2006 *Hud-Nut News* is *The Motor* (British) magazine's 1932 comparison of the Essex Terraplane sports roadster and the Type 49 Bugatti!

TELEGRAPH SERVICE in the U.S. was reportedly discontinued at the end of January 2006, but had been only in very limited use for years before that. Begun around 1844, it is apparently

the first of our national communications media to disappear completely since smoke signals and the Pony Express. It was doomed mostly by much-reduced long-distance telephone rates and of course by later electronic media such as e-mail.

However, telegraphy remained an important communications tool during Hudson's years of production, 1909-57. It encouraged much-condensed wording of messages (to save costs); and routine business messages were often further condensed by the use of "code words." Rules required that the "words" be pronounceable (something like BFTSPLK would be charged for as seven words instead of one). Hudson encouraged use of code particularly for ordering of parts, and provided a list of about 25 code words in its parts catalogues. WUPMU, for instance, meant "ship to us by parcel post." WUSTY meant "charge our account and ship by freight to [address]." WUUBE meant "we will call and pick up parts." Et cetera. Apparently many other companies used similar codes.

ALTHOUGH NEW-CAR introduction time is not as exciting as it once was, I'm eagerly awaiting our next "hybrid." Maybe it will be a hybrid of soapbox racer and Shetland pony, able to run equally well (if at all) on unleaded oats or leftover Martinis. You can't stop progress.

AFTER TWENTY-ODD years of Hudsonotes, I find that—apart from a few winter tips next time—I have finally run out of topics and ideas for future columns. However, reader suggestions and ideas—and corrections and comments—will still be welcomed. Please write to me or to the Editor. Good luck to all.



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