It Stalls at a Stop

by Tom Endy

This is a common complaint often heard from Model A owners. My experience has been that it has to do with the Zenith carburetor. On most forums numerous theories are offered; many of them contradictory.

Every once in a while I encounter a Zenith that defies being fixed so that it does not stall at a stop. It can be very frustrating. However, I think I may have hit upon the solution.

Recently I was rebuilding two Zeniths that road tested perfectly until I came to a stop, then the engine stalled. The float level was set to different heights a number of times, the throttle shaft was replaced, the throttle bosses re-bushed, the float replaced. The float valve was replaced with a Viton tip. Flow tested jets installed. All the passage ways were open. Nothing I did to the Zeniths resolved the problem.

It was then I began to think about the throttle plate itself. If the throttle plate does not close on the idle circuit hole in the throat properly it could adversely affect the flow of air to the idle circuit. The transfer from run to idle would then be disrupted.

I recall attending a Zenith seminar years ago at a MAFCA meet conducted by Herman Reise, now deceased, who knew quite a bit about Zenith carburetor restoration. He made a statement that stuck in my mind. He said that “there hasn’t been a decent throttle plate produced in 50 years”. Unfortunately he did not elaborate.

Snyder’s Model A catalog has an interesting statement concerning the reproduction throttle plate they offer. “Made of brass as original with correct angles on the edges. USA”

Maybe old Herman was on to something, so I ordered throttle plates from Snyder and installed them in the two Zeniths that stalled when coming to a stop. Problem resolved!

This was quite a revelation. When rebuilding a Zenith I will now be installing new throttle plates from Snyder’s. I suspect some of the other better suppliers, such as Bratton’s, are offering the same throttle plate, however they don’t specifically say so in their catalog.

The small hole in the throat of the upper casting allows air to flow into the idle circuit when the throttle is closed.

The throttle plate must close such that half of the hole just peeks above the closed throttle plate.