

## MODERN GASKETS FOR VINTAGE ENGINES Makes Them Better Than New

It's true with all of the really neat vintage engines ever made, there's quite a selection of alternative powerplants available to drop under the hood of a classic truck. When it comes to deciding on which one, the first consideration should be whether or not rebuild parts are available. The coolest looking engine in the world is only good as a boat anchor if you can't find the internal bits essential to make it run.

Because anything can happen to an engine during the course of a truck's life, such as blowing up beyond repair, one can't assume they have the original engine. The engine shown in this '53 Ford F-100 is most likely the 215-inch OHV six-cylinder that was introduced in 1952, and then superseded in 1954 with a 223-inch version (after the head is removed and the bore is measured it will be confirmed). Right off the bat, knowing the 215 was only in production for two years didn't seem very encouraging. Having owned a '56 223 during the '80s with parts already becoming scarce, I was apprehensive. It was a no-brainer checking with the zit-faced kid at the local national auto parts chain would lead to a dead end. What I needed was to locate a company that specialized in hard to find obsolete parts. The search led to Egge Machine in Santa Fe Springs, California. I gave them a call and was told they had an overhaul gasket set for the 215-inch Ford six in stock. It was only a day after I ordered the gasket set from Egge that it arrived. The last thing I thought would be showing up was a bright new box full of fresh gaskets. It never occurred to me the gasket set would be anything other than a crusty old box containing brittle N.O.S. gaskets punched out over 50 years ago.

The gasket sets sold by Egge Machine are manufactured by Best Gaskets of Whittier, California, only a few miles down the road from Egge. The company founded by Jack Best has been in business for over 60 years, and does not sell direct to the public. In the '80s, Best Gaskets focused on gaskets for the vintage market. In

1996 the company was sold to Craig Weaver and Armin Brown where the emphasis was placed on producing the highest quality available. As a component of quality, Best Gaskets is continually developing new sealing solutions to old problems inherent to dated technology. A good example is their answer to the asbestos-free rear main seal gasket manufacturers have been producing since the early '90s. In place of a rope-type configuration Best has developed rubber replacement seals that ease installation and eliminate annoying rear main seal leaks.

It's not likely CCT readers will be seeing a 215-inch, Ford-powered project truck anytime soon. Originally when I bought the '53 the 215 was going to go for scrap. Then a closer inspection revealed the engine had been factory rebuilt, and looked like it was still a good runner. The odds are good that by the time this story hits the stands, I've gone through the little six-banger and sold it to offset the cost of building the '53. **CCT**

