Replacement of 55-64 rear axle bearings---instructions, pictures (Topic#329498)

Tom Parsons

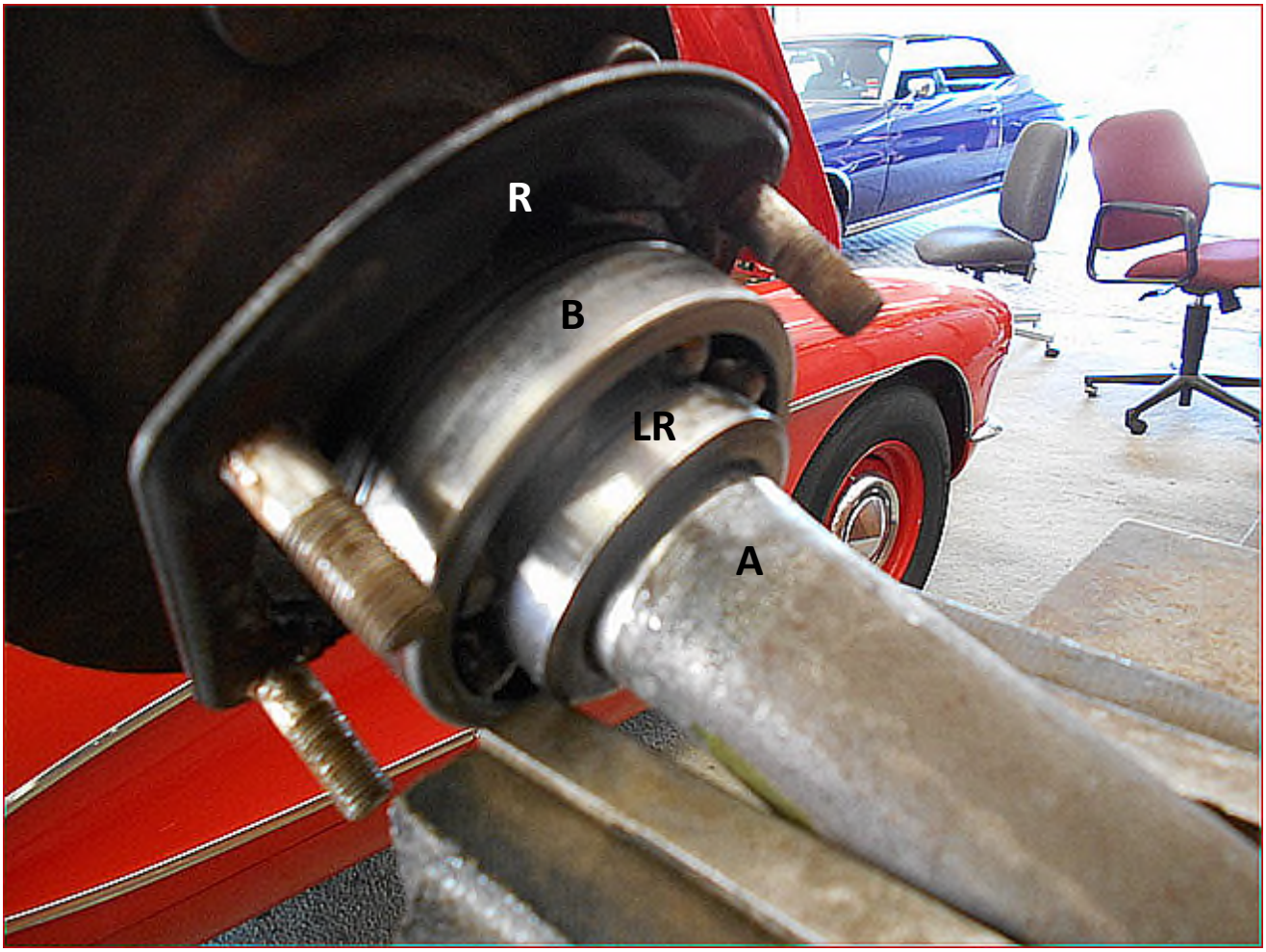
[Link to Thread at Chevy Talk]

DZAUTO

10-14-15 01:10 PM - Post#2582465

From time to time, the question has come up about how to replace 55-64 (and 56-62 Vette) rear axle bearings. I once said the next time I replaced one, I would put together an article with pictures. Well, here it is. This is my 56 Vette and I'm replacing the left rear axle bearing. I'm not showing how to remove or replace the axle shaft in the housing (I presume everyone knows how to do that).

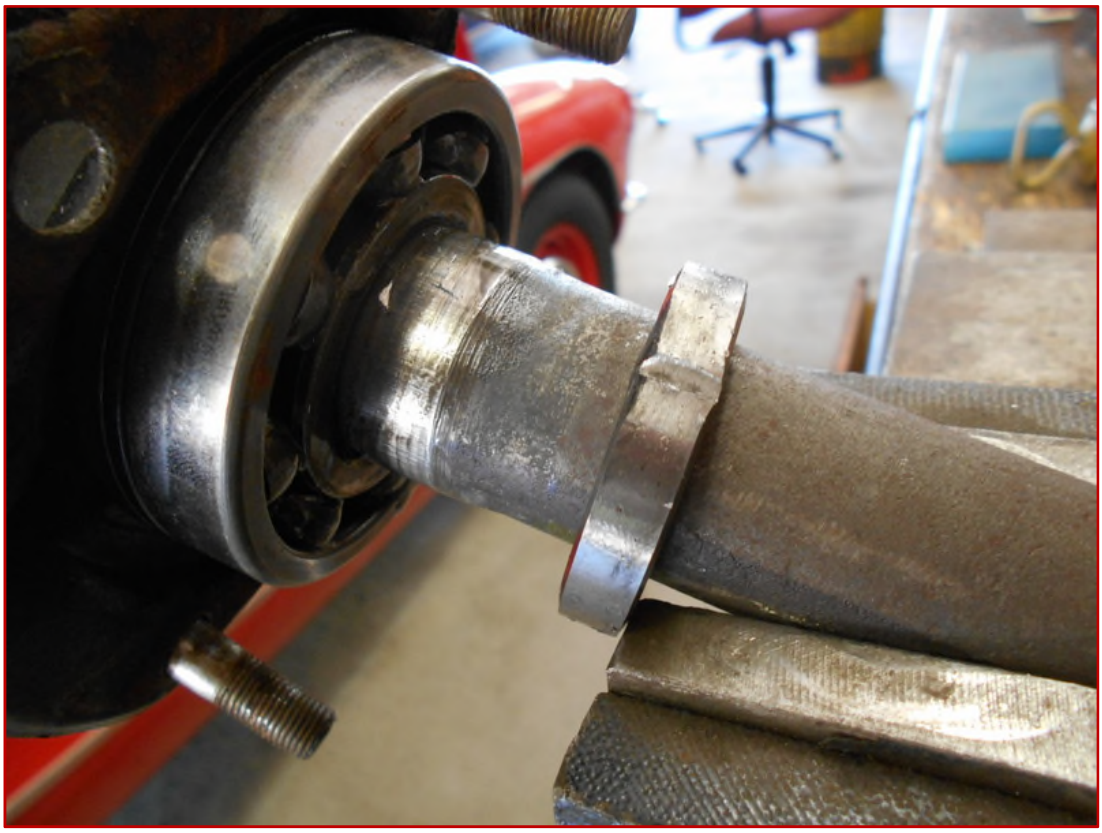
This is the axle (A), bearing (B), lock ring (LR) and retainer (R) after removal from the axle housing.



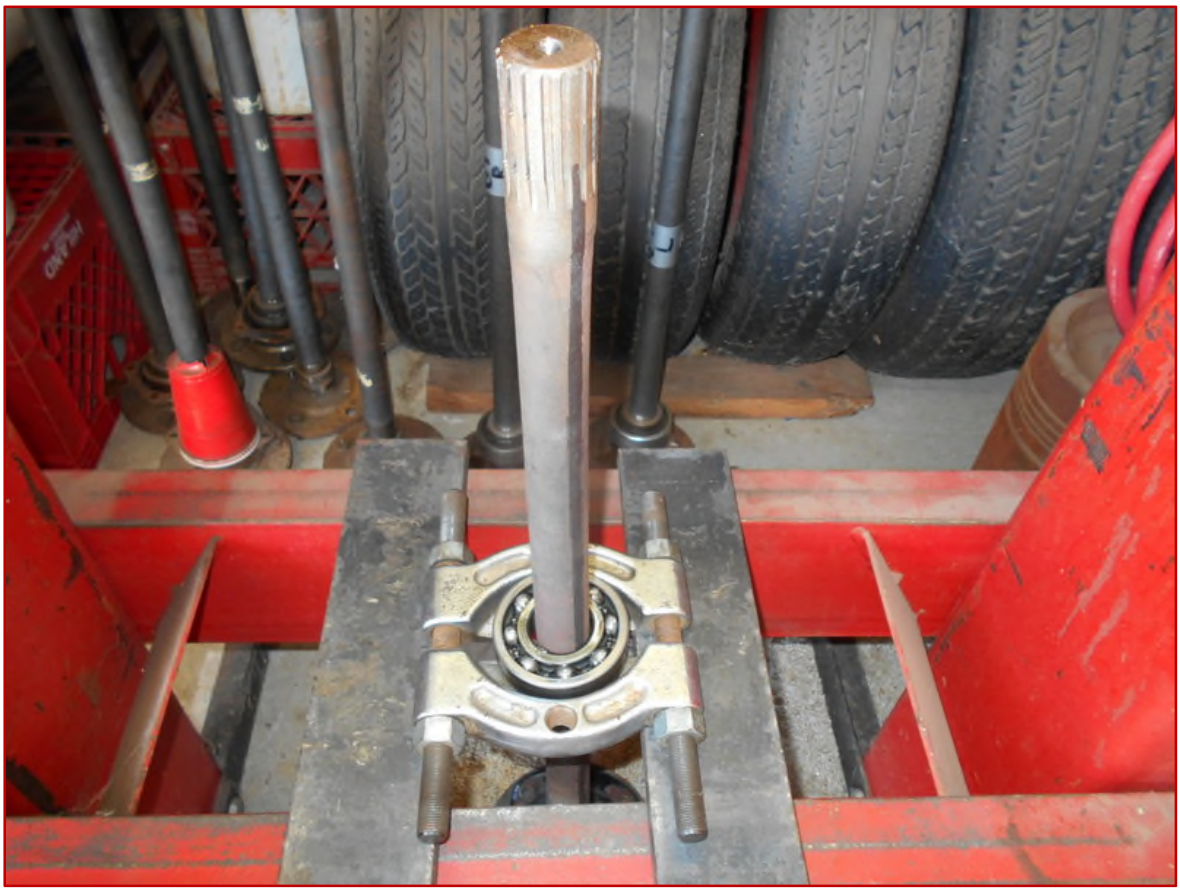
Using a BIG hammer and a chisel, punch a deep groove in the lock ring (this is also shown in the service manual).

Once the deep groove has been made.

The groove loosens the lock ring enough that it virtually slips right off.



The axle and bearing can now be placed in a press and the bearing pressed off. I have a cheap 20ton press that I got about 25yrs ago from Harbor Freight, and it does everything I have ever needed pressed (on or off).



Once the bearing is off, clean and inspect the axle surface where the bearing seats (as well as the rest of the axle).

This is the left axle from the 56 Vette. As can be seen from inspection, the splined end has a slight twist (I'm still going to use it).

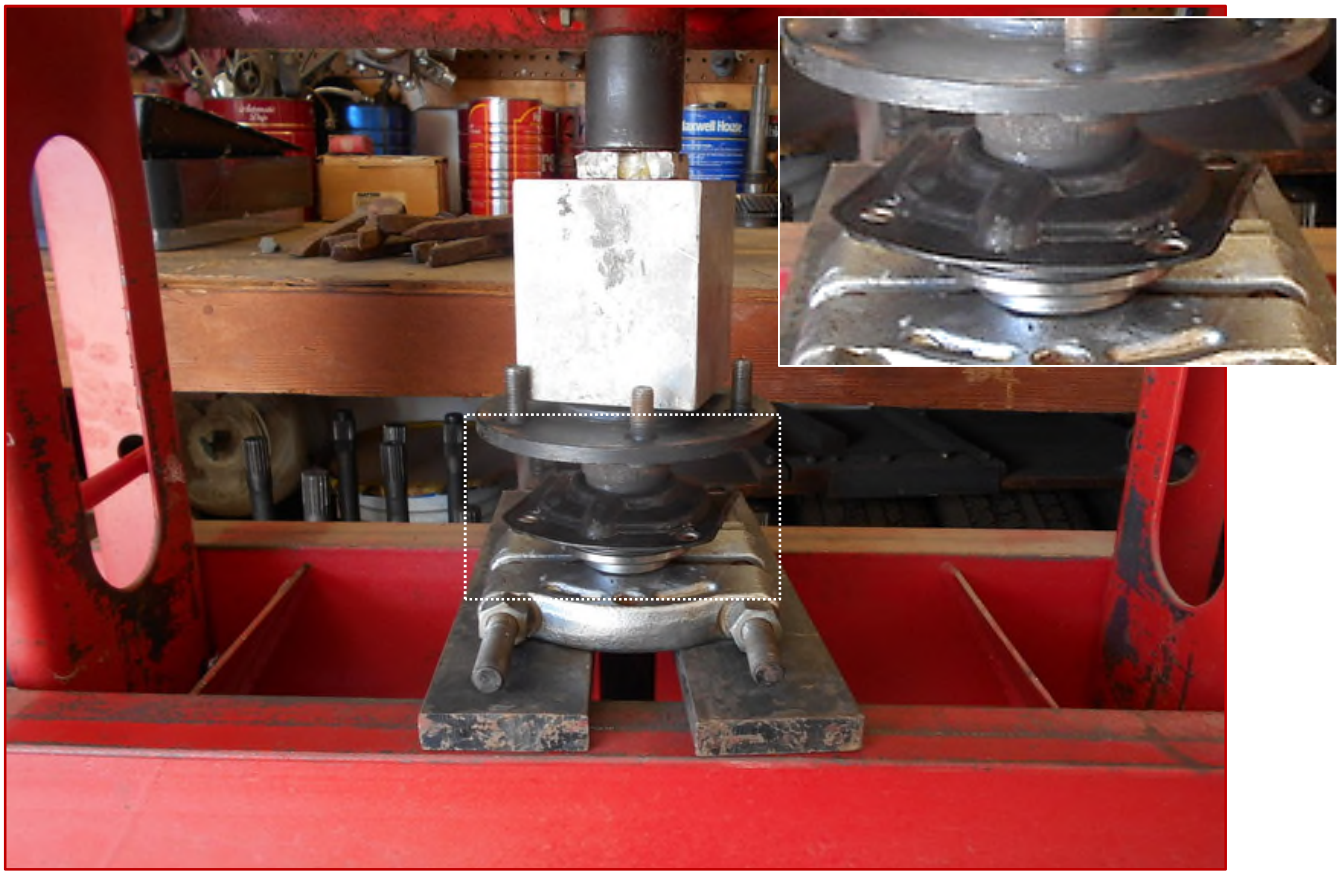
DO NOT, DO NOT, DO NOT FORGET to drop on the bearing retainer **BEFORE** pressing on the bearing!!!!!

This seal goes to the **OUTSIDE** of the axle. I have seen several colors of seals (green, black, red, etc.), but they are all the same.

Some bearings have a seal on the other side (permanently sealed) and some do not (lubricated by rear-end oil). If your new bearing has a seal on both sides, this is what the INSIDE seal looks like.

Press the bearing on by itself first. DO NOT press on both bearing and lock ring at the same time. Again, this is how the service manual instructs installing the bearing**. Press it until the bearing is tight against the seat on the axle.** While pressing on the axle bearing, I partially press it on, release the pressure and rotate the axle 90deg, press some more, release pressure, rotate the axle another 90deg and finish pressing. This method IS NOT NECESSARY, but I feel it assures the bearing is pressed on evenly.

Now press on the lock ring. As mentioned above when pressing on the bearing, I also partially press on the lock ring and then rotate it 2-3 times.



New bearing and lock ring are now pressed on and ready to stab into the axle housing. I also like to use a new gasket.