

The 1938 Packard Continues

By Robert Douglas



The story of our 1938 1601 Packard, like the car, continues to evolve. If you know our Packard it is a great driver. It seems to take us every where in all kinds of weather and all kinds of terrain, faithfully delivering us to every destination.

Well with a car that is a driver there is a need for regular maintenance and March and April have been the time for that maintenance. After ten years and thousands of miles the clutch was beginning to chatter a bit so it was time to change it. Off went the Packard with it's Shop Manual and a Motors Manual to Bob Earls at Evelyn and Howard Freedman's Gideon Street shop. The work was not all that complicated but it took some time and grease was the name of the game. Not as bad as doing suspension but still it makes one thankful for coveralls, Go Jo Hand Cleaner, a good friend close by with good advice and above all, a hoist!!

After getting the car on the hoist the first order of business was to remove the front carpet and pad, then the floor board transmission cover and remove the top cover of the transmission and shift lever. Then lift the car and get under to remove the speedometer cable, ground strap, drop the drive line, the cross member and fly wheel cover. Next, support the back of the engine so that when the transmission mounts are removed the engine and transmission will not drop in the back. After all the engine and transmission are supported at the front of the block and on the transmission mounts in the back. Next, disconnect the transmission mounts and remove the bolts that hold the transmission to the bell housing. At this point it was time to ask Bob Earls for a hand and we slid the

transmission back, down and out of the car, you do not want to drop that unit and with greasy hands that can become a distinct possibility which makes four hands much better than two! With the transmission removed, covered with a rag and slid out of the way it was time to remove the clutch actuator rod and throw out bearing along with the clutch pressure plate and disc. These drop out through the bottom of the bell housing and lastly we removed the flywheel. When replacing a clutch it is always best practice to have the flywheel surfaced to make for smooth contact with the new clutch disc.

With all of the disassembly complete it was time to deliver the pressure plate and disc out to AFCO (Automotive Friction Company) in Boring, Oregon. They specialize in rebuilding clutches, water pumps and they surface flywheels to boot! Sure enough, in a few days Bob Earls got the call that everything was ready, so out to Boring, pick up the parts and deliver them back to the shop. The removal process was reversed and all the parts were reinstalled in the car, the fluid levels checked, everything greased and the moment of truth was at hand. The car was lowered from the hoist, started, backed out of the shop and driven down the street, no chattering, no lurching just smooth motoring, just like you would expect from a Packard!

With the mechanicals well in hand it was time to change the oil and lube all of the grease fittings as well as replace some worn out suspension parts in the rear. To be specific the Panhard rod (rear stabilizer bar) bushings were shot as was the sway bar to frame link, and the sway bar mounting bushings. Imagine that; after seventy seven years rubber bushings going south. They just don't make 'em like they used to. Over the years rattles were developing in the rear so it was time to replace a few items. As always Max Merritt had the parts so an order was placed and soon arrived over at Gideon Street. The advantage to these parts was that they were a direct swap out, a new Panhard rod, a new bushing and a new sway bar to frame link and what a difference they made, no rear end rattles or loose handling, everything was tight and smooth!

There was a fair amount of work that was done on our Packard in March and April but it was more than worth the effort for the smooth motoring that the car has delivered over the years. With good maintenance it will continue to deliver! I would like to thank Howard and Evelyn Freedman for the shop space and Bob Earls for the guidance, help and expertise that made all of this possible. It is nice to have a shop manual but to have some one there that knows what to do with any problem that comes up is the most help of all! It is sort of like having a life guard when you are swimming in the pool.

