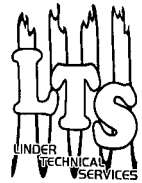


Networking

Newsletter



Looking Thru The Windshield

The first road trip in a hot rod is always something special and I can't begin to describe the feeling of creating every nut and bolt in a vehicle from the ground up. My 1929 Model A started life as a sedan that ran the Newport Hill Climb in 2002 and later, based on an artist drawing that I saw in a magazine, turned into a truck. We used '32 Ford frame rails, elliptical rear springs (makes them really low) in the rear, added a quick change rear axle and a 302 GMC six cylinder engine. The engine is bored 090 with a McGurk solid lifter camshaft and five (5) Stromberg 97 series carbs. It runs and sounds awesome! Hooked to a Saginaw four speed and 3:68 gear it pushes this 2000lb vehicle very well to say the least.



I had driven the vehicle to a couple of shows this summer but no real road miles so far when I decided to make the last show of the year the Morris, Illinois, the "Hunnert Car Pile Up". It is the Midwest's greasiest car show and this year had approx. 800 cars in the Grundy County Speedway. Each car is inspected for "traditional vintage appeal" before entering the grounds and many are turned away based on billet wheels, fuel injection and other non-period looks. This show has become the show to do each year and most are traditional rods driven from everywhere in the Midwest, rain or shine. My schedule had me teaching at a college located about 260 miles north of Indianapolis just west of Chicago a couple of days before the show. I decided to drive the hot rod up and stop for the show on my return route over the weekend. Doug had to take the van and bring the trade show stuff and we decided that I would drive up alone as I couldn't find any brave souls to take the ride with no windows (only a windshield) and no heater (forecast was 40 to 50 degrees). So, on Wednesday morning I left the house pulling my original teardrop camper just for the added storage and maybe if it warmed up just a bit I might even sleep in it a night or two as I was sharing a room with my son, Scott, and his friend at the car show. With a full fuel tank, (eight gallons) off I went driving the old roads with the plan of taking all day to drive the 200 plus miles and maybe even finding a few antique stores along the way. The weather was great on the first leg of my trip and the hum of a five carb GMC 322ci engine made me smile most of the trip. The whine of the quick change was the only speedometer that I needed. Just pace with a car you feel is running the speed limit, listen to the whine (or howl) of the straight cut gears and stay at that noise level. One of the most pleasant sounds a gear head could ever hear. With no fuel gauge, I figured on a worst case I could maybe get 10 mpg and looked at a map and decided to stop every 60-70 miles or less if I felt like getting out of the car. That also worked very well for me as I really needed to stretch my chubby frame every tank or so as well. (I will redo the interior of the car this winter and install windows and a heater). All the way up the car worked very well with no real problems other than I noticed that if I hit the throttle kinda hard at road speed the clutch would slip a little. (This was fixed the following day by adjusting the pedal on my hydraulic clutch.) The only other discomfort was all the rattles this model A had (also to be fixed this winter) but all in all, it was a trip every hot-rodder should make!



Continued on page 4 →

Analysis from the “Sleuth”, Michele Winn



Randy Dillman taught an extremely good class on pass-thru programming with the J2534 tool during our annual technician conference in September. After the class, many were discouraged about his truthful look into what will be needed to make this a profitable, reliable procedure. I have my own opinions about what will be needed and I will share them at the end of this article. First, let me lead you through my first J2534 pass-thru programming experience.

Last week I had the privilege of a great learning experience. Jim was gone, Doug was busy in the injector lab and I was all alone. One of our local shops called to see if I could reprogram a PCM in a 2000 Ford Windstar. I stuck out my chest and said **NO PROBLEM**. In the past 4-5 years, I've programmed literally hundreds of PCM's, so I wasn't worried. Until I remembered that my NGS had just come back from being repaired 2 days earlier and I hadn't plugged it in yet to see if it worked. I quickly checked and it seemed to be functioning properly. Next I booted the laptop which I use for Ford programming. While I waited, I remembered that it had been at least a year, maybe 2 since I had received a calibration CD from Ford. We didn't renew our subscription with them after we purchased the EASE J2534 unit because we didn't need both. Now I was getting a little nervous. I had flashed several GM PCM's with the new EASE unit, but the only time I had used it on anything else was when Randy Dillman was here over the summer teaching a class. It worked then.....but that was then.....and this is now.....and did I mention, I'm all alone!

All I could do was wait until the vehicle showed up. About an hour later, the shop OWNER arrived in the Windstar and said he would just “hang out” and wait while I flashed the PCM. No pressure, right? I knew the first thing I had to do was go to the Ford website (www.motorcraft.com) and pay for a one-day subscription so I could access the calibration that I needed. That was pretty painless. I was asked to set up an account which requires a username and password. Then I purchased a one-day subscription for \$24.95. The transaction took about 5 minutes. The next thing I had to do was download the latest version of the “Ford Programming Assistant” from the motorcraft.com website. The download took 9 minutes and then another 6 minutes to install on my PC. (If you're keeping track, that's 20 minutes so far).

With all of that taken care of, the next step was to open the EASE programming software which guided me step-by-step on how to hook-up the cables, where to get the calibration information (if I hadn't done it already) and then it automatically launched the “Ford Programming Assistant” software that I had just downloaded. In my opinion, the “Ford Programming Assistant” is one of the hardest programs to navigate. Instead of being like every other windows program that you're used to, when you set the cursor over a supposed “link”, the cursor does not turn into the cute little “hand” and it does not highlight. Instead, your cursor turns into a very hard to see “X” and you must simply click on every supposed “link” on the page to see if it takes you to the next screen. Oh, and by simply “clicking” or “double-clicking”, it won't move to the next page until you click on the green checkmark in the lower right hand corner of the screen. If at any time you need to back up, you have to re-start the entire process. It is the most frustrating program I've ever tried to use.

It took approx. another 15 minutes for me to navigate thru the entire process (which I had to re-start twice) and get the point where it would actually download the calibration. Just before the download started, a warning screen appeared that said the cooling fans and fuel pump would run during the calibration process and it's recommended that you remove the fuses for both to prevent battery interference. I've been known to skip this step in the past because when you program a vehicle with the NGS, it takes less than 5 minutes, so it's never a problem of the battery running down. This time since the shop owner was standing around, I decided to pull fuses. Once again, another 5 minutes was wasted because when I pulled the cover off the fuse block (located next to the battery), all the fuses were numbered, but not identified any other way.

Analysis from the “Sleuth”, (cont. from page 2)

After spending a few minutes in the owner’s manual, I located the fuses and I was ready to go. It took another 25 minutes for the download and flash of the PCM to complete. Once the flash was complete, I re-installed the fuses and was instructed to go thru a series of “key on”, “key off” procedures which would check and clear any codes set during the flash process. After that, the vehicle started and I was well on my way to getting paid! (or so I thought)

What does this mean to you?

1. Re-evaluate what you are charging for programming. As you can see from my experience, I spent approx. 75 minutes of time PLUS \$24.95 to access the calibration I needed. I would recommend charging a minimum 1 hour labor plus the cost of the calibration. In my case, our labor rate is: \$77.47 per hour plus the \$24.95 for the calibration = \$102.42. I only charged \$50, but I won’t make that mistake again :)
2. You must have a high-speed internet connection. Dial-up will not be a workable option for J2534 pass-thru programming.
3. If you plan to perform programming for multiple manufacturers, you may need more than one computer. In many cases, the software you will need to download from the O.E.’s site will not be compatible with software you may currently have stored on your PC from another O.E.’s site.
4. In order to make this a profitable experience, it may require re-arranging your shop. You may need to have a designated area in your shop for programming that is out of the way of the normal flow of traffic. This way, you can hook up all of your cables and walk away to start another job and not have to worry about cords being tripped over and inadvertently unplugged.
5. Computers skills must increase. Just because your technician is able to surf the internet doesn’t mean he will be able to navigate thru this process successfully
6. No matter which J2534 tool you decide to purchase, make sure they have an adequate support staff that will be able to assist you when needed.

Meet Eric “Bryan” Huntley, our newest employee

Earlier this year, we hired another new face in the fuel injection room. After looking thru past newsletters, we realized that Eric (or Bryan as he’s known around the shop) had never been formally introduced.

Eric started with us in February this year after his mother (a friend of Jim’s) coerced Jim into hiring him on a temporary basis. He quickly proved to be a quick study. His first task at LTS was to sort 5,000 injector cores. This gave Eric a good knowledge of the different types of injectors and their pattern failures.

Eric has assumed other responsibilities in recent months. He now answers the phone; takes injector orders and prepares the injectors for shipping. He also puts the finishing touches on the injectors once they are in sets.

Eric comes from a car family and enjoys all forms of automobile and motor sport, specifically F1. In his spare time he enjoys reading, kayaking and bicycling. His life long goal is to own a Ferrari, but currently drives a Mitsubishi.

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Looking Thru the Windshield (Cont. from front page)

After two days in Northern Illinois, I got up Friday morning to 42 degree weather (no rain yet but a bit brisk at 60-65 mph in a hot rod). I drove down to the city of Morris, Illinois with a double sock hat and some goggles and once I settled in it wasn't too bad. The "Hunnert Car Pile-up" show was great and we had nicer weather coming home on Sunday with our five other cars including our other two roadsters. One was driven by my son, Scott and his friend and the other was driven by Greg and Stan, our fuel injection guys.

On the return trip I had a radiator cap malfunction and blew some coolant on me and the other cars, but we fixed it with some tools on the side of the road and made the trip OK. (Even though the radiator cap issue happened a couple more times before we got home).

The car will now go into the shop for total tear down, some insulation in the cab and some final paint. All in all a exciting trip and a great practice ride for our next adventure (driving the hot rods to Las Vegas and back) which will be a lot longer ride for sure. Stay tuned for some more Bubba adventures!

—*Jim Linder*

