

Check the Drawbar on Your Motorcar Trailer

By Mike Paul

In the Fall 1988 issue of *THE SETOFF*, an article written by myself on motorcar trailers was published. In that article, I recommended that a tilt-bed trailer manufactured by Chilton Mfg. Co. would be perfect for transporting a motorcar. I subsequently purchased the model UT6020S-1 trailer in June 1990 and had used it without incident until July 24, 1994.

On that date, while traveling down the highway at 55 m.p.h. with my M19 aboard the trailer, the drawbar collapsed at one of the formed bends, and the bent drawbar scraped along the highway until I was able to slow down and bring my rig to a stop on the shoulder. After appraising the damage, I then attempted to drive the disabled trailer off the highway shoulder into a roadside business, and in so doing, the drawbar completely broke in half, leaving a three-foot-long section of the drawbar attached to my tow vehicle and the rest of the trailer sitting forlornly, nose down in the gravel yard of the roadside business.

The reason for bringing this incident to the attention of *THE SET-OFF* readership is that I am aware that a number of my motorcar brethren have purchased the Chilton model UT6020S-1 trailer. The manufacturer admitted to me that there had been a couple of incidents of cracked drawbars with this particular model trailer prior to my episode, and he immediately replaced my drawbar with a new one at no cost to myself.

I am therefore advising all owners of the Chilton model UT6020S-1 tilt-bed trailer to carefully check their trailer drawbars at the two formed bends for evidence of cracking, particularly on the undersides of those bends. If cracks are noted, the drawbar should be replaced immediately to avoid the situation I encountered. If you doubt

your ability to determine if the drawbar is cracked, your professional weld shop should be willing to appraise this situation for you. I asked Chilton to gusset the two bend areas on the new drawbar and they graciously complied.

If you are concerned about the integrity of your drawbar, even though cracks are not evident, you might ask an experienced, professional welder to put gussets on both sides of the formed bend areas to increase the drawbar strength. If you elect to have this done, be sure that your welder is competent. The drawbar is a thin-wall tube and if welding is not done properly, the drawbar may be weakened rather than strengthened if gusseted improperly.

Since I have been unable to find any engineering standards that apply to trailers other than the coupler and safety chains, I suspect that this is a "Buyers Beware" situation not requiring the trailer manufacturer to issue a recall. Therefore, it is up to the trailer owner to ensure that his trailer is roadworthy.

