

Tech Session—How to Clean Your Gas Tank

If you don't want to pay a radiator shop to give your old dirty tank essentially a gas tank renew for close to \$500, consider doing it yourself. This is my 3rd one. The 49 has been running 13 years and 15K miles without a filter. The 36 Terraplane had a new tank done by a radiator shop years ago, and had about 6 gal of old stinky gas in it, probably at least 10 years old. The 49 Commadore didn't have any gas after 35 years in a barn but on inspection, was quite dirty, and stinky. The 51 Hornet I did for a friend, had about 4 gal of stinky gas and had gobs of wet crud as well as a coating of rust on sides, top and bottom inside.

First of all, what to do with the gas. Fortunately, Hudson provided a drain in the bottom of the tank. Well, I thought I'd mix the gas from the Terraplane 50/50 with new gas and burn it in the old 12 HP Kohler in the Wheel Horse. Well, it ran, but next morning it wouldn't start, for the first time in some 50 years. I traced the problem to the fuel pump and found that the poppets were stuck closed from the varnish in the old gas. Sounded like a good idea at the time as they say.

So, the only thing to do with old gas is burn it. For mercy sakes, don't pour it down the drain, unless you want to light up your yard like 4th of July. Gas in a city sewer could blow a persibling hole cover sky high. See, the correct people say ya can't call them 'Man-hole' 'cause it's gender specific. Woman-hole is no better, although I suppose there are some women in the sewer. Person-hole has the word 'son' in it, so we can't use that, and per-daughter hole is worse, so we have to use sibling, thus the Persibling-hole cover.

I dump a gallon or so at a time in the burn barrel with papers to burn. Then get a 10 ft pole, wrap some newspaper around the end and light it some 20 ft from the barrel and sneak up on it. One 'whump' and it burns off peacefully. Might not want to do that in town.



After thoroughly draining the gas from the tank, pour a gallon or so of kerosene in the tank and thoroughly slosh it around and drain it. The kerosene will mix with the few drops of gas left and render it non-explosive. Dump that out, (makes good parts cleaner). Then mix a strong solution of good detergent and hot water and rinse well. This will remove the kerosene residue and a lot of wet and loose crud. Dump where it can't leach into water supplies or do other damage. Remove the pickup, and the sender, and spray-rinse it out good with a hose. Dry thoroughly with the warm air from the blow end of a shop vac. To be super-safe run a shop-vac hose from your vehicle tailpipe to the filler neck of the tank and run the vehicle while you cut two, 3-sided access holes in the top with a thin cut-off wheel on an angle grinder, one either side of the baffle, which you can locate from the sender hole.

Do not do as someone I know, who drained the tank from Dad's 65 Ford and started welding on it. It didn't blow, but began to rumble and roll around on the ground. It swelled up so they never could get it back in the car. On the other hand, I watched Howard W. weld his GTO tank after just draining the gas out, using the exhaust purge method, with no problem. The theory is, that the oxygen is already burned, and can't support ignition.

Now for the cleaning. You'll need a metal paint scraper and wire brushes. I use a small battery drill unit to make the job easier. Get all the rust etc off the bottom, sides, and top. Remove all remaining parts of the original fine screen arrangement surrounding the pickup end. I just heard that some people bead blast which I'd try next time.

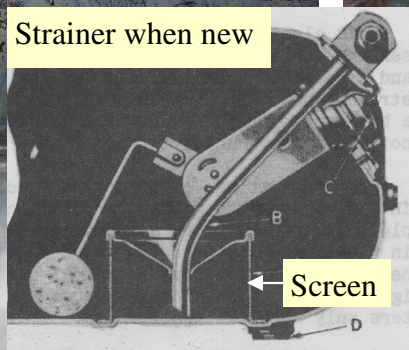
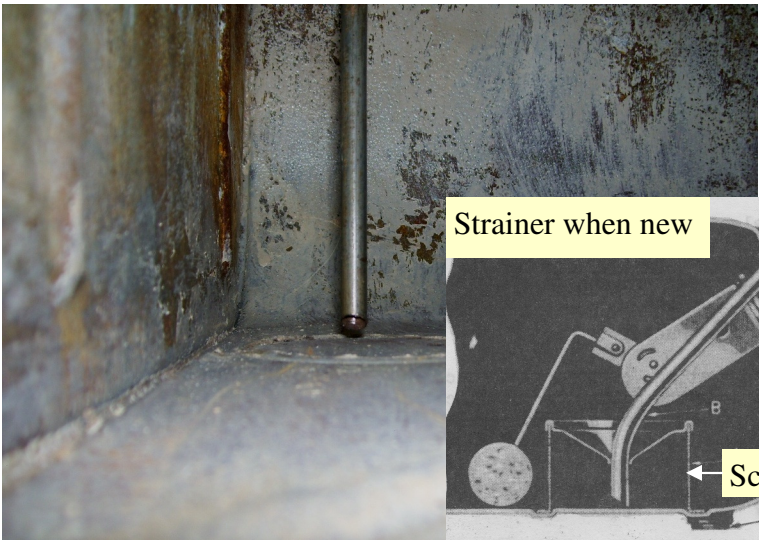
Get Eastwood's tank cleaning kit, and follow directions. Eastwood Metal wash, Dilute Muriatic and Acetone, from your hardware store, Eastwood Fast Etch, then paint the inside with Eastwood sealer.

Replace the pickup tube, making sure it clears the tank bottom, and the sender unit. Do one last vacuum for any stray stuff then solder the top closed with a soldering gun. Spray some paint on it and you're done. It's a good idea to put a plastic see-thru filter just after the tank pickup for good measure. Larry



What you see here is what's left of the original screen unit with part of it which has come loose at the right. After years of storing old gas these will no longer be the screen that keeps crud out, but the remnant which keeps crud in which will plug up your intake tube. This tube was so packed with stuff all 3 inches from the end of it had to be drilled out.

This is what gas becomes when it's left in the tank for several years. Between the shop vac (which will probably stink forever) and a paint scraper and wire brushes, we got it out.



The end of the clean pick-up tube in the clean coated tank ready to suck up gas for many miles of driving in your Hudson. Lift the tank back in the car using a floor jack with a board on the bottom of the tank. You'll need a new vent hose to the filler neck, which is a little tricky to get in place. The rubber ring needs to go in the body before the filler neck goes up through it. Make sure the straps that hold the tank are in good shape. It's dangerous and embarrassing to drop a tank on the road.

When soldering the access panels closed, try to get them to fit as well as possible, then tack the corners. The edges must be cleaned with steel wool, emery cloth etc. Then wipe paste flux and tin (melt a coating of solder) on about 1/4 in of the edges. Then use large diameter (1/8 inch) solder to help bridge the gap and provide a good seal. You can use a regular soldering gun for this.