

Wheel Misalignment Bad News for Safety

The stress and strain of driving over rough roads affects the caster of your car's wheels most frequently. The right amount of caster allows wheels to return to a "straight-ahead" position, thereby promoting steering stability. Misaligned caster angles can contribute to wheel shimmy.

Camber, or the tilt of the wheel at the top, provides a true-running wheel when the car is rolling. Fast-wearing tires and a tendency on the part of your car to pull to one side can usually be traced to misalignment of the camber angle. Camber problems are corrected by reestablishing an inboard tilt to the affected wheels.

However, before any correction of these angles can be made properly, tires, shock absorbers and the entire steering linkage should be examined for wear.

Diagnosing the Problem

How can a driver diagnose a wheel alignment problem? By checking for the following symptoms:

- Shimmying on a smooth level road—possible caster problem.
- Hard steering and difficulty returning steering wheels to straight-ahead position—possible caster problem.
- Feathering or saw-tooth pattern on tire tread—possible camber problem.

There are no absolutely correct caster or camber angles. Adjustment of these angles varies from car maker to car maker and even within a single manufacturer's car line.

While wheel alignment correction is a relatively simple task, the job should be performed by a reliable mechanic for best results.

Winterization Checklist

- ✓ **Tuneup**—Get new plugs, and inspect distributor cap and wires.
- ✓ **Filters**—Replace fuel, PVC and air filters.
- ✓ **Belts**—Check for proper tension. If belts are cracked or worn, invest in new ones.
- ✓ **Battery**—Examine fluid levels and cranking capacity.
- ✓ **Tires**—Get proper inflation in tires and evaluate tread wear. Maybe it's time for a rotation.
- ✓ **Cooling system**—Make sure radiator and hoses are in good condition. Also check antifreeze level.
- ✓ **Oil**—Get new oil filter, and switch to winter-weight oil.
- ✓ **Brakes**—Have brake fluid level topped off. Check the condition of drums and shoes, pedals and rotors.
- ✓ **Lights**—Check front, rear and interior bulbs. Don't forget the dashboard light.
- ✓ **Muffler**—Look for loose pipe connections. Replace if defective or extensively corroded.

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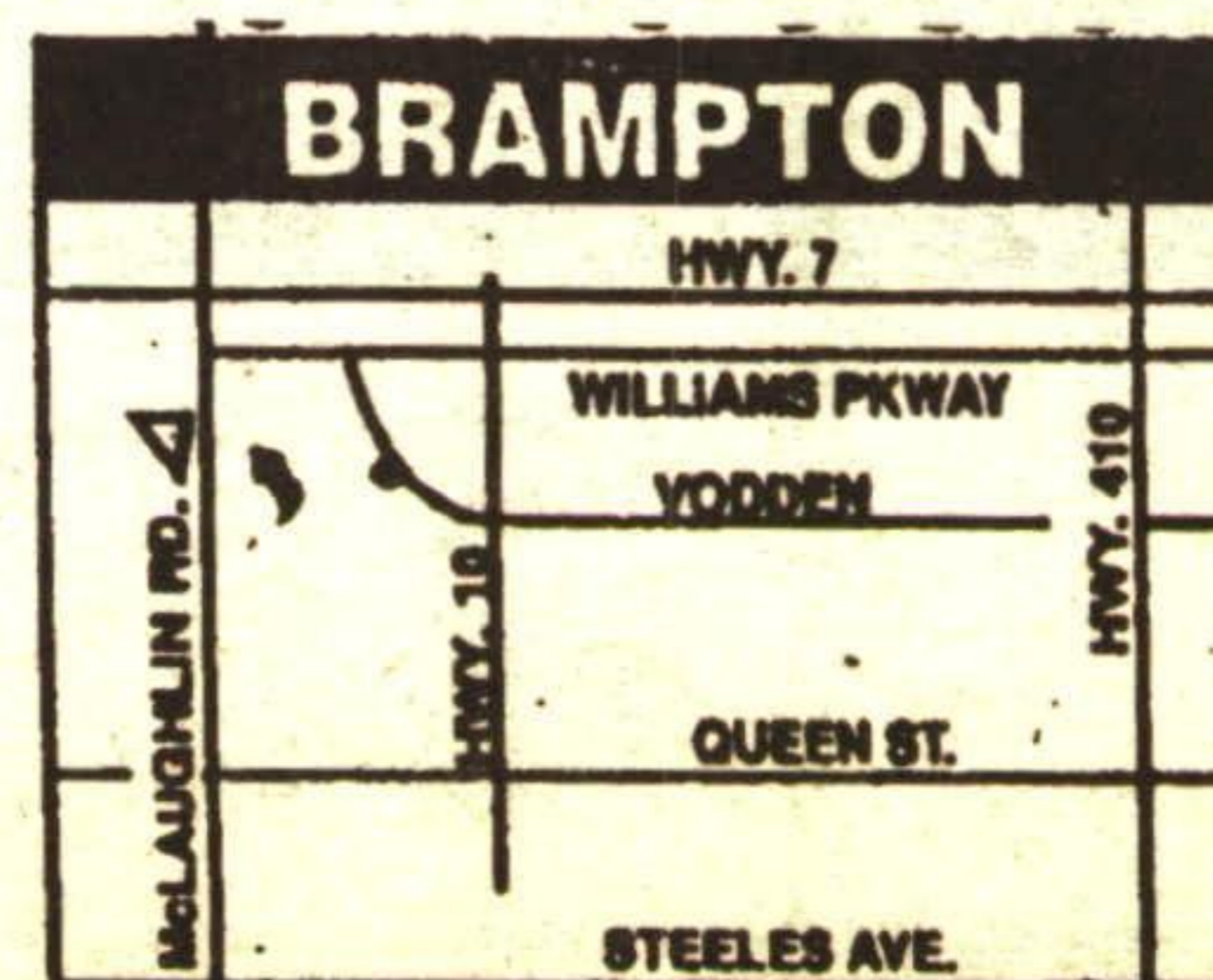


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