

Technical Notes

Up North we knew we had to tune our cars at least once a year, but that's not the case here in Arizona

By Paul Rydning

Back in the good old days—1955 or so—we knew we had to tune our cars at least once a year, just before our cold Minnesota winter if we expected to start our cars on those cold mornings. In most cases we did not ask if we needed the tune up, rather we knew that everyone did it and we had better do it also. In any case we expected to do some kind of “tune-up” at least every 10,000 to 15,000 miles.

Our Full Classic® cars are seldom driven in winter or under conditions which might demand such a tune up schedule, so we are faced with a need to develop our own standard for determining when and what we need to do to keep our cars running in first class condition.

To help guide us through this wilderness, I think it might be helpful to define a few terms.

At the lowest end of the scale in terms of work required and parts needed, we can find the “minor tune-up.” This normally consists of a spark plug cleaning, points adjustment, timing adjustment and carburetor adjustment. A high quality shop would also do a compression test as part of this procedure.

At the top end of tune-up work, we find the “major tune-up,” which consists of spark plug replacement, points and condenser replacement, along with rebuilding the distributor if needed, carburetor rebuild, checking and adjusting the voltage regulator, exhaust and intake valve adjustment, and checking and replacing fan belts as needed.

This would include all labor for removal and replacement of all parts and making all final adjustments as needed. The coolant and battery would also be checked at this time and parts replaced as needed.

A good mechanic would expect to complete this work in one eight hour work day. In the mid 1950's this would cost between \$75 and \$150, depending on the parts costs on the specific car.

(Editor note: How many times that would it cost

today for your Full Classic®?)

For most of us, the work associated with the major tune-up is done at the time we do a full restoration. Most of us will not drive our cars 10,000 miles in the time we own them! On the other hand some tune-up requirements are set by time rather than miles, so we will still need to take some steps to keep our cars in top flight condition.

At least once a year, we need to check the condition of our fluids such as anti-freeze, brake fluid, and remove, clean, and adjust the spark plug gap.

This is also a good time to check and adjust timing, as well as making minor carburetor adjustments.

One part that is often overlooked is the vacuum advance (on cars so equipped). A quick check of this item will often result in large improvements in performance if the vacuum advance is found to be in poor condition.

This type of major tune up should be undertaken any time you notice a reduction in performance, or a reduction in starting performance.

A major tune-up may be required every four to five years after restoration regardless of the miles driven. The harmful effects of aging fuel, anti-freeze, oil, dust and water vapor can well require a complete review of all operating systems if we are to expect the normal Full Classic® performance to continue.

