

## 1969 Ford F-100



The best car ever made was a truck. In Particular, the 1969 Ford F-100 truck is the best car in the world. To explain why, I have to start by saying I bought mine back in about 1997 for \$400. It was my first truck and I really can't remember why I bought it in the first place. In any case, \$400 is cheap, cheap, cheap. I put about another \$400 in it over the course of the next few months just making it a bit more road-worthy. These repairs amounted to a new water pump, engine fan, assorted belts and hoses, break work, and a universal joint. I also had to ditch the bias-ply tires that were, amazingly, still on the thing.

The tires, brakes, and U-joint repair reminds me that I have one big gripe before I move on to how awesome this little truck was. The gripe is not about the truck, but rather about a certain repair shop in Plymouth who I set to the task because I had limited space for working on cars at my apartment. Not wanting to name names, the company was located in Plymouth and was a Tire and Service Center. Also not naming names, the service manager's last name was exactly like mine, but I won't mention it here. Long story longer, I took it to them for the tires and front wheel cylinders (yep- drums), but NOT the U-joint, which I was going to change myself. When I came to pick it up, they had charged me a remarkable \$50+ dollar per wheel cylinder in the front and then informed me that the back ones were bad, too. I told them that I had inspected those and they were fine. The man whose name rhymes with Dilbert took me to look at my truck up on the lift: "See where the brake fluid is leaking from the rear wheel cylinder" he pointed. With my own finger I simply popped the rubber seal back on and asked him if he thought I was stupid, or was it the other way around. I also informed him that, even if I tried, I could not find wheel cylinders for over \$25 for such a ubiquitous model. Before leaving, he tried to

charge me for replacing the U-joint I asked him not to replace. No matter, since I pointed out to him that he had not changed it anyway.

Ok, gripe finished. Now, back to the magnificent vehicle that is the '69 F-100. Generally, one rates a car by comparing its efficiency, its reliability, and its maintainability. In the case of this at-the-time 30 year old antique, the reliability was nearly nonexistent. The gas sipping 240 inline six gave it acceptable marks for efficiency, but what really set this thing apart was maintainability that was off the chart! Most everything on it could be fixed with a screwdriver and a wrench. I used to stand flat on the pavement under the hood beside the engine while conducting maintenance – the narrow straight 6 giving me gobs of space to work. Parts were always on the shelves at every car parts store I went to (and I visited many). In fact, a handful of tools thrown behind the seat where I also kept an alternator, a fuel pump, a few belts and hoses, a set of points, a distributor cap and rotor, a coil, and assorted fluids, got me from Plymouth, Indiana, to Miami and back again. The same arrangement got Patrick Guyse from Plymouth to Dallas! Pat will also remember periodically crawling under the truck while it blocked traffic to use pliers to reattach the shifting linkage. The thing could be, and was, repaired anywhere at any time with any tools available. In fact, when my brother had thoughtfully over-revved the engine in a fit of rage at being stuck in 1st due to the linkage issue, bending some push rods, I affected repairs by way of a convenient lifter access panel on the side of the block. Very convenient.

My fondest story about this truck involves the one thing I could not fix myself – the worn out kingpin bushings. This little issue caused the front end to dodge and weave with the precision steering of a lawn tractor. One lonely night careening my way through Kentucky's Bluegrass Region at a blistering 50 mph, I was stunned to see blue flashing lights in my rear view. Upon stopping, the cop walked up and asked "Do you know why I pulled you over?" I said something like "Yah, I was probably swerving a bit because the kingpin bushings are shot in this thing." Then he said the weirdest thing: "Well that, and your license isn't laminated." I was shocked and amazed that he seemed to have knowledge about something in my wallet that I had not yet showed him. "My license isn't laminated?" "That's right," he asserted, "you're supposed to have your license laminated." I assured him that it was laminated. It had come like that. Besides, how would he know if it were still in my wallet? "No, no. Your license PLATE- it has to be laminated." I was dumbfounded and asked for clarification several times. Each time he assured me that in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, as with most states, it was that law that my license plate be laminated. Around the third time he said this it dawned on me, and I said it aloud accidentally: "Oooohhhh! You mean illuminated." I have never seen a man look more embarrassed, and he just walked away without a word. Now I know how my British friends feel.