



THOUGHTS FROM THE MODEL T GARAGE...

By Ed Moran

Howdy Fellow Model T'ers! In past columns we've talked about various parts of the Ford ignition system. We've covered timers, the magneto, coils and sparkplugs. This time, let's discuss the growing popularity of using a distributor and completely eliminating the need for magneto, coils and timer!

If you do an informal survey of the folks who tour a lot in their T's I think you'll find that more than half of them are now using a modern distributor and single spark coil system. Those who have them generally like them. There are those, who enjoy the buzz of the old spark coils and continue to use the original system and when properly adjusted the timer and coils can work equally as well but the distributor is a much simpler system to get adjusted and working and... unless you're using an Anderson timer, the distributor is probably more trouble free.

There are three distributors that currently make up the bulk of the systems sold. One uses a distributor head from a Japanese car, another uses a Volkswagen head and the third uses a Bosch head. All seem to be constructed pretty well and all will probably do the job but there are differences.

Lets take the Japanese model first. This kit is made up by John Stolz in Weatherford, Texas. It comes complete with 6 or 12 volt coil, idler pulley, sparkplug wires and special wrenches. It's a nice package with everything you need to convert. The other two do not include the sparkplug wires which will add about \$10.00 to their cost.

The Stolz distributor mounts down in the same position as the original timer which eliminates any play that the others may have in the spiral gear and shaft they use. That's an advantage but the location is also a disadvantage in my opinion. The distributor is down in front where it will be coated with oil AND it's not in a position where you can set the points easily! Dick Chambers plans to install one of these on his "Peach Flat" Model T and I'll let you know his experiences with it.

The second choice uses a Volkswagen head. When you buy this one, you'll also need to buy a coil, coil bracket and sparkplug wires so don't forget to order them at the same time. The VW model clamps where the timer was but the distributor itself is on top of a vertical shaft which puts the points up where they are easy to set or replace and easy to adjust for timing. The VW rotor turns opposite to the Bosch unit and so it requires a slightly more complicated linkage with two rods and a small arm to reverse the motion so that when the spark lever is up the distributor is retarded. There's nothing wrong with



this but it does take a little longer to install and adjust the rods for the correct distances. The VW distributor will make it difficult to get to the fan belt adjustment because of the position of its vertical shaft. Once installed, the VW distributor works well and spare parts are available at any local auto supply.

The third system we'll discuss uses the Bosch head. This one also places the distributor head on the end of a vertical shaft making it easy to adjust or replace the points. The Bosch also is positioned so that it does not interfere with the fan belt tensioning bolt. Another advantage of the Bosch is that the direction of rotor travel allows a simple single control rod with two less adjustments and less chance of play in the spark retard/advance. Bosch replacement parts should also be readily available at local parts suppliers.

The distributor does not need the magneto and, in fact, will not run well on one. So if you have magneto problems the distributor is a quick and painless solution that offers very good performance and possibly improved power if your mag or spark coils are not in top condition. If running 12 volts you will want to place a dropping resistor in series with the coil to drop the voltage down to 8 volts. This increases point life.

See you down the road☐