THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE SERIES

Mike Dawson

Two Tales of Recent Maintenance Issues

1. One of our members, Linda Reece, was driving in Harrisonville with her grandchildren tucked into her 1964 Spyder convertible when the clutch pedal went to the floor and then the entire pedal and arm assembly fell out onto the floor. After driving without a clutch to a safe spot, she called me with the errant part in her hand. After I explained what had happened she contacted friends and a tow truck and had the Spyder brought to my place. This particular trauma is only common to manual transmission early model cars but it is a combination of marginal welding at the factory, cycles of use and stiffness of the pressure plate and return spring. The support that is bolted under the dash has a tube welded to it that has two plastic bushings for the clutch pedal to pivot on. If you have an early model car with manual transmission I would recommend heading off the possible failure by initiating a preventive operation.

At first examination it looks like you cannot remove the assembly without taking out the steering column but with a little twisting of the support you can accomplish removal and installation. The first step is to remove the clutch return spring and unhook the adjusting rod from the lever in the rear so you have slack in the cable. Next, since there are plastic bushings at the welding site, you must unbolt the assembly (3 bolts), remove it with the pedal stop and then remove the snap ring and two bushings. If the tube with the bushings has already bent slightly, be sure and use a square to align it before welding. Hook the clutch cable clevis back on the pedal arm before bolting the bracket tight.

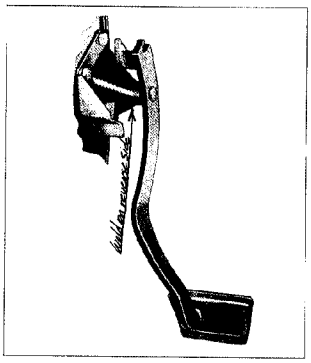

Fig. 68-1—Clutch Linkage

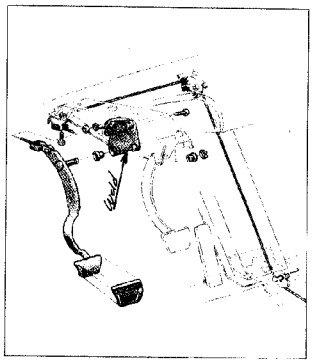

Fig. 68-2—Pedal Support Bracket

2. Another member, Sherman Rutherford, was on his way to the Thunder in the Valley Speedway for our club gathering when he was spotted in a parking lot with both lids up. When I arrived Sherman already had a gas line off and had determined that no gas was being delivered to the carburetors. The quick diagnosis by both of us was that another mechanical fuel pump had expired. Once removed, I tried pumping the stem on the pavement but no suction was available so a new pump was installed and off to the race track we went. As the club met in the shade of the bleachers, we discussed fuel pumps and I took Sherman's dead pump apart. No evidence of loose valves, ruptured fabric, or rust pieces, so I reassembled it and tried stroking it again. No suction. It came apart again and this time (with reading glasses) I noticed that the edge of the rubber/fabric

valve was up off of the seat slightly. I used a pen to push it back down but it popped back up. I thought it must have dirt under it and turned my attention to race cars and cold beverages. I would solve the mystery later.

The next morning I returned to the fuel pump valve body and discovered that overnight the open valve had closed with out any help. I reassembled the pump and it worked perfectly. My first suspect was that the valves were warping due to high heat and gas additives. After Sherman indicated he purchased premium fuel at Casey's I am speculating that our culprit is 15% ethanol. After talking to several folks about the issue I think that Casey's adds another 5% ethanol at the terminal and uses the "splash method" of mixing to provide their premium grade at the pump. I asked the manager at our local Casey's about their premium fuel but received a non-answer for my trouble. A shop here in Belton says that they do a lot of older Chrysler vehicle valve jobs because the exhaust valves burn from too much ethanol. I personally have never used the premium that has ethanol but using the regular grade with 10% has never caused any problems in my cars other than hot idle or hot restart issues which I have largely solved. There are several stations in the metro area that sell premium with no ethanol – I would recommend spending the additional dollars, your Corvair will probably reward you with better service.