

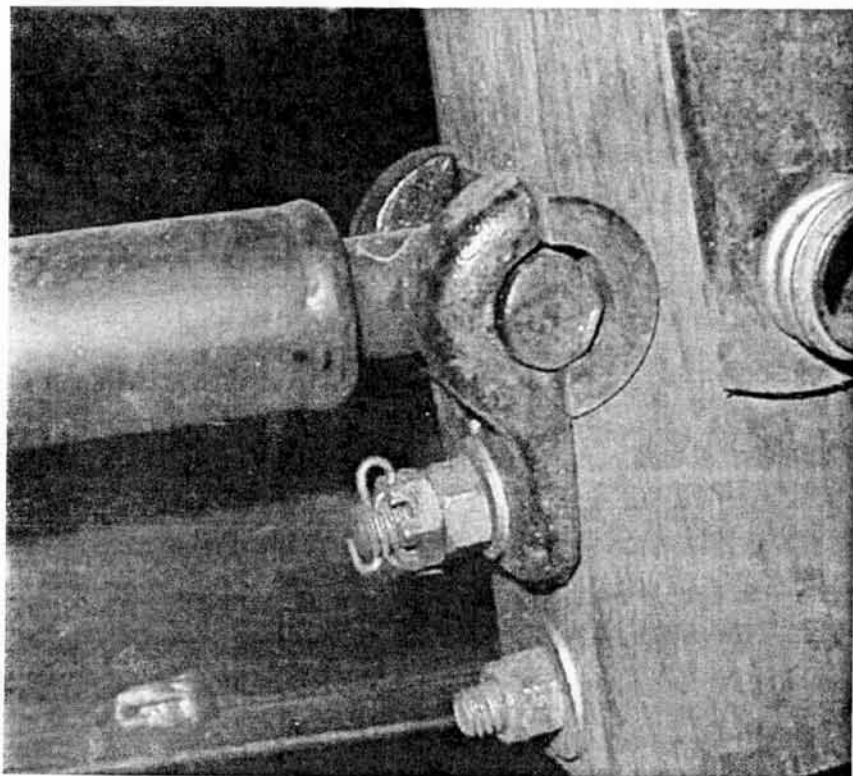
Listen to Your Motor Car

by Jim & Pat Spicer

What was that bang?

Pay attention—your speeder may be telling you something. We were cruising along with three other speeders on a work party when there was a large BANG. I turned to my wife, and as she looked at me, we both said, “What was that?” We decided it must have been something on the rail and continued on with everything apparently OK. Wrong! Mistake number one: we should have found a safe place, put out a flag, and stopped for an inspection. At the top of the hill when we stopped for a break, I noticed that the brake lever had a strange pumping motion, like the wheels were suddenly out of round. However it stopped and held in the first notch. We were standing around talking when I noticed that part of the brake rigging was gone. I only had brakes on one side. (This particular problem only affects Fairmont “A” cars. Don’t stop reading, however; the next one could affect you.)

I had recently changed the brake shoes and liners, when I had reassembled the brakes I couldn’t remember which way the brake hook that holds the toggle arm was placed. In the Fairmont manual, the hook was shown placed fingers down, and I reassembled mine that way. The problem was, that after a while the toggle arm seated into the wood, allowing the hook to become loose. This allowed the toggle arm to fall out and hit the ground, sticking into the ballast and wrenching the arm off the car. The solution to this one is to place the hook fingers up. This will prevent the arm from falling off. You should also inspect your brake rigging often.

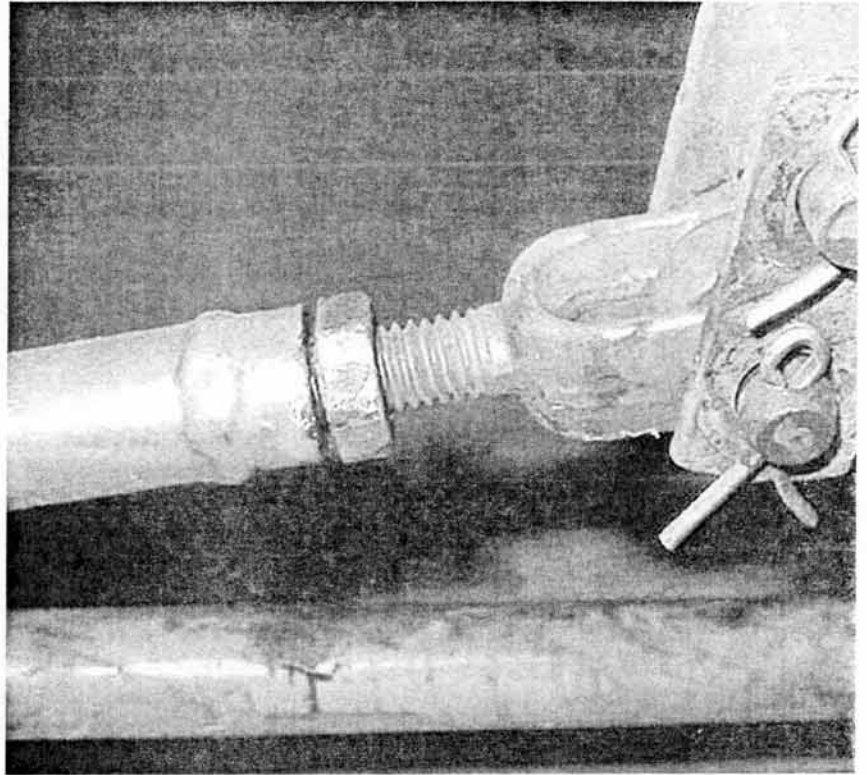


"Fingers" up is better.

Why is that jamb nut loose?

The next problem was soon to appear. I noticed that the brake lever developed this strange pumping motion. Normally the brake lever would move only slightly as we came to a stop. Suddenly as the car approached a stop, the lever was moving more than an inch with each wheel revolution. The car still held in the first notch, but something was wrong. As soon as we stopped I inspected the brake rigging; everything seemed OK except one jamb nut was loose on the toggle arm. I tightened the nut and proceeded on. At the next stop the brake still

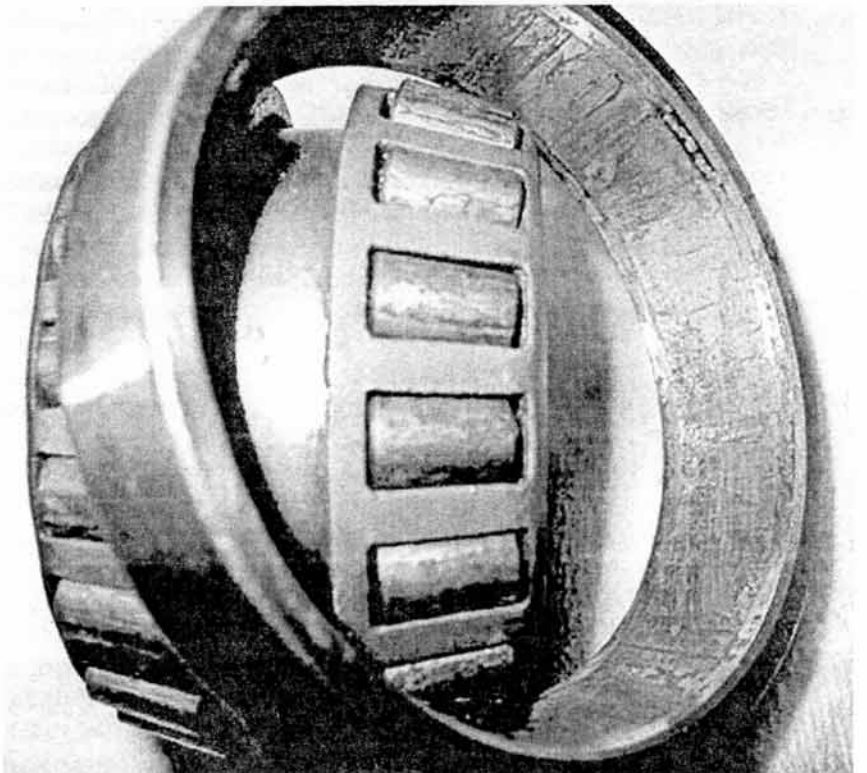
felt strange. I once again inspected the rigging; the jam nut was loose again. The problem: the threads were worn on the adjuster and in the toggle arm, allowing the threads to jump whenever the brakes were applied hard. Once again I only had brakes on one side. The toggle arm and eye bolt or yoke had to be replaced. Before I encountered this problem, I had done inspections for the meet coordinator. On two occasions I had found loose jam nuts. Not being aware of the potential danger, I told the operators to tighten the nuts and forgot about it. Now I wonder if the nuts became loose again at the next stop.



Loose jamb nut on toggle arm.

Now What?

You just had a great day. The overnight stop is 200 yards ahead, and you have just enough speed to coast up to the car ahead of you. You push in the clutch, kick it out of gear and turn off the engine. RRRrrrr, RRrrr, Rrr, rr. What is that noise? Well that noise is caused by a Fairmont design problem. Fairmont didn't put any seals in the axle bearings. The only way to keep water out of the bearings is to keep them well greased. Your problem probably started before you got your car. Water was allowed to get in the bearing and start rust. The rust and grease have formed a grinding compound, and it has been wearing away the bearings. Now it has worn them to the point that they have a series of little ridges and valleys. As the rollers go over the ridges, they create the roaring sound. Now what? Well, if you were paying attention, you caught it in time. Grease the axle bearings and continue your trip. When you get home replace the noisy bearing. However, if you ignore the noise it will become worse at an accelerated rate until eventually you will have a bearing failure. (continued inside back cover)



Axle bearing that has been wet. It is now rusty, but has not been run. If run, it will soon develop ridges, become noisy and eventually fail.