

## Do you know any "old" Shade Tree Mechanics?

By Bob Kocher

I'm sure most of you have heard the term Shade Tree Mechanic. I want to be the first to let you know I was one, but it was a long time ago, hence old! From time to time I was also called a gear-head, a redneck grease monkey, and pump jockey, plus a few other choice names. I used to love it when a pump jockey was asked if he was ever going to amount to anything and would answer that he was in training to be a "Petroleum Transfer Engineer."

Most of the terms meant I loved and worked on cars a lot; however, Shade Tree Mechanic meant what it sounds like. Where I grew up we didn't have driveway and our garages were small and dark (no electric) with dirt floors. So I guess being a Shade Tree Mechanic was born out of necessity.

So I loved working on cars--both the ones I owned and those of friends. We needed somewhere to work on them and a nice tree was always being hunted. And quite often the job was an engine change. The goal was to stay out of the direct sunlight, and the shade of a tree made it a nice place to work. For engine changing I would borrow a chain hoist and throw it over a tree limb, take the car's hood off, and pull the engine. Yes, I was a real Shade Tree Mechanic.

The other day some one sent me a link to a German video about how to pull an engine out of a car. It's so funny it made me remember pulling engines as a kid, so I was explaining the term of Shade Tree Mechanic to my son. (Link to video is at end of this story)

Most Shade Tree Mechanics also spent time in junkyards looking for used car parts and good running engines. These were sometimes known as Two-legged Junkyard Dogs.

My love for cars and engines started at an early age with a Whizzer motorbike when I was delivering newspapers. By the time I was 15 years old, I had owned two Whizzer motorbikes and had disassembled them completely and learned what made them tick. At an early age I learned my blood was really just 10W40 oil.

Next, still 15, I took \$75.00 from my paper route savings along with my Whizzer and make a trade at a local Chevy dealer for a 1936 Ford flathead 5 window coupe with a rumble seat. Unable to drive legally, I spent the next year taking the Ford coupe apart bolt by bolt. Wow, what an education on what makes cars and parts work. Three months before I become of age to get a license, I bought a showroom-like 1948 flathead Ford convertible.

While still taking care of an early morning paper route, at age 13 I also went to work at a local auto body shop after school and during the summer months. It was while working at the body shop I learned to take the car bodies apart and learned to paint them.

On the Saturday that I was sixteen, I applied for driving permit at 9:00 am and at 10:00 took my driving test for a license. The next part was the best. Six days after receiving a license to drive, I loaded up my ragtop with my toolbox in the trunk and the boy who lived across the street and took off for a fun driving trip. It was about 1500 miles from home to Florida, quite a drive for a sixteen year old.

Shortly after I crossed the Florida border, the engine blew up and I had to have the car towed to a junkyard. I talked the junkyard owner into using his wrecker, bought a used flathead engine, changed the motor, and was back on the road the next day. Did I mention I changed that engine under a tree?



Having bought, sold, tore apart, wrecked, repaired, raced, and driven close to a million vehicles, I guess I'm qualified as an Automotive Expert! I've worked in all fifty United States, most of Canada, much of Europe, and Central America. These days I am a freelance automotive writer and new car test driver. Yes, my blood is still oil.

*Link to how to remove an engine. Pretty easy if you have the right tools and know what you are doing...*

<http://bientijd.com/mediaplayer/?itemid=33478>