

# Fox Tales

## Fox Valley Region Model A Restorers Club

February 2007

### First Startup for '07

In early December, the Fox Valley Model T Club contacted Club member, Phred Hollister, to see if he could get a couple guys from the Fox Valley MARC Region to start a Model A. The recalcitrant Sport Coupe belonged to Jerry Mathers, a former member of our Club from years ago. The Mathers had it restored in the '80's and had enjoyed rumble-seating when their twin daughters were young. In recent years the car had been sitting. It actually qualified for the disparaging designation, "barn fresh." Now Jerry's health required the car to be sold.

Phred easily rounded up a team that was willing to make the garage call. He, John Cali, and Bruce Winslow met at the Mathers' St. Charles home to look at the car and to diagnose the mechanical situation. They discovered a late-1928 sleeping beauty that obviously had once been treated to a full restoration. Since then, rodents had had their way in the restored interior and the bumpers and radiator surround had lost their luster. While the rest of the car was respectable, the sheet metal – especially the fenders – was excellent. The team removed the battery and the carb, which John took home to rework. They agreed to reconvene after the New Year to resurrect the car.

It was late in the third quarter of the Chicago Bear's first playoff game when the crew returned to the car. With football squawking from the radio of John's truck, they set to work. The rebuilt carb and a new Farm and Fleet battery were installed. The distributor was calibrated and new plugs were gapped. Marvel Mystery oil was splashed into the cylinders and a faulty ignition switch was detected and jumped out of the equation. Still, the engine was reluctant to betray even a hint of life. It turned over readily, but it would not fire. This flatty was not going to make it easy for the good "sam-A-ritans." The Bears Game went into overtime. The wrenchers took a break to drink Marilyn Mathers' coffee and to wait for the radio-roar that marked Chicago's win. Their more important game was still undecided.

Gathering darkness made each attempt to start the car more futile than the last. It appeared that Phred's "other team" was going to lose the day. Then, just as the Fox Valley "restorers" were about to push the car back into the garage, John called for



one final try. Phred pulled the choke rod and tromped the starter while John snugged the palm of his hand over the carburetor intake. When he popped his hand away, the engine sputtered. Hope sprang into the hearts of the old car guys and all thoughts of quitting before this job was done vanished. Again John "burped" the carb and the engine chugged to life – for the first time in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!

When the "Marvelous Smoke" cleared, and the engine settled down to a fast idle, the mechanical victors discovered the exhaust manifold was glowing red (so much for their static timing and adjustment of the distributor) and that a pile of mouse nesting the size of a loaf of bread had been expelled from the exhaust. The mice may have contributed to the engine's meager vacuum and its very slow rebirth.

Marilyn Mathers was very happy – and even happier a week later when an ad on [www.fordbarn.com](http://www.fordbarn.com)'s swapsite yielded an interested buyer. Phred followed up to help start the car again when Terry, from Sugar Grove, came to kick the tires. He insisted that membership in The Fox Valley Chapter was obligatory – should Terry buy the Sport Coupe.

*Post Script:* Marilyn Mathers has reported that Terry returned with a check and a trailer. She and Jerry are glad that the car will remain in the area. Phred will see that Terry has every opportunity to join our Club.



### Carburetor Heimlich

Steve Schullery, of Kalamazoo Michigan, offered the following tip on the message board at [www.fordbarn.com](http://www.fordbarn.com). Our Model A Guru, John Cali, obviously knows the maneuver – by any other name!

If your car starts running rough, there are a few likely culprits: a loose spark plug wire, the condenser is failing, or a piece of crud has found its way into one of the carburetor jets. If the problem is particularly severe at idle but the car runs ok down the road, the problem is almost certainly the latter. Happily, there is an easy three-step fix, assuming the engine will at least run:

- (1) With the engine running, open the passenger-side hood.
- (2) With your left hand poised near the carburetor's air intake, briefly race the engine using your right hand on the throttle rod.
- (3) In rapid succession, release the throttle rod, momentarily but completely shut off the air supply by popping the palm of your left hand (wear a "Michael Jackson leather glove") over the carburetor air intake, and quickly remove your left hand before the engine dies.

Most of the time your car will magically resume its normal idle after just the first "treatment."

The theory is that, with the engine racing and the air intake shut off, the entire vacuum being created by the cylinders' intake strokes is focused on the carburetor jets; the resulting tremendous momentary suction will suck virtually any blockage on through and on its way. In that moment just after the throttle rod is released and the throttle plate is closed, the main jet is pretty much out of the loop and all of that high-revving suction is directed through the idle jet plumbing.

