

Tool Time With Chuck

by Chuck Wills

I do know a thing or two about tools... just ask me!

I figure that there are few people as qualified as I am to write a new column about tools. You see, I've got a garage full of 'em. Come over and take a look sometime, they're all out there in boxes, drawers and scattered across my workbench. You'll be able to identify the workbench by the imposing mound of half-finished projects looming above the shelving. In recent years, I've even talked Teresa Turbo into letting me have air tools. You can tear up a lot of stuff with air tool. Ask me how I know sometime.

I'm qualified to write about tools not just by the virtue of owning a bunch, but by the fact that I've misused tools for over 20 years and have survived to talk about it, and I've stayed pretty much intact! At the tender age of six, I decided that my wind-up car would probably work better if I took it apart. You can probably guess how the story ended. I went on to scam tools out of my Dad's toolbox for the next decade and "repair" everything from RC cars to bicycles. My motto is "If it ain't broke, take it apart and find out why".

One of my fondest memories of tool abuse goes back to when I was the tender age of 12 and had a five horsepower go-kart that my parents regretted buying me. The dialog went like this:

"Son, that's a screw driver, don't use it like a chisel!"

"Sorry Dad, I broke the chisel on that iron thing, and I still have to get this bolt off."

"A chisel is not the way to remove a bolt! Why didn't you use a wrench?!?"

"Well, Dad, I lost the wrench somewhere, and then I rounded the head off this darned bolt with a pair of pliers, so I have to chisel it off."

Is it any wonder Dad would never let me have a cutting torch?

About ten years later, I successfully disassembled an entire Porsche 914 with a flat blade screwdriver, a cheap socket set from China, a #5 hammer and a set of wrenches from India. Now I'm not saying it ever ran again, but that sucker did come apart!

Those of you that were at the club holiday party might remember that Rick presented me with a gift of gear wrenches. If you haven't seen a gear wrench before, it's about the neatest thing you can imagine. It looks like a box-end wrench, but it has a ratchet gizmo inside that lets you tighten the bajeesus out of about anything you can fit it on. Instead of the normal routine of taking the wrench on and off of a bolt while you tighten it, the gear wrench stays on the bolt and ratchets just like a socket wrench. Think of a gear wrench as a very low profile socket wrench that fits places that a normal ratchet never could.

Now, a word of warning. A gear wrench is a fine piece of precision machinery. You'd better not beat on it with a hammer if the bolt is rusted tight. Leave the hammer beating to a regular wrench or maybe a big breaker bar. This tool requires finesse to take advantage of its speed and agility.



Pros: Speed, agility, speed, low profile for small spaces, makes really cool "klik klik" sound when you turn the gears.

Cons: Can't beat on it much with a hammer without damage, still falls directly under the middle of the car when I drop it, chrome finish shows my greasy fingerprints.

On the Chuck's Tool Approval Scale, gear wrenches get a score of 10! Now go out and buy a set!

Membership Profile

Meet The Booes

Rick and Susie are an energetic, fun couple who live outside of Greencastle and drive a 1995 black Miata. In 1999, they were out looking at cars (particularly at Corvettes) when they saw and absolutely fell in love with this Miata. (Good choice, Rick and Susie!!)

Rick is an automotive machine tool technician and is in the Air National Guard based in Terre Haute and Susie is a dental assistant. They have two children: their son is at the Naval Air Force Academy and their daughter is a junior in high school.

Their favorite Miata adventure was a trip they took through northern Illinois on their way to Minnesota. They chose the "road less travelled" and took two-lane and back roads all the way there. Part of what made the trip so special was that the weather was absolutely perfect for having the top down on the car. Also of note was that they came across two car shows on the way, in Galena, Illinois.

Rick and Susie are fun-car enthusiasts, and in addition to their Miata, also drive a PT Cruiser, a truck, and a Jeep Wrangler. The PT Cruiser has a great vanity tag "PT SUZER"!

Rick and Susie have volunteered to be Rally Masters (along with the Brummetts) for the August "Late Summer Mardi Gras" Rally.



Rick and Susie Booe bundled up and joined other members on the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg tour.