

Ask Ronny

by Ronny Shaver @ Ronny's Garage

Answering Your Questions About Classic Car Care Service And Restoration

Published February 20, 2012

Common Silver Spirit – Spur, Bentley 8 and Mulsanne Issues

by Ronny Shaver

The following are common problems and causes found on cars from 1981 through 1998.

Brake problems:

1. Brake pressure warning. Common problems are low sphere pressure, low fluid level. Spheres are not re-buildable and must be replaced. Normal for lights to come on after car sits. If the lights go out immediately, then the sphere diaphragm is most likely burst. If the lights take a long time to go out, then the gas pressure is very low. A good test is to let the car run 2 minutes, then turn car off, immediately turn the ignition back on then pump the brakes until the lights come back on. With full pressure spheres, it should take at least 20 to 30 pumps for the lights to come on.
2. Leak. Common brake system leaks are brake pump housings, caliper seals, hoses and rear struts.

Suspension problems:

1. Harsh ride in rear. The most common cause is gas spring failure. The rear struts have spheres on top that provide the soft ride, when they fail, the car will bounce severely, especially when exiting a driveway onto the street.
2. Clunking and noises. Common causes for clunking in front suspension is worn bushings, shock grommets, shock ball joints. Two weak points of the front suspension are the compliance mounts and camber bearings. They both affect alignment settings. When compliance mounts fail, the car will make a clunking noise in the front while braking and also tend to make the car pull one way or another while driving. When camber bearings fail, the front wheels will slant inward at the top and cause excessive tire wear. They can also make a slight "honking" noise over speed bumps and such.
3. Leaks. The most common leak in the rear suspension is at the struts. Early struts can be rebuilt but later ones must be replaced. There is also a small plastic bleed line connecting the strut to the body that will seep.

Steering problems:

1. Leaks. Common leaks are steering rack, cooler hoses and high pressure hose. Steering racks can be rebuilt.

Engine problems:

1. Leaks. The most common engine leaks are the front engine cover and valve cover gaskets.
2. Performance. Common causes of poor performance are faulty spark plug wires and fuel injectors. A very common fault is when the car is cold, it starts very easily and runs great, but when the car is warm, after sitting a short while, it starts only after cranking a long time, then runs rough for a little while. Nine times out of ten the fuel accumulator is at fault.
3. Noises. The most common noises are lifters and pistons. Lifters will normally make a slight tapping noise at start-up, but when they make noise after running awhile, then they usually need replacement. Brake pumps can also make the same noise. Another similar noise can occur if the car has been overheated, pistons can crack and shrink below specification making a louder tapping noise, especially under load.

Transmission problems:

1. Leaks. Common causes of leaks are pan gaskets and side seals. Side seals are usually at fault if the car leaks only after sitting a long time.

Cooling system problems:

1. Leaks. Common causes of leaks are water pumps and hoses.

2. Overheating. Common causes are thermostats and radiators. Early brass radiators can be cleaned or re-cored. Later aluminum radiators must usually be replaced. Sometimes blown head gaskets will cause overheating.

Electrical:

1. Wipers and accessories. The most common reason for electrical problems is relays. Sometimes the wipers will stay on after they are switched off, or not work at all. This is almost always caused by the three control relays. Another wiper fault is when they do not return completely when turned off. There is an extension mechanism on top of the motor that usually binds due to lack of lubrication. A few drops of oil on this item occasionally will prevent this condition.

2. Windows. The most common cause for window problems is micro-switches. When replacing faulty switches, be sure to replace both to ensure proper operation. Another window fault is caused by the drive coupling and or gear. When these fail, one can hear the motor running but the window will not move. One more common window fault is slow operation, low voltage at the window is usually the fault and can be rectified with a wiring modification with additional relays installed in the door.

Thank you for the questions and keep them coming. Please send your questions to Ronny at ronnyshaver@ronnysgarage.com.

Happy Motoring!
Ronny