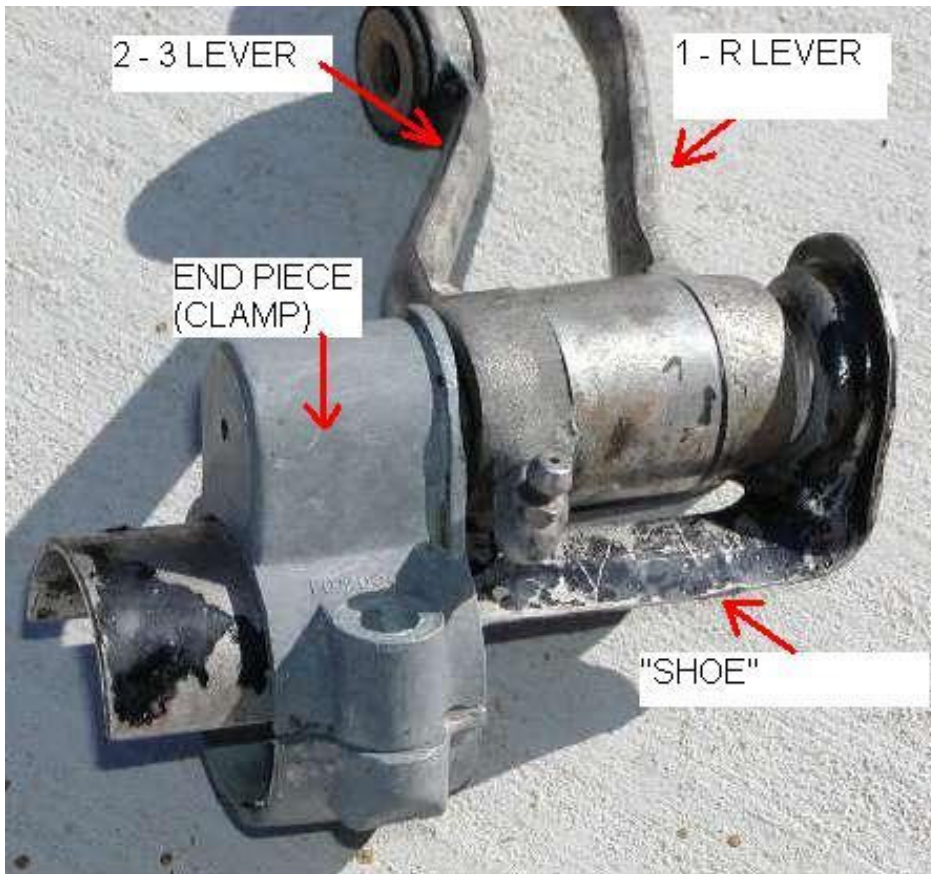


## Ford F-Series Column Shift Repairs

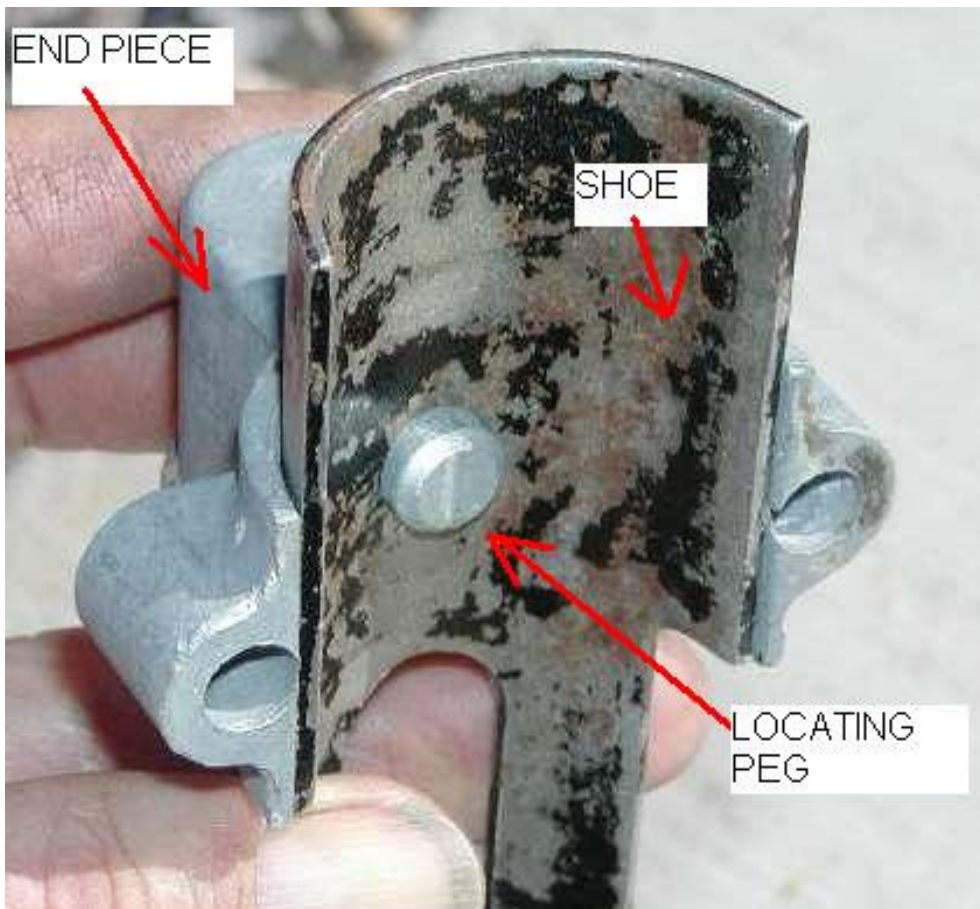
I've had it on my list to tighten up the linkage on my '52's column shift setup for a long time. I tried to get it apart when I had all the front end sheet metal off, and it was easy to get at, but couldn't figure out how to get it loose of the column. The factory manual is useless, it gives no detail of the removal process. Not even a picture of the F-1 "remote control" system. So this describes how I got mine off the truck without removing the shifter tube or whole steering column. Ford used this exact setup on cars from '49 - '59, and trucks from '48 - '56.

It's a simple system. To remove the assembly, start by removing the column shift lever. This is super easy; just use two small punches to depress the two spring-loaded pivot pins on the lever, then pull the lever out. Be aware: the pivot pins and spring will shoot out.

Next go under the hood, and undo the two bolts holding the clamp piece just above the steering box. The lower half of the clamp will come free.

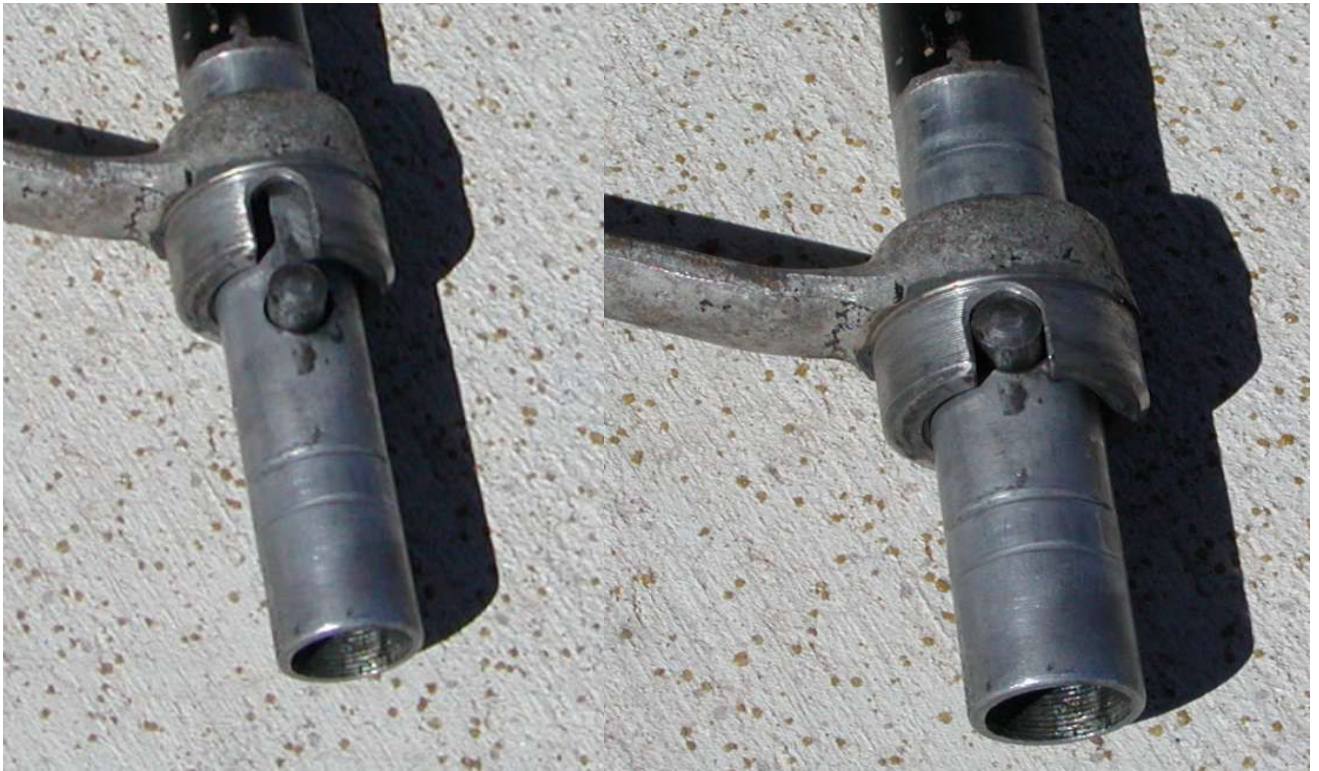


The upper half is locked to the "shoe" plate under it, and to the steering column, with a round peg cast into it.



So you need to pry the shoe up away from the steering column to get the peg clear of the column. Once you do that, you need to pry the upper half of the clamp away from the shoe, so the peg is clear of the shoe. Once it is clear, you can slide the end piece off the shifter tube. Then slide the wave washer and 2-3 lever off. To get the 1-R lever off, you'll need to pull a steel pin out of the shifter tube. It should just drop out. Then slide the lever, wave washer, and shoe off the tube. Push the shifter tube up to get the clearance needed for the shoe.

The shifter tube is a hollow steel tube, with a hole drilled thru it near the bottom. In this hole there is a steel pin (the one just removed). The steel pin engages into slots in the 1-2 and 3-4 levers, to move them.



As you can see, there isn't a lot of wear in my shift levers' slots. The pin shows some wear, where the tube contacts it. The pin is hardened steel and the shifter tube is mild steel, so the tube will be worse than the pin. The pins are available from Obsolete Ford Parts and others, P/N 01A-7337, only a couple of bucks.

WEAR

Getting the shifter tube out is pretty easy; just drop the column support (remove the bolts to instrument panel and loosen the pinch bolt) down to the floor, and you'll be able to swing the shift tube to the side to clear the steering wheel, and pull it out.

My pin wasn't that worn, it's the hole in the tube. The tube is hollow but actually has a steel plug inside it with a hole for the pin. It is pushed inside the tube and then peened in two places thru the outer tube (they punched the outer tube to lock the inner plug). My

inner plug had gotten loose inside the tube, too. If this is your situation, you could just drill and pin the plug to the outer tube, and get a good improvement. I wanted “like new”, so I took my shifter tube to my favorite machinist (Gene at Noor Mfg. in Albuquerque, a super guy). He made up a whole new lower end for the tube out of 1018 carbon steel. It’s got a spigot on the upper end that was pressed into the remaining tube, welded, then turned down. It is better than new! Look at the difference in the shape of the hole. Price for the work was very reasonable.



After cleaning up the assembly, look it over. Look for anything that’s not a tight fit any more. The linkage rods attach to the levers thru a brass and rubber bushing. The rubber allows some flex and absorbs some vibration, but can deteriorate and allow a whole lot of slop. Unfortunately, I believe that Bonus Built replacement parts are not available, but similar late-model parts can be adapted ( I think they are at least partly plastic). Mine in the picture is near-new.

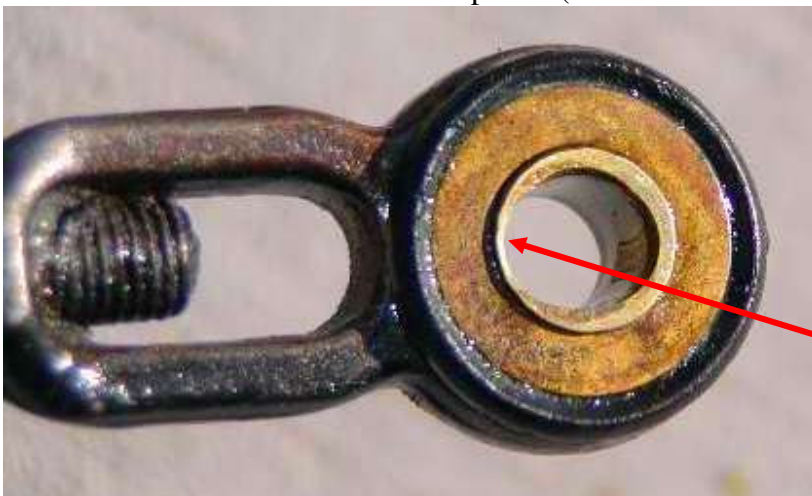
The linkage rod itself where it sits in the grommet can get worn, too. Welding-up and grinding back can be done to restore.

The shoe has a leather seal in the upper end, P/N 01A-7314 (doesn't appear to be available any more). This is not only to keep grease in the levers and dirt out, but it keeps the shifter tube from rattling around. You could probably make a new one out of leather, but I found that three 7/8" ID x 1" OD O-rings fit perfectly in there, side-by-side, and do the job quite well. Make sure it's clean and oiled or greased when you put it back together.

The 1-R and 2-3 levers are pushed together on the shifter tube by wave washers, one at each end of the assembly (between the clamp piece and the 2-3 lever, and between the 1-R lever and the shoe piece). One of mine is worn thin, and not providing much push. They are P/N 351560-S7, and are available from Green Sales, Obsolete Ford, and many others. (The basic column shift parts were virtually the same from 49 – 59 on cars, 48 – 56 trucks).

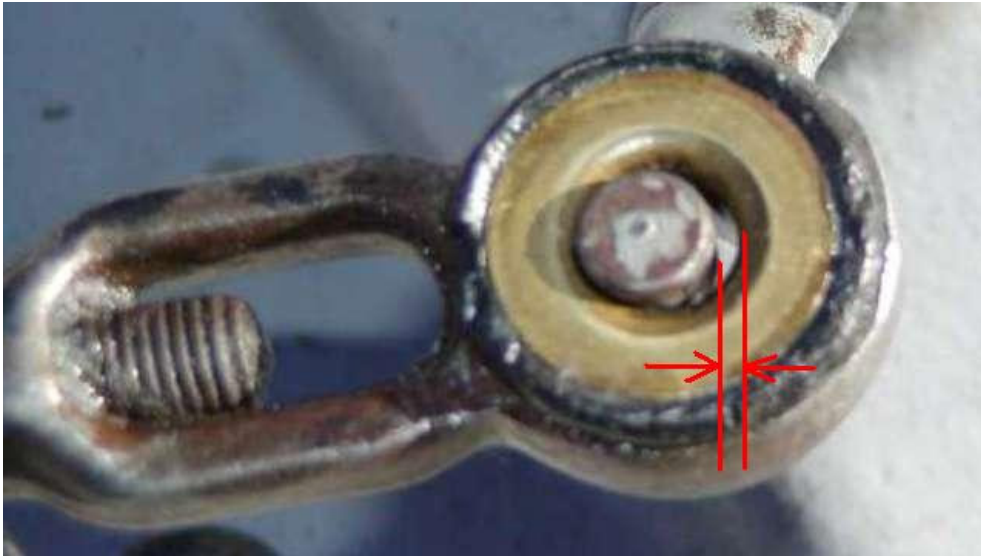


Next is the highest-wear part: the link end at the trans levers. The same type of brass and rubber grommet is used in an adjustable end piece. Mine are shot! These can be repaired with a kit available from Dennis Carpenter (P/N 01A-7354-RK, \$5 apiece at this time).



Worn area

See how much slop there is with the grommet sitting on the shifter lever pin?



That translates into a lot of lost motion when shifting. Worse yet, the pins in the shifter levers also get loose in the shifter levers. The pins are made at the factory to press into holes in the levers, then are peened over to hold them in place. Over the years, the pins get wobbly and the peening doesn't hold the pin tightly. I suppose they could be re-peened, but the best fix I've seen is to clean up the lever and pin and braze the pins into the levers. It works great. You have to get the braze material wicked into the hole in the lever, all the way thru.

Assembly is the reverse of above. That's what the manuals always say, right?? I won't leave you hanging with that.

Slide the column tube back in from the top. Slide the column support/clamp up to its position, but just loosely thread on the nuts. This leaves the tube loose enough to move up and away from the steering column tube at the bottom end, which you need.

Make sure the upper end of the shifter tube is piloted properly over the fixed piece and spring on the top of the column. I used a piece of twine to hold it up to the steering wheel.

Slide on the shoe, then a wave washer, then the 1-R lever, the 2-3 lever, another wave washer, then the end piece. When you put the levers on, make sure they are pointing down and clear of the block; you can't swing them around on the shaft, they hit the rear of the block/bellhousing. Use lots of grease. (There is a grease fitting on the 2-3 lever, but packing it with heavy grease guarantees it gets everywhere it needs to). To get the end piece on, you need to angle the shift tube up and away from the shoe in order for the peg to clear. If you have the arms of a jabba man, you can compress the wave washers

enough to get the peg up and into the hole in the shoe. I don't (not while leaning over a fender, anyway!), so I used arc-joint pliers to gently squeeze the whole assembly. You'll feel the peg drop in. Now slide the whole assembly around on the steering column until you feel the peg drop into the hole in it. Put on the lower half of the clamp and the two bolts. You're just about done!

Put the shift lever back into the top of the tube (note that many levers are slightly angled towards the driver – get it on the right way!). Re-attach the shift rods to the shifter assembly and the trans (with some grease). I use hitch pins instead of cotter pins, they're much easier to remove. Use washers on the sides of the bushings to take up side slop, but they shouldn't be real tight.

Happy shifting!

-- Albuq F-1 (Ross)

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