

# The Summertime Blues

## Plan ahead to avoid costly repairs

By Judith Greer

For The Pittsburgh Press

**A**LTHOUGH winter driving demands the most from a car, hot weather makes its own special demands. Proper and timely car maintenance will save money in the long run by preventing costly repairs caused by prolonged neglect.

Car care in the spring involves three major steps: repairing problems caused by winter driving; preparing for warm weather driving; and finding a good automobile technician to do complicated repairs.

The most common breakdown problem in the summer is overheating.

To avoid overheating, drain and flush the entire system to fight rust and corrosion; check hoses for leaks and replace clogged, collapsed or cracked hoses; examine clamps for tightness; check belt tension and coolant level; hose off the radiator to remove dirt and bugs; and check the pressure cap.

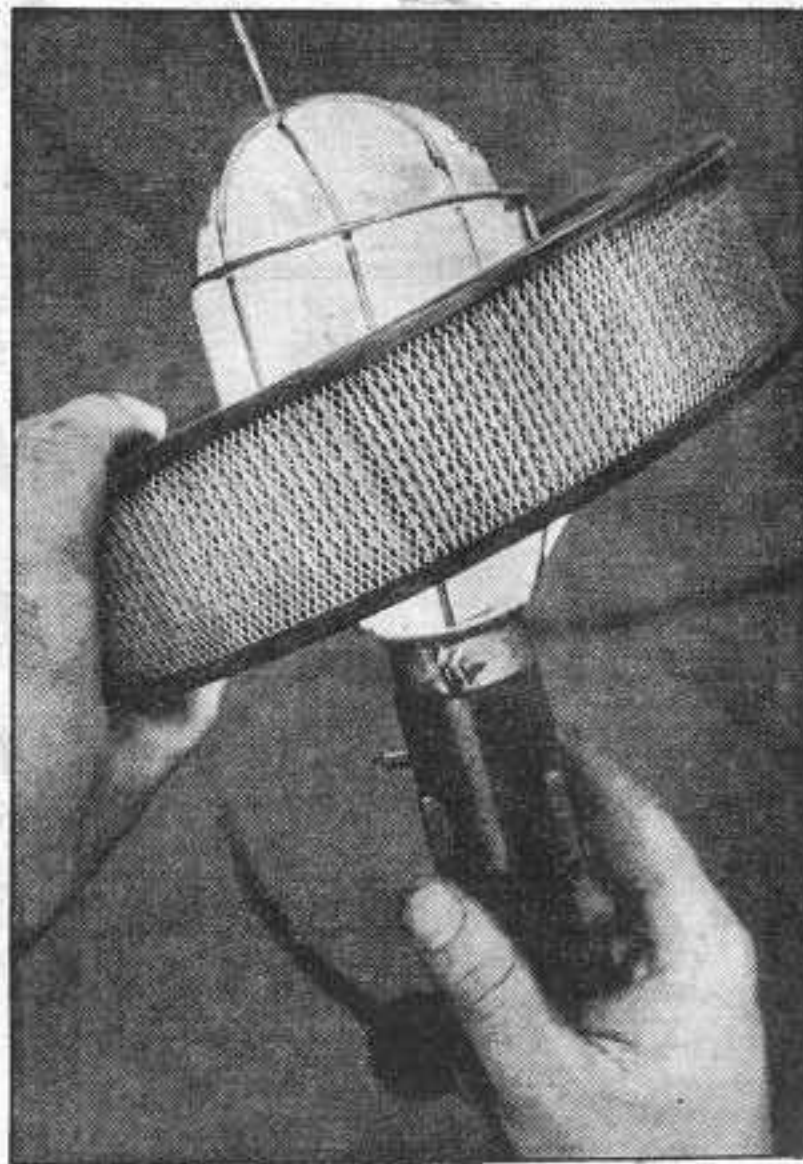
Cars often overheat because of faulty fan belts and radiator hoses, said Joe Pascarella, mechanic at Cooper's Tire in Cheswick.

He said that hot water running through the hoses causes the rubber to soften. Should the hose break, hot water explodes all over the engine.

"I have seen quite a few distributor caps crack under the pressure."

Charlie Ritter, manager of Standard Auto Parts in Washington, said belts and hoses should be changed every three years. Good belts cost \$5 and hoses \$8, he added.

Fan belts keep the alternator running. Without the alternator, the juice stops running into the battery. To check for proper tension, the belt should not give more than about a half inch when pressing the thumb



Pete Diana for The Pittsburgh Press

Hold a light inside an air cleaner to determine if light shines through; if not, buy a new filter.

"All of these items are covered... time wear, but see really checked by..."

"If you don't use good anti-freeze and keep the system flushed out, you can clog the heater/cooler system and do damage to the radiator, which costs about \$150."

— Charlie Ritter

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