

Wheels: Mike S. writes by e-mail: "In June or July, I took my wife's 2002 Jeep to a mechanic to have Freon added to the air conditioner. He also checked out why the jeep when parking or when it was almost not moving such as making a 90 degree turn to enter our garage, the power steering seemed to give out.

He said that the steering problem was in the gear box and that sometimes just a simple fluid flush would make a difference and stated that the radiator cooling fan also uses the same fluid as the gearbox.

After he added Freon and flushed the steering, he said the steering did not improve and it was safe to drive the car the way it was but if I wanted it repaired a new gear box would be about \$500.00.

I picked up the car at which time I noticed with the hood closed the motor sounded like it was racing even though the RPMs on the tach were the same. I said "This sure sounds very noisy and his reply was he noticed it as well and we determined that the noise occurred once the air kicked in so it must be the radiator fan."

We continued to drive the car putting off taking it for 2nd opinion to another mechanic as I work during the day. However, yesterday I took it to a Chrysler dealer and they tell me that it needs a cooling fan assembly at a tune of \$1,559 plus tax.

Is it possible to just put a regular electric fan on it, and if so, how much difficulty would there be since they are a lot cheaper?

If I get one from a salvage yard and find a mechanic to install it, is this likely to last the life of the car or are these hydraulic fans just problematic?"

Halderman: I asked Tom Freels the Chrysler Mopar College Automotive Program (CAP) coordinator at Sinclair Community College for his opinion and here is what he wrote:

"I think that the original problem may have always been the radiator fan. The Grand Cherokee that the customer owns has the hydraulic fan that shares the same fluid as the pump and steering gear. The original problem sounds likely more of a power steering fluid level issue with no assist at idle. I can't see the steering gear causing a problem that is only evident at idle or parked. The fan likely made noise because it was faulty or possibly became faulty with a fluid starvation issue. There is no mention of a fluid leak though. They would have to find a shop willing to put an electric fan on and the problem with that is the check engine light will be on constantly for the circuit fault with the original fan. It is hydraulically driven, but electronically controlled by the engine computer."

Thanks Tom. Therefore, it seems that the best and most cost efficient approach is to find a used hydraulic fan assembly at a recycling (wrecking) yard and have the unit replaced with the same unit that came from the factory.

