

## Those Onans Can Really Idle

By Ron Zammit

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It has been my observation that most of the Onan-engined cars sound like they are running a generator in a motor home when they are at idle. It always bothers me to hear an engine race so at "idle," because it not only wastes fuel, but things like the throwout bearing wear out a bit quicker with this condition.

I never thought about solutions when all I owned was a two-cycle car, but eventually I purchased an MT19. Sure enough, it could run about 20 m.p.h. in second gear at "idle." No adjustment of the two idle screws (mixture and butterfly position) seemed to help. I could only get it to "idle" faster! When I finally got around

to tearing it all down, I discovered what I consider a design flaw in these cars. Well, it's a design flaw unless your carb has been carefully adjusted each time. The problem is that the Fairmont linkage is much more rugged than the carb's butterfly and its shaft.

To understand the problem, let's imagine you are starting with a brand new carb and the engine idles beautifully, just barely "ticking." (They can do that!) If the throttle lever had any space between it and the end of the control panel slot, there will be a problem soon. As you use the car, you tend to shove the throttle lever fully forward to idle the car, and the linkage is so strong it bends the butterfly and its shaft. Air leaking by the bent butterfly makes the idle faster, and you re-adjust things. If the throttle

linkage is adjusted to push the butterfly closed, the problem will get worse, as the butterfly gets bent again. In side view, the butterfly in my car looked somewhat like the letter "S" and the shaft was bent into a shallow "U." I played around with straightening them with some improvement, but new parts worked the best. (About \$15 for the two parts!)

Now the car idles great! Adjusting the main jet (under the carb) is a pain, but I suggest you do it as per the instructions to keep full torque coming as you come off idle. With the idle so fast, perhaps someone has incorrectly set the main mixture as was done on my car.

Even if your car idles now, I suggest you check the linkage. The carb idle screw, the one that adjusts the butterfly position, should be set for the desired idle speed, and the linkage then adjusted so the throttle lever is hard against the forward end of its slot at idle. In this way no pressure is applied to the butterfly and its shaft at idle, and it will not get bent.