

CHEERIO! A YANKEE CAR JUNKYARD IN ENGLAND!

DEC '98 - \$3.95
Canada - 4.95

CARS & PARTS®



Plymouth's Thunderous '59 Fury

**Hudson's sporty
'34 conv. coupe**

'65 Pontiac Catalina

SHOWS

**Auburn; Hoosier;
Milestone
Car Society**

How-to-Resto

- Installing the seats
- Overheating:
The cure!



FEATURES

1959 Plymouth Sport Fury conv.	10
Springfield Fall '98 Swap Meet	16
Springfield Fall '98 Car Corral	17
McDorman's Concours	18
1965 Pontiac Catalina	20
1934 Hudson 8 convertible coupe	28
Corvettes at Carlisle	36
Resto How-To:	
Interior: Final Installation	38
Overheating: The Cure	41
Auburn '98 Swap Meet	45
Auburn '98 Car Corral	46
Milestone Car Society Grand National ..	48
Hoosier '98 Swap Meet	49
Hoosier '98 Car Corral	50
History of Dodge, Part 5	54
All American Auto Parts in England	58
Auburn '98 Auction	61

COLUMNS

Editor's Stop	6	New Products	53
Reader Forum	8	Free Wheeling	54
Voice of the Hobby	25	Ford Country	64
In the Headlights ..	26	Tool Bag	66
At the Wheel	34	Calendar of Events	68
Tech Tips	43	Vendor Locator ..	70
Auto Trivia Quiz ..	52	Editorial Index ...	136

CLASSIFIEDS

Collector Car Corral	73
Classified Marketplace	75
Classified Word Ad Form	137
Index to Advertisers	138

'59 Plymouth Fury convertible ... 10

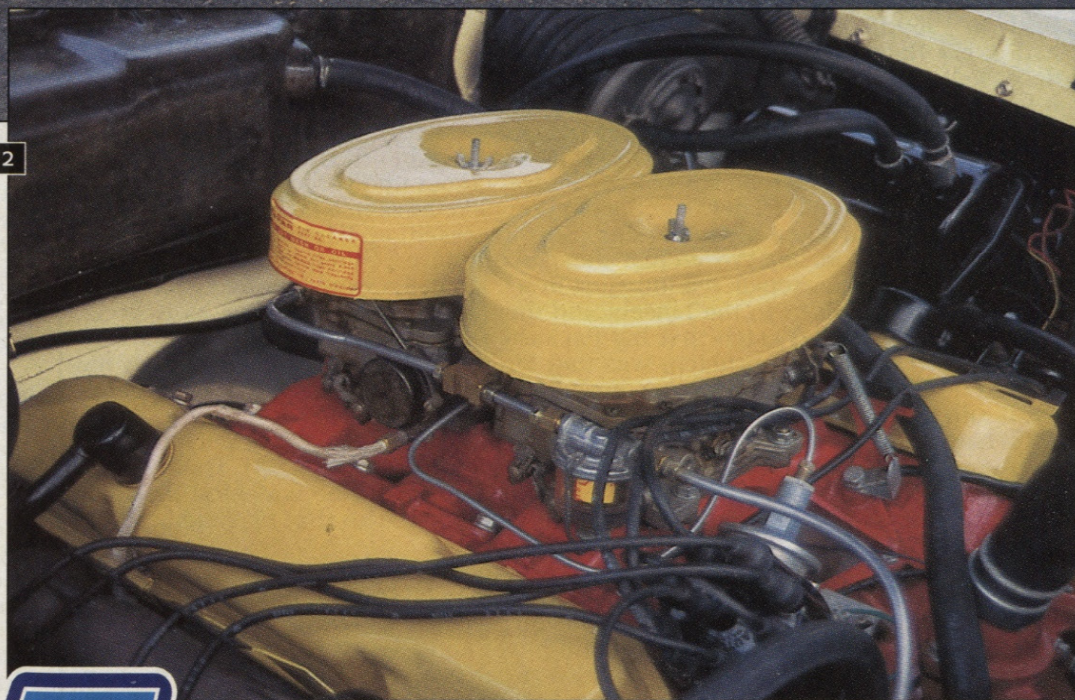


'65 Pontiac Catalina ... 20



'34 Hudson 8 convertible ... 28

SUBSCRIPTION RATES, (monthly frequency): U.S. 12 issues \$26.95, (1st class \$46.95), 24 issues \$46.95, (1st class \$86.95); outside USA: 12 issues \$41.95 (air mail \$66.95); 24 issues \$76.95; (air mail \$126.95). Free 20-word ad for each renewed subscription for use any time during subscription term. Allow 4-6 weeks for new subscription. **ARTICLES**, news items and photographs are welcome. Unsolicited material cannot be acknowledged or returned unless accompanied by return postage and self-addressed envelope. We cannot be responsible for material sent, but every safeguarding effort will be taken. We reserve the right to edit material submitted, solicited or unsolicited. Send all material to Cars & Parts, Editorial Dept., P.O. Box 482, Sidney, Ohio 45365-0482. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**: Send new and old addresses before you move. Include current label or write both addresses and zip codes. Your postmaster can supply change of address form #3579. Allow 4-6 weeks for changes. **EDITORIAL OFFICES**: 911 Vandemark Road, Sidney, Ohio. Mail address: P.O. Box 482, Sidney, Ohio 45365-0482. Customer Service, 1-800-448-3611, or 937-498-0803. Hours: Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM. **CARS & PARTS** (USPS 537-850) (ISSN 0008-6975) is published monthly at \$26.95 per year by Amos Press Inc., 911 Vandemark Road, Sidney, Ohio 45365-0482. Additional issue published in September. Periodicals postage paid at Sidney, Ohio and additional entry points. (GST R1-26225960). **POSTMASTER**: Address changes to Cars & Parts, Customer Service, P.O. Box 482, Sidney, Ohio 45365-0482. **NEWSSTAND BUYERS**: Cars & Parts goes on sale by the 21st of each month. Please ask your favorite newsstand to stock Cars & Parts. Newsstand info: 1-800-221-3148. **MAILING LIST AVAILABLE**: To rent the Cars & Parts mailing list call D-J Associates, 203-431-8777. **EDITOR'S NOTE**: Any attempt by a reader to perform any repair or restoration procedure described or pictured in Cars & Parts is performed at his or her own risk. **A Division of AMOS PRESS INC.** Entire Contents Copyright 1998 by Amos Press Inc., Sidney, Ohio. **PRINTED IN THE USA**



by Bob Stevens

It's difficult to select the best model of a certain make for an entire decade, but in the case of Plymouth in the '50s, there's only one "best of" and it's the fabulous Fury. And the top Fury of the decade known popularly as the "nifty fifties" is clearly the Sport Fury of 1959, or at least that was the consensus among the experts at the time, and among collectors today. It's not hard to figure out why.

The '59 Sport Fury combined superb handling, a comfortable ride, rich exterior appointments, luxurious interior highlights, torrid

Sport Fury Convertible

Plymouth's best in '59

Photos by the author

1. Although essentially a carry-over from '58, the '59 Plymouth line received some fine tuning with new appointments, colors, etc. Up front, a new egg-crate-style grille and refashioned bumper helped with the requisite annual facelift.

2. The Sport Fury was not only the premium luxury offering in the Plymouth camp, but also the "hot" one for '59. Standard was a 260-hp 318-cid V-8 with four-barrel carb, while performance options included this 361-cid V-8 with 305 hp on tap. The dealer-installed dual-four setup, a leftover from the '58 model year, boosted the power to 330.



3

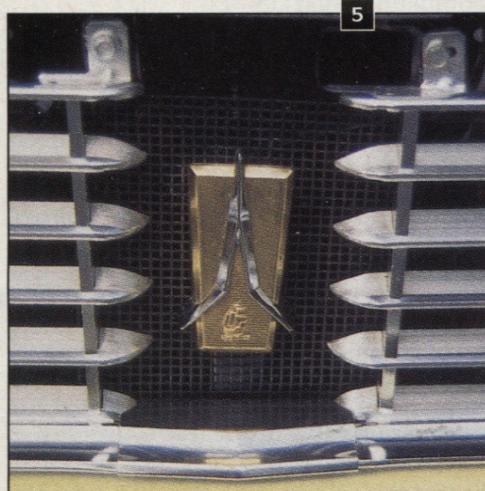
3. Easily the top-of-the-line Plymouth for 1959, the Sport Fury convertible sold new for \$3,125; only the Fury Sport Suburban nine-passenger wagon was more expensive, and then by only six dollars! This one, pretty well equipped, stickered for just under four grand!

4. Plymouth nameplate appears up front on the forward lip of the hood. Chrome trimmed headlight doors have a little dip in the middle, a neat styling trick that accents the so-called "double-barrel" front fenders.

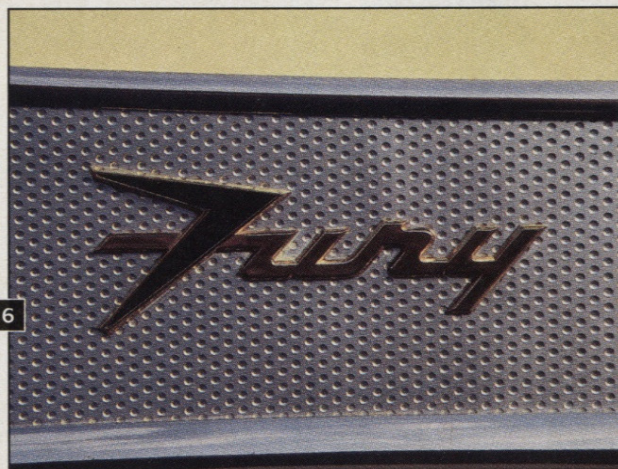
5. Recessed into the grille center is the "forward look" emblem, which includes the traditional Plymouth sailing ship.



4



5



6

6. Fury nameplate, finished in gold, is mounted at the back of the body side trim on the rear quarters.

V-8 performance, and styling that would have put Virgil Exner at the top of his trade, if he hadn't already ascended the heights. Exner gave Chrysler the "different" look it needed to remain competitive, yet produced concepts and styling tricks that appealed to practically everyone. Even Chevy and Ford stalwarts were eyeing Chrysler, Dodge, DeSoto and Plymouth by the late '50s. Chrysler had discovered that styling does sell.

For the low-priced Plymouth to harbor such a beautiful automobile as the Sport Fury of 1959 was, itself, a bit incredible. It looked like anything but an offering from one of the industry's low-priced three. And it certainly didn't perform like it either!

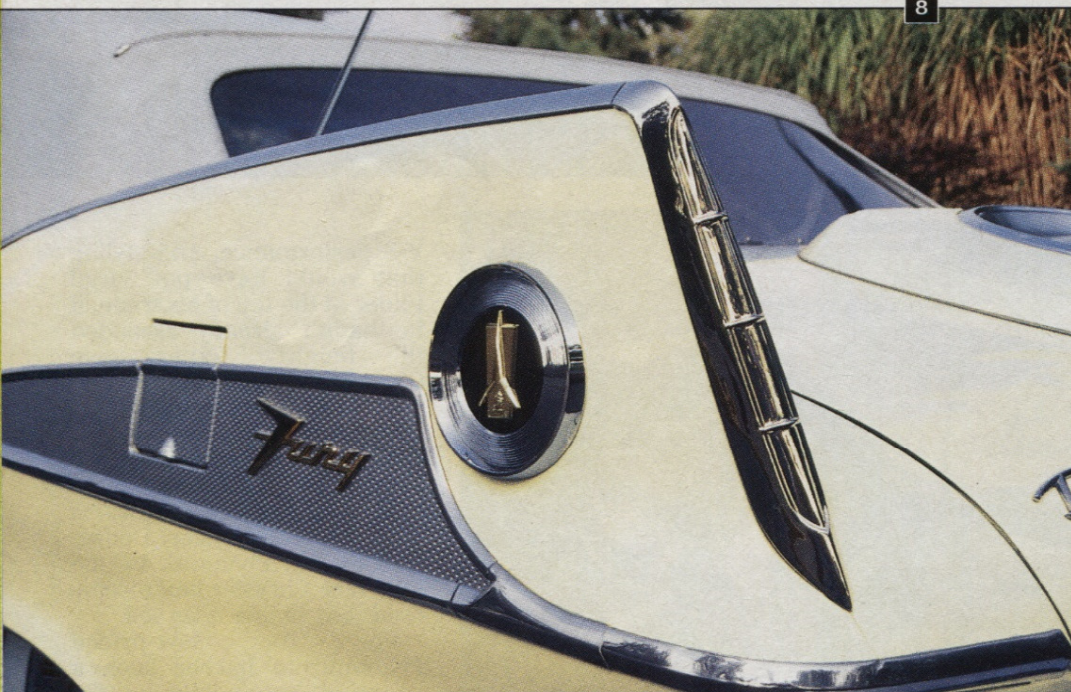
Plymouth entered the '59 model year foray in reasonably good stead. Its position in the industry was a solid third place, although Rambler, whose sales had almost doubled from the preceding year, nearly stole third place from Chrysler Corp.'s top-selling line. Plymouth's sales were up measurably from the dismal '58 showing, but then practically everyone was down in 1958, the year of the short but very sharp "Eisenhower" recession that persisted throughout the year.

Although Plymouth didn't relinquish the number three spot, behind perennial leaders Chevy and Ford. It was a close call, though. In fact, Rambler edged out Plymouth in production for the

7. The Sport Fury line also included a two-door hardtop at \$2,927, but the 3,670-pound convertible was the premium choice. Only 5,990 ragtop editions were produced in '59. The rear view is as bold as the front.



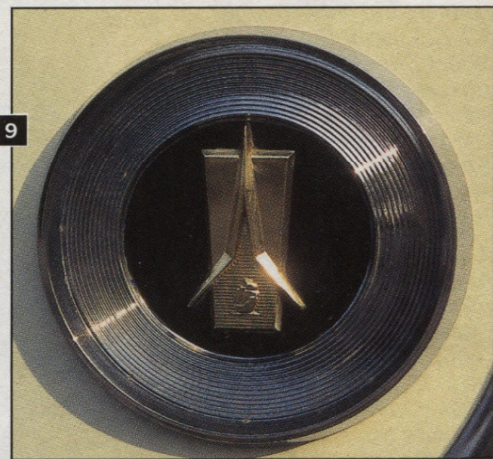
7



8

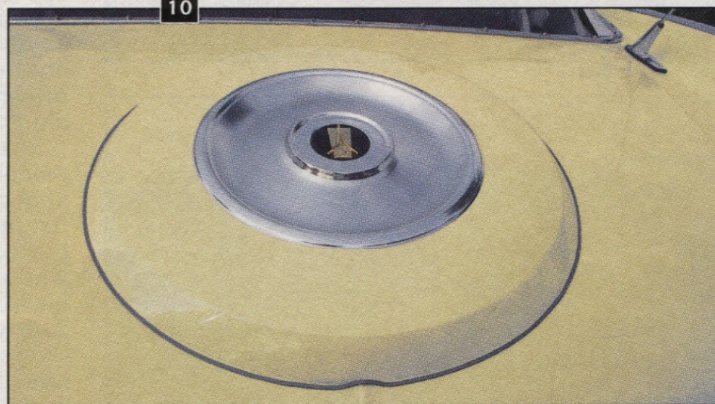
8. Chrome-rimmed tailfins were among the biggest the industry had ever grafted onto an automobile. They were both longer and higher than the ones used in '58.

9. Gold and chrome were effectively woven into the forward look logo bolted to the tail fins.



9

10. Famous "toilet seat" graced the rear deck, disguised as a fake continental kit, or is it vice versa? Either way, it was the butt of numerous jokes! Virgil Exner obviously had a sense of humor. Standard on the Sport Fury, "the seat" was optional on other Plymouths, at a \$29 premium.



10

1959 calendar year, by about 8,000 units. And, 1959 would be Plymouth's last season as the country's number three automaker for a long time, as it wouldn't place third again until the 1970 model year.

Overall, the domestic industry had an average year in 1959, with total production settling in at 5,566,527, which was

up from the 10-year low of 4,222,781 realized amidst the downturn economy of 1958. Although it was shy of the 7.1 million, 6.3 million and 6.2 million units produced in 1955-57, respectively, it was better than 1954's 4.8 million, so historically, it was not a bad season. Plymouth's best year remained 1955 when it built 742,991 automobiles.

Plymouth's '59 model year output rose to 458,261, which was just marginally ahead of 1958's 443,799. Again, it was strong enough for Plymouth to retain bragging rights to "third best" in a very competitive market.

Heading up the corporation at that time was the forceful and sometimes fiery L.L. Colbert, nicknamed "Tex" because of his Texas upbringing. Born on June 13, 1906 in Oakwood, Tex., Colbert graduated from the University of Texas with a business major and then earned a law degree at Harvard. Lester Colbert, who preferred "Tex," joined Chrysler as a corporate attorney in '33 and was appointed president Nov. 3, 1950.

Augmenting the top management team at the corporate level were Paul C. Ackerman, who entered the auto business in 1922 with the Maxwell Motor Co. after graduating from the University of Michigan and was named vice president of engineering for Chrysler in 1956, and

Virgil M. Exner, who had exited the General Motors Design Staff in 1949 to join Chrysler Corp., where he rose quickly to become director of styling in August 1953 and then vice president of styling in July 1957. Exner, who jump started his career by joining Harley Earl's dynamic crew at GM in 1934, is generally credited with bringing Chrysler Corp. into the modern postwar era with clever, tricky, and trendy styling. He was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Mich.

On the hot seat more than Exner or anyone else at Chrysler Corp. in the late '50s were the manufacturing guys, as quality control had sunk to new lows, especially in the 1957-59 period. L.T. Woolson, v-p of manufacturing, and G.H. Stover, director of production control for car and truck assembly, were the two



11. *It's only natural that one of the most beautiful automobiles of 1959 would be complemented by an equally gorgeous interior. The custom padded steering wheel, a Sport Fury trademark, was huge, with a large cross bar and full horn ring.*



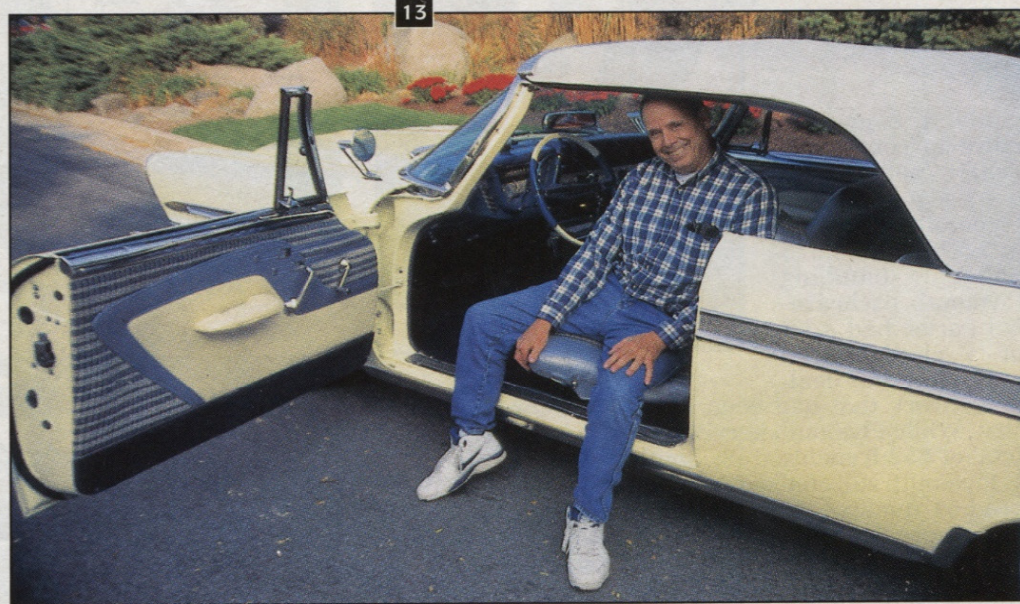
12. *One of the Sport Fury's more novel features was its swivel front bucket seats. They were standard issue on the Sport Fury, but cost an extra \$67 on other models.*

13. *Sport Fury aficionado Myles Walker, Medford Lakes, N.J., demonstrates the ease of entering or exiting the full-size luxury automobile, courtesy of the convenient and fashionable swivel bucket seats. Walker has owned the stylish Plymouth since June of 1994. By tripping a lever on the side of the cushion, the seat swiveled 40 degrees.*

Chrysler Corp. veterans assigned to correct the glaring deficiencies in product quality. While productivity was on par with the rest of the industry, fit and finish were truly miserable, and the cars suffered rust problems. Even the most dedicated Chrysler customers were finding it difficult to remain loyal when panels were obviously misaligned, leaks were springing up everywhere and parts were falling off in their hands. They jokingly said the cars started rusting in the showroom, but Chrysler owners weren't laughing.

Yet product quality was, indeed, improving measurably by 1959, and the results were no more evident than at Plymouth. The top guy at Chrysler's top division was a veteran manager who had been with the corporation since 1932. Harry E. Chesebrough was born July 13, 1909 in Ludington, Mich., and educated at the University of Michigan and the Chrysler Institute of Engineering. In April 1958, he was appointed general manager of Plymouth, which also won him a Chrysler vice presidency. He took over the reins just as the finishing touches were going on the '59 models.

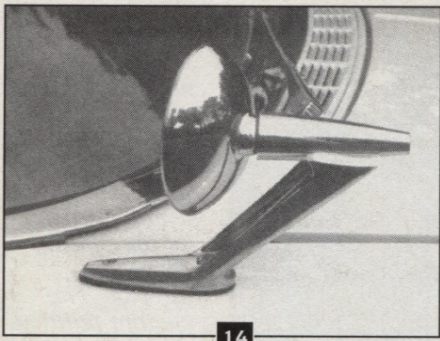
While Exner was in charge of all styling at the corporation, including all



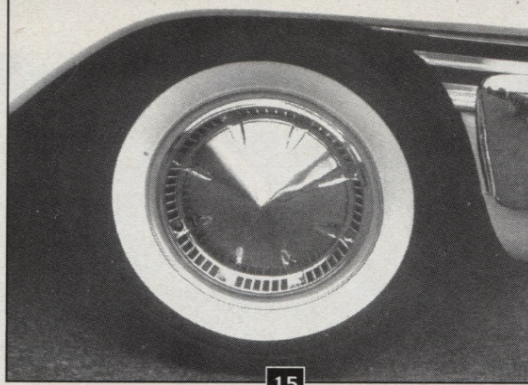
the individual makes, Plymouth had its own chief engineer, one J.E. Charipar. It also had its own ad director, L.T. Hagopian, and its very own dealer relations manager, K.R. Porter.

Porter had to maintain an upbeat tone with a Plymouth dealer network that was

primarily dualed with other makes, mostly within the corporation. Of Plymouth's 6,843 franchised outlets, only 176 were exclusively Plymouth. The other 5,557 Plymouth dealers of record as of Jan. 1, 1958 were dualed with another Mopar brand. (In '60, Plymouth



14



15

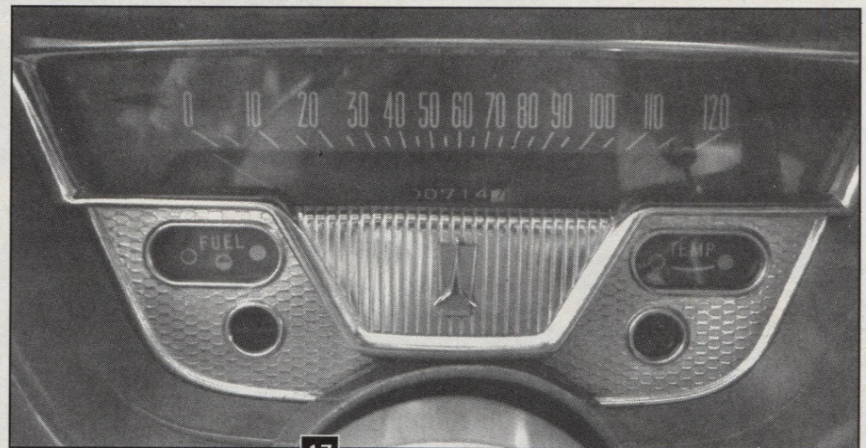
14. Sport mirrors are so fancy they resemble exotic aftermarket items rather than standard Plymouth-issue mirrors. The forward look couldn't get more forward. Virgil Exner knew how to make a statement ... big or small!

15. Full wheel covers have a pointed middle and a series of large notches, plus small vanes around the cap's circumference.



16

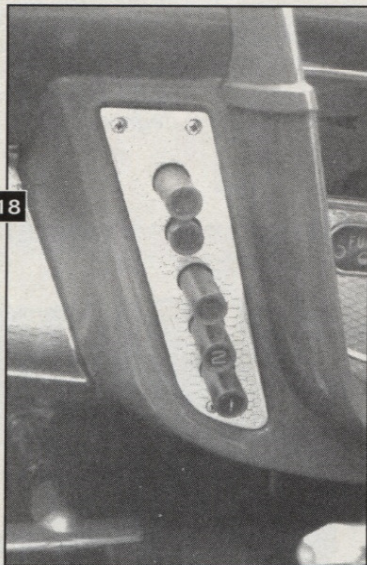
16. Twin rear radio antennas are canted, enhancing the Plymouth's rakish stature. They were optional, but just 10 bucks.



17

17. Speedo clocks to 120 mph, which is easily within the Sport Fury's capabilities when fitted with the optional engine and upgraded with the twin Carter four-barrel carbs. Fuel and temperature gauges are provided, but warning lights are used for the oil (left, under fuel gauge) and amp readings.

18. Pushbutton controls allow the driver to quickly and easily select the gear and direction of the Torqueflite automatic transmission.



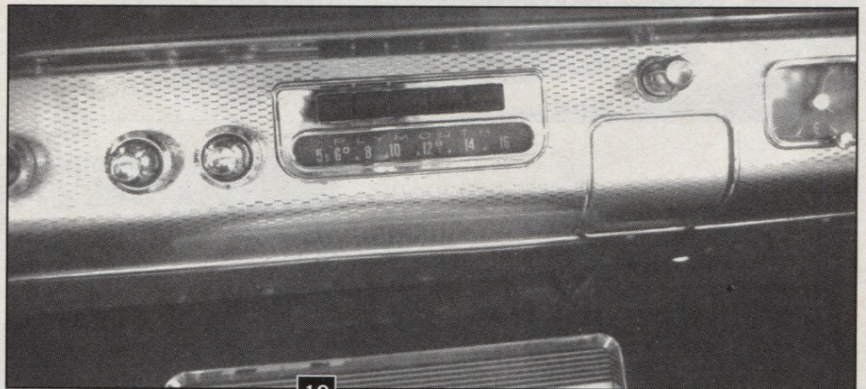
18

made a concerted move to convert its dealer network to essentially Plymouth, resulting in 1,596 of its 3,573 outlets handling Plymouth exclusively.) Porter had a bit of a challenge in rebuilding the dealer network that had been ravaged by the '58 recession. While Plymouth survived the darkness of 1958, a total of 852 franchised Plymouth dealers did not.

Plymouth still chalked up a grand season in 1959, as product quality, although still not great, was better and improving, and sales had turned upward. Also, the 11-millionth Plymouth rolled off the line at the Detroit plant, where Chesebrough and plant manager William C. Cawthorn waited to greet the milestone car.

Joining them was one of those loyal Plymouth customers, Willard Sloan, of Detroit, who had bought one of the very first Plymouths built in 1928 and had owned another 13 of them since.

In addition to Detroit, Plymouths in the '59 model year were also made in St. Louis, Mo., Los Angeles, Calif., and Newark, Del. A growing percentage of the Plymouths being assembled at those facilities were



19

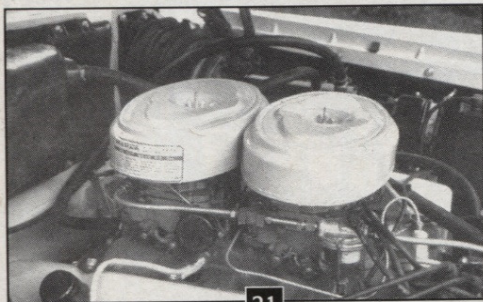
19. Electric clock (right) was standard, but the pushbutton radio was a \$59 option.



20

20. RCA Victor record player, a genuine Mopar accessory, is mounted beneath the dash, with all controls on the front of the unit. According to original reports, the record player worked fine when the car was still or traveling over smooth roads, but bumps, potholes and rough pavement would render it virtually useless, while scarring records.

21. Premium fuel is delivered to the big V-8 in this example via a pair of Carter AFB four-barrel carbs. Hitting passing gear at speed behind the wheel of this beauty is a real thrill for anyone addicted to high performance.

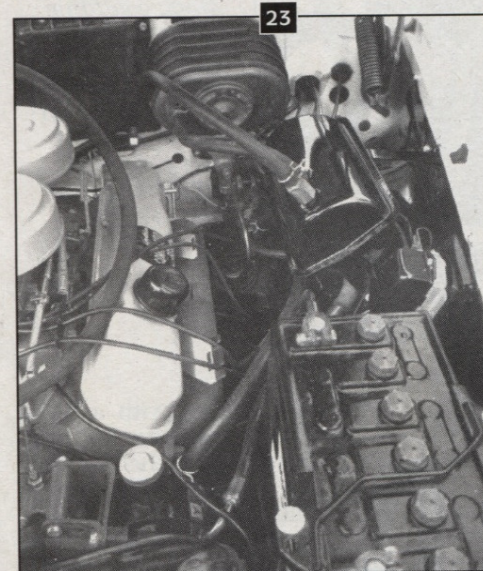


21



22

22. The "Golden Commando 395" engine is clearly identified by decals applied to the valve covers, just in case you missed the twin four-barrel carbs on top. The 395 designation was simply the biggest number the Plymouth folks could find in '59; it represented the engine's torque rating (395 lbs.-ft.).



23

23. Power steering (bottom) and power brakes (top) were extra cost items, stickering for \$63 and \$36, respectively.

police cars. Plymouth offered a special Patroller 8, a four-door sedan with V-8 power, and a couple of station wagons for police and other official use. The increased attention to this segment of the market paid off, as Plymouth sales to police departments set a record in 1959, posting an increase of 32 percent over



SPECIFICATIONS 1959 PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY CONVERTIBLE

GENERAL DATA

Body style: 2-dr. convertible
Passenger capacity: 5/6
Base price: \$3,125
Std. features: 260-hp 318-cid V-8; swivel front seats; silver side moldings; electric clock; full wheel covers; backup lights; variable-speed wipers; locking glove box; front armrests; sport deck lid; special body trim; right sunvisor; windshield washer; dual exhaust; padded dash; padded steering wheel; cigar lighter

Price as equipped: \$3,920

Options: 305-hp, 361-cid V-8, \$87; Torqueflite automatic, \$227; power steering, \$77; power brakes, \$36; heater and defroster, \$58; whitewall tires, \$28; Mirror-Matic, \$16; headlight dimmer, \$40; RCA 45-rpm record player; tinted glass, \$36; dual rear antennas, \$10; pushbutton AM radio, \$59; dual-four carburetion (dealer installed); left outside mirror, \$6; right outside mirror, \$6

BASIC SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase: 118"
Length: 208.2"
Width: 78"
Height: 56.5"
Weight: 3,670 lbs.
Front tread: 59.6"
Rear tread: 60.1"
Ground clearance: 5.3"

INTERIOR SPECIFICATIONS

Headroom: 34.4" front; 34.5" rear
Legroom: 45.5" front; 39.0" rear

ENGINE

Model: Golden Commando 395
Type: V-8
Displacement: 361 cu. in.
HP @ RPM: 305 @ 4600
Torque @ RPM: 395 lbs.-ft. @ 3000

Compression ratio: 10.0:1
Bore x stroke: 4.1250 x 3.375"

Induction system: Single Carter 4-bbl.

Ignition: 12 volt, neg. grd.

Fuel: Premium leaded

Exhaust: Dual

Valve configuration: Overhead

Valve lifters: Hydraulic

Main bearings: 5

Oil pressure: 45-65 psi

Opt.: Dual Carter 4-bbl. carbs, boosting hp to 330

TRANSMISSION

Type: Torqueflite automatic 3-spd.

Ratios:

1st - 2.45

2nd - 1.45

3rd - 1.00

DIFFERENTIAL

Type: Conventional

Ratio: 3.31

Opt.: 2.93

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent, torsion bars, stabilizer bar, Oriflow shocks

Rear: Semi-elliptical springs, Oriflow shocks

FRAME

Type: Steel

STEERING

Type: Power rack & sector
Ratio: 19.1:2
Turning circle: 42.5'
Turns, lock to lock: 3.5

BRAKES

Type: 4-wheel hydraulic, drum
Effective swept area: 184 sq. in.

TIRES

Size: 8.00 x 14
Type: 4-ply tubeless

CAPACITIES

Cooling system: 16 qts. (17 qts. w/heater)

Gasoline tank: 20 gals.

Engine oil: 5 qts. (6 qts. w/filter)

Transmission: Torqueflite automatic, 9 qts.

Rear axle: 3.5 pts.

CALCULATED DATA

HP/CID: .91

LBS/HP: 11.12

LBS/CID: 10.17

PERFORMANCE*

Acceleration:

0-45 5.5 sec.

0-60 8.5 sec.

30-50 3.2 sec.

45-60 2.9 sec.

50-80 7.4 sec.

Standing 1/4 mile:

16.2 sec. @ 87 mph

Fuel mileage: 12.5 mpg city; 13.4 mpg highway

*Source: *Motor Trend* road test of a '59 Plymouth Sport Fury w/305-hp 361

the preceding year.

The new Plymouths for 1959, representing a full complement of models from the low-line Savoy to the premium Fury and Sport Fury, were all introduced to the public on Oct. 16, 1958, two weeks earlier than the launch date of the '58 models, which was Nov. 1, 1957. Among the 20-odd models composing the Plymouth line for '59 was a car for virtually every need and pocketbook.

Starting with the six-cylinder Savoy business coupe at just \$2,143, the line rose through the ranks of sedans, hardtops and wagons all the way up to the line leaders, the Suburban Sport wagons at \$3,021 (six-passenger) and \$3,131 (nine-

passenger), and the sexy Sport Fury series, with just two models, a six-passenger two-door hardtop at \$2,927, and a racy convertible at \$3,125.

Plymouth was quite proud of its '59 offering, and justifiably so. In an ad campaign to recruit new dealers, Plymouth bragged that it had "The Big Difference in ride, performance, space, and economy, and many other advances that no other low-price car can match. Facts help sell the Big Difference, and Plymouth supplies a whole arsenal of facts to Plymouth dealers."

Plymouth adopted the same "Big Difference" theme for its consumer

continued on page 134

advertising as well, also telling the world that it offered the biggest and most powerful V-8 in its class, and at "a reduced price for 1959." Of course, the ad writers were talking about the Golden Commando 395 V-8, a 361-cubic-inch engine that developed 305 horsepower and 395 lbs.-ft. of torque (hence the name Commando "395"). The engine was available as an option throughout the Plymouth V-8 lines, even the bottom-rung Savoy sedans and the normally sedate family station wagons. But this beauty of a power house was most at home when residing in a Sport Fury. The standard Sport Fury mill was a 318-cid Super Pack V-8 that delivered 260 hp and was optional on other V-8 models for about \$32. The optional Golden Commando 395 was just \$74, in spite of the extra 45 horses.

In other consumer advertising, Plymouth let the motoring press tell its story, quoting such luminaries as "Uncle Tom" McCahill, who wrote in *Mechanix Illustrated* that "Plymouth may prove to be the only '59 car which has actually improved performance ... best car of the low-priced three ... a great performance car ... I drove this Plymouth flat-out and there wasn't the slightest sign of overheating or breakdown."

Other wordsmiths were equally enthused, according to Plymouth advertising, which reported such favorable comments as "This year's 'hot one' may be the 1959 Plymouth" — Art Railton, *Popular Mechanics*; "It's quite a package and deserves an excellent rating when compared to anything other than a full-fledged sports car," — Ray Brock, *Hot Rod*; and "Probably the hottest of the standard passenger sedans and the quickest car on the road in Fury form with the big engine. Great handling that may even surpass some sports cars. Must be driven to be fully appreciated" — the editors of *Motor Life*.

The motoring press of the day received the newly face lifted and mechanically refined Plymouth with a level of appreciation and praise normally reserved for much more expensive and luxurious automobiles. In reviewing the different road tests and personal impressions of the writers and editors in charge in 1959, one gets the impression that if the professional scribes were going to buy a new car that year it might just have been a Plymouth, and quite likely a Fury.

Among the more interesting road tests involving a 1959 Plymouth was one appearing in *Motor Trend* and pitting a '59 Fury four-door hardtop with the 305-horse Golden Commando 395 V-8 and a Torqueflite against a '59 Chevy Impala four-door with the tri-power 348-cid V-8 teamed with a Turboglide, and a '59 Ford Fairlane 500 four-door sedan with the 300-hp 352-cid V-8 with a single four-barrel and a Fordomatic. It was, essentially, a comparison of the "low-priced three" from "the Big Three."

Some observations made about Plymouth were:

- Fit and finish: Essentially, the '59

Plymouth was well put together, although "there are still wide tolerances for door fits that are made up with the rubber sealing gaskets, and the badly wrinkled covering on the trim panel behind the rear seat is definitely poor quality control." However, the factory promised that it eliminated the water leakage around the dummy spare tire cover on the rear deck through "better sealing around the mounting screws."

- Access: Easy and effortless entry and exit thanks to wide door openings.

- Driving position: Comfortable, spacious and relaxing, but inside rear-view mirror disrupts driver's forward vision because it's so big and mounted at the center of the dash. Also, "left-handed operation of dash-mounted transmission pushbuttons is annoying, especially in parking." Everything else is appropriately located for both driver and passengers. However, short seats and "poor back support increased by very soft padding induce fatigue in a short time."

- Instrumentation: Nice display, easy to read, good lighting.

- Operation: Starts quickly and warms up rapidly. Engineers added aluminum foil and fiberglass insulation between the block and the intake manifold to cure problems with vapor lock and hard "hot" starting. It solved the problem, though it still takes a few cranks to fire the V-8 when it's hot.

- City driving: With good visibility and nice road manners, city driving is a pleasure, although with 3.5 turns of the wheel, lock-to-lock, parking can be an exercise. "The rear fins seem to be more function than just a design feature, as they give a good indication of rear end position when parking."

- Highway driving: Superb acceleration, good stability at high speeds and precise handling all contribute to the Fury's excellent road characteristics. "For the switchbacks of mountain roads or the sweeping curves of some foothill highways, the Plymouth poses no problems. There is some body lean," but nothing to get concerned about.

- Stopping: Brakes are adequate, although they do not "recover as rapidly as modern speeds demand."

- Comfort: The Plymouth rides well and has plenty of legroom and hiproom, though tall passengers may find headroom lacking in the back seat in the area of the rear window. Ventilation is just fair, but heat is fine. Best of all, "road rumble and engine noise levels are quite low, even at speeds of 80 mph."

In the final analysis, the testers seemed to prefer the Plymouth. Although it wasn't the best fuel mileage wise, and depreciation figured to be quite a bit higher than with Chevy or Ford, the Plymouth was "the best performing and best handling of the Big Three tested." In the Feb. '59 report, *Motor Trend* surmised that the "sporty design of the Fury should hold up well for several years without becoming outdated by major facelifts by competitors. Here is a car that is fun to drive out in the flat, on curv-

ing roads, or through the mountains, yet it provides comfort and usable luggage space for family touring."

In its what's new for '59 review, *Motor Trend* cited two Plymouth features, the swivel front bucket seats and Mirror-Matic, a \$14 accessory that sensed bright lights approaching from the rear and automatically dimmed the oncoming glare, then returned to normal once the lights have passed. The swivel seats made entry and exit a thing of grace for front seat occupants.

The well-known automotive writer and editor, Walt Woron, apparently took the "Sport" in Sport Fury a little too seriously. He compared the sporty Plymouth to a Lago America luxury sports car. His test, chronicled in the January '59 issue of *Motor Trend*, concluded that the Lago was a lot more like a sports car, which would seem rather obvious, and that the Lago would cut a much tighter corner than the bigger, heavier and bulkier Sport Fury, again an obvious observation from any viewpoint.

Nevertheless, Woron, who was editor of *MT* at the time, stated that he preferred the Plymouth, because it was half the price of the Lago and provided a smoother, quieter ride, considerably more performance, and handling that while not up to sports car standards was exceptional for a full-size automobile. Again, one is curious as to why the magazine would conduct a comparison test between two such dissimilar cars.

Still, the big Plymouth held its own. As Walter A. Woron said, in his own words, "I am not enthusiastic about Detroit's utility cars, but this '59 Fury has changed my mind. It not only howls, but handles!"

With lots of horsepower and gobs of low-end torque, the Fury "will spin the tires off the start line," Woron noted, and shifting is "smooth enough." He did note that the steering felt a little loose, and the car needed quite a bit of cranking to get it through a turn. But he still preferred the Sport Fury's tremendous luxury and performance, right down to its intriguing design and its pushbutton shifting.

Woron liked the Plymouth's expansive visibility, especially the view from the driver's seat. But he did dislike one aspect of his rearward look, those big tailfins sprouting high into the air. "They're big enough," he declared, "to hide a small car."

Evaluating the '59 Sport Fury for serious performance enthusiasts was *Motor Trend's* sister publication, *Hot Rod*. In an examination by the legendary Ray Brock, the '59 Sport Fury got very high marks. He at first was unsure about the swivel seats, but after working them a few times, he learned to like them a lot. The front seats would swivel automatically 40 degrees. And there was still a third member of the front seat that could accommodate another passenger, but with only two up front the center back cushion folded down to provide armrests for the driver and his front-seat passenger. Brock also appreciated the limousine-like ride and the "excellent" handling

and cornering qualities.

But, being a natural born hot rodder, Brock was more interested in the Fury's performance potential. "The 305-hp 361-cid '59 engine reaches its maximum at a very suitable 4600 rpm. Hydraulic lifters are used but the engine will rev to better than 5200 rpm without valve float." How did he know that?

Although the speedometer was found to be inaccurate with an error factor of roughly 10 percent, Brock estimated that the '59 version would do a bit better than the 0-to-60 in eight seconds recorded in a test of a '58 Fury, possibly getting to 66 mph in the same eight seconds. He also recommended the optional limited-slip rear end. With it, he observed, "the car would hardly 'squeal' a tire on the asphalt under full throttle acceleration."

In 1959, the factory didn't offer the dual-quad setup, as it had in 1958 with the Fury in the form of the 350-cid V-8. But it did continue the twin four-barrel setup in the parts books, complete with two Carter four-barrel carbs and matching intake, throttle linkage and intake manifold, allowing its dealers to install the extra-hot setup at the customer's request on any 361-cid V-8. The part numbers for the carburetors were 1826-081 (front) and 1826-082 (rear). It boosted the power rating from 305 to 330.

Standard on all 361-cid Golden Commando V-8s that year, at least as long as the supply was healthy at the factory, were new resistor-type high-tension distributor wires, reportedly the first use of non-copper spark plug wires in an OEM application.

Plymouth produced a healthy number of Sport Fury two-door hardtops in 1959, exactly 17,867, but only 5,990 convertibles were built.

A prime example of the rare '59 Plymouth Sport Fury convertible, the Glacier White survivor seen here, carries the dual-quad 361 Golden Commando with its 330 hp.

A relatively early car, this Sport Fury carries serial number M293105834, which decodes as follows: M = model year (1959); 2 = car line (8 cyl.); 9 = model (Sport Fury); 3 = assembly plant (Evansville, Ind.); 105834 = sequential production number (starting with 100001; 5,834th car made at Evansville that model year).

Not much is known about the early life of this well equipped Sport Fury, except that it was sold new in Lincoln, Neb. When it was a few years old, it was in an accident and was laid up in a garage for some seven years, and then sold in 1971. Originally, it was equipped with some \$795 in options, putting its sticker price in the neighborhood of \$3,920. In 1959, the average annual wage was about \$5,010 and a new house cost \$12,500. The typical new car ran \$2,250, so the Sport Fury was way beyond the reach of most buyers. But it was also more car than most shoppers wanted or could handle. It was also pretty thirsty, but with petrol at 25 cents a gallon, not many people with a budget big enough to accommodate a Sport Fury would leave their dealer's lot in a Savoy six-banger

because of concerns over economy.

The second owner, for some unknown reason, apparently stored the car from the time he bought it in 1971 until 1979, when it was sold to a collector in Colorado Springs, Colo. He also did nothing with the car and sold it "as is" to another enthusiast in 1989. This car guy, a doctor who also lived in Colorado Springs, started the restoration. In 1992, while the car was in a trim shop, Myles Walker, a collector from Medford Lakes, N.J., spotted it during a vacation trip to Colorado. But the shop owner wouldn't divulge the name of the owner.

Myles' son, who was stationed at an Air Force base in the area, spotted the very same car for sale on a dealer's lot about a year and a half later. He phoned his Dad, who caught the next flight west to Colorado Springs. Although the restoration was only about 60 percent completed and a number of parts were missing, Walker was consumed by the car's beauty and intriguing features. He negotiated a deal, hauled it home and spent the next few years completing the restoration, and upgrading certain aspects of the old restoration work.

Attesting to the car's ambience, and the quality of its restoration, are eight best of show awards, numerous first place trophies, AACA junior and senior awards and a best of show for 1955 and up at the 1996 nationals of the Plymouth Owners Club.

In the car's restoration, Myles did a lot of the body work himself, but some was subcontracted out to Cedar Automotive, Parkerstown, N.J., where it was also painted. The interior and top work was handled by Al's Trim, Hainesport, N.J. Myles did most of the mechanical upgrade himself, while a local plating shop plated the chromed pieces that the former owner didn't have done.

Walker, a national accounts manager for Fujitsu-ICL, is a 34-year hobbyist who maintains membership in the Packard Club, Plymouth Owners Club, AACA, Porsche Club, Walter P. Chrysler Club, etc. In addition to the '59 Plymouth, he also owns a '56 Packard Caribbean convertible, '64 Studebaker GT Hawk, Porsche 930 Turbo, etc.

But the Sport Fury is something special. Although Chrysler lacked the funds to totally redesign the Plymouth in its final year of separate frame and body construction (unibody came in for '60), the Sport Fury was substantially upgraded in terms of exterior cosmetics and trim and the visually explosive interior with its "swivel seats, new dashboard, wool carpet and unique upholstery blending metallic vinyls and cloth," he said.

Myles owned a '59 Sport Fury new and says that he can personally attest to the fact that the '59 model was a great car then and now. He is especially fond of the following quote from *Motor Life's* January '59 issue: "None of today's low-priced cars are likely to become classics by any stretch of the definition, but the 1957-59 Plymouths undoubtedly will be pointed to in the years to come as 'great' cars." In fact, they have!

The 1959 Plymouth Sport Fury has been certified as a milestone car by the Milestone Car Society, thanks in great measure to the efforts of one Myles Walker, who nominated the car for certification, and in some small way by the author, who is on the MCS committee that considers and acts on all applications. The author, incidentally, voted approval of the Sport Fury in four of the five categories — innovation, styling, engineering and performance — but cast a negative vote on the fifth qualification, craftsmanship. But, as Myles says, "In 1959 no American car was noted for craftsmanship; they all rusted badly. This may be why so few 1959 automobiles remain." He's got a point!

Nevertheless, 1959 was a great time to be a car enthusiast. It was pretty peaceful, being many years after World War II. Even Korea was just a memory for most, while Vietnam was a far distant land that most Americans couldn't find on a map. It was the quiet, purposeful, hope and dream-filled America of Dwight David Eisenhower. Peacetime prosperity had returned after the brief '58 recession, and Americans were dealing with such issues as Alaska becoming the 49th state, and Hawaii next in line for statehood.

Being an American was all about keeping up with the Joneses, and that meant not just a new car, but one that was just a bit flashier, faster and more daring than anything else in the neighborhood, and this wasn't Mr. Rogers' neighborhood either! How about showing the neighbors your new Sport Fury with the novel yet practical swivel seats, the latest in space-age electronic gizmos in the optional Mirror-Matic and headlight dimmer systems, the spirited performance of the 361 Commando engine with the slick-shifting Torqueflite, and then showing off all that radical styling with the high-rising tail fins, the fancy body trim and that magnetic interior.

And then top it off by demonstrating the glamour accessory of the year in the RCA 45-rpm record player that automatically played up to 14 records. It was warranted for 90 days or 4,000 miles, and defective units were removed by Plymouth dealers and shipped to RCA regional service centers for repair or replacement. The units were quite the fad in '59, having been introduced near the very end of the model year, but were more novelty than practical. Rough roads would render the unit inoperable, but it did serve one very real purpose ... it hastened the development of the eight-track tape player!

The Sport Fury was definitely beyond the means of the average new car buyer, and that's as it should be. Something that unusual, that special, and that "hot" should be reserved for the enthusiast, the guy who spends a lot more of his income on his "ride."

And in 1959 the Plymouth Sport Fury filled the bill better than anything else offered in the low-priced three lines from GM, Ford and Chrysler. It was, as they said, a "great car." And, as Myles insists, it still is!