

a portion of said reinforcing ribs being in abutting relationship with the interior surfaces of said shell, said reinforcing ribs defining a longitudinal passage through said elongated shell for receiving and supporting a rotatable shaft,

wherein said reinforcing ribs are formed by molding of plastic material onto the interior surfaces of said shell, and a portion of the plastic material of said reinforcing ribs extends through at least some of said perforations of said shell, the edges of said perforations being embedded in the plastic material extending there-through, thereby attaching fixedly said reinforcing ribs to said shell.

14. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein said shell is fabricated from a material selected from metal, thermoset plastic material, thermoplastic material and combinations thereof.

15. The shaft support structure of claim 14 wherein said shell is fabricated from metal.

16. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein at least a portion of at least one of the interior surfaces and exterior surfaces of said shell are covered with a layer of molded on plastic material.

17. The shaft support structure of claim 16 wherein at least a portion of the exterior surface of said shell is covered with exterior molded on plastic material, the exterior molded on plastic material is continuous with the plastic material of said reinforcing ribs, and further fixedly attaches said ribs to said shell.

18. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein the plastic material extending through and embedding said edges of said perforations defines substantially plastic lined apertures in said elongated shell.

19. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein said reinforcing ribs are further fixedly attached to said shell by attachment means selected from fasteners, adhesives, snap connections and combinations thereof.

20. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein the plastic material of said reinforcing ribs is selected from thermoset plastic materials, thermoplastic materials and combinations thereof.

21. The shaft support structure of claim 20 wherein the plastic material of said reinforcing ribs is a thermoplastic

material selected from thermoplastic polyurethane, thermoplastic polyurea, thermoplastic polyimide, thermoplastic polyamide, thermoplastic polyamideimide, thermoplastic polyester, thermoplastic polycarbonate, thermoplastic polysulfone, thermoplastic polyketone, thermoplastic polypropylene, thermoplastic acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene and thermoplastic compositions containing one or more thereof.

22. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein said plastic material of said reinforcing ribs is reinforced with a material selected from glass fibers, carbon fibers, boron fibers, metal fibers and mixtures thereof.

23. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein said reinforcing ribs form a continuous unitary structure within the hollow interior of said elongated shell.

24. The shaft support structure of claim 13 wherein at least some of said perforations have deformed edge portions, and said deformed edge portions are embedded in the plastic material extending therethrough.

25. The shaft support structure of claim 13 further comprising within said longitudinal passage at least one rolling bearing means for rotatably supporting said shaft.

26. The shaft support structure of claim 25 wherein said rolling bearing means is supported within said longitudinal passage by a plastic boss, said plastic boss being continuous with said reinforcing ribs and being formed concurrently with the formation of said reinforcing ribs by molding of plastic material onto the interior surfaces of said shell.

27. The support shaft structure of claim 13 wherein said support shaft structure is a steering column and said rotatable shaft is a rotatable steering shaft.

28. The shaft support structure of claim 27 wherein at least a portion of said shaft support structure is irreversibly longitudinally collapsible.

29. The shaft support structure of claim 28 further comprising a rake adjustment plate fixed to the exterior of a side wall of said shell, said rake adjustment plate comprising plastic material and being formed by molding of plastic material onto the exterior surface of said side wall of said shell.

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