

The Preventive Maintenance Series by Mike Dawson

This is the first in a series of articles that will possibly help in diagnosing common (and uncommon) problems that can occur during Corvair operation. Most of you will recognize one or more that have already caused head scratching.

1. Powerglide transmission torque converters will leak down over time in a car that is not driven, overfilling the pan. Fluid will usually leak out of the shifter cable seal or a separation in the cable casing and leave a large puddle. Driving the car will cure the leak until the next time the car sits idle. Visual inspection will usually help you determine what is leaking. Change the O-ring and/or seal up the cable with an epoxy compound after cleaning and using sandpaper.
2. A mysterious dead battery on early model cars can be caused by the wire reinforced heater hose touching the stud and battery cable on the back of the starter solenoid. This can occur on late models, but less likely due to clearances.
3. Late model dashboards are plastic with a single ground strap to a screw under the dash on the left side of the column. Loss of that ground causes erratic gauge operation and strange light combinations.
4. A light howling noise when the engine is cold is usually the fan bearing. Grease it early with the tool that most clubs have available – or buy one from a vendor. (Editors note: Fan bearing greasing tool is shown on page tools-4 in the Clarks catalog and is available from our club's tool crib.)
5. Plugged up crankcase vent tubes on any Corvair will cause oil to come out of the dipstick tube or any weak gaskets. It also will spit oil into the air cleaners and can cause pinging. Clean both the upper and lower tubes with a frayed speedometer cable. Gas in the oil will cause the same symptoms, check for leaking carburetor needle and seats, failed choke pull offs or an internally leaking fuel pump which could be missing the boss that prevents gas from going into the crankcase.
6. A rusty fuse block can cause the ends of fuses to get hot and melt the filament during normal current draw. When you check them, use an ohm meter if there is any question. Also fuses made in China will melt at the caps instead of the middle and appear to be good. Again – use an ohm meter.
7. Flooding conditions (black smoke, rough running) at a cold start up can be a failed choke pull off. This also will dilute the oil with gas.
8. A ruptured vacuum modulator on Powerglides will cause a low reading on the dipstick when it is full. A failed modulator will also cause white smoke and pinging as it gets worse. To check: pull the lower hose connection and check for fluid. Also, check the level with the engine running and then shut off the engine and see if the fluid level comes up substantially in the tube.
9. A totally dead electrical system on an early model can be the 10 gage wire in the multi connector at the left front side of the engine compartment. Corrosion in the connector causes an instant total electrical failure. The cure is to solder in a bypass wire; the connector was only placed there for assembly purposes.

10. To lengthen the life of a late model speedometer cable, do not bolt the support bracket to the fender. Instead, use a wire tie to suspend it from the brake line. Too short a radius will break the casing and let water in.

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