One was Childe Harold Wills, who hated the "Childe" appellation his mother had found in a Lord Byron poem and always went by "C.H." or "C. Harold." Wills was a brilliant and creative mechanical engineer and designer. His father had been a mechanical engineer as well. Early on, Wills had been involved in Ford's many racing ventures and would contribute much to the Ford Motor Company.

Wills had worked on the planetary transmission used in earlier Ford Motor Company cars. He was said to have come up with the Model T's shared engine and transmission lubrication system while taking a bath! 13

According to Balough, the planetary transmission may not have been used, save for the fate of an accident when a prototype Model T was being tested.

"This model incorporated a sliding gear transmission in place of the standard planetary transmission in the earlier Ford cars," Balough recalled. "Mr. Ford wasn't sold on this type. It fell to my lot to take the car on a trial run." 14

Balough's test run ended in disaster. It was a busy time of day as three street cars converged near the Ford plant taking workers home. One of the street cars turned just as he was trying to pass it.

"The experimental model was completely wrecked, crushed between the street car and a telegraph pole," said Balough. "Naturally I was worried about what Mr. Ford's reaction would be. He said: 'Charley, that's the best job you ever did for this company.'" 15

Balough recalled that the sliding gear transmission was abandoned but that the team then turned to the possibility of a three-speed planetary transmission as their next step. When that transmission proved problematic, Balough said Ford's reaction was philosophical.