

Wheels: An e-mail from Don says, “Recently, we had to get the front end realigned on our Grand Marquis (1999, 40,000 miles) after a brake inspection. This is the second time this garage has aligned this car’s front end in less than six months. They said a tie rod was loose, which necessitated the alignment. My question was why was the tie rod loose with an alignment last in August? I have always had trouble getting alignments. The most annoying part of it is the technicians cannot seem to get the steering wheel straight. I know that the front end geometry is a very complicated business, but with the equipment available these days, most of the guess work should be out of the job. Any advise on how to get a good front end alignment?”

Halderman: Any worn parts in the front suspension and/or the steering system can cause the front wheels to be out-of-alignment. Therefore, shops carefully inspect these parts for wear before doing an alignment. Often, these parts are slightly worn and may not be bad enough to require replacement. Then, as the vehicle is driven, the part wears and eventually reaches the point that it is no longer within factory specifications. I can only guess that this was the situation. Another possible reason is a worn pitman arm, which is a pattern failure on this vehicle. Ask the shop to check for technical service bulletins (TSBs) regarding this condition because the information shows a replacement part that has been redesigned for longer life.

