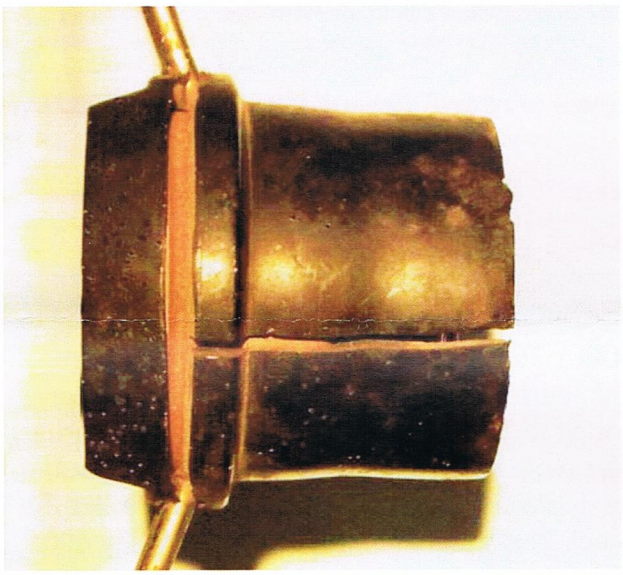
The Reincarnation of a Cracked Steering Wheel Hub

By John Logan
Edited by Jeannette Hartman

Face it, to Sunbeam fans, one important thing that separates the pedestrians from the road warriors is the steering wheel in your hands.

The sidewalk set sighs with admiration at the sight of those smooth, glossy curves and purring sounds as it rolls down the street.

But many of you, with the feel of the pedal under your right foot and the vibes of the engine, look through the steering wheel and see the . . . cracked steering wheel hub.



If your Sunbeam's steering wheel hub looks like the photo above, it's a victim of a natural aging process. The Bakelite and hard rubber of the '50s and '60s just wasn't as stable as today's plastics. They continually outgas like ice cubes left too long in the freezer.

The plastic on the steering wheel has to crack because it's restrained by the steel structural cup inside.

So, what to do?

The Outsourcing Option

For $300, you can get a recast hub from Ken Corbin of Aurora, CO. For another $300, you can get the wood rim replaced by his partner. Richard Fritz reported on this in the October 2009 *Rootes Review* with pictures. It appears to be a great restoration.

Ken can sell you a completed wheel or supply you with a restored wheel reduced to 14 ½" for $650. He can be reached at creedo@ix.netcom.com or 303-364-5787.

The Do It Yourself Alternative

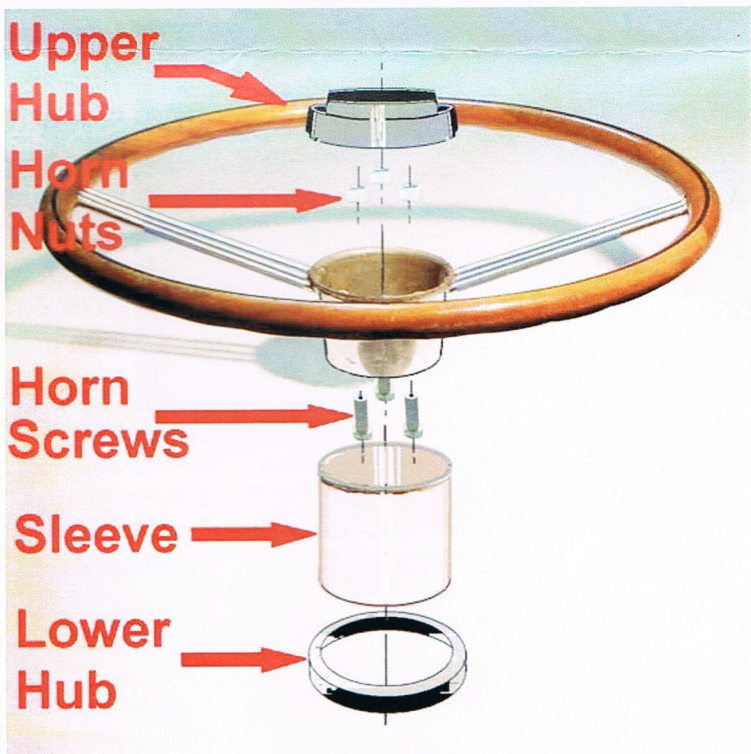
If you like a challenge, there's another way. (Warning! If you are not reading this article in solitude, I suggest that you put on those Foster Grants to hide the gleam in your eye – or alternatively, encase this issue in a plain, brown wrapper to avoid the notice of those in your life who have seizures when they hear the words "Sunbeam" and "new project" used in the same sentence.)

The DIY alternative only takes about $25 for materials and the time and talents (yours or a friend's) to machine with a metal or wood lathe, drill and tap a thread, saw accurately, use a press, glue, file, sand and paint.

be replacing the cracked plastic with new components (see below): a sleeve made from a 3" aluminum tube pressed on the wheel's structural cup and held by Plexiglas sections above and below that are glued together. Three drilled and tapped screws with nuts replace the cast-in threaded inserts of the original hub.

A Special Tool

A Special Tool is recommended for clamping parts together. It consists of two 1/4" thick plates at least 4-1/2" square with 7/16" holes in the center, a 7/16"-20 x 6" grade 5 threaded rod with nuts and a 3-1/2" x 4" tube.



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