Removing Scratches and Tool Marks.

The Detroit Model #42 pictured had some deep scratches on the tank (see first picture). Many people try to remove scratches with some heavy buffing. This will work fine if the scratches are not too deep. If the scratches are deep, as in the model #42, the buffing would remove material from the bottom of the scratch as well as the surface of the tank. This has a tendency of rounding the edges of the scratch and leaving the surface uneven.

To remove the scratches on this torch I first wet sanded it with 400 grit sandpaper. To wet sand, just dip the sand paper in water. The water acts as a lubricant. When the scratches had just about disappeared, I switched to the finer 600 grade. The higher the number, the finer the grit. The 400 & 600 grit paper are typically used to wet sand primer on cars just prior to the color coats. The wet sanding removes all the small lines, runs, bumps, and marks and leaves the finish totally smooth. In the case of wet sanding blow torch tanks, the idea is to lower the surface of the tank down to the deepest level of the scratches. To do this, concentrate on the area of the scratches but do not work exclusively on that immediate area. Sanding should be done in a circular motion (see second picture) and over a broad area. You do not want to sand the bottom of the scratch, you want to sand down the surface above the scratch. The circular motion keeps you from moving the sand paper in the same direction as the scratch and making it deeper. It's always a good idea to sand the entire tank. You may have to remove more material in the area of the scratches, but sanding the entire tank will produce more uniform results.

Some people may want to sand the tank whether or not it has scratches. The sanding will remove any imperfections in the tank. There could be subtle lines from when it was formed, tiny dings, or small bumps. You will see them as soon as you start sanding. They will appear as high and low spots. All these minor imperfections will be removed in the sanding process. Just as wet sanding cars, prior to painting, provides a smooth finish, wet sanding torches prior to buffing also produces a very even and smooth finish. Buffing easily removes the swirls left by finish sanding with 600 grit paper and produces a very high luster finish (see third picture). I prefer to sand only when there is damage, but it's just a matter of taste.

This same process can be used to remove tool marks. The tool marks will probably be deeper than any scratches you might find on a tank. For this you may want to start out by wet sanding with 320 grit paper. The process is the same as above, use a circular motion and move to the 400 and 600 grades to finish. Usually with tool marks there is a raised area as well as an indentation. I find that just removing the raised area makes a significant difference.

Consider using this same process for painting the wooden handles of some torches. The process can be used in the initial stripping and cleaning phase as well as between coats to eliminate irregularities such as runs, bubbles, and pits. Also, and this once happened to me, marks left by a fly that landed on my wet paint.

If you are going to do a lot of sanding, it's a good idea to wear thin rubber household gloves to protect your hands.


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