

SPEED TIP #98

EXHAUST MANIFOLD

by Tony Catalano

VERY often I had looked into the engine compartment of fellow car owners to observe and sometimes admire the new look of their exhaust manifold, (simple pleasures). I had frequently wondered how some of these finishes had been obtained, observing that some were better and longer lasting than others. When talking with some of the owners I found that there was and inexhaustible (pardon the pun) number of suggestions, but only few offered an adequate result or were long lasting. I wanted to find the best product before attempting the job for myself. After all if you're going to go to the trouble of pulling those things off you may as well try to make the results last as long as possible. This was my problem I didn't want to fight with those ugly things just to have them turn on me next year, so I kept on putting off the job, not willing to experiment on my own and waiting for someone to make the definitive recommendation of some product or method. In the meantime I had been using the graphite looking product, you know, the one that comes in that expensive little round black plastic container. This stuff really didn't look too bad but it was quite messy. It didn't last over the winter, the rust would leach through and would need a touch up. Not really a big deal but just don't try and go to a judged car show with it. After the judge sticks his arm inside the engine compartment and comes out with a sleeve full of grey goober, you won't be having fun. But other than that, and the occasional purest shaking his head, it will provide a temporary solution. But that really isn't what I wanted to talk about. I really did start out to recommend the definitive "Cast Iron Manifold" coating. Keep in mind, everyone that I talk to, felt that they had found the best product. If the truth were known, you would probably find that it's all made in one big brewing pot in Chicago. Anyway the stuff that I came up with is a spray paint. It comes in a 12 oz. rattle can is called "VHT NU-CAST" cast iron manifold coating. It comes in several different colors so be sure to specify "SP-998 GREY. I was able to order mine from the local N.A.P.A. parts store.

For the best results and a long lasting job, first take the exhaust manifold to your local chrome shop or better yet Ready Strip shop, for a cleaning. This will take all the rust and grease completely off and ready your parts for painting. When handling the parts prior to painting try not to touch them with your bare hand because the oils are not good to paint over. Only have the parts stripped when you are ready to paint them immediately. I had the chrome shop call me as soon as they had dipped and washed them. The reason for the urgency is that the cast iron is now totally unprotected and will rust quicker than a Ford in Cleveland in January. Follow the directions on the can, especially the one about a well ventilated area. They really mean it. Spray outside, don't even think about doing it inside an enclosed area. It says that it's ozone safe but that must be the only thing. No kidding you don't want to breathe this stuff. Even though the job takes a minute, a minute is too long. To cure, wait until the paint is thoroughly dry, then bake in the oven for 30 to 60 minutes, at about 600 to 650 degrees F. As I had implied before, there are many products that seem to be similar such as Cast-Blast, etc. The wise thing to do would be to make sure the product is specifically for exhaust manifolds and that it says so right on the label that it is good for at least 1400 degrees.

Before closing I wanted to pass along sympathetic thoughts to Rich LaValley of California after hearing of his unfortunate fender crunch on his return home from this years S.A.C.E. National at Port Ludlow Washington. The accident no doubt was not helped by the plastic Firestone death grip tires (no longer made by Firestone.) They sure do look good but these reproduction tires are like toy tires compared to the new technology. Last year on route to a car show, I blew a brand new one out on the Interstate, it had 50 miles on it. The year before, our Editor had totally worn out a set on a trip back east.