HEALEY TECHNICAL

THE E-MAIL MECHANIC

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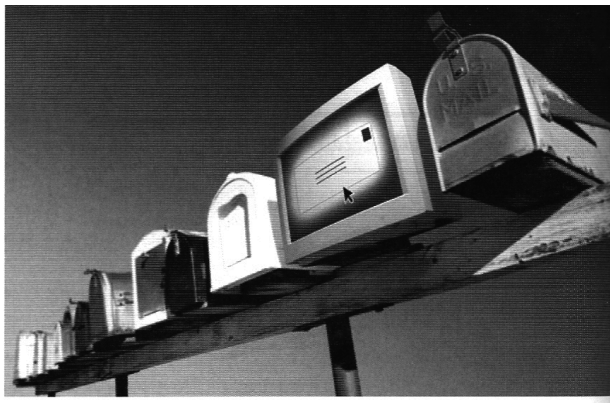

This series of articles would not be possible were it not for the Internet and computers. It is therefore, in my opinion, important to relate a story that will have special meaning to grandparents and to all those of us who use computers.

Last week, my oldest granddaughter (17) told me that her laptop was not working properly. She brought it out to my house and asked me to take a look at it since I had worked with computers most of my working life, albeit most of them mainframes. I looked and looked and looked over most of a weekend, and I finally discovered that in the two years she has owned this computer she had never done a virus check, a "spyware" check, or used any type of protection from viruses or spyware. I found and removed over 5,000 spyware insertions, snippets of code and otherwise dangerous files; 8 viruses; 17 "Trojan horses" and a myriad of other problems. I have had to install countless updates to Windows and other programs. She just cannot resist clicking on any pop-up that purports to help make her browser faster, give her prize winnings, or any of the other patently false come-ons to which teenagers (and others) fall victim. It would have been easier just to erase everything and start over, but how do you tell a teenager that you are going to destroy her "special" screen saver and wallpaper of her favorite rock star (who is Dominic Monaghan anyway?). And besides, with my love of the quirks of Healeys, I have a built-in bias in favor of taking on challenges.

The point here is that we should all be very vigilant to have the latest anti-virus, firewall and anti-spyware programs installed on our computers and make sure that we frequently update them with the new software bug fixes, virus definitions and other safeguards.

The reason why I bring this up is that the granddaughter loves my Healey and wants it to be left to her in my will (or earlier). However, this will not happen until she comes to an understanding that vigilance is the best policy, and that leads us to one of the threads on the Healeys Mail List. Safeguards are important when we perform any sort of mechanical work, but it would also be nice if this would apply to the previous owner(s) also as is evidenced by our latest tale of woe.

THE OBVIOUS IS NOT ALWAYS

One Lister (someone subscribed to the Healeys Mail List) recently asked:

"I took my BJ8 out for a nice Sunday morning drive and it ran beautifully. Came back home for breakfast. Then went back out to start the car again and heard nothing but a clunk. So I thought I would catch it in gear. No dice, the motor is locked up tight. I removed the spark plugs and jacked it up on one side. Then tried to turn it over by rotating the rear wheel while in 4th gear. It will not budge. What could have happened? It was idling great before I turned the motor off. Dean, 65 BJ8."

Among the responses was:

"At the risk of asking the obvious, did you check the oil?" (This was my favorite response and perhaps the obvious starting point.)

Another Lister stated that:

"Sounds like the starter pinion is stuck in mesh with the flywheel ring gear. I once bought an MGB that the owner thought had a seized engine. We bought the car under that understanding. Got it home and my son unbolted the starter motor and it popped loose. Then the engine turned easily."

Later, the original question asker, Dean, came back with the results of his further search into the problem:

"Well I took your advice and pulled my starter, or at least I tried to pull my starter. I removed the 2 bolts that hold it in, but it wouldn't budge. So I removed the cover for the starter pinion. I then took a soft hammer and hit the assembly a couple of times. Well, a large lock washer flew out on the ground and the starter came out (after I removed the oil filter assembly). I then tried to turn over the motor by turning the rear wheel while it was in gear. It turns nice and easy now. But now the question is, Where did that lock washer come from? Do I trust that there is nothing else in there floating around?"

When later asked for a follow-up, he reported:

"Well, for starters it [the lock washer] is the same size as the ones on the starter bolts. The underside of my car is very oily and greasy. This washer was clean and shiny, if that helps any. It could have been in there for years and with my luck just got dislodged from its hiding place."

Dean further stated that the email responses that he received got him started in the proper direction and that logic took him to the conclusion. Our cars can be likened to fine wine in that they do improve with age (as do we all), they are complex, have great character and must be handled with care. Without overstating the obvious that it may be wise to keep the underside as clean as possible considering the normal spotting of oil once in a while, this incident emphasizes another point in any mechanical work on moving parts, and that is to frequently use a magnetized device to assure that there are no stray bits and pieces left in delicate parts of the car.

A NEW TOOL

As this is written, it is the middle of April, and there have been many topics of discussion on the Healeys List from which this column is culled. One of them involves a Healeyite who rashly installed a trickle charger last year and, true to form, did not bother to read the directions. You can find his name at the top of this article. To make a long story short, the trickle charger was installed incorrectly. Somehow the polarity on the batteries was reversed (twin 6 cells for a BN6) and when the key was turned on, the diode in the fuel pump blew. The next installment will be all about fixing this problem, including the installation of the new fuel pump, repair of the old one, and getting everything ready so that my granddaughter can drive my Healey to show her friends and gloat a little bit. And, true to the last article in this series, photographs will be included thanks to my new digital camera. As many Listers have written over the past year, digital cameras are now an integral part of any Healeyite's tool chest. Many of us suffer from CRS (Can't Remember Stuff) so if not already in your arsenal, it is strongly urged that a digital camera become part of your normal tool chest to record things to help you remember that the order of removal is normally the reverse of the order of installation.

ENGINE ID PLATES

Recently there was a question about the removal and replacement of Engine ID plates and Car Number Plates ("VIN" plates in modern terminology). These plates can be obtained from many of the usual parts suppliers, but only in blank form. However, to have them prepared with the proper stamping, one must supply the vendor with proof of ownership. Clarke Spares (Clarke Spares & Restorations, PO Box 1501, Doylestown, PA 18901, 215-348-0595, www.clarkespares.com) is usually acknowledged as the expert in this field and, if personal experience is any measure, they are very careful to check documentation before they make up a new plate. Frankly, this seems to be an advantage in any restoration since they insist on proof before stamping these plates, thus helping to assure that there aren't two cars with the same number running around out there.

To remove the ID plate on the engine, one Lister asked, "What is the best way to remove the engine number plate... from the block? Just drilling out the two rivets seems the obvious answer, but I thought I would check with the authorities. Thanks."

Responses were:

"I filed a flat on each rivet head, then cut a slot into each. With an impact screwdriver set on reverse, mine came right out. The rivets are threaded, but the thread is a very lazy one — kinda like the rifling in a barrel. If you're lucky, like I was, it won't be too difficult to get them out."

"I tried to remove my plate by using a small vise-grip. It twisted the head of one of the rivets. I ended up having to drill out the remaining portion of the rivet. Very scary. The shaft of the rivet was hardened and the drill bit wanted to walk over to the soft cast iron block. The empty hole was a little bigger than when it left the factory. I filed the hole with high temp Epoxy when I installed the new rivet after rebuilding the engine."

The original questioner then responded with:

"Thanks to those who gave me tips. I cut a slot with my Dremel tool and then turned them out with screwdriver. Put a little liquid wrench on the night before. Presto — out like a charm, but I sure am glad I asked!"

VITAL STATISTICS

These messages and others can be found in the Healey Mail List Archives at http://www.team.net/archive/healeys.

If you are interested in joining the Healeys Mail List, all that is necessary is to send an email message to: majordomo@autox.team.net and in the text field enter simply "subscribe healeys" (without the quotation marks) and send the message. Leave the subject line blank. Then follow the instructions in the automated email message that you will receive in return. You will not be disappointed. The procedure for subscribing is also described in the ***Austin-Healey Resource Book*** in the "Internet Resources" section.