



Standard Test Method for Determining Life and Torque of Lubricating Greases in Small Ball Bearings¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 3337; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method describes a procedure for the determination of grease life and torque in small bearings. Although this test method is not the equivalent of a long-time field-service test, it is intended to predict the relative grease life at high temperature in a reasonable period of testing time. In addition, this test method measures the running torque at both low (1 r/min) and high (12 000 r/min) speeds.

1.2 Except for torque, which is measured in g-cm, the values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as the standard in this test method. The SI values given in parenthesis are for information only.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Terminology

2.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

2.1.1 *grease life*—a measure of the durability of the grease in a small bearing at elevated temperatures.

2.1.2 *grease torque*—a measure of the amount of friction due to viscous shear of the grease.

2.1.3 *running torque*—a measure of the amount of friction in a rotating bearing due to load, speed, and viscous shear of the grease.

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 A single row ball bearing with the test lubricating grease is rotated at a high speed under a constant load and selected temperature. Total running time is determined at completion of the test as a measure of the durability of the grease.

3.2 Running torque can be obtained for a single row ball bearing with the test lubricating grease rotating at 1 r/min and 12 000 r/min.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This test method is a screening test to differentiate among the expected life of greases in ball bearings running at high temperatures. If torque is a factor in selection of a grease, the test method provides for measurements at both low (1 r/min) and high (12 000 r/min) speeds.

5. Apparatus

5.1 The apparatus required for this test method is described in detail in Annex A1. A new R-4 bearing is used for each test. It is run at 12 000 r/min $\frac{1}{2}$ -lbf (2.2-N) radial load and 5-lbf (22-N) axial load.

6. Reagents and Materials

6.1 *Grease Sample*—Procure the grease sample from below the surface of the grease container. Do not let separated oil get in contact with the sample; pour the excess oil off if present. Screen the grease using a 40- μ m retention filter. A technique for screening is described in Annex A2.

6.2 *Test Bearing:*

6.2.1 *Specifications*—the test bearing² is size R-4.

6.2.2 *Size*—0.2500 in. (6.350 mm) bore, 0.6250 in. (15.875 mm) OD, 0.1960 in. (4.978 mm) wide.

6.2.3 *Material*—Type 440C stainless steel, heat stabilized.

6.2.4 *Precision Class*—AFBMA (Anti-Friction Bearing Manufacturers Association) Class 7.

6.2.5 *Radial Clearance*—0.0003 to 0.0005 in. (0.007 to 0.013 mm).

6.2.6 *Retainer*—stainless steel ribbon type.

6.2.7 *Shields*—removable with snap rings.

6.2.8 *Packaging*—bearing, shields, and snap rings packaged individually in clean and sealed envelopes.

7. Grease Packing of Test Bearing

7.1 Pack the test bearing in a clean environment with a quantity of test grease to fill one third of the free space in the bearing.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F34 on Rolling Element Bearings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F34.02 on Tribology.

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² A suitable bearing is Barden No. SR4SSW4, shipped without lubricant and with shields and snap rings unassembled, available from O. P. Schuman and Sons, Inc., County Line and Titus Rd., Warrington, PA 18976.

7.2 If it is necessary to determine the free space of a weighed bearing, place the bearing (with shields and snap rings removed) in a container of melted petrolatum of known density under vacuum. Let the petrolatum harden, remove bearing, and replace shields and snap rings. Clean the bearing of excess petrolatum and determine the weight increase. Using the density of petrolatum and bearing weight increase, compute the bearing free space. For the Barden bearing No. SR4SSW4, the one-third free space is 0.080 mL.

7.3 The test bearing may be packed on either a weight or a volume basis. A small spatula or a small syringe³ with a short needle can be used to place the test grease between the balls on both sides of the test bearing.

7.4 If the test bearing is packed on a weight basis, the density of the grease must be known in order to compute the weight of test grease equivalent to one-third the free space in the test bearing.

7.5 Immediately after packing the test grease in the test bearing, install the shields and snap rings. Then turn the bearing 100 revolutions in each direction at less than 200 r/min to distribute the test grease.

8. Procedure

8.1 This procedure describes removal of a used test bearing, installation of a new test bearing, start-up technique, and test monitoring.

8.1.1 Test Bearing Removal:

8.1.1.1 Remove the heater box.

8.1.1.2 Unlatch the radial and axial bead chains from the cantilever beams and unplug the test-bearing outer-race thermocouple cable from the post at the side of the tester.

8.1.1.3 Remove the nose cone by removing the four screws which attach it to the test-bearing housing.

8.1.1.4 Using two small wrenches, one on the test-bearing lock nut and one on the spindle flats next to the nut, loosen the test-bearing lock nut. This is done safely by having the wrench handles about 20 deg apart and squeezing them toward each other to avoid a bending moment on the overhung end of the spindle.

8.1.1.5 Remove the test-bearing lock nut.

8.1.1.6 Slide the test bearing housing off the end of the spindle and lift slowly in a vertical direction until the torque arm, its bead chain, and the thermocouple wires with plug clear the slot in the mounting plate. Do not remove the slinger.

8.1.1.7 Push (Note 1) the used test bearing out of its housing.

NOTE 1—A 3/8-in. (9.5-mm) diameter by 6-in. (150-mm) long wooden dowel with one end turned down to 1/4 in. (6.4 mm) diameter for 3/16 in. (4.8 mm) is useful in pushing out the test bearing.

8.1.1.8 Rotate the outer race of the used test bearing by hand to determine roughness, stickiness, etc. Tag the bearing, noting date, run number, grease code, running hours, and condition of bearing.

8.1.2 Test Bearing Installation:

8.1.2.1 With the spring-loaded thermocouple retracted, push a new test bearing into the housing. Use the nose cone to seat the test bearing fully. This avoids thumb pressure on the inner race and shields which can damage the bearing.

8.1.2.2 Hold the housing up above the tester and let the thermocouple plug with wires and the radial bead chain drop down through the slot in the mounting plate. **Caution:** Use care to ensure that the transducer-core extension is not bumped and that the thermocouple lead wires are not bent to prevent erroneous data.

8.1.2.3 Slide the test bearing and housing over the end of the spindle until the test bearing seats against the slinger.

8.1.2.4 Insert the thermocouple plug and attach the radial bead chain to its cantilever with three beads below the beam.

8.1.2.5 Install the test-bearing lock nut (Note 2) finger tight with the shoulder end toward the test bearing. Then fully tighten the nut using two small wrenches and following the technique in 8.1.1.4.

NOTE 2—If the test bearing runs at temperatures above 300°F (150°C), lubricate the nut and screw threads with a solid lubricant such as molybdenum disulfide to prevent thread galling.

8.1.2.6 Attach the nose cone with the bead chain slot upward using the four small screws.

8.1.2.7 Attach the axial bead chain to its cantilever beam with three beads beyond the beam.

8.1.2.8 Using a 0 to 5-lbf (0 to 22-N) spring scale, check the cantilever beams (Note 3) for 1/2-lbf (2.2-N) radial loading and 5-lbf axial loading.

NOTE 3—Cantilever beam loads can be changed by bending the beams. After bending, use a 6-in. (150 mm) machinist square and a straightedge to ensure that the radial-bead chain is perpendicular to the base and that the axial bead chain is in line with the centerline of the spindle.

8.1.2.9 Check the thermocouple lead wires to be sure they are freely suspended and smoothly contoured from the torque arm to the plug.

8.1.2.10 Carefully place the heater box over the test-bearing housing.

8.1.3 Start-up Technique:

8.1.3.1 To relieve drive-belt tension, prop up the pivoted-drive motor using a block of wood.

8.1.3.2 Turn the run-time meter to zero.

8.1.3.3 Set the cycle timer to 20 % (zero to 17 % is the 4-h shutdown interval).

8.1.3.4 Set the torque-meter cut-off at 80 % of full scale.

8.1.3.5 Set the temperature controller (left-hand pointer) to about 20°F (10°C) below the intended outer-race test-bearing temperature. Set and maintain the over-temperature cut-off (right-hand pointer) 15°F (9°C) above the control temperature (the temperature controller is connected to the thermocouple in the heater box).

8.1.3.6 Turn on the following switches: 110 V a-c, torque, heater, and high-speed motor. Then push the start button to activate circuits.

8.1.3.7 Gradually slide the prop out from under the drive-motor base until the spindle runs at low speed with a slack belt. Finger pressure on the spindle aids in keeping a low speed. Run for about 1/2 min at low speed before removing the prop to bring the spindle up to test speed.

³ A suitable micrometer syringe is Catalog No. N-07844-00, 0.2-mL capacity, manufactured by Cole-Parmer Instruments Co., 7425 North Oak Park Ave., Chicago, IL 60648.

TABLE 1 Suggested Report Form for Evaluation of Greases in Small Bearings

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Grease: _____ | Date: _____ | | | | | | |
| Temperature, °F (°C) _____ | Operator _____ | | | | | | |
| Speed, r/min _____ | | | | | | | |
| Load, lb: Radial _____ | Avg running-life from _____ | | | | | | |
| Axial _____ | three runs, h _____ | | | | | | |
| Torque g-cm | | | | | | | |
| Run No. | Minimum 1 r/min | Minimum High r/min | Failure High r/min | Outer Race, °F(°C) Rise | Box Control, ° F (°C) | Running Life, h | Reason for Failure |
| 1 | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | |

8.1.4 Test Monitoring:

8.1.4.1 After 1 h of test operation at high speed and control temperature, measure the temperature⁴ of the outer race of the test bearing. Adjust the controller such that the outer race of the test bearing is at test temperature for the grease. Additional controller adjustment may be required during the first 40 h of operation.

8.1.4.2 After 2 h of test operation at high speed and control temperature, stop the drive motor and prop it up to remove belt tension. Adjust the torque table so that the torque meter reads two to four units up-scale (torque-meter tare) by gently tapping the bead chains with a pencil during the torque table adjustment to minimize the torque-meter tare error due to static friction in the bearings. This ensures torque-transducer contact with the torque arm. Restart the testers and run for another hour before recording data.

8.1.4.3 Record test hours, torque-meter tare, torque-meter reading, net torque, torque in g-cm from calibration curve, control temperature, and outer-race temperature of the test bearing at least once every 24 h. Calibration of torque instrumentation is in A1.5. Torque data for both high-speed and one-r/min operation are to be recorded. After the first recording, set the torque meter cut-off at five times this running torque.

8.1.4.4 To keep the tester running for 30 s when over-torque occurs at start-up, hold the arm away from the transducer core by light finger pressure on the radial bead chain.

8.1.4.5 During the early part of the test at high speed, excessive bead-chain vibration, torque fluctuation greater than ±2 g-cm, or torque greater than twice the normal running

torque for the grease may be observed. If any of these occur, stop the test and restart using a new test bearing.

9. Results

9.1 Termination of the test is determined by any one of the following conditions:

9.1.1 Instantaneous over-torque of five times the minimum running torque at high speed and test temperature, or over-torque of five times the minimum running torque if it continues for more than 30 s at high-speed start-up in the test cycle.

9.1.2 Over-temperature of 20°F (11°C) at the outer race of the test bearing.

9.1.3 Noise level increase that persists for more than 1 min either at start-up or running at high speed.

10. Report

10.1 Report test results and test conditions on the report form shown in Table 1.

11. Precision and Bias

11.1 The precision of this test is not known to have been obtained in accordance with currently accepted guidelines (for example, in Committee D-2 Research Report RR: D02-1007, Manual on Determining Precision Data for ASTM Methods on Petroleum Products and Lubricants).

11.2 Grease life data generated in cooperative testing using this procedure show appreciable scatter and were found to conform in the general case to Weibull probability distributions rather than normal distributions. Conventional ASTM definitions of repeatability and reproducibility are meaningful only for data that can be described by normal distributions and, therefore, are not appropriate. Weibull parameters such as slope, L_{10} and L_{50} , are used to describe the distribution of the test data.

11.3 Precision may be judged from Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, which are Weibull plots of the data obtained in test programs

⁴ A miniature recorder with a chart speed of ¼-in./h is useful for monitoring outer-race temperature throughout the entire test. To set the controller, the outer-race temperature of the test bearing should be measured to ±2°F (±1°C) using a precision instrument such as a potentiometer.

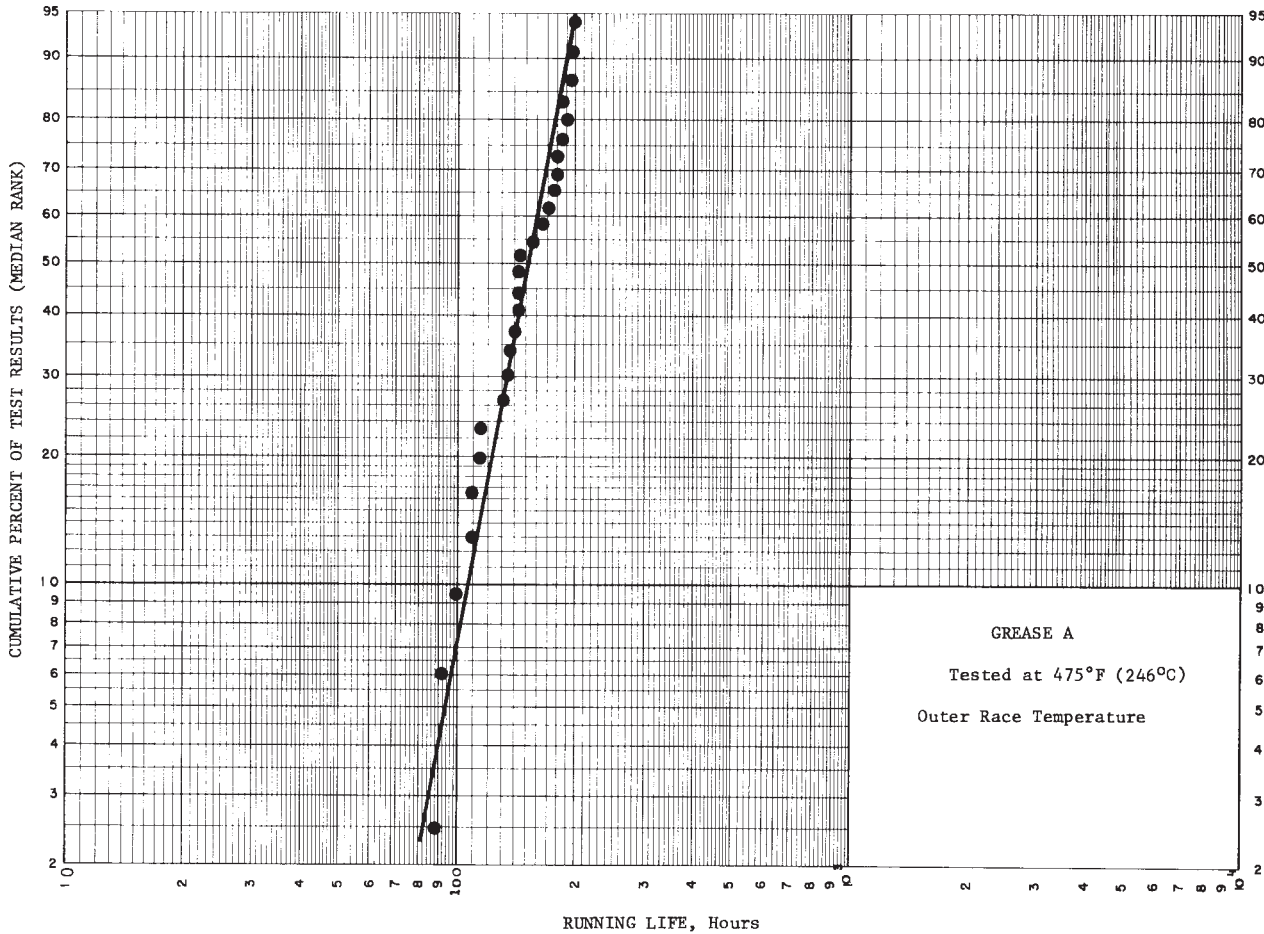


FIG. 1 Weibull Parameter of Grease A

involving two greases and seven cooperators. Weibull parameters calculated for the data are summarized in Table 2.⁵

TABLE 2 Precision—Summary of Weibull Parameters (Figs. 1 and 2)

| | Grease A | Grease B |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Weibull Slope | 4.91 | 3.02 |
| 90 % confidence limits | 3.88 to 6.24 | 2.26 to 4.10 |
| L_{10} life, h | 108 | 170 |
| 90 % confidence limits | 89 to 117 | 112 to 204 |
| 90 % confidence limits, as percent of L_{10} | 82 to 108 | 66 to 120 |
| L_{50} life, h | 153 | 296 |

11.4 The precision of the test may also be judged by considering Table 3, which summarizes the data obtained in the cooperative program.

⁵ Further details may be found in an article by Lindeman, et al., *NLGI Spokesman*, Vol 34, No. 4, July 1975, pp. 126–134.

TABLE 3 Precision—Summary of Cooperative Testing Program

| | Failure Lives, h | |
|----------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Mean | Range for Center 50 % of Results |
| Grease A | 151 | 130 to 180 |
| Grease B | 297 | 220 to 388 |

11.5 Because the life results obtained show appreciable scatter, replicate testing is essential when using this procedure.

11.6 *Bias*—The procedure in this test method for measuring grease life in small ball bearings has no bias because the value of grease life in small ball bearings is defined only in terms of the test method.

12. Keywords

12.1 lubricating grease; lubricating grease life; lubricating grease torque; running torque; small ball bearings

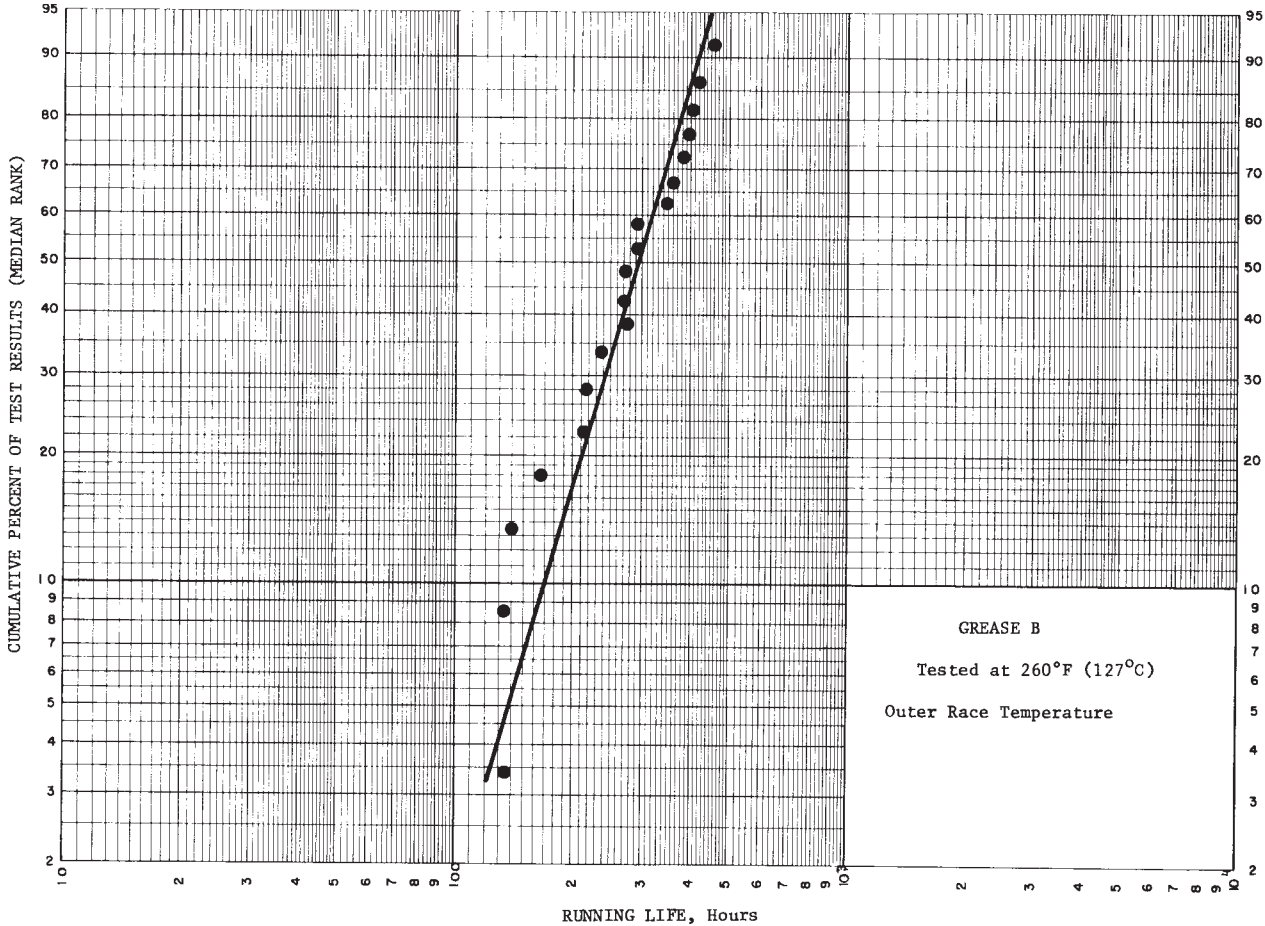


FIG. 2 Weibull Parameter of Grease B

ANNEXES

(Mandatory Information)

A1. Apparatus

A1.1 Complete Tester

A1.1.1 The complete tester is shown in Fig. A1.1.⁶ It consists of a mechanical unit and an instrument cabinet with connecting cables.

A1.2 Mechanical Unit

A1.2.1 A side view of the mechanical unit with the heater box removed is shown in Fig. A1.2. A 3600-r/min motor, pivot mounted to the base plate, drives the ball-bearing-supported spindle at 12 000 r/min by means of a flat belt. To drive the spindle at 1 r/min, a gearhead motor with a manual clutch is

mounted in line with the spindle. Three columns from the base support a glass-bonded-mica plate for mounting the spindle assembly.

A1.3 Heater Box

A1.3.1 To operate the test bearing at temperatures above ambient, a glass-bonded-mica box with four cartridge heaters is placed over the test bearing and the adjacent spindle bearing. A thermocouple in the heater box and its connected temperature controller maintain an environmental temperature such that the test-bearing outer-race will operate at test temperature for the grease.

⁶ The Model R-4 Bearing Grease Torque Tester is manufactured by O. P. Schuman and Sons, Inc., County Line and Titus Road, Warrington, PA 18976.

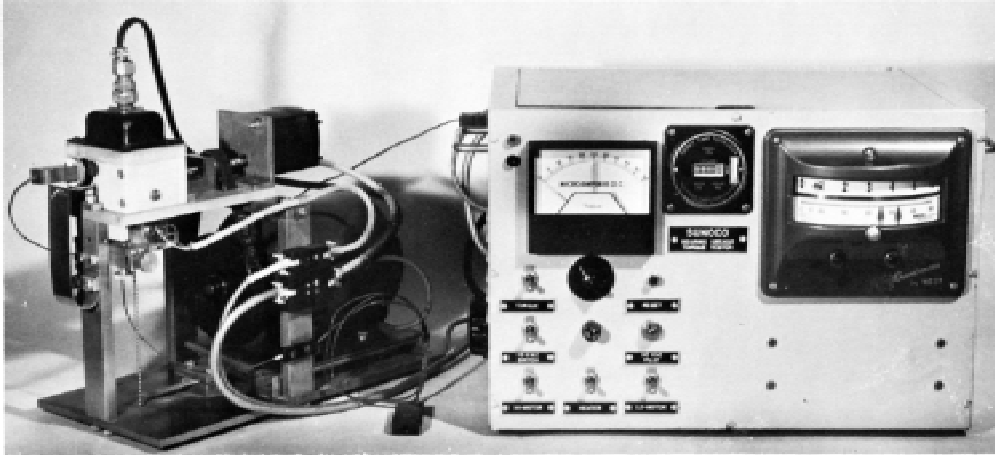


FIG. A1.1 Model R-4 Bearing Grease Torque Tester

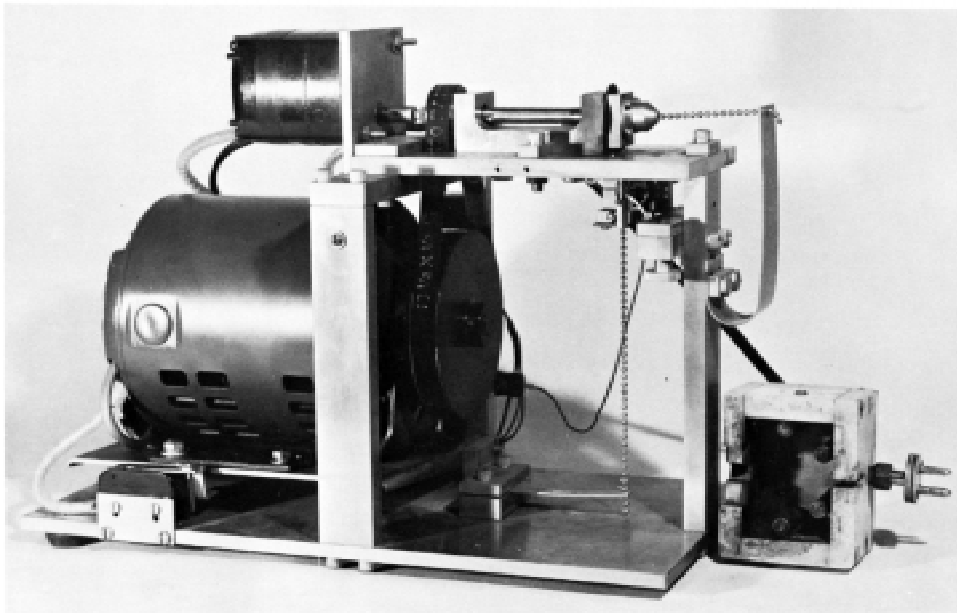


FIG. A1.2 Mechanical Unit with Heater Box Removed

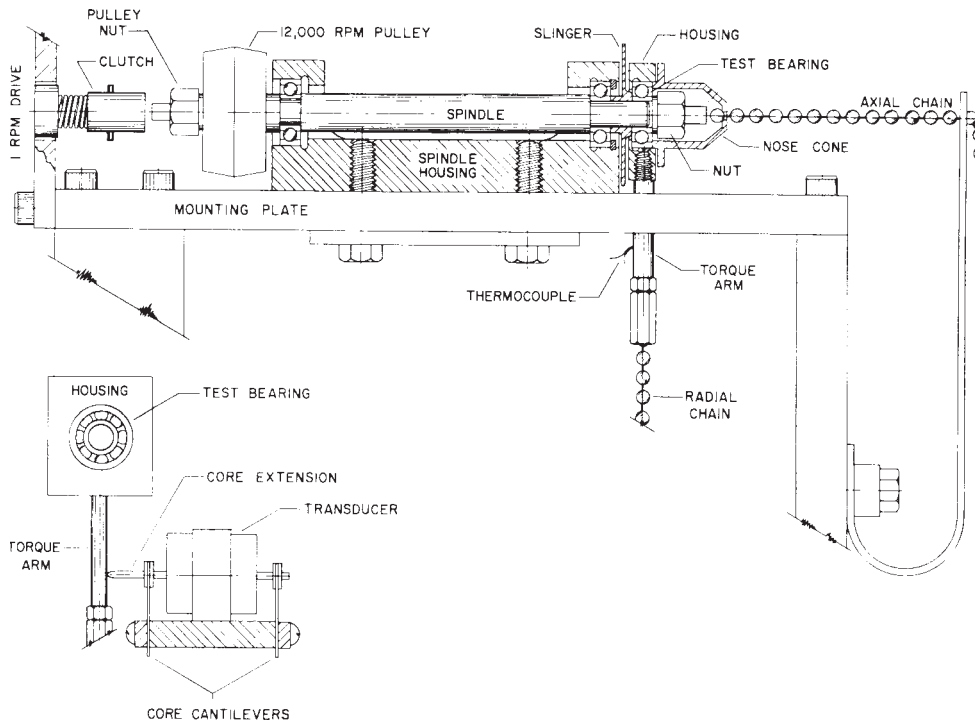


FIG. A1.3 Cross-Section Drawing of Spindle Assembly and Torque-Measuring Device

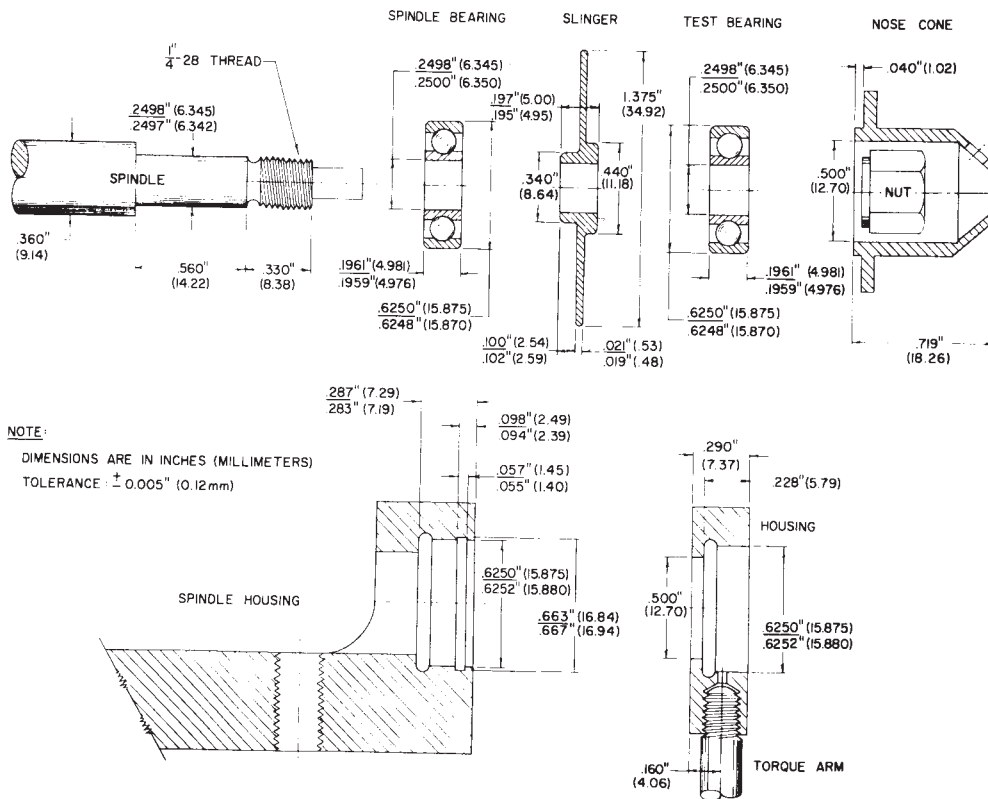


FIG. A1.4 Critical Dimensions for Spindle Assembly

A1.4 Spindle Assembly

A1.4.1 Fig. A1.3 is a cross-section drawing showing the spindle assembly with loading and torque-measuring devices.

A1.4.2 The 12 000-r/min pulley and the inner race of the adjacent floating bearing are clamped against a shoulder on the spindle by the pulley nut. The spindle turns on two R-4 ball

bearings, the one near the slinger being locked in the spindle housing by a retaining ring against its outer race.

A1.4.3 A slinger is mounted on the spindle next to the test bearing to circulate air and reduce temperature gradients inside the heater box.

A1.4.4 The test bearing is pushed into its rectangular housing and its outer race is clamped in place by the nose cone with four screws. The inner race of the test bearing, the slinger, and the inner race of the adjacent spindle bearing are all locked against a shoulder on the spindle by a nut prior to installing the nose cone.

A1.4.5 A hollow torque arm is screwed into the bottom of the test-bearing housing. It serves as an access for an iron-constantan, Type J thermocouple to the outer race of the test bearing, a means of applying radial load to the test bearing, and a displacement against the core of a transducer which is proportional to test-bearing torque.

A1.4.6 Loads for the test bearing are transmitted by bead chains. The axial chain from the nose cone to the curved cantilever provides a 5-lbf (22-N) axial load. The radial chain from the slotted nut at the bottom of the torque arm to the straight cantilever at the tester base provides a 1/2-lbf (2.2-N) radial load.

A1.4.7 Friction within the test bearing applies a torque to its housing when the inner race is rotated. An equal and opposite torque is applied to the housing by the torque arm due to radial-chain tension and the transducer-core cantilevers. For small displacement of the torque arm, about 1/32 in. (0.794 mm), the transducer output is proportional to bearing torque.

A1.4.8 Fig. A1.4 shows critical dimensions for parts of the spindle assembly.

A1.5 Calibration

A1.5.1 Calibration of the torque measuring instrumentation should be made with a hot tester after several hours of test-bearing operation.

A1.5.2 Remove the heater box and the drive belt.

A1.5.3 Vibrate the bead chains gently by tapping with a pencil. Then advance the torque table until the torque read-out meter indicates a slight up-scale deflection. Record this reading as meter-tare for zero torque.

A1.5.4 Mount calibration arm on top of test-bearing housing. It must be balanced with the weighthanger notch at 50 mm from the center of the test bearing.

A1.5.5 Add various weights in grams to the calibration arm and record meter readings. Gently vibrate chains for each reading.

A1.5.6 Plot a calibration curve of applied torque (gram-weight times 50 mm) versus net meter readings (meter reading for a given weight minus meter-tare).

A1.5.7 The calibration potentiometer can be used to change the slope of the calibration curve.

A1.6 Schematic Circuit

A1.6.1 A schematic power wiring diagram is shown in Fig. A1.5 (the numbers in parentheses in this section refer to Fig. A1.5).

A1.6.2 Power switch (1) connects the 110-V a-c power supply.

A1.6.3 Fuse (2) protects the circuitry and pilot (3) indicates that the circuitry is operational.

A1.6.4 Low-speed motor (1-r/min motor) (4) is manually turned on by low-speed motor switch (5).

A1.6.5 Meter relay (6) is the torque read-out indicator and incorporates an over-torque cut-off relay contact.

A1.6.6 Run-time meter (7) indicates total hours of operation and runs as long as start relay (9) remains closed.

A1.6.7 Momentary contact switch (8) energizes start relay (9) which will remain latched-in until power failure or opening of a safety contact. Safety contacts are over-torque (6), limit switch for belt break (11), and over-temperature at controller (17).

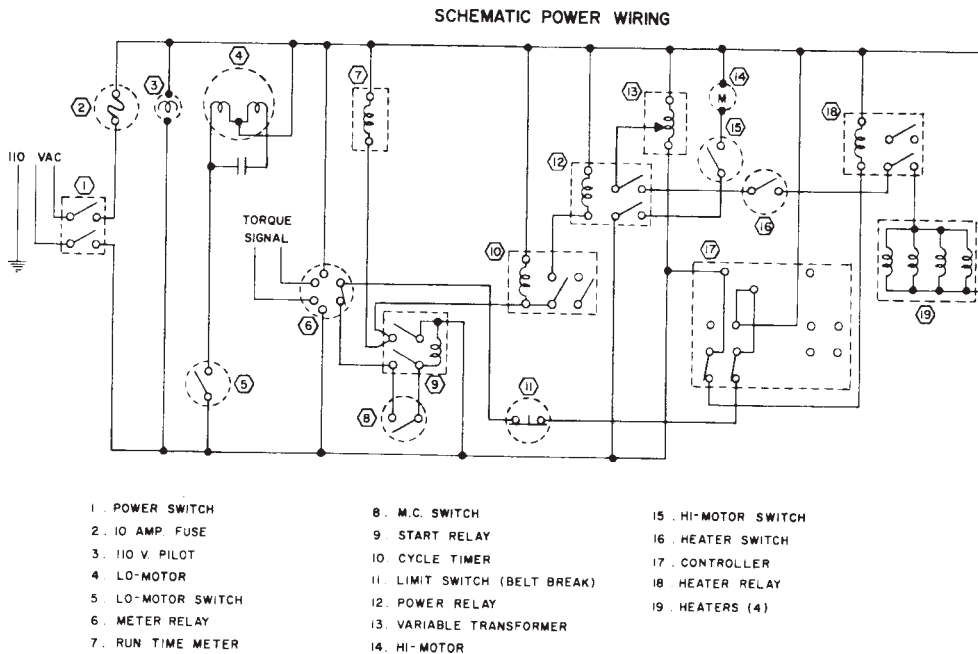


FIG. A1.5 Schematic Power Wiring

A1.6.8 Cycle timer (10) is powered by the upper contact of start relay (9). The contact in cycle timer (10) turns power relay (12) on for 20 h and off for 4 h.

A1.6.9 The lower contact of power relay (12) in series with manual high-speed motor switch (15) operates high-speed motor (14) for 12 000-r/min spindle speed. The upper contact of power relay (12), in series with manual heater switch (16), supplies power from variable transformer (13) to the contact of heater relay (18).

A1.6.10 If temperature controller (17) calls for heat in the heater box over the test bearing, its control contact energizes heater relay (18). The contact in heater relay (18) completes the power circuit to energize heaters (19).

A1.6.11 Run timer (7), cycle timer (10), power relay (12), high-speed motor (14), and heaters (19) all become de-energized by means of start relay (9) in case of power failure or safety signal. Momentary contact switch (8) must be manually pushed to put the tester back in operation.

A1.7 Precision Torque Measurement

A1.7.1 Since the torque arm is rigidly attached to the test-bearing housing and the outer race of the test bearing is clamped in this housing, the torque arm magnifies any run-out of the test bearing raceways. Turning the spindle to various positions may result in different meter-tare readings. Precisions torque measurements, especially at 1 r/min can be obtained as

outlined below, provided the spindle is marked at 90-deg intervals, one through four.

A1.7.2 For 12 000-r/min Torque:

A1.7.2.1 Record the meter reading at 12 000 r/min with stabilized temperature.

A1.7.2.2 Stop the drive motor, remove the belt, and record the meter-tare at the four marked positions of the spindle.

A1.7.2.3 Average the meter-tare readings and subtract the mean value from the 12 000-r/min meter reading.

A1.7.2.4 From the calibration curve of torque in gram-centimetres versus net-meter readings, observe and record the 12 000-r/min torque in gram-centimetres.

A1.7.3 For 1-r/min Torque:

A1.7.3.1 Engage the 1-r/min motor clutch and turn on the 1-r/min gearhead motor.

A1.7.3.2 Record meter readings for each of the four marked positions of the spindle.

A1.7.3.3 Subtract the meter-tare for each spindle position from its corresponding meter reading to determine four values of net-meter reading at 1 r/min.

A1.7.3.4 Average these four net-meter readings to obtain a mean 1-r/min meter reading.

A1.7.3.5 From the calibration curve of torque in gram-centimetres versus net-meter readings, observe and record the 1-r/min torque.

A1.7.4 Stop the 1-r/min gearhead motor, disengage the 1-r/min clutch, replace the belt, and restart on high speed.

A2. TECHNIQUE FOR SCREENING GREASE

A2.1 Partially fill a clean 2-oz (56-g) or 4-oz (112-g) hand-type grease gun with the test grease.

A2.2 Pump the grease through a clean 40- μ m (Sieve No. 325, U.S. Sieve Series) retention filter⁷ into a clean container which can be tightly covered. This filter should have a slot

milled across its outlet for grease discharge. The inlet should be fitted with a standard grease fitting to match the hand-type grease gun.

A2.3 Place the cover on the container and label.

A2.4 When packing a bearing, keep the container covered as much as possible. Dust and lint in the air will contaminate the filtered grease sample.

⁷ A suitable filter is No. FKW-X5-4PP with 1/4-in. FNPT ends for 40- μ m retention manufactured by Fluid Dynamics, 1750-T Memtec Dr., Deland, FL 32724-2045.

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