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Subj: MORGAN STEERING

Many of you have heard me complain about +4 steering. After driving a 4/4 for years I think +4 steering is terrible. However, I find few +4 and +8 owners with the old worm and peg steering agreeing with me. Anyway, I didn't like the steering and I am going to fix it so my +4 steers better.

Fred Sisson in his book "Morgan Garage" explains how a "Gemmer Steering Box" may be installed. The "Gemmer" box is made in France and the Morgan Factory is now and has been using it since about 1975 or so. I was able to buy a "Gemmer Box" from John Worrall (Heart of England) for $800 delivered to my door. I could have ordered it from the Morgan Factory for a little less but I knew John would send me the right stuff (not so sure about the Morgan Factory Spares Team).

Installing the Gemmer Box is easy. There is a slight alteration to the inside valence that is done with a 5 lb hammer. Kind of brutal, hitting your Morgan with a sledge hammer. With that, just bolt it in. I won't go too far into the details of making the rest of the steering work, other than I used a TR8 upper shaft, a XJ6 mid-shaft and a MGB U-joint. Rusty at British Auto Center (here in West Seattle) helped me engineer the connections. This cost me $150. You might think this is pricey but Rusty spent some time helping me with the details. Now that I have the design, others could save on this by shopping.

KINGPINS AND BUSHINGS

In as much as I have it all apart, new kingpins and bushings were in order. This is a standard machine shop job. The only change is I had the kingpins coated with a special process. They impregnate the steel with lubricant. It is kind of involved and I am not sure it will help. But for $15 per pin it was worth a try. Gary VanHook put me on to that one.

The one thing I wanted to get rid of was the oiler. I don't like the oil and grease dripping all over the place. The other day I drove up Harry Sharp's driveway (he has a MGB and a couple of Triumphs). I had just hit the oiler as Harry lives just a few blocks away. So there I was - two big gobs of oil/grease right in the middle of Harry's nice clean drive. I now understand why he runs down to greet me before I can get to the white cement. Leo Lee e-mailed me and asked if I had seen the ad for Chrome King Pins in "Miscellany". I had not. I looked up the ad and there it was. A grease cup. Off I went looking for grease cups. As a kid I remember grease cups all over the place. Anywhere a bearing was there was a grease cup. Well, nobody knew what I was talking about until I got to McGuire Bearing Co. They have a product called "Petromatic". It comes in two sizes. The small one will fit right on top of the King Pin with plenty of clearance. It screws into the hole that the oiler pipe fitted in to. It has a zerk fitting at the base. You pump grease into the cup above and a spring (you have a choice of 3 tensions) pushes the grease down the king pin and keeps it greased. The cup is clear so you can see if there is enough grease or not. I am using "Redline" synthetic wheel bearing grease. Maybe white lithium grease would be better (don't know). I am also going to put the "Petromatic" on the axle stub grease fitting (not sure if it will stand the shock of the road plus not interfere with the shock absorber).

Now you may say "Hey Button, your Morgan is leaking oil out of the engine, transmission and rear end; what about that?" All I can say is that I am working on it. These "Petromatic" grease cups cost $15 each. I have tested this in my shop by putting the king pin upright in a vice, putting the "Petromatic" in the top and watching to see how much grease comes out of the little holes on the king pin. It looks like it will work. I will tell you in a year or so.

Now after all this; Button's R&D Department asked himself "how can I reduce the friction at the brass plate under the main spring"? Back to McGuire Bearing. They found a "Needle Thrust Bearing" that would fit under the brass plate and thus cut the friction when turning. The needle bearing is 1/8" thick. Will it take the beating? I don't know. Tell you later.

MY FIRST DRIVE

It works! There is no "DREADED MORGAN WHEEL WOBBLE". The steering at speed is precise with none of the hitches and glitches of the old system. However, slow speed maneuvering still takes a bit of grunt that I was hoping to eliminate. It still steers like a +4. It just won't drive like a 4/4. I guess the Triumph engine extra weight is doing its thing.

Was it worth a $1,000? Wellllllllllll!! Would I do it again knowing what I do now? Wellllll!!!! I am happy with the new steering. But it is expensive. Unless my existing steering box was worn out beyond reasonable repair I would not spend the money. It is better but not $1,000 better.

I will have to tell you later how the "Petromatic" grease cups work. Look for a report in a year or two.

Button