



# TClinic

## SHOP NOTES — CLEANING-DEGREASING

by Barney (Doc) Jackson

What to use as a parts/engine cleaner and degreaser always seems to be a problem in the home workshop. Every home mechanic has his pet solutions — some good, and some so-so and some just plain lousy. The following suggestions combine experience and research (also known as plagiarism) — you can make your own choice.

For parts (small, that is), I use paint thinner — it's cheap, easy to obtain inexpensive, doesn't evaporate quickly, not too hard on the hands and costs about 22¢ a gallon at Standard Brands Paint Stores. "Parts Dip" or "Carburetor Cleaner," although expensive, will quickly break down sludge, old paint, etc, and is excellent for both ferrous and non-ferrous materials. The parts may be afterward rinsed in thinner or hot water. CAUTION: Carb Cleaner is very hard on the hands, so use a metal dip-basket. I do not recommend gasoline as a cleaner for several reasons — it's very hard on the hands, it

evaporates quickly and is relatively expensive AND its use presents an EXTREME FIRE HAZARD — but, if you must use it, work in an open, well ventilated area and use rubber or plastic gloves. Although I have never tried it, I understand that a strong solution of boiling "Wisk" makes an excellent cleaner and degreaser.

If you have the engine (block or head) out of the car, have it "hot tanked" (hot, caustic soda). Remove all oil passage plugs and core (freeze) plugs. CAUTION: Do not place aluminum parts in the hot tank — it will dissolve them.

To clean the engine in the car, I use a 50-50 mixture of kerosene and "Motor Bath," sprayed or painted on with a brush. Let stand a few minutes, then hose off. To prevent moisture from getting into the distributor, remove the cap and plug wires completely and cover the distributor body with a plastic "baggie."

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### 2002 Update

Most moderately grimy parts can be cleaned with modern environmentally friendly "citric" type cleaners now available. They work pretty good. For very heavy grime you may have to resort to the paint thinner or specialty engine cleaners to cut down the main bulk. You can finish up the job with the citric cleaners.

No matter what you use, be sure to dispose of the used material and sludge in the proper manner.