

Steering Boxes are one of those seldom seen but yet quite important items that should be checked after all these 40-50 years: inspection, lubrication and adjustment being the main areas of concern. You can follow your shop manual for recommended checking, adjustment and overhaul (pretty clear instructions), and you can use the following as additional tips:

The plug on the driver's side of the trunk bottom allows access to the adjustment. This should be done only after checking other areas of the steering for play and after observing the movement of the pitman shaft in the bushing while you barely rotate the steering shaft from under the car. Adjustment will take up some of the bushing wear but if noticeable movement between the shaft and the bushing is visible, the bushing should be replaced. This is particularly true if the adjusting screw is disappearing into the locknut. You can also use the manual to check the shaft bearing adjustment but that adjustment is usually pretty close if the bushing is not worn out. A disappearing adjuster screw can be caused by a badly worn ball nut and sector gear but the bushing is normally the culprit.

To adjust, loosen the locknut at least two turns while holding the slotted screw so you can evaluate the turns needed to adjust. Make sure the steering box is in the straight ahead position (equal turns from left to right) irregardless of the steering wheel center which may have been altered. Turn the screw back and forth to make sure the threads are not binding and then gently tighten until resistance is felt. Rotate the steering wheel back and forth a couple of times and re-center. Then gently tighten the screw again and tighten the locknut.

The shop manual lists a special steering lubricant but I have always felt comfortable using a light chassis lube pumped in to the box through the provided plug. You can use a grease gun with a funnel or hose attachment, or you can borrow my special adapters with fittings. Carefully fill the box completely full.

If your steering box needs a bushing, the box needs to be removed and disassembled. Different years require minor variations on removing the box. You will need an air hammer with a fork or similar tool to separate the pitman arm from the center link bushing. You will also need access to two special tools once the box is out: a puller to remove the pitman arm from the pitman shaft which is usually **very tight**, and a press with adapters for the pitman shaft bushing since it is a thin wall type (hammers don't work well in this application). The bushing CCP sells is slightly oversize when installed and makes up for a worn shaft which is common. You may have to hone the bushing if your shaft is like new. The box disassembly, assembly and adjustment are covered in the manual. When you check the shaft bearings and races, you may find good bearings and a bad lower race. This causes lumpy steering and needs to be corrected. The races and balls are available but the upper and lower races are interchangeable and you could salvage a good upper race from a junk box. Apparently the lower bearing frets on the race from road shock – this can be really bad if you use a nylon pitman arm bushing. Also, water can enter the upper seal and settle in the lower race causing pitting. Replace the two seals and the gasket which are available, adjust the bearings and the sector, Be sure to use sealer on the large lock nut as noted in the manual, fill with lubricant and you are ready for smooth steering with a concourse clean box.