



Spring is Coming! Prepare Your Classic Now For the Show Season Ahead.

By Carl and Maria Erickson

For those of you that have had a classic for years, this might seem elementary, and for those who are new to the hobby, this is going to be great information...either way, it'll be a great refresher for all.

The first step is to visually inspect the entire car: in particular, check that the tires are correctly inflated, and also check the tread and condition to be sure they are going to be safe for the summer. If they need to be replaced, do it sooner than later. Flat tires at the car show can be a real drag. Then check the rubber hoses in the engine compartment, as they can often crack and degrade over the winter, and if you happen to have air shocks make sure you didn't lose pressure over the winter or else when you hit the railroad tracks at 45 mph, you are going to be sorry.

Check the battery next, as it may have discharged over the winter months. If required, put the battery on a charger so that it will be ready when it's time to start the car.

Next check the level of all fluids and oils; brake and clutch fluid levels should be checked, then water and coolant levels, finishing up with the oil and transmission levels. If you still have gas in the tank from last year, hopefully you had put the stabilizer in it prior to putting it in storage. If you didn't you may want to siphon it out and put in fresh gasoline with lead additive and an octane booster. At this stage it is well worthwhile to undertake a full service as the effort expended now will pay you back later.

Check the operation of the handbrake; and try to push the car a few inches. Then apply the handbrake, and push the car again. You should be unable to move it. Check the operation of the foot/brake; get someone to push the car with the handbrake released while you depress the brake pedal. If the car will not move, then the initial check is ok.

When the weather is dry, move the car out of the garage, and many minor defects which go unnoticed in the garage will become apparent in the daylight. Wash the car to remove dust and debris that may have settled on it. This is a good time to inspect the bodywork, make note of any defects that you may want to keep an eye on as time goes on. Get a good wax on the car. Detail the interior and check your upholstery to be sure no critters claimed the interior for the winter.

Start the car, and allow it to warm up to normal temperature, while maintaining a close watch for oil and fluid leaks that may have developed. Use a powerful lamp or torch to inspect deep in the engine bay.

If all is well, depress the clutch and try to select a gear. Sometimes, when a car has been standing for some time, the clutch can stick so ease the gear stick gently into place. A large grinding sound at this stage indicates that the clutch may have stuck. This will have to be resolved before further progress is made.

Finally, take the car on a short drive. In the first few miles, check the operation of the brakes with gentle pressure on the brake pedal. Over the winter, rust will have formed on the discs or drums, so the brakes will be a little noisy on the first use. If moderate pressure does not slow the car, then stop (using the



handbrake if required) and check fully the operation of the brakes before progressing. Listen for any new and different “sounds” that the engine or body may be making and investigate.

Now that you’ve got everything, you can complete any repairs before show season starts for the year ahead.