





LONG BEACH

HILL CLIMB

The Long Beach (California) Model T Club may not be the largest in the country, or even in the Los Angeles area for that matter, but size doesn't always mean much. For many years now, this organization has been the organizer of the two most popular events on the Coast. One of these events is their Annual Swap Meet, held in August each year, and generally conceded to be the largest held in California. The other event is their Hill Climb held in May. Both events draw hundreds of enthusiasts from as many miles.





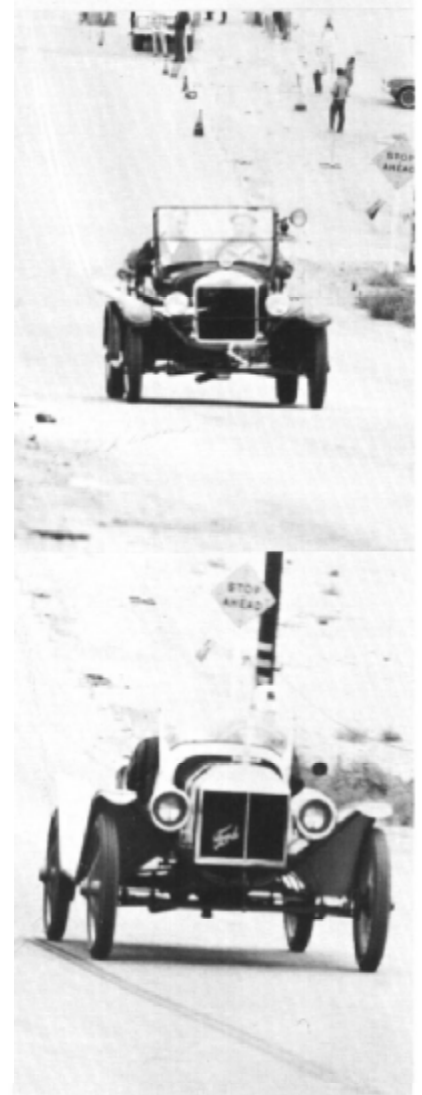
Shell Hill is a 22% grade located in the oil fields of Signal Hill. Each year the Signal Hill Police Department allows the Club to block off the hill and stage a series of contests to see just who has the fastest Model T on the hill.

All cars run in classes, with some divisions within the classes. This year there were six classes: STOCK, SEMI-MODIFIED, MODIFIED, COMMERCIAL, ONE-TON TRUCK and SPEEDSTER. The first three are for stock bodied Fords; semi-modified being minor changes such as carburetors and ignition. The modified cars had to have a T block but there was no limit as to what was in or on that block. Speedster models had four divisions: those with flat head engines, those with overhead valves, those with stock engines and those with stock engines with minor changes like those in the semi-modified class.

In recent years, almost anything went, and some of the cars were pretty daring. This year, every car had to be licensed for the street. This restriction hasn't dulled the enthusiasm much because the cars seem to get faster each year. Most are driven to and from the event.

The run up the hill is a short one, less than a quarter of a mile. No standard Model T can make it in high gear, and some won't even make it in low. When some of the worm-drive trucks run the course it might be quicker to walk! The hot speedsters, on the other hand, start out in low, shift to low Ruckstell and clear the top in less than ten seconds, gaining speed all the way!

The Vintage Ford has covered this year's event so that you might get some idea of just what goes on on a quiet Sunday in Long Beach.





Clem Sala (left) came all the way from Hayward, Calif. and just a few moments after he had unloaded his roadster from its trailer, he drove a short distance and split the pinion in the differential. Minor problems like this don't stop enthusiasts like Clem, though, and in a short time he had the rear-end out, apart, and with the help of some of the local people, had it together again in plenty of time to show us southerners just how it's done up north. Facing Clem is Dick Bloomfield, who supplied the new pinion. The man with his back towards the camera is unidentified.



The satisfaction of winning was not the only reward. All classes and divisions of the classes received trophies like this one. That's a genuine Model T piston, chrome plated and mounted with an appropriate plaque. These were made by the members of the Club.



Patterned after modern dragster design, this short-coupled '26 ran in the Commercial class: The driver wouldn't say if the design helped any, but being shorter, it shouldn't take as long to get to the top of the hill!

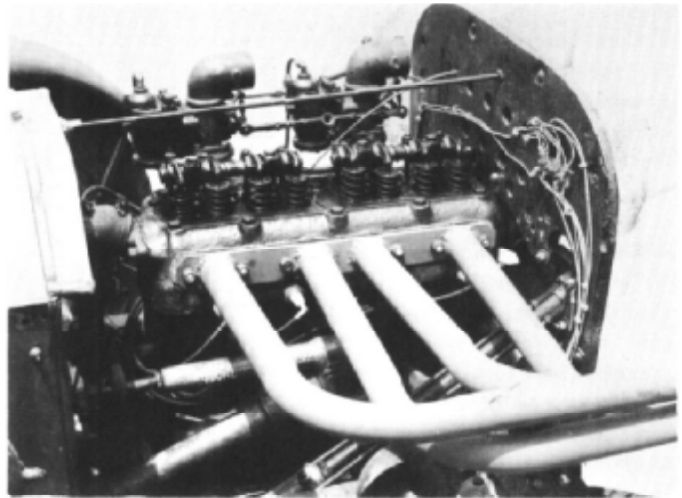


Steep? This shot was taken from the top of the hill (with a telephoto lens) while standing on the hill!

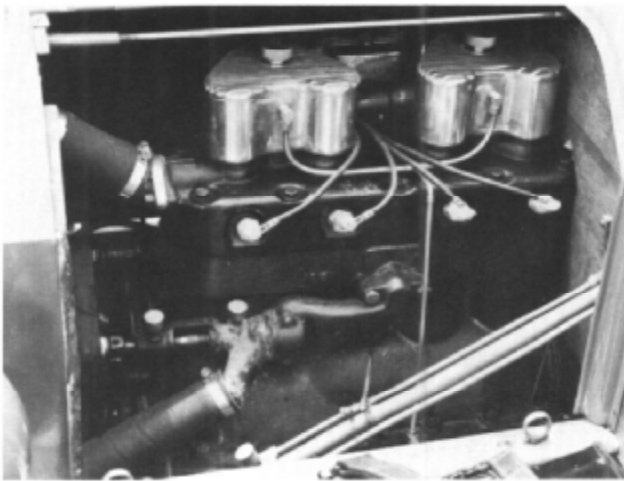
In events such as this, the average engine seems out of place. Even the most conservative driver has to do *something* to get that extra bit of "go" that it takes to even be in the running for a trophy.

Modifications run from minor ones like a non-stock carburetor to the addition of Model A crankshafts and Frontenac, Rajo or other overhead valve setups. Many of the competing cars run equipment that is added just for this event, and is removed when it's all over. There was more than one apparently stock engine that had been "souped" by the addition of a special manifold and dual carburetors.

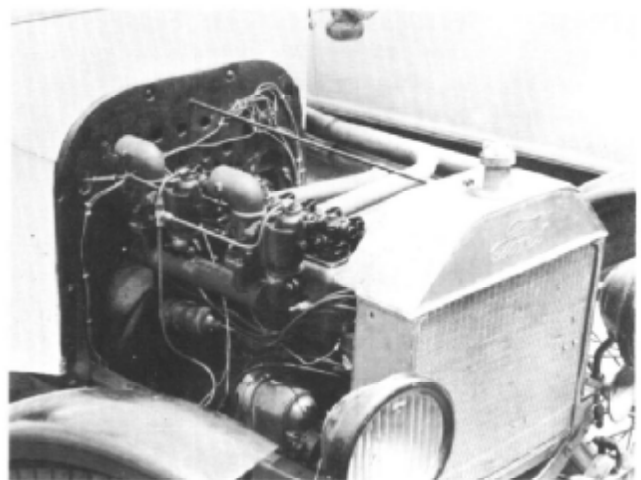
But there is nothing that goes like the overheads, and it is surprising how many have survived the years. Pictured here are a few of these engines.



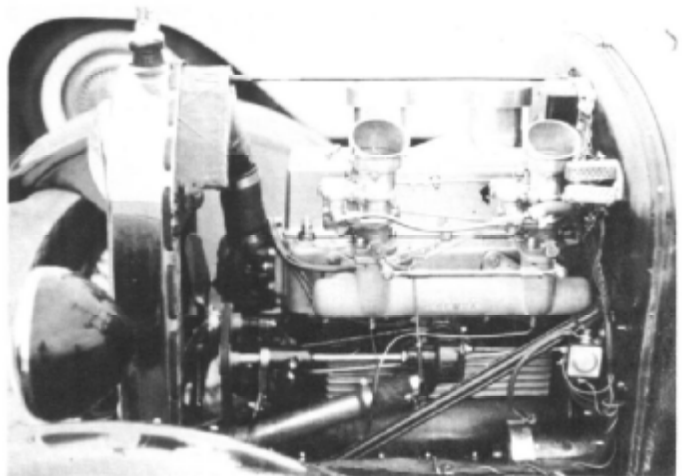
Owned by Jud Palmer, this channeled (cut down) '15 touring features a Rajo head and dual carburetion. Notice the dual ignition, too, with a magneto feeding the plugs on the exhaust side and a distributor-coil system feeding those on the intake side.



Rare, but still to be seen, is this "F" head Rajo. The exhaust valves are in the block (actually the standard Ford exhaust valves and manifold were used) while the intakes are in the head. Quite a few of these were sold because it was possible to install the head without cutting the firewall away as was necessary with the full overhead setups.



"GEMSA". You won't find these in the old catalogs because they were made in Los Angeles within the past few years. Made mainly for Model A-B-C Fords, only twelve were made for the Model T. This 1926 touring, owned by Doc Pruden (who lists his occupation as a "tooth carpenter") features dual Stromberg "97 carburetors, and a huge exhaust system on the other side (pictured elsewhere in this article).



Cars entering the contest seem to run from the sublime to the ridiculous. From elaborate speedsters to last-minute assemblies of parts laying around the yard. In years past, some of the cars were a bit of a hazard-one time there was a winner whose steering column consisted of a piece of water pipe which ran from the front steering gear, through a knot-hole in the dash, to the steering wheel. A laugh at the time, it could have been dangerous. Since the cars must be safe on the streets, some of the old daring has gone. But, not all of it has.

An example of one of these efforts is shown here. You can almost drool over the collection of 'early parts used on this car. The frame still has the cast body brackets at the rear, making it one of the very first. The engine sports a Rajo head. Note the tire pump used to pressure the gas tank. And check that seat!

Going a step (at least) further, we have what appears to be a loll-12 Torpedo in the restoration stages. Notice the new wood, the new radiator and the apparently-stock engine (and a late one, too).

This is Doc Pruden s '26 touring, the car that took the fastest time of the day trophy. Those huge exhaust pipes, dumping into the even larger tail pipe, made quite a noise! Early in the day, after Doc had run up the hill in something over ten seconds, and other cars were doing a little better, we asked him what he was going to do. "Why nothing, except push the throttle a little further, he said.



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