

Reproduction!

by Tom Endy

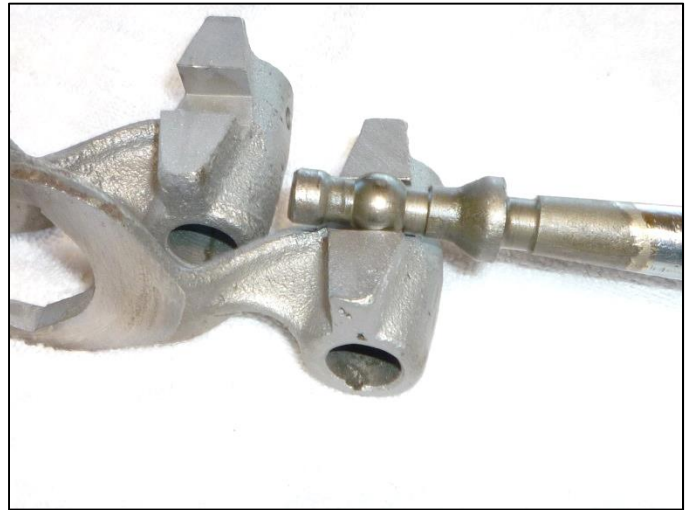
The word itself scares me! Reproduction parts would probably be ok if they were made correctly....and consistently. A fellow club member recently bought a restored Model A somewhere in the east and had it shipped out here to California. Problem was; he could not shift it. I gave him a rebuilt transmission tower and it solved the problem.

Sometime later I took his tower apart and was able to see why he could not shift it. The tower had been rebuilt and everything inside the tower was reproduction new. It even had a pair of reproduction shift forks that have recently become available from several Model A suppliers. The biggest problem was the ball on the end of the shift lever did not fit inside the slots in the forks. The slots in both forks were not wide enough and it would jam the ball. The reproduction fork castings are rough and do not look to be of good quality. I believe that original forks are forged, the reproductions are definitely cast.

I discovered another problem while taking it apart. The tunnels bored through the shift forks are too small and both shaft rails were installed extremely tight, so much so that one cracked when someone tried to insert a shift rail through it. I had a difficult time getting them apart. Someone had even put a rail shaft locking pin in up-side-down and then somehow managed to peen it over on top. I had a difficult time removing it.

You would think that whoever assembled the tower would have realized that it would not shift when they finished assembling it. And then whoever installed it on a transmission in the car should have noticed that it would not shift correctly.

The ball of the end of the shifter is a nominal 1½” round diameter; the slot in the shift fork is also a nominal 1½” diameter; however, they can’t both be the same diameter as there has to be some clearance for the ball to be able to move around inside the slots.



The slots in the two reproduction forks are not wide enough to allow the ball on the end of the shifter to travel inside the slots without becoming jammed.



The tunnel drilled through the forks for the shift rails to insert through is not large enough and caused this one to crack.

For years Model A hobbyist have been restoring transmission towers by welding up the worn ball on the end of the shifter and grinding it down to fit into the fork slot properly. The wear in the forks is also welded up and milled to fit the ball on the end of the shifter properly.

Editor’s note:

Bratton’s Antique Auto has removed them from their stock.