



THOUGHTS FROM THE MODEL T GARAGE...

By Ed Melozan

Howdy, fellow Model Ters! I'd like to talk a little bit more about the front wheel bearings on our Model Ts.

The wheel bearings are often an area that gets very little attention until it's too late! When is the last time you inspected your front wheel bearings and repacked them? It probably should be done at least once a year and more often if you still have the early Ford ball bearings!

Jack up the front axle and put a couple of jack stands under there and we'll take a look at our bearings!

Once we get the wheels off the ground, remove the hubcap. This is best done with the strange looking Ford wrench that's available from all the T suppliers for a very reasonable price. It's a flat piece of steel about 7 or so inches in length with several odd shaped holes. The largest of these is a nice fit on the end of the T hubcap and will help you remove it without damaging the cap! I usually put a paper shop towel over the cap and then put the tool on that to lessen the possibility of scratches.

With cap off, remove the cotter pin and unscrew the large nut. Don't forget that the passenger side nut is a reverse thread! You will have tough time getting it off if you turn it the normal counter-clockwise direction to loosen it! Lay the nut on a clean cloth along with the cotter pin and remove the special washer that has a projection that fits in the slot on the spindle and keeps the washer (and nut) from turning.

Now, grab your hubcap removal tool and you will find that another opening on the tool fits the flat places on the edge of the taper bearing. Unscrew the bearing and lay it on the clean towel. You can now gently pull the wheel toward you and off the spindle. Remove the dust cap on the rear side of the wheel and take out the large inner bearing. Add it to the shop towel. Now we're ready to do some inspecting. I like to put a blanket over the top of a 30 gallon trash can and gently lay the wheel down flat on the can. With a good light, we want to look very carefully at the front bearing race. The race should be snug in the wheel hub. You should NOT be able to move it! Wipe any grease off with a clean rag. The race surface should be shiny with NO pits or discoloration from heat. If you see any pits, you will need to replace the race. If not, you can probably re-use it. Now, turn the wheel over and do the same inspection of the race in the back of the wheel. Again, checking carefully for pits or heat discoloration. If this race passes inspection, you are ready to clean, inspect and repack the bearings.

Do NOT clean the bearings with mineral spirits or kerosene! These will leave a film on the bearings which will mix with the new grease and can cause it to break down and lose its lubricating effectiveness! I use lacquer thinner and have used gasoline in the past. Put the bearings in a clean can and pour in some thinner. Swish them around and dry them with a clean rag. It's best not to spin the bearings, without lubricant, using compressed air. When clean, check the bearings just as you did the races. If any of the rollers have pits, the bearings will need to be replaced. Spin them with your hand and they should spin freely with no catching or hesitation. If they are ok, grab a glob of wheel-bearing grease and put it in your palm. Work the grease into the bearing until all the rollers are coated. Replace the rear bearing in the hub and carefully tap the dust retainer back on. There are modern retainers with a silicon rubber seal that do a much better job than the original retainers!

Put the wheel on the spindle and screw the front bearing onto the spindle. Screw the bearing up and tighten it snuggly. Then, back the bearing off about 1/4 turn. The wheel should spin easily and stop with



the valve stem at the bottom. If it won't, the bearing is too tight! Put on the washer and tighten the nut. Make sure the nut doesn't cause the bearing to tighten so much it binds the wheel! Replace the cotter pin and hubcap. Do the other side and We're ready for another year.

See you down the road