Steering Idler Box

Almost all Roadsters need a rebuilt idler box. This is the unit opposite the steering box on the passenger side of left hand drive cars. Same location for the right hand drive, but on the opposite side!

The idler box is made up of a housing, a shaft and two bushings. The early style idlers had a flat top surface with a large flat rubber cap that was supposed to keep grit, grime, and moisture out.

Unfortunately, the design was not very good and many of these early caps have gone by the wayside and fallen off or were never replaced when they rotted away. The end result is that the shaft rusts and eats away at the bushings; this creates a lot of play and wear where there should be none.

Replacing the bushings is only viable when the shaft surface is not pitted and corroded. The bushings will not last once the coarse shaft surface starts wearing away at the newly installed bushings.

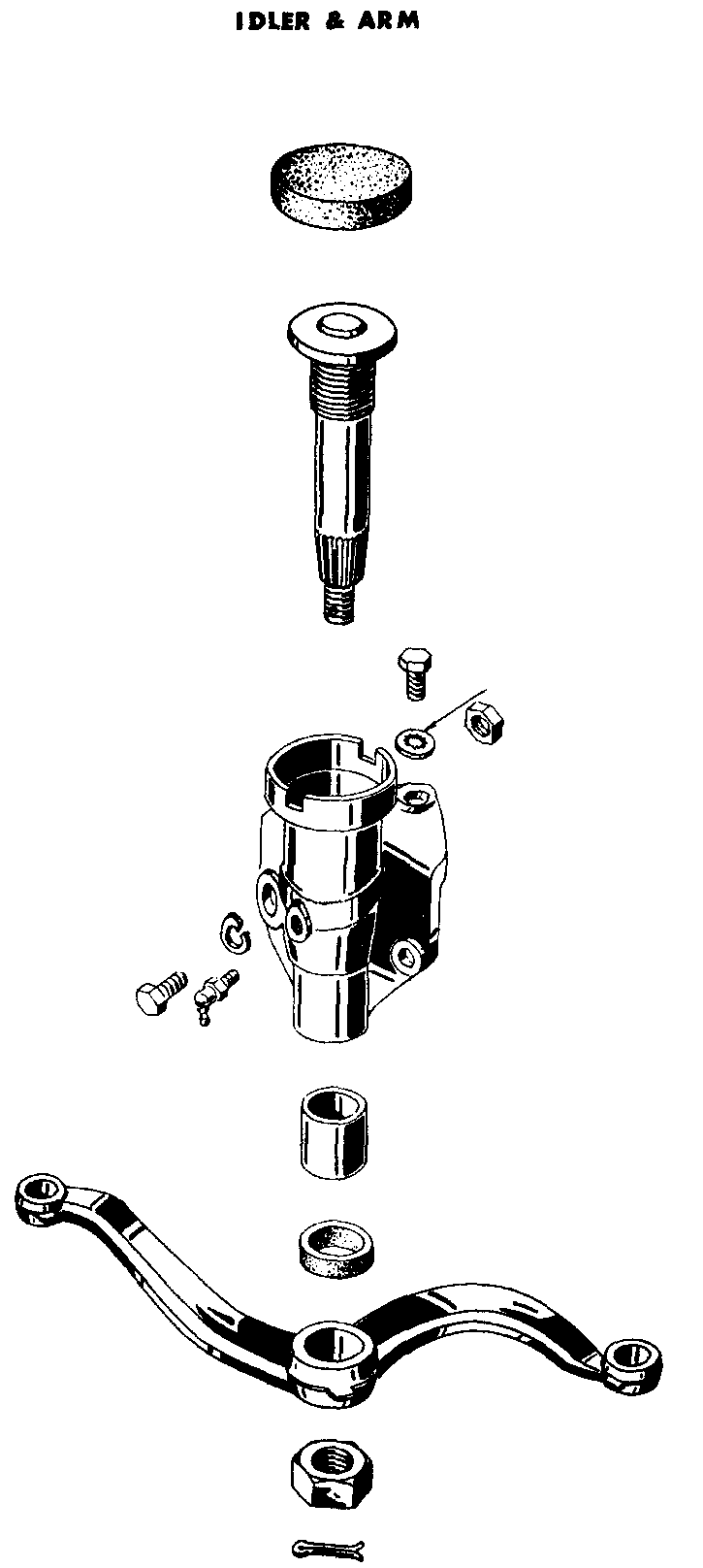
One quick way to see if your idler assembly is worn is to take the flat cap off, wipe away the grease, and have someone grab the steering wheel and move it back and forth; there should be no side movement at the top or bottom (where the pitman arm is connected). Movement at the top means the threaded bushing is worn; lower movement means that the brass bushing is worn.

The normal wear pattern for a Roadster suspension is as follows. The weakest area seems to be the upper A-arm bushings and shafts. Once these wear (lack of grease) the lower ball joints develop slop. Once both these areas are worn, the play works its way to the idler box. Symptoms of this wear are shuddering of the front wheels when driving on rough roads or crossing railway tracks.

You can simply replace the upper and lower idler bushings and an idler rubber cap if the idler shaft surface is OK; if not, you need a complete, rebuilt idler box.

The best remedy for suspension woes is to grease the front end every 1000 miles after replacing all worn parts. Check all rubber boots on ball joints, tie rods, and seals on upper and lower A-arms. The metal on metal system used is good only if there is grease to lubricate it all.

The cost of the parts and of any labor add up. ***Twenty minutes a month greasing can save you lots of expensive repairs!***



Save the entire front end by greasing

The problems with your front end don't end with the idler box. Here are some other front end parts which wear rapidly without grease:

- TIE ROD ASSEMBLIES
- BALL JOINTS
- CROSS ROD ASSEMBLIES
- UPPER A-ARM KIT
- LOWER A-ARM KIT

SUMMARY: The cost of parts can mount up; the cost of labor can be even more (although you can reduce this by doing it yourself if you have the time and the skill). The cost and effort of greasing is negligible!

Return to Technical Information

©1996-2004, Sports Imports. All Rights Reserved. Do not duplicate or redistribute in any form.