



Service Manual

Leather Lubricants

by Charles Hendrickson

In lectures and conversations, the very helpful Harvey Piltingsrud has alluded to leather lubricants but has refused to comment on them because no data was available to substantiate or deflate the claims. Further research is needed.

One of the "old-time" servicemen in this area always carried several jars of Vaseline Petroleum Jelly and applied it to all thin pneumatic pouch leather. Chests from the 1920s showed very dark brown pouch leather (like Chrysler ads: With "Rich Corinthian Leather") that was greasy and pliable to the touch and very flexible. Even after 50 years there was no hint of dryness to the leather, though it probably was not as limp as when newly installed. The feel of the leather was not wet-grease, but a very old hard grease — not porous or weak. The color could be a combination of oxidation and dirt but in no way implied corrosion or decay. One was impressed at how fresh and pliable the leather felt — perhaps even a thicker feel than when new. The leather had kept its bulk and had not thinned out. Chests worked well and gave no hint of needing releathering. The Vaseline-treated leather seemed to "breathe" less than untreated leather.

All of this lacks scientific backing and is passed along for comment by others.