

by Pat Ganahl

NO BUM STEER

An Early Ford can use better steering; here's help for '35-'48's.

The three major modernizations which distinguish street rods from restored antiques are updated drivetrain, brakes, and steering. Each of these subjects has supplied our magazines with reams of editorial content for years. Rodders are always finding a better way to do one or the other.

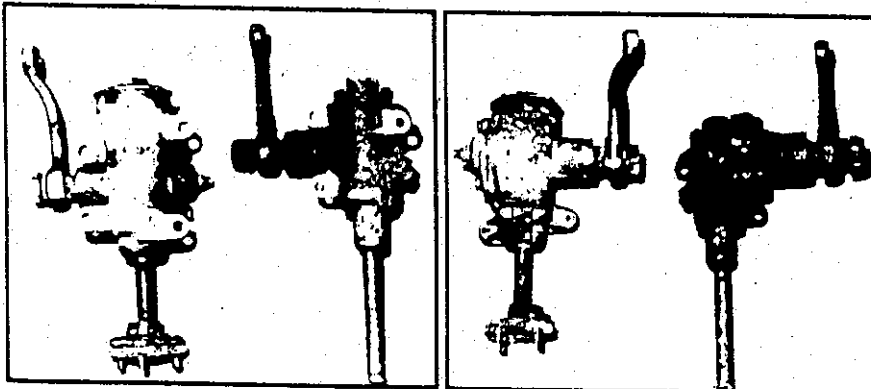
In 1935 Henry Ford figured out that his cars would steer better if he ran the drag link parallel to the tie rod — we call it "cross steering" these days. But he hadn't yet devised recirculating ball worm gears for his steering boxes. Even rebuilt to original specs, '35-'36 Ford steering systems are far from finger-touch. And

finding the parts to rebuild the gear, plus the coin to pay for them, can be difficult.

So rodders, in their usual resourceful manner, have been researching applicable late-model substitutes at the wrecking yards. Several have found the GM Saginaw or Vega steering gear to be not only good, plentiful, and inexpensive units, but also ones that will readily adapt to most mid-thirties to late forties cars in need of better direction. In fact, if you ignore one of the mounting studs and drill some extra holes, you can actually bolt one into a '35-'48 Ford and make it work. But that is kind of sloppy.

Just recently Pete & Jake's Hot Rod Repair Shop had an order to modernize a '36 Ford. They figured the Saginaw box would be perfect for the steering (which it was), and they set about making a neat little adapter plate which would mount the same steering in anybody's '35 or '36 Ford. Naturally, they now have lots of the adapters and are willing to sell.

The steering box used for this installation is from a '64-'65 Chevelle or '70-'78 Vega. This box has a pitman arm that can be easily re-tapered to accept the stock Ford tie rod end. However, most GM cars up through the present are using this Saginaw box. Another great adventure to this swap is that the Saginaw power steering unit, should you wish power assist for your street rod, is only slightly larger than the standard box and mounts to the same bracket. An added bonus is that the power box's arm (which



The Saginaw steering box, as used in '64-'65 Chevelles and other GM cars, compares closely with a stock '36 Ford gearbox (Ford unit is on right).