

Wheels: An e-mail from Gary says, “I would like your thoughts and advice on the following: I have a 1993 Isuzu Trooper with 205,000 miles on it and it was in storage (outside for the better part of two years). I rarely started it so it basically just sat.

I finally decided to bring it back out of the mothballs so to speak. I turned the engine over just 3-5 times and the engine started, sputtered, and then quit. I tried again and it started right up, ran rough for a few minutes and cleared up.

Then I drove it the first time only on side streets at 25 mph max. twice. I took it out to get fresh gas (up to now been driving on 2-year old gas) and went no faster than 50 mph. At this time I noticed a sort of squirm or back and forth motion in the steering wheel (no more than about 1 or 2 inches). I attributed this condition to the possibility that the tires may have flat spots on them. But as I drive more and faster the problem seems to be worse and the squirm of the steering wheel is more. My thought is to have the wheels rebalanced and rotated. Do you think this will fix the problem?”

The latest thing I am noticing has me scratching my head. Sometimes when I start out turning to the left and to a lesser degree turning right, I feel this shuddering, which feels like it is coming out of the rear end. However, when I start out just driving straight ahead and not turning left or right, this condition does not occur. It seems to feel like something is rubbing as I turn as related to the pinion/planetary gear in the rear axle housing but I am just guessing.

So any ideas what this might be? It doesn't seem to be coming from the transmission. By the way, the Trooper is a 4 X 4 but I have not engaged the 4 X4 at all yet.”

Halderman: It appears that you did everything correctly to get the vehicle out of storage and running. The steering problem could be caused by several problems including:

1. A fault with one or more of the tires
2. A sticking brake on one or more wheel

Because you felt that the problem was in the rear, maybe one of the rear wheel drum brakes is dragging. This could easily be the cause as rust can form during storage and prevent the brake shoes from retracting when the brakes are released. This is a very common problem with front disc brakes. They can often not release due to rust and corrosion on the slides of the disc brake caliper.

You or a service technician can check if this is the cause by hoisting the vehicle and trying to rotate the wheels by hand with the wheels off the ground. If a wheel does not rotate, this indicates a fault with the wheel brake. If the wheel brakes are okay, have a service technician check the driveshaft U-joints for excessive rust or damage.

