

Technical Tips

How important are the tires on your Full Classic[®] when considering their safety?

By Bill Crumrine

About five years ago we decided to purchase another Classic for touring—our 1932 Pierce-Arrow was pretty slow. We found and purchased a 1937 Pierce coupe.

These are pretty good tour cars as they handle fairly well, have decent power brakes and factory overdrive which enables one to cruise at 55-65 mph comfortably.

After a year or so of correcting numerous mechanical problems we decided to go on a regional CCCA tour. I decided I'd repack the wheel bearings and in the process had an opportunity to closely examine the tires.

I had spoken with the former owner and knew the tires had been replaced during the restoration in 1983—with very few miles since then. They appeared to be new and still had the little rubber bumps all over them---they looked great. We had new 20 year old tires on this car!

I began to question the wisdom of traveling down the road at 65 miles an hour in a 65 year old car with 20+ year old tires and tubes. I could find only one tire having the correct white sidewall width so I bought a set of four with tubes and mounted them.

It was then that I noticed the sidewall stated the tire was rated at just under 1500 pounds. The bad news is that this car weighs 5900 dry and about 6800 pounds ready to tour—we are 800 pounds overweight!

This reality did not instill in me a great deal of confidence.

Then I began to think about the spares. If we have a flat we might have to drive a considerable distance before we find a shop that wants to mess with these old rims—tubes and flaps (wire wheels).

So I bought some more tires. We now have six new, probably underperforming,

tires. I can't do much about it except drive carefully and pray more regularly!

This story is written with the intent of getting you to think about your tire situation.

Not everyone needs to run out and get new ones. If an annual trip to the courthouse to participate in the July 4th parade is about all you do in a particular car, forget all of this.

On the other hand, if you have cars in which you travel significant distances at speed, give this matter some serious thought.

It'll probably cost you \$800 to \$1200 for a remedy. I think that's a small price to pay for your safety and that of your passengers. In closing, let me say I am no expert in this area.

Consult the vintage tire professionals for guidance. Modern car tire people are now saying we should replace tires about every five years, regardless of mileage. I doubt that all of this is just a marketing tool to sell more tires.