Hi. Long time since I've been on the site. Kind of busy.....



Had a b***h of a summer. Went all the way through the engine, transmission, steering. and roadster during last winter. Replaced anything showing wear. Checked everything out so as to not have any problems on a couple of trips I had planned for the summer.

June rolled around and I loaded the car for the LA Roadster show on Father's Day. Left early on a Tuesday morning since I wanted to get to Ontario a day or so early. Decided against taking the usual side roads and stick to the Interstates. Stopped the fist night in Green River, UT. Left out early the next morning figuring I'd spend the night in Vegas. Yeah....right!

Cruising along about 70 mph in overdrive and not a care in the world. It was late in the afternoon and I was about five miles outside of St.George, Ut. This is about 20 miles from the SW corner of the state. Suddenly, and I mean SUDDENLY, a loud WHAM and the rear of the roadster lifted clear off the road about 6". This was followed by all kinds of LOUD noises and grinding emitting from the rear end. The speedometer was bouncing all over the place and the engine wasn't putting any power to the rear wheels. Just what I wanted. Shifted it out of overdrive and the speedometer steadied at 55 mph or so. So the problem was back of the transmission because the speedometer is at the rear of the transmission. Touched the gas and the hammering and no power being delivered began again. Let off the gas and the hammering got worse! Pushed in the clutch to shut down

the noise. Found if I BARELY (less than 1/8") touched the gas or let off that amount it wouldn't hammer.

Coaxed it into the edge of St. George. It was a little before 5:00PM. Got a motel and checked the rear end. Nothing visual found. Pulled the Vacuum cannister.....nothing wrong there. That would be too easy. Checked the rear end lubricant....right on the full mark and very hot. Called Billy Pupo in CA to see if he could give me any clues. No anwer. Made four phone calls in an hour....no answer and never did returned any of my calls.

Spent a restless night trying to figure out what had happened. Usually when a Columbia lets go, you still have low range. Not in this case. Low range still worked...but just barely. Made a U turn early morning and started limping for home. Long way to go with a sick car.

Found if I took it easy, I could coax it up to 55 mph but it would take over a mile to get there. Downhills were out since I couldn't use any compression. So I'd put the transmission into neutral and coast down the hills. Not much coasting with the lack of streamlining in a '34 Ford. Stopped at Richfield, UT for the first night. I was really beat...driving a crippled car on a lot of shoulder wore me out. By this time, the most I could coax out of the roadster without hammering and tearing up more parts, was 45 mph and this would take over a mile to obtain after stopping.

Left out before daybreak. I had hoped the roadster would heal itself over night....it didn't! Gradually I was able to creep up to 40 mph. As the hours passed, the 40 mph slowly decreased. Stopped at a motel near the UT/CO border late the second day. Thankfullly the engine ran cool the whole time. Left early the third day. With any luck, I'd make it home late that day.....like that was going to happen with my luck.

The speed gradually decreased as the day wore on. Soon it was down to 35 mph and dropping.faster. Made it to Silt, CO and had to stop for gas. Little problem getting started again. Finally limped to the entrance to the I-25 (about a 1/4 mile from the station). It was down hill so I had some help. Gradually accelerated as much as I dared..... 14 miles later I was clear up to 25 mph! I had two big hills to climb over the Continental Divide and I knew for sure I wouldn't be able to even make it 1/10 of the way up the first one. I stayed on the right road shoulder and limped along. Near Glenwood Springs, CO there was single lane construction both directions. Not a problem....except for the #%@$# Toyota SUV slowing down to less than 10 mph for the two mile construction zone, I could barely hold the 10 mph by the time the stupid driver got his head out of his a** and sped up.

Limped through the town of Glenwood and started up the canyon. Speed now as down to 10 mph and falling fast. A mile into the canyon it shuddered to a stop. Had to use the engine starter to get it off the road since I couldn’t push it. State patrol came by and stopped. Called a car hauler and they stayed there and directed traffic around my car. Nice people.

Car hauler loaded me aboard and took me a half mile to No Name rest stop. Unloaded me there....and collected $230 cash. Not nice people. Called a friend in Denver and told him where I was and what had happened. He gulped his coffee down and hooked up his race trailer and drove the 160+ miles to haul me home. Got home about 5 PM. Once home we had to jack up the rear of the car and pull it into the garage by the jack.

Pulled the rear out and tore it down the next day. Everything inside was junk. Everything was burnt badly with grease burned into the metal. Only two minor pieces were stil good in the entire rear end. The ring and pinion were chipped and galded. The axle bearings were scorched badly. All the bearings in the rear end were scorched and galded. The plantary gear had no teeth left. The OD pinons (3) which held the planetary gears were gone. The plate that had been reinforced with weld had failed and one of the three corners lifted up and the gears would not mesh with the drum gear. One of the pinions was less than 1/4" diameter in one spot and was 1/8" longer than the other two. Tore heel out of everthing.

At times limping towards home from St. George, UT the rear end would lock up and the rear of the car would elevate a few inches off the ground.. The sudden loud noise coming from the rear end would startle me since nothing I could feel would forecast this.…..other than accelerating or de-accelerating at too fast a rate. So I drove slowly and was careful on the accelerator for over two days. Boring! Each time it would get airborne, it would make the roadster accelerate a mile or so slower. I was sure I was on the verge of becoming a permanent speed-bump in the shoulder of the interstate by passing traffic. After getting it towed home from Glenwood Canyon in CO, we had to tow it back to the garage and use jacks to get it in the garage. Everything in the rear end was locked up and refused to move. The three of us couldn't move it by hand. I was wore out since it was after 5:00 PM when we got home on June 18, Friday. It had been a tension filled trip home.
Tore it down the next morning, Saturday, June 19. It was burned and damaged beyond belief. Everything inside the rear end and housings were burnt black from the heat boiling the rear end grease. The cooked black stuff would only come off with a lot of sandblaster time. I could see damage to nearly every piece there was.
The cause of it coming apart, was part #A-21….the differential support hub and washer assembly. When building a Columbia, this is one of the pieces which is made "bullet proof" by reinforcing the factory weld. This is re-welded since the factory weld is on the flimsy side and welding makes it stronger (at least it's supposed to). This part locates the planetary pinions (3 of them…part #A-26) and the 3 planetary pinion gears …. Part #A-26) in correct relation to the drum or part #A-24.
The weld on the #A-21 failed which caused one of the pinion shafts which hold and align the pinion gear (part #A-21) to bend upward about a half inch, which allowed the pinion on that shaft to climb out from the outer gear hub….. which caused the excess heat as it turned (or tried to) turn the part #A-40 when the teeth between the two gears both were torn up. It cooked the grease and destroyed the entire rear end. The pinion for that shaft had broken teeth and the pinion shaft looked like a crooked cigar…..it was worn half way through and bent like a crooked branch or cigar.

After accessing the damage I had Jim Nielsen contact J. Conley in CA. He only deals in Columbia overdrives and has nearly every Columbia part one might need. Jim Nielsen has some used parts and between him, Conley, and a good friend Bernie we were able to replace nearly everything damaged or burned in the rear end an overdrive. I found some USA Timken bearings in town. All bearings and bearing races (except for the axle bearings) were replaced with new Timken bearings.
The list of parts which were new or reconditioned I got from Conley were:
A-2 housing oil seal
A-7 differential carrier oil baffle
A-8 differential carried bearing cup
A-17 differential outer case assembly
A-20 differential outer case bearing cone
A-21 differential support hub and washer assembly
A-24 differential case and internal gear assembly
A-25 planetary pinon gear (3)
A-26 planetary pinion shaft (3)
A-27 Sun gear
A-28 side gear thrust washer, brass, (1)
A-29 differential side pinion thrust washers (4)
A-30 differential spider cross shaft (1)
A-32 synchro clutch assembly (drum, lower washer, hub, spring, shoe, Teflon lining, upper washer)
A-33 drive clutch
A-34 stationary clutch
A-35 upper oil baffle
A-36 lower oil baffle

The small end of the Ford pinion gear was chewed up pretty good. The ring gear has some galling on the teeth.. The rear end gears were a 10 spline, 3.78:1 rear end ratio. I searched among all the guys here in town for the 10 spline 3.78 gears which are for a ’36 with a tube ’34 driveshaft. No one in town had any 3.78 gears. Plenty of 4.11, 4.33, 4.44, gears and even a couple of 3.54 gears with the correct splines. Found one which had a chipped tooth on the ring gear that was about 1/8” long….. probably from being dropped in the past. But a whole lot better than what I had. Paid $125 for it and put it in.

Total cost so far just for parts was $2400 including bearings etc.

Finally got all the parts and got a friend, Bernie, who is an expert on a Columbia overdrive to put it all together on Friday, July 2.

Ron Holleran in VT had asked if I could be there for his garage bash in Chester, VT and time was running short. Ron had said it would be a two to three day get together with Ford Flathead people. At least that’s the way I remember it. I said I would try to make it but that was before everything turned to crap going to LA.

Got up early on Saturday morning, July 3, to put the rear end in the car. Got it together at 5:00 PM. Took it for a ride. No noises either from the rear end or the used ring and pinion. Tried shifting into Overdrive….like that's going to happen with my lousy luck. It wouldn't shift at all. Drove it back home after trying it several times. Called Bernie and told him the bad news. He came over right away with a friend named Doug who drives a patina '36 Ford. Neat car and he's BIG dude. Bernie went for a ride and tried shifting it.. After some deep thinking he said he was sure he knew the problem. I was completely worn out from too many hours and hard work in the garage over the week getting ready for my trip with a busted roadster. I told them I wouldn't be able to work on it until the next day. I was just too beat. Talk about good friends….. The two of them pulled the overdrive side loose and Bernie, somehow, was able to remove the clutch and synchronize assembly with just the axle housing pulled back a few inches. I have not idea how he did it or got it back together. I handed them whatever wrenches they needed since I was wasted and out on my feet. Three hours later they had it all back together. Two of the parts (A-35 and A-34) had been reversed during assembly. Probably due to phone interruptions since both Doug and Bernie are really good at helping others.

Took it out for a drive about 9:00 PM. Shifted like a clock. I shut off the garage lights and drug this old geezer body into the house.

Woke up Sunday…still completely worn out. This old age sucks big time. Decided I had to take it easy for at least a full day before leaving for VT or I wouldn't make it. Took it easy all day.

The next morning, Monday, I left early. Shifted good and no noises. Life is good….at times.

The second day, Tuesday, in the early afternoon, I had stopped for gas in MO. The transmission or clutch acted up. It wouldn't shift without double clutching It felt like I was trying to force shift it without a clutch. The next gas stop it shifted just as it always did. Odd. Something strange was going on in the transmission or clutch. It would shift funny off and on the rest of that day. That night I checked the grease in both the Columbia and transmission, Both were full and dribbled out when I pulled their check plugs. I adjusted the clutch outward in case the new clutch disc (put in the rebuilt the engine in January) was just getting worn in or something It wasn't smooth like it should be. But the next day it shifted good all day. Strange but it gave me something to think about. Maybe it was just wearing in.

The rebuilt engine was running really good and pulling hard. I always check the mileage in the first few tanks of gas. I noticed the first two tanks of gas were in the usual 21-21.5 mpg range. The third tank suddenly dropped to 19 mpg and got steadily worse and finally settled down to 18 mpg. I attributed it to running about 10 mph faster than usual. Thought about it and blamed it on the tremendous lack of streamlining on the '34 Ford! Should have thought harder about it and come up with the real reason.

Ran into some really bad weather and stopped early afternoon for the day. Each day I would get up early and drive late….running in the 75 to 80 mph range. In CN I checked the grease in the overdrive and the transmission. No drips or signs of leakage. Both trickled out their check plug when I pulled them. Was making good time on Thursday and was close to the border of north MA. I'd make it to Ron's sometime around noon on Friday. The shifting started messing up again. Nothing to do but keep going and look at it when at Ron's.

Then things turned grim again. Running about 75 mph on a split lane 4 lane highway near the MA/VT border in the right lane. Semi passed me on the left running about 85 mph. He was closely followed by two cars running a tad faster than 85 and real close together….. getting lined up to pass the semi. The semi was about 6 car lengths in front of me….and still in the left lane. He put on his right turn lights and began to change lanes.

He was barely in my lane when his right front tire blew sending rubber and rim everywhere. This turned his rig sideways…..the whole two lane road was suddenly taken up by the sliding semi and trailer. I slammed on my brakes extremely hard…harder than I think I ever had used any brakes…..there didn't appear anyplace to go but hit the semi trailer.….both road sides had corrugated guard rails for as far as I could see. There simply was no place for me to go. I was sliding side ways….trying to get stopped. The two cars behind me had nailed their brakes too…the two cars beside me were slow in reacting. The semi rolled over onto it's side….sliding along pretty fast…with the top of the semi and tractor towards me. The two cars which had been in the left lane plowed into the top of overturned trailer with their tires smoking. I could see around the semi now that I was closer and saw a brief break in the right guard rail. I was still sliding towards the right with all four locked up when I saw it.

I don't remember much of what followed. I guess I let off the brakes and was able to point the sliding roadster into the guardrail break…or something like that. I just don't know. I went into the bar ditch about 15' or so, and then turned sharply left because of an upcoming gully. I was still doing about 50 mph or so when I got back on the road….. sliding side ways onto the asphalt. Scared me! The two cars who had been behind me both plowed into the roof of the semi trailer. I didn't stop, but I did slow down. I was shaking for sure. I still have no idea how I got through it. But it wasn't through…….

An hour later, I got on the brakes for a needed gas stop….and to clean out my britches. The brake pedal was mushy and close to the floor. I'd have to look at it tomorrow/ The brakes got steadily worse… big surprise!. The pedal was soon on the floor It was near 4:00 PM when I limped into Chester, VT. I had driven the last 60 miles without any brakes other than the emergency brake and downshifting the transmission. I was beat and decided to grab a motel (the only one I saw in the thriving metropolis of Chester VA) and call Ron to tell him I'd see him the morning.

Checked the master cylinder. It was bone dry. Drove to a restaurant to get something to eat…using just the emergency brake. The inside of the left rear tire was covered in brake fluid. I blew a wheel cylinder missing that semi. No big problem….. at least I thought so at the time. Little did I realize there weren't any wheel cylinders for my heap in the entire area!!

Well I missed Ron's get together completely. He said he told me it would be Friday only and I had missed it. It was over before I even got close! It was now Saturday morning.

So I missed the whole deal. Called Ron and got directions to his house Saturday morning….like that did much good. Finally called him and had him stand by the road to his diggin's. I had driven right past his place at least four times! He said he lived on a mountain top…..VT calls their mounds, mountains. I was looking for something like one or two thousand feet high above the roadway.

On the way to Ron's I drove into Chester and found a gas station open. Most stations and all parts houses are either closed or open only until noon on Saturdays in VT! He didn't have any cans of brake fluid for sale. But he scrounged around and came up with a half empty small can he filled out of his brake bleeder and gave to me. I filled the master cylinder and pumped the master cylinder about 8 times and let it set a minute. Then did it again. If you're filling a master cylinder after replacing the master cylinder or replacing the line close to the master cylinder, try filling and pumping the brake pedal as I just described. The majority of the time, the air will bleed back into the master cylinder and give a firm pedal. Saves bleeding the brakes. The filling station operator had never heard of such a thing. He was impressed with the way us decrepit old geezers do things the easiest way.

Went out to breakfast with Ron….he had a bowl for his eggs, hash browns, and bacon….which he stirred up! We returned to his shop and garage to repair the wheel cylinder. Nice shop with some good machinery. Several experimental intake manifolds and things laying around from the day before.

Repairing a blown wheel cylinder is a simple job….if you've got the tools and parts. Cleared a spot in the garage and pulled the back half of the roadster inside the open garage area. The left side, where the wheel cylinder was blown, was about 2' from the shelving on the side. Tight quarters but I would have the wheel off and get some added room that way. Jacked it up and put it on some stands in the rear. Pulled the left wheel and asked Ron for a wrench for the axle nut. He didn't have any wrench that big! He did come up with a large pipe wrench. I have always disliked using pipe wrenches on good bolts and nuts……they destroy the nuts so a 12 point wrench will not fit the nut…..especially since Doug (he's a BIG, strong dude) had tightened it to 275 ft/lbs !!!! And so it began…….the wheel cylinder from hell.

Asked Ron Halloran for his wheel puller to pull my right rear wheel. He didn't have one. Now that's a puzzle….. How can anyone who has messed with these flatheads for as many years as Ron has, not have a wheel puller. He raced stock cars for years. Said he

never needed one. I remembered Don Davis, a friend of mine in Denver, had come across one he hadn't used since his high school days and had offered it to me to carry in the roadster saying it didn't take up much room. I had thrown it in just in case before leaving home. It didn't look like the pullers I had used for the past 50 years or so, but I had no choice but to try it. It took a ¾" wrench so I wasn't expecting much out of it. The damn thing worked better than my expensive one back home! It was rusty from sitting in the corner of his garage for over 40 years, but it really worked neat. So I got the drum off. The wheel cylinder was sopping wet from DOT 3 brake fluid as was everything. Wiped the worst of it up.

Pulled the wheel cylinder which took some time due to the rusty brake line. I had to unscrew it all the way with an end wrench. Damn rust. I dismantled the backing plate and took the wheel cylinder apart. The back cup had tilted sideways when I slammed on the brakes. Probably because the shoe wasn't adjusted as tight as the leading shoe for the forward cup. Cleaned the wheel cylinder and all of the parts with some gas and wiped of the backing plate. Washed the brake shoes as good as I could using up the last drop of Ron's lacquer thinner.

Asked Ron if I could borrow his brake cylinder hone. Said he had one but they had cleaned up the shop for the bash a few days before and he didn't know where to look since his grandson had helped him clean the shop and put things out of sight. After some extensive looking we gave up. It was about noon on Saturday by this time. Everything in the way of automotive in the area was closed. Ron got on the phone and called around. Called one of his buds and he had one. But it was about 20 miles away.

Now, Ron has no car or truck. He can't see to drive, so why have one? Makes sense to me. But how was I going to get the wheel cylinder honed when the hone was 20 miles away. Groan!!! He called his grandson who lived a quarter mile away. His father offered to loan us his pickup truck. Nice truck. I just hope no one I knew saw me driving it….. it's a Chevy! Drove to borrow the use of the hone. He let me hone it while he watched. Nice shop and in the middle of a Ford truck restoration. Drove back to Ron's and got there about 2:00 PM. Put the cylinder back together using some brake fluid and the same cups and pistons. Got under the car and started the three bolts which attach the brake cylinder to the backing plate. Didn't tighten them until after I got the brake line started. Assembled the shoes…they had dried out by then. Not real good, but as good as I could have at the time. They'd dry out before long on the hot road home.

Now all I had to do was attach the brake line. Yeah….like that's ever going to happen in my life time! I had to use an end wrench to turn the fitting from the start. I struggled with it for over an hour with no luck getting it started, but I did manage to cross thread it pretty good. Decided to call it a day and try to find a new ¼" brake line the next day…Sunday. Went to the motel and crashed early.

The next morning I called Ron. He had been on the phone looking for a brake line, a brake cylinder, or a parts house that would be open or from a friend. Finally got a lead from a buddy of his about BEST parts would be open at 10:00 for a couple of hours. Got

back in the truck…it sure drove nice… and drove the 27 miles or so to the parts place It was a tad after 10:00 when we got there. I asked for 5' of ¼" steel brake line. I nearly fainted when they went in the back and came right back with one!!!! It had fittings on both ends…one standard length and the other the long length variety. Bought it and some brake fluid and drove back to Ron's.

Had to cut the too-long line about 4" and put a double flair on it. Ron had several Flaring tools and pieces. But they didn't work worth a hoot. Finally figured out it was the worn corrugations on the inside of the tubing holder were letting the tube push through. Used a different tubing holder on the next one. Worked good enough for me since the new brake line was almost too short now!

Ran a few spare fittings in and out the wheel cylinder. It was as good as it was going to get…not good but would probably work with some encouragement. Crawled under the heap and screwed the normal length fitting right in at the front with no problem. I had chosen to use the long fitting on the rear because of the tightness of the area in regard to the wrench. Wrong decision….as I soon found out….oh well…everything else lately had been a wrong decision.

I started to screw the long fitting into the stripped wheel cylinder. It refused to start no matter what I did. The threads were so bad I had to use a wrench from the very start. I used every trick I knew for well over an hour before I finally got it started straight…..or thought I had! It went in about two turns pretty easy…then began tightening up. Damn rust. I was using a Snap-On end wrench out of my roadster and I was soon on the verge of spreading it apart I was pulling on it so hard.

"I wish you had a line wrench" I said to Ron…cussing a lot.

"I've got one." He brought it to me. I looked at it and said "Craftsman. Don't you know better than to buy cheap tools?" I put the wrench on the fitting. The rusty steel line would still wiggle when I tried to move it…indicating the line was not tight yet. I beared down on the line wrench. Got about a quarter turn on it and the line was almost tight enough in the fitting. Finally! Applied more pressure to the line wrench. I could feel it getting soft. Nothing to do, but keep going. Got another eighth of a turn the line was barely loose now. Just a little more. Beared down on the wrench….and felt the wrench go soft. The jaws on the Craftsman line wrench had spread just enough so the jaws rounded off the fitting just enough so the wrench slipped part way over the fitting….and then slid outward toward the wheel….essentially jamming in the wrench against the wheel tight and the other end jammed against the fitting. Used a 3' pry bar with no help and a lot of other things. None helped.. Worked over an hour on it with no change. I couldn't budge the stuck wrench. Finally I came out wiping my hands…cussing pretty good by this time.

"Ron. I can't get it to budge in any direction." There was no way I could get the wheel cylinder on the bench since the wrench was jammed against the backing plate and wheel.

"Just leave it there until you get home," he said.

“Can’t do that. The wrench won’t let the rear wheel be mounted. It rubs hard against the sidewall “ I thought about plugging the left rear brake line and running on three wheel brakes, but the car would be unpredictable with just three brakes.

“Let me see that torch.” I said to Ron. I fired it up and cut the wrench right where it would clear the brake drum. Took maybe a minute.

Put the wheel on and bled the brakes. NO LEAKS! Finished putting my tools away while Ron put his away. Fired the roadster and tried out the brakes on his front lawn. Worked good. I looked like a pig pen….but then I usually do when I’ve been working under a car. It was late in the day and I went back to the motel and worked on getting clean. I crashed early again.

Up early and picked up Ron for his “bowl” breakfast. Then we toured some of the covered bridges and took some pictures. Ron sure knows the area and it’s beautiful county for sure…..now if they just had a 23/7 parts house or two and some old Ford parts.

Left for the trip home on Monday, July 12. The sun was warm and it was partly cloudy. The roadster was running great and the overdrive was shifting pretty well. Nice day for a cruise in a top down roadster with a sweet running flathead. The pipes were rumbling just enough to enjoy. Life is good.

I was cruising along about 75 or so when I came upon road construction (or should that be destruction?). Posted 45 mph so got off the gas and slowed down to 45 mph in overdrive. The traffic cones narrowed. They were the barrel type with sand in them to keep them from being blown over. I was behind a furniture delivery van with duals. He had cut in ahead of me just as the cones began narrowing. His right rear dual clipped a cone and sent it spinning and it began wallowing around. It wallowed back towards me….no place to go. It hit the right corner of the front bumper and bounced up on the outer right front fender and rebounded off. It wasn’t through yet. It hit the driver side door of a parked car……..a state patrol car! Groan big time. It was parked beside a sign which said to the effect “Hit a worker, Go to Jail for 15 years, $12,000 fine, and loss of license”.

That’s all I needed. He jumped in his patrol car and lit the tires up. I pulled over at a wide spot in the median. He pulled in behind me. He came stomping back…his ticket book in hand. To say he was mad is a gross understatement.

He lit into me like a drill sergeant. He took my driver’s license, my insurance card, and my car registration. He was shaking he was so mad. I asked him if he was going to go after the truck that caused the wreck. Well, he didn’t believe me. It took me over an hour to convince him I had been hit by the barrel. And not that I had hit the barrel. Then he got started on the sign and was thinking of taking me in to jail and prosecuting me for hitting his car. More talking. Finally he said he wouldn’t write me up if I didn’t notify the

insurance company. I assured him I would repair the split fender and the bumper myself with out notifying the insurance company.

He looked at my license plate. It's a 1934 Colorado plate. Now he's going to write me up for illegal registration. So I hand him the paper with the state seal on it stating I can run the license plate under the year of manufacture state law. He had never heard of such a thing. So I had to explain the law and how it applied only to certain cars and conditions. Finally he said I could go…..after he wanted to look over the car and the engine. I can go that. It wasn't long until I was underway. What a trip this was getting to be!

Stopped that night and checked the overdrive grease again. Still full and no signs of any leaks. At least it was doing good, although it still was missing shifting into overdrive more and more frequently. And the clutch and/or transmission was acting up.
Called Bill Bentley (Ford site web master) on Wednesday morning when I got near his diggins' outside Grand Junction, MI. Arranged to meet him outside a roadside café so he could lead me to his house. I could easily get lost going to or leaving his house. Followed him to his home. Beautiful place. Front looks out over a lake and the surrounding hills are thick with foliage. Neat garage and a '37 pickup and his '37 coupe. Both are great cars, but his health is preventing him from working on the pickup and doing some things he wants to do.

Used his garage to add some insulation to the roadster floor since I was getting a lot of outside air coming through to the inside. It helped quite a bit. Then we spent the day mostly talking and just kicking tires. He's not doing real well with his breathing.
Spent the night with Bill and Lu, his wife. There aren't any motels for maybe 50 miles from his place. Got up and left for the road the next morning, I was running out of time. Car felt better without all that cold air in the early mornings and hot air the rest of the time.

I was tired of the long days and shut it off early that day. As usual, I got a room first and unloaded luggage. Then I would wash the car. Then shower and go to eat. Then back to the motel for the night. Some routine, but it works for me…old geezer that I am.

Got up the next morning and drove into OH and met some old friends from Denver. Spent the next three days with them. Had a great time Went to a destruction derby one night….hadn't done that in years. Lots of fun. I even worked on their Chevy a little! Left out of the morning of Sunday, July 18 for home. I had a very important doctor's appointment for Tuesday morning, July 20. It was for a diabetes study I was on. I had to be there and with the way things were going I drove late that night and got up early on Monday, July 18…… about 100 miles east of Kansas City. Drove long and hard…not stopping unless I had to…or the roadster needed gas. Some of the time the speedometer was sitting on 85 mph. That old car and I don't much like it at that speed, but then we're both old geezers. I arrived home that night ….after 8:00 PM.

I was beat. 5700 miles round trip. Not the farthest run, but one I had more trouble on. July 21, Wednesday, two days later the roadster is all cleaned up and the oil has been

changed and a grease job and the brake cylinder and brake line had been replaced.. Nice day when I woke up. Decided to take the roadster to breakfast. Fired right off. Was just cruising about 35 mph traveling north on Kipling street to meet the guys for coffee.

Crossed Colfax Avenue and heard a really loud noise. The clutch had come apart. Called Larry Christensen for help. He's one of the guys who meet for breakfast most days of the week. He got his dually and his trailer and loaded me up. Hauled my roadster home. We pushed it back into the garage since I had to pull the rear end out. Called Ron who lives on my block and he came and said it wasn't much of a job to repair the fender and pull out the bumper. And he would get it done in the next few days….like that is EVER going to happen.

Pulled the rear end. Pulled the transmission. Everything looked normal. However, the junk in the bell housing sure didn't look good. Lots of bent springs, pulled and bent dowels which ripped through the steel (?) disc that locate the anti-chatter springs etc. The fiber disc didn't show any damage. Damn Chinese clutch I had bought at a swap meet from a guy who swore it was NOS. Best I never see him again!

Decided while the rear end was out, to look at the Columbia and see how the new parts were fairing Pulled it apart… and nearly puked! Burned bad again. Scored parts etc. Now it gets to the bad stuff…….

Sat in the middle of the floor examining the carnage. Nothing to do but try to figure out what caused the Columbia to get so hot.

The bearings weren't hurt for the most part…..just a couple needed replacing. There were metal-to-metal contacts on nearly all of the rotating parts. Some were real bad, but some were barely scratches. All of the Teflon cushioning pads (about ¼" x 1" x 1/16" thick in size) in the clutch were non-existent…. I found one sliver about the size of the flat spot on a wooden match. All of the rest of the Teflon had melted and was mixed in with the grease! Takes a lot of heat to melt this stuff…or so I've been told.

Bernie and I hauled all of the pieces out to Jim Nieslsen….the parts house guy who ordered all of the stuff. He knows Columbia overdrives as well as anyone. Went over each piece looking for the reason for the heat. When it's looked at with an impartial eye, you'd say it was run out of grease. But anyone who knows me, knows that's not going to happen. Nothing else could have caused so much heat unless something inside wasn't machined to the correct size or some manufacture flaw that we couldn't find. We all know the chances of a manufacture admitting they were wrong. Kept it at Jims for a few days to think about things. Several phone calls were made to Conley.

Finally boxed up all but the housings, and shipped it to Conley. He examined it and said I had run it out of grease….that it wasn't anything he had or hadn't done. He said I had so much rake on the car that the rear end leaked grease down the driveshaft and into the transmission……that's where the grease went. Odd, that had never happened in 180,000 miles and I had replaced the driveshaft seal and bushing in Jan of this year. I run sealed

bearing in the back of the transmission to prevent this. He said to buy a special seal and adapter made in Texas which would fit between the driveshaft and the pinion shaft. $110 more. Ordered one. When it came here it was the wrong one. Two phone calls later, the guy said it had been his error. So back it went and it took two weeks for the right one to get here. More delays. Conley was asked to check everything out and send back whatever parts we needed to make it right.. This was about July 28.

Meantime I had Jim looking for a NOS or new 9" clutch disc for the car to replace the cheap Chinese junk. I swear I will NEVER use any Chinese crap in my cars!! I couldn't believe when Jim came across both a NOS 9" disc and pressure plate. The throw-out bearing was getting a tad rough so I took out the plug I had put in it and shot it with two shots of grease. It should last another 100,000 miles with no noises. Spent nearly a week searching for the clutch and disc.

Meantime, nothing was heard about the overdrive. Called him and he said everyone there said I had run it out of grease. Yeah…..right. He said he had to do the Early V8 annual meet in St. James, UT and would get mine done after the meet was over. Three weeks later another call made. He was just going to start on it! Funny how long it takes to get something done….except when you're doing it for someone else.

Put the new clutch in and put the transmission back in. Repaired a few things that had bugged me on the trip since I couldn't drive the roadster. At least it was something to do. Not a problem really… I had my '66 Ranchero to drive while the roadster was down. Good idea…not.

The weekend after I blew the clutch, I drove the Ranchero out to look for at a 9" clutch a good friend of mine had. When I left there, I backed it up to turn it around……just like I always did. Except this time I hit a pole with the left rear corner of the truck! Neat…just one more damn thing! Drove it home and called Ron. He came over and said it wasn't much and he could straighten and paint and finish it in four days….yeah…right. Like any body/paint man ever met a target date. He started it a few days later. Today is December 1 and it still isn't done….and neither is the roadster fender!!!! I guess I just expect too much.

Time passes. During this time, I replaced the tired and worn out insulation in the roadster. I made a new floor board that wasn't broken in two pieces. Fits nice and should reduce engine and outside heat/cold. Fixed some other things that needed fixing. Didn't last long in the garage each day.

Finally got the overdrive parts October 12….. along with a nice bill! No allowance for anything! That surprised Bernie, Jim, and me…….I thought sure he would at least pay shipping one way at the very, very least. But no…and no discount for anything. He told Bernie on the phone he had put it all together and then took it apart to be sure everything was right. Shipped all of the pieces back to us. Had another NEW sun gear….saying the one that was in it was damaged and couldn't be used. He sent the old Sun gear back to me. I have to tell you…..I've built a lot of rear ends and transmissions using a hell of a lot

worse gears than the sun gear was…..@ $250 I would have probably used the rough one.
Parts list
A-5 & A-23 set of locks
A-20 differential outer case cone
A- 8 differential outer case bearing cap
A-15 & A-26 pinion shaft and gear (3)
A-3 special gasket for overdrive housing (1)
A-50 assortment of rear end housing gaskets
A-32 synchro assembly kit
A-27 Sun gear
A-12 bushing
Labor and repairs to A-17 & A-25
Freight and insurance to CA
Freight and insurance to CO
Total = $765. Not counting the miscellaneous things like grease, gasket sealer, a new axle bushing end and another new rear wheel bearing which ads up.

Good, now I can finally get the roadster back together and get on Ron's butt about the paint. But Bernie had to visit family in the Dakotas for a little over a week…..then he had to finish the floors in his basement conversion….so that took almost a week….and then it's Veterans' Day, etc. etc. During this time, I had the flu and a GD cold that I couldn't get rid of. Spent nearly 3 weeks in a chair flipping channels… my favorite thing!

Then Bernie calls. He just noticed the rear axle bearing race on the driver side housing is getting bad. Take it down to have a new one machined on. Leave it off at Jim's Thursday about noon. I'm told it'll be ready that afternoon. Drive to Jims at 4:00. He didn't get it to the guy in time. And he doesn't work Fridays or Saturdays! Another delay! Finally get it late Monday afternoon.

Bernie becomes available. Things are looking up!!!! Except I'm sick enough that I can't stand and help put it together. So he puts it together at home while I try to get better at home. Three days go by and I call him mid-morning. He was just about finished with it and would finish it that that morning. An hour later he calls……Conley had shipped us a thicker Sun gear…….so thick the axle will not go through it. Bernie has to dismantle most of the overdrive to get it out. The Sun gear has to be machined , or the axle machined, or the correct Sun gear is needed. I'm not interested in having special axles that have to be machined. Like that would be available in VT on a Saturday afternoon! Or machine out the Sun gear. I've heard the reason Deats made thicker ones was he didn't want to get involved in heat treating to the old standards. If that's true, then machining the inside would weaken it.

Called Conley. I'm sure he thinks I'm switching parts since John Deats made some thick ones and machined down the axle diameter. He says he's never had a Deats sun gear and wouldn't use one if he had it. More phone calls follow. It takes a week before he gets around to shipping another one. Bernie puts the overdrive together. This time everything fits right. Finally! Jim ships the thick Sun gear to Conley.

Bernie brings the overdrive out Monday, November 15. Begin to put the rear end pieces together…. Like the driveshaft, backing plates, e-brake, wheels, housing, etc. One morning I ask Doug if he's available. He comes down and helps me shove the driveshaft in. Sure is nice to be healthy and strong. We work about 3-4 hours and have almost all of the work done. After lunch I call it quits. I'm wore out. I'm still sick so can't work much…like a few hours a day…and skipping days frequently.

Finally I get better and manage to get it together on November 22 . A week to put a rear end in! Ridiculous!

Started it up while on the stands. Ran it at 20 mph in high gear to circulate the new EP 90-140 gear oil Then shift it into overdrive. It shifts in and out of overdrive smoothly with no balking or anything. Finally! I take it out for a test run. Sweet. No noises. BUT it's not going out of overdrive… at least it doesn't feel that way, but I'm only doing 30 mph and can't really tell. Cold out so drive it home and park it. Maybe tomorrow I'll feel like checking the vacuum connections. And taking it out and driving it faster to determine if it is shifting.
Total cost thus far for the overdrive is roughly $3400. Sure makes a five speed look attractive.

So there you have my crappy summer. No wonder I'm tired after reading all of this. Now if it just works!