

Suspension and Handling Tech Sessions

By Dick Lorntson

I was asked by some motor home groups if I would be interested in writing a few articles for their internet publications about suspension, handling, and related issues. I thought that if these articles were of value to their groups, maybe it would be of interest to others as well. I consider myself to be a specialist rather than an expert as I learn something new each day and often it is the motor home owner who teaches me. I also own a motor home and travel to rallies in it with my wife and our two standard poodles. Being an owner gives me an interesting perspective as driver, co-pilot, and chassis technician.

My wheel alignment, chassis and frame industry career began over 30 years ago. The vehicles I have worked on range from small 4 wheelers (ATV's) to full size semi's. I have also had the opportunity to work side by side with a few old timers who had close to 30 years each of experience when I met them as I learned the trade. I have enjoyed opportunities to work with the techs from Brazel's RV and Henderson's Lineup, Brake and RV. We learn from each other and although we each protect our trade secrets, we know sharing our knowledge is for the common good of all our RV customers.

I like to ask the question at seminars, "How does your coach handle?" Usually the driver says, "Great!" or "No problem" while the co-pilot stands beside or behind shaking their heads to indicate "No". Most RV owners I meet usually do not fully understand that even if their unit seems to drive OK, there is something that can be done to make it drive and handle better. Frequent complaints I hear are rough ride, rut tracking, pounding over tar cracks in the road, excessive swaying in heavy winds or excessive over-steering. Often the fix is something as simple as setting the proper air pressure for your coach and it's weight or a thorough suspension lube.

The articles that I will be presenting over the next few months will explain the what's and why's of steering, suspension, tires, and alignment. My goal is to help you have a better understanding of the suspension and drive-ability of your coach, and how to avoid a lot of common problems that can potentially cause extra repairs or poor handling. Even better yet, I hope to help you understand clearly what is needed to make your particular coach drive, ride and handle better so you can enjoy your travels and drive with confidence and security.

I will attempt to address complaints that are common across all chassis. Some of the chassis I cover will be covered to inform you or your friends who own these, or in case you make a coach change in the future. I have learned that most problems Bouncer owners are having are seen in some degree with nearly every other chassis on the road.

Future articles will cover:

- ❖ Correct air pressure for all of your tires and why
- ❖ Maintenance of tires, wheels and suspension assemblies
- ❖ Causes of abnormal or irregular tire wear, when to rotate (or not), and balancing tires
- ❖ Tire brands and mileage expectations
- ❖ Wheel safety and maintenance
- ❖ Proper maintenance of suspension assemblies
- ❖ Proper ride height and it's effects on alignment and handling

- ❖ Proper road testing diagnostics to eliminate guess work
- ❖ Suspension assemblies, how they work together
- ❖ Class B & C chassis and common problems
- ❖ Ford F53 chassis
- ❖ Workhorse P 30-32,
- ❖ W series and UFO chassis
- ❖ Freightliner, XC, XCS, IFS, Fred
- ❖ DynoMax®
- ❖ Roadmaster
- ❖ Spartan
- ❖ Older coach brands from the past, i.e. John Deere, Oshkosh, early Dodge, Isuzu
- ❖ Other topics that you request

I look forward to sharing my knowledge and hearing your comments, ideas and questions. I welcome phone call requests or E-Mails to particular problems that you have experienced. I'll do my best to address them in an article or directly back to you.

Happy and safe travels!

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