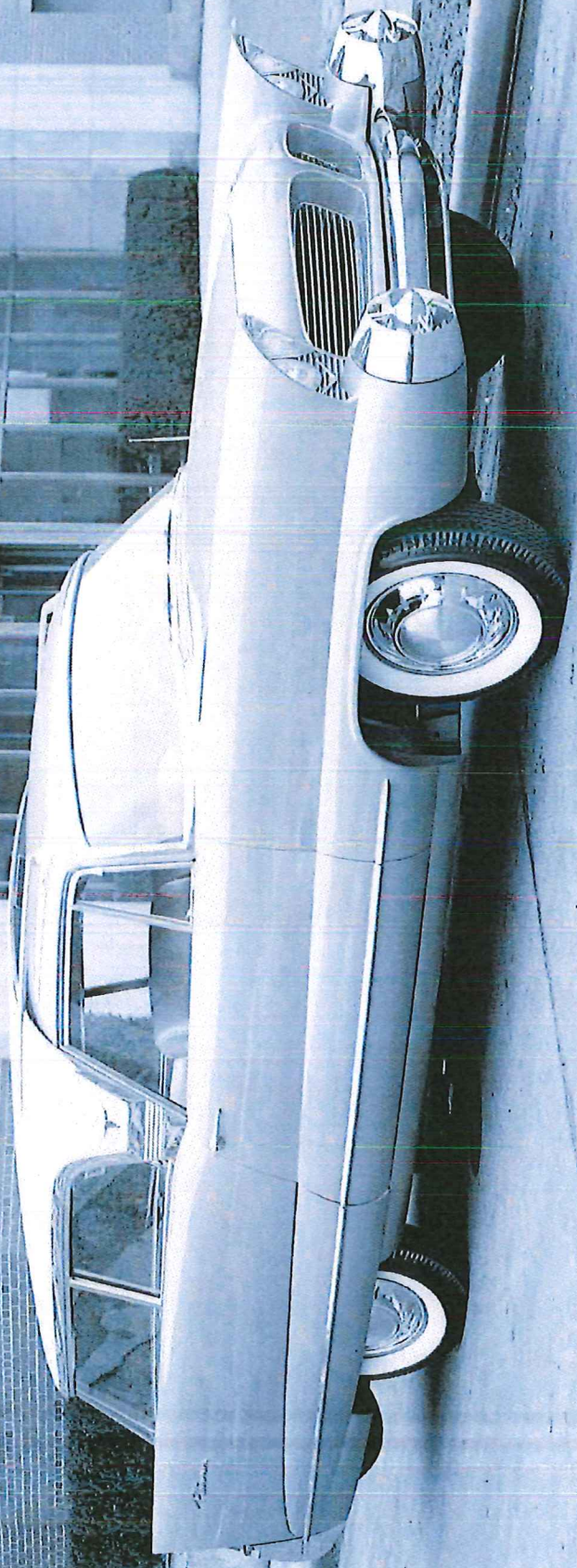
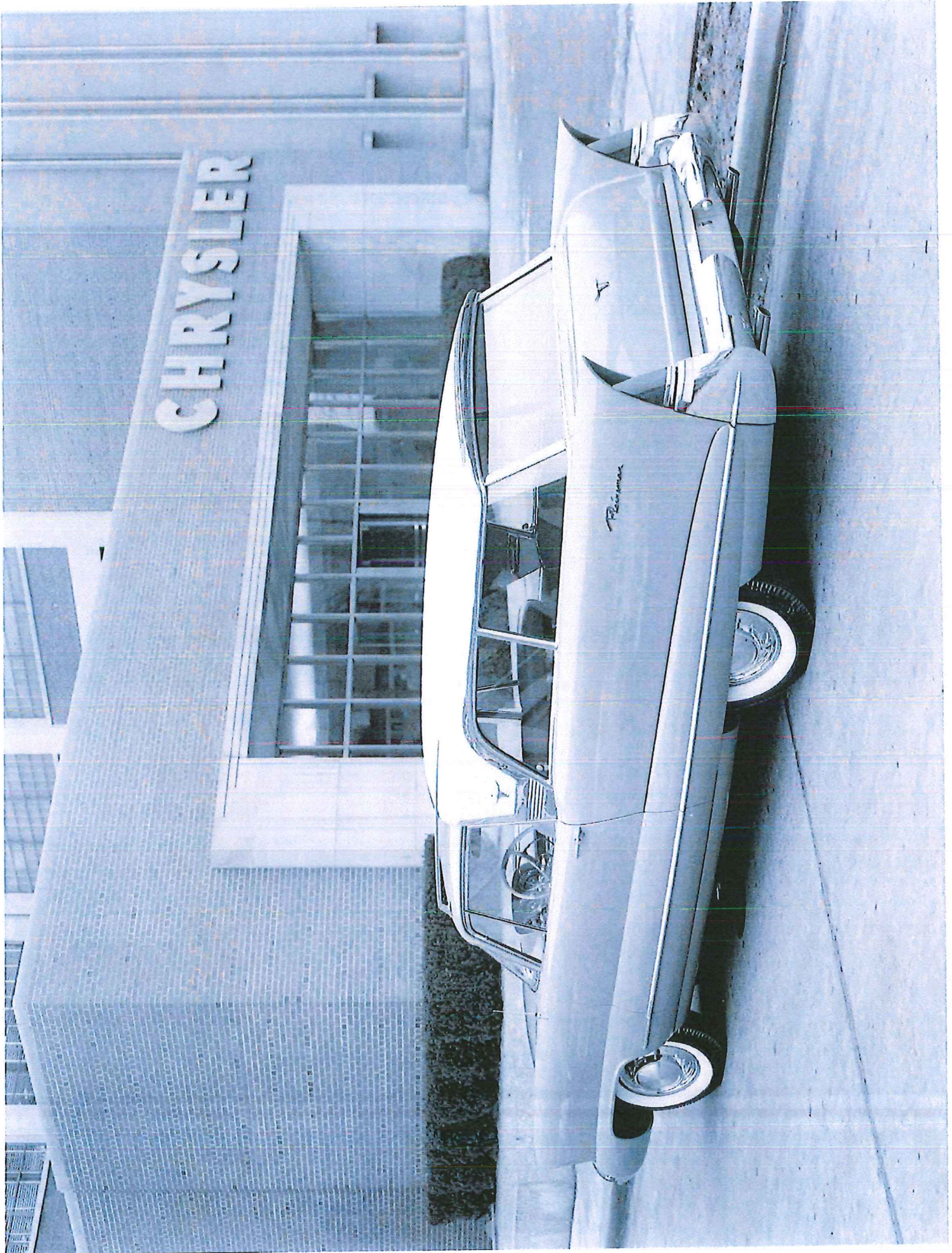
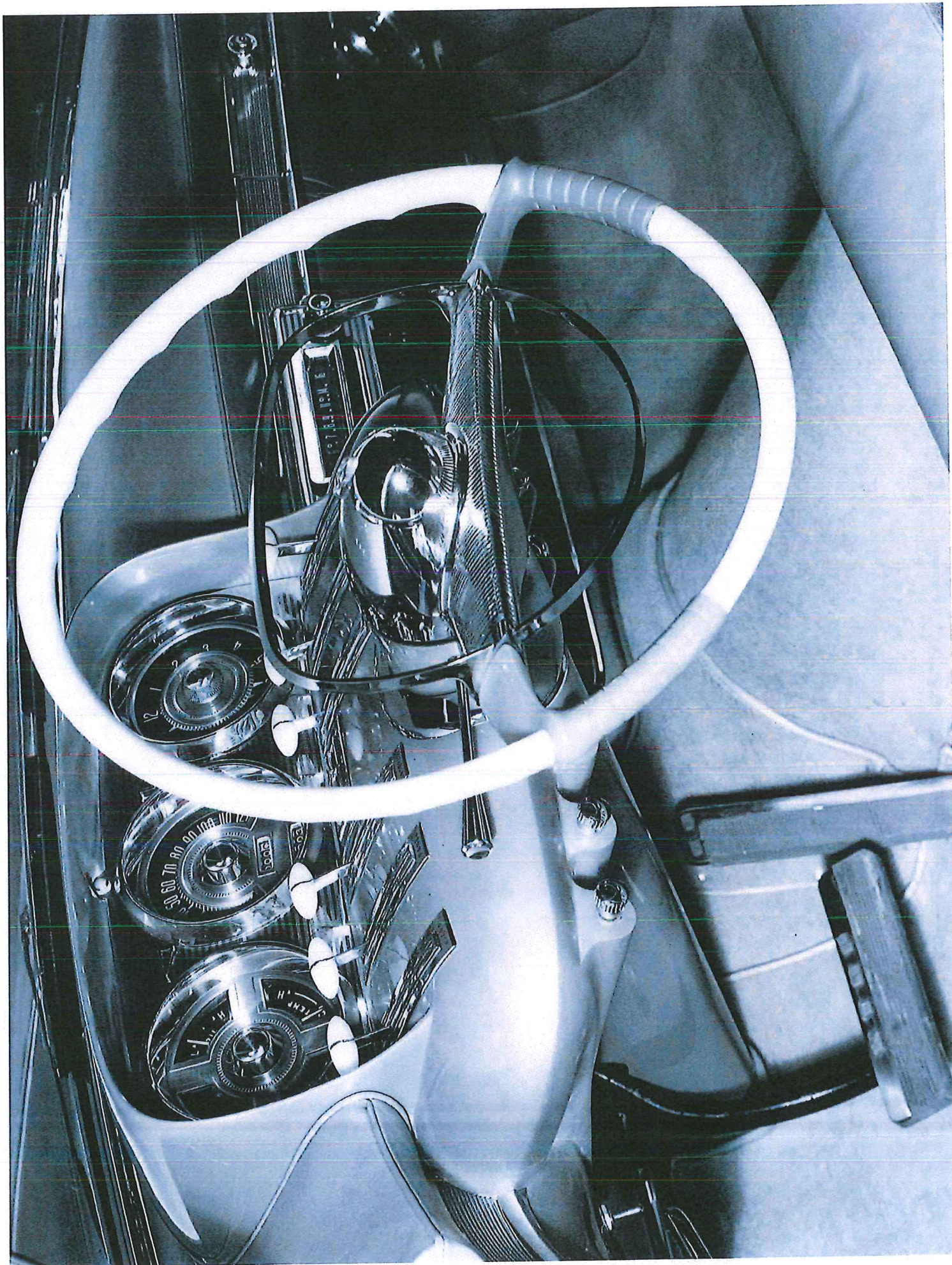


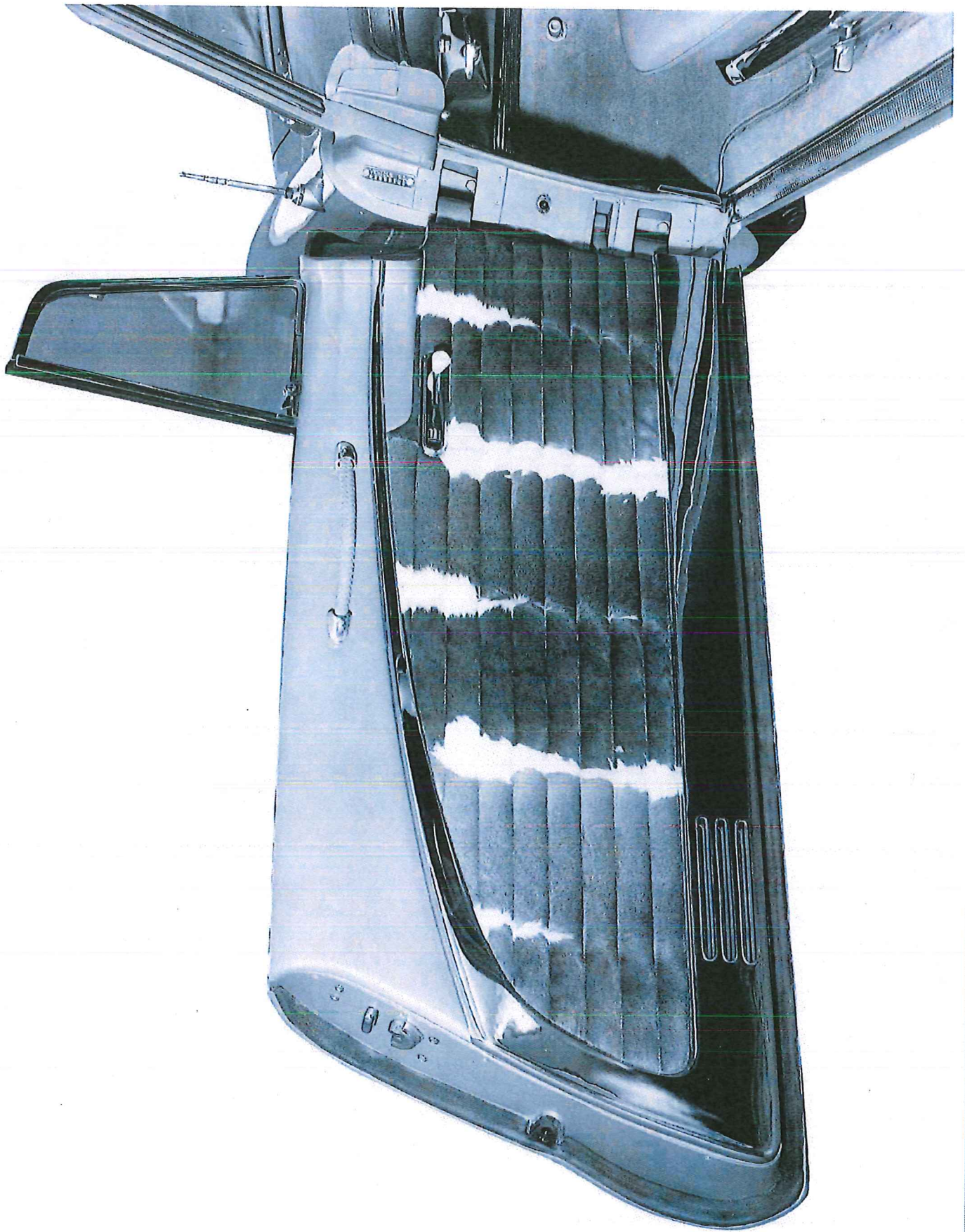
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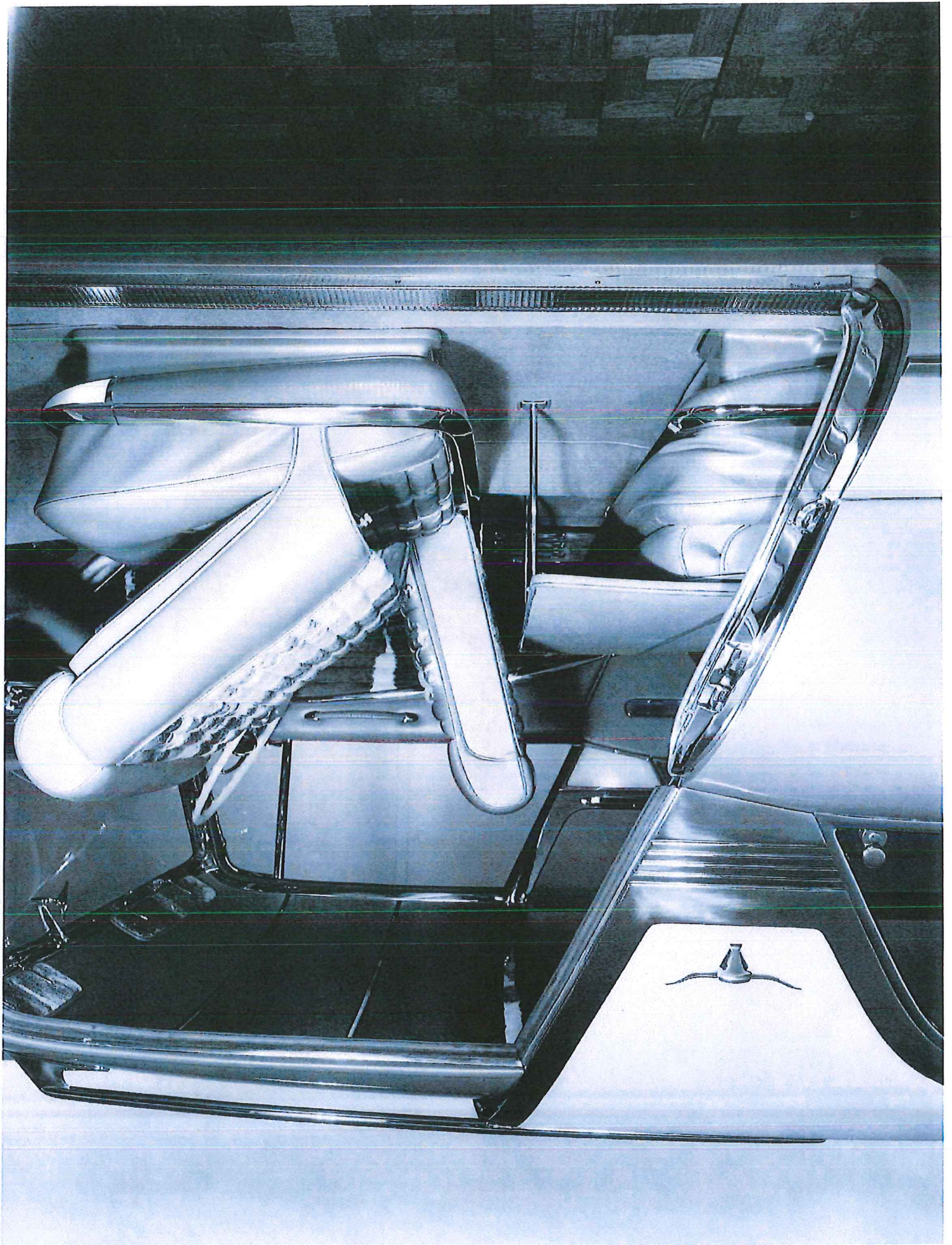










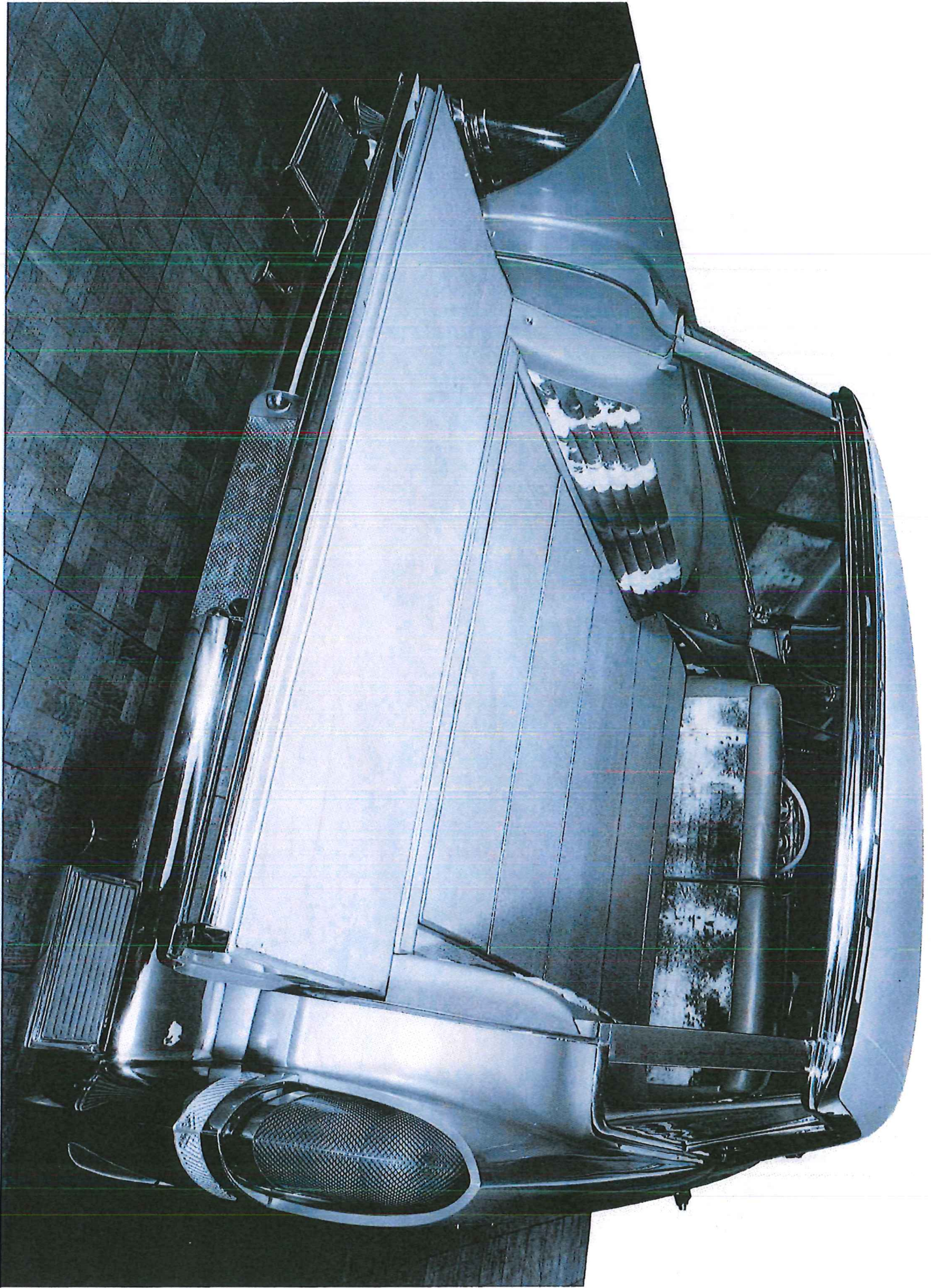




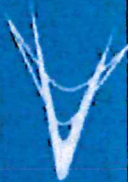








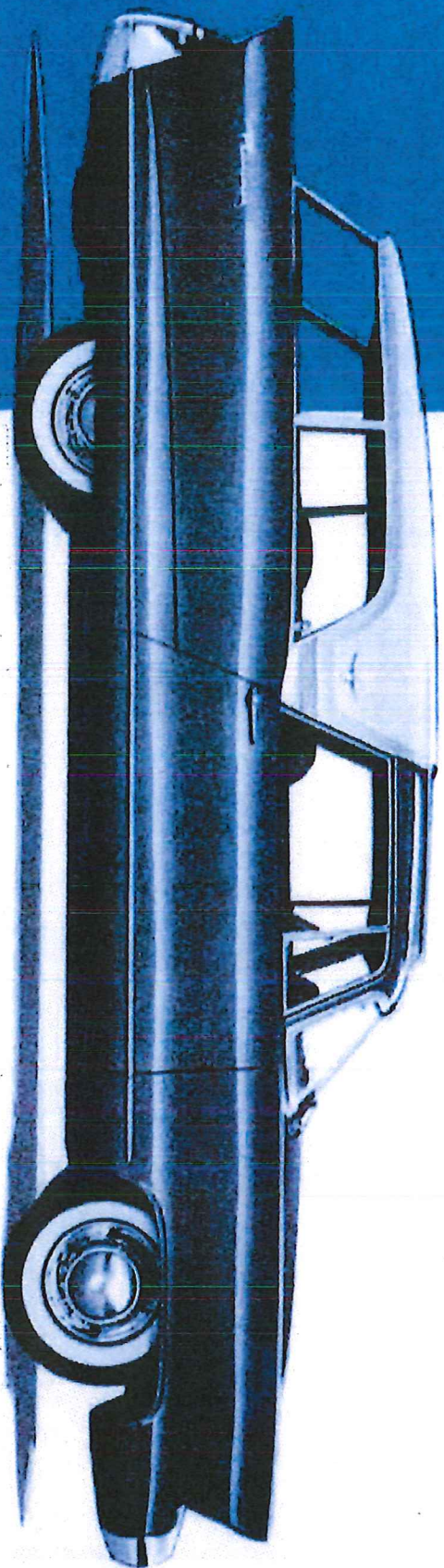




THE PLAINSMAN

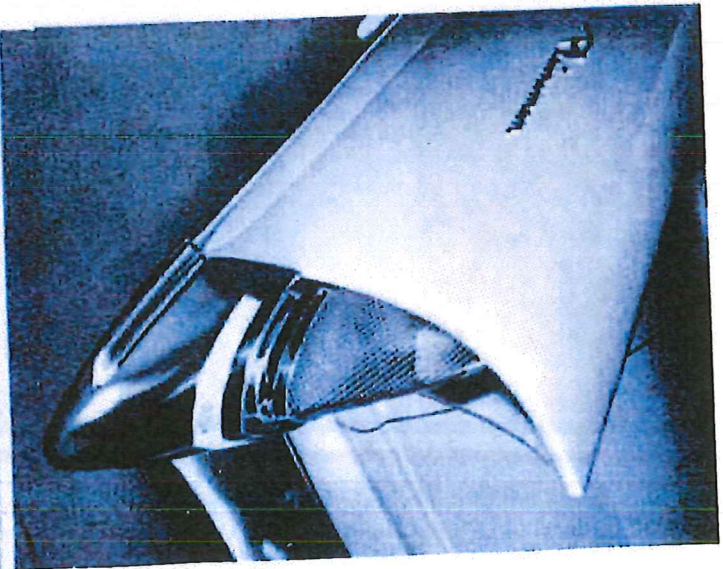
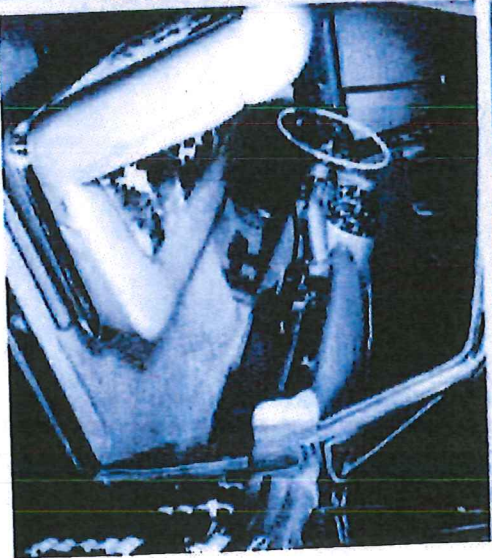
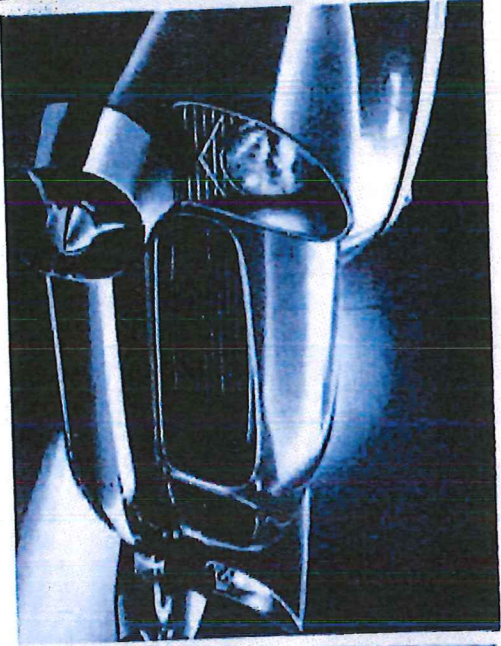
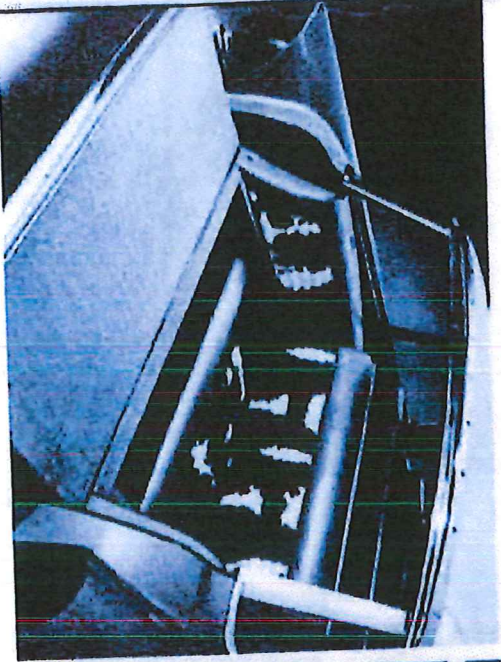
Sets the Pace in Advanced Styling

A bold new concept in station wagon design from the forward-looking stylists in Chrysler Corporation's Engineering Division, this 8 passenger "idea station wagon" features such striking innovations as an "observation car" rearward-facing third seat and a spare tire concealed in the rear fender. The Plainsman reflects the colorful and casual way of life that typifies the nation's westward movement. From its creation and testing come valuable ideas for future cars of THE FORWARD LOOK. Sorry—the Plainsman's not for sale. However, we're sure you'll find all your heart desires in automobile beauty and power in one of the outstanding cars of THE FORWARD LOOK '56. Drop in on your Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto, Chrysler, or Imperial dealer soon.



PLAINSMAN SPECIFICATIONS

Color.....	Palomino beige metallic
Over-all length.....	208 inches
Over-all width.....	79.4 inches
Over-all height.....	60.2 inches
Wheelbase.....	115 inches
Engine.....	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8 PowerFlite
Transmission.....	7.10 x 15
Tires.....	106.5 inches
Maximum cargo deck length (Tailgate open).....	86.7 inches
Cargo deck length with tailgate closed.....	63.5 inches
Maximum cargo deck width.....	Coastal Power
Steering.....	Safety Pedal Power
Brakes.....	



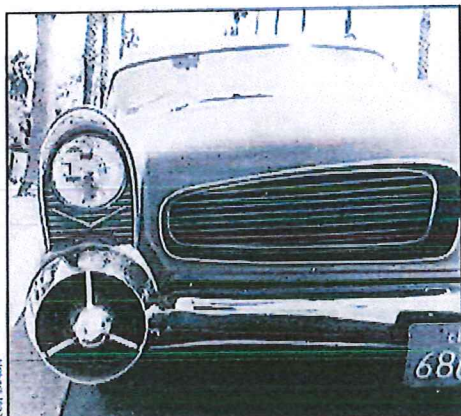
The Saga of the Plainsman

by Leon Dixon



The MoPar Show Car That Escaped From Cuba

Courtesy of David Scott



Left: The Plainsman as it appeared during its debut in 1956. Above: The Plainsman today on the streets of L.A., hardly the worse for wear after 24 years.

THERE IT WAS! The car was right there in front of me! Was it real? I didn't know, but I wasn't about to take a chance on not finding out. I dived out of the passenger door of my car and jumped right in front of that apparition. It was real, all right. The startled driver slammed on the brakes, and I was already jabbering away like a crazed magpie. I babbled on as I walked around the car. Could I take pictures? Yes. The owner, more relaxed now, smiled a knowing smile.

It was the Plainsman all right. Little steerhead medallions. Plainsman logos, unborn calfskin upholstery. It was all there. The owner had to leave and cars were backed up behind my own abandoned vehicle, so I set up an appointment to see the car later. I could hardly catch my breath—coincidence of coincidences. After all these years the car was miraculously still alive and well—on the street, mind you. But let's go back to the beginning.

The Plainsman was what Chrysler called an "idea car." Although Virgil Exner has often been referred to as the father of the Plainsman, the car was actually designed *in total* by a talented young stylist named David Scott. He had been in charge of Chrysler Division styling, but was shifted to Plymouth Division around the time Virgil Exner became corporate vice-president of styling. Exner gave Scott a free hand in the Plymouth studios. This resulted in the design and development of what was then known only as project car A-493.

In February 1954, rough styling sketches had been done. Dave Scott picks up the story: "My original concept was a cabriolet—kind of like a modern 'T-roof' without the 'T'. The front section of the roof was removable. However, about that time there was a certain amount of interest in sporty station-wagon-style vehicles (such as the Waldorf Nomad, see SIA #9), so Virgil Exner suggested I adapt my design to a wagon-type body. They loved it. We all agreed it was the way to go. Once we settled on a design, we had several proposals for names and accompanying paint and trim themes. Unfortunately, right about the time we settled on a name and theme, we discovered that Pontiac had selected the same name for their production-bound sporty wagon. The name, of course, was 'Safari'. We decided to stick with the theme and changed the name on our car to 'Plainsman'—and that's how it all began."

The original wagon design started life as a 3/4-scale model with a wraparound windshield and Plymouth medallions. Since it was done in the Plymouth studio, the scale model had "Plymouth" spelled out across the rear bumper. But for reasons unknown, the finished car was simply referred to in official company literature as "The Plainsman"—period. Somewhere after the model's development, both the Plymouth name and the wraparound windshield disappeared. According to Mr. Scott, Chrysler brass got wind

of the fact that GM and Ford were going all-out with wraparound windshields, so a decision was made to go to a more moderate version reminiscent of MoPar production vehicles. That windshield change was, in this writer's opinion, a crucial factor in later reactions some Chrysler brass had to the finished car, as we shall see.

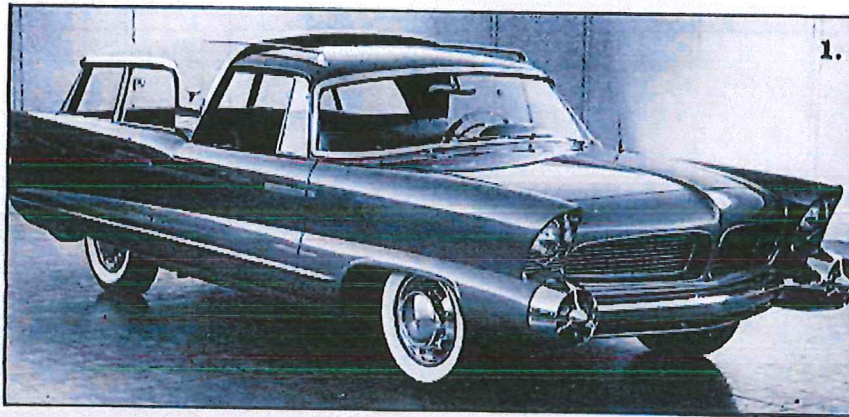
No full-sized mock-up was made. Instead, the Plainsman went from the 3/4 model directly to a finished product. This job was turned over to Ghia of Italy, which at the time was heavily involved in building a whole series of Chrysler "idea cars" (Falcon sports cars, K-310, Flightsweeps, etc. See SIA #30). On October 15, 1954, Ghia started work on the A-493. The car was to be built on a standard Plymouth P-27 "H" series chassis of 115-inch wheelbase. Nearly a year after it was begun, the A-493—now officially the Plainsman—was shipped from Genoa, Italy, aboard the S.S. Cristoforo Colombo. Unlike the ill-fated A-494 (Norseman) which followed months later, the Plainsman arrived in New York on November 26, 1955, with no problems. (The Norseman was aboard the Andria Doria when she sank off Nantucket in 1956.) By December 5th, the big crate containing the Plainsman had arrived at Chrysler headquarters in Highland Park, Michigan.

Dave Scott recalls: "The car was in a huge crate with the axles lashed down onto big 4 x 8 wood blocks...the wheels were off and in a separate compartment. Imagine our surprise when we bolted the wheels on and lifted the car out of the crate base to sit on its own...it sank right down to the rubber snubbers! The suspension bottomed-out from the weight of the car alone. Ghia had so much lead in that body that the poor Plymouth suspension was taxed beyond capacity. The engineers hustled the car into the factory garage and went to work. The final solution was to modify the Plymouth chassis with suspension from a Chrysler New Yorker."

Unexpected problems are not really all that uncommon with show cars and one-offs—especially when there are deadlines and vehicles are constructed elsewhere. Even production cars, as we all know, have their share of bugs. This writer recalls a conversation with an official of a company which supplied the initial Packard Caribbean prototype. He recalled watching in horror as the heavily loaded and stiffly sprung hood folded like a clamshell right after the car was unveiled to company brass.

Back at the uncrating of the Plainsman, Bill Brownlie, then assistant manager of the Chrysler-Imperial studio, recalls that he was a little disappointed at the finished product. "It looked a bit puffy when compared with the original scale model... the body had lost some of its low look. This is the kind of thing that can happen when you go direct from a 3/4 model to full scale with no aesthetic adjustments. The car had a lot of

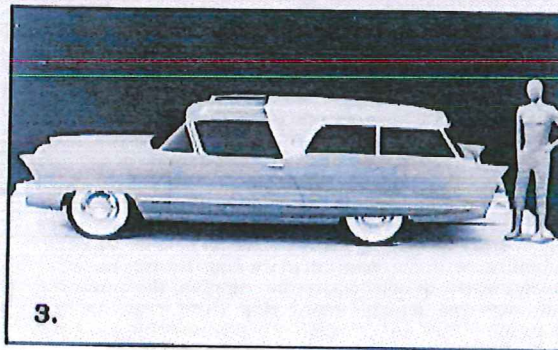
1. Plainsman went to full-size operational automobile directly from 3/8 clay studies 2. and 3. This was a very unusual move, but David Scott feels that Ghia did a superb job in building the car from the 3/8 clays. 4. Plainsman's rear fenders break at a very sharp rake.



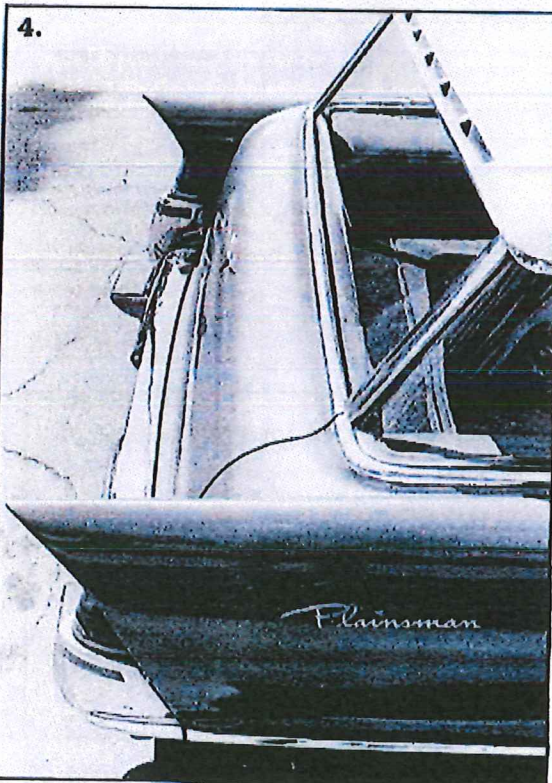
Courtesy of David Scott



Courtesy of David Scott



Courtesy of David Scott



Leah Dixon

The Saga of the Plainsman

continued

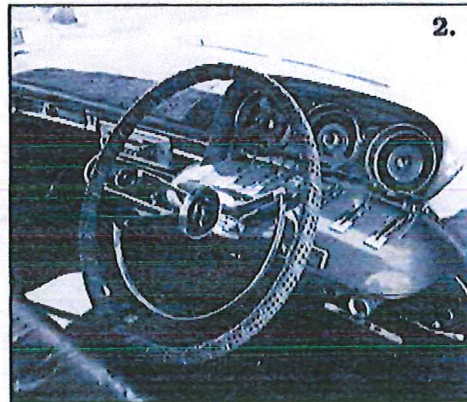
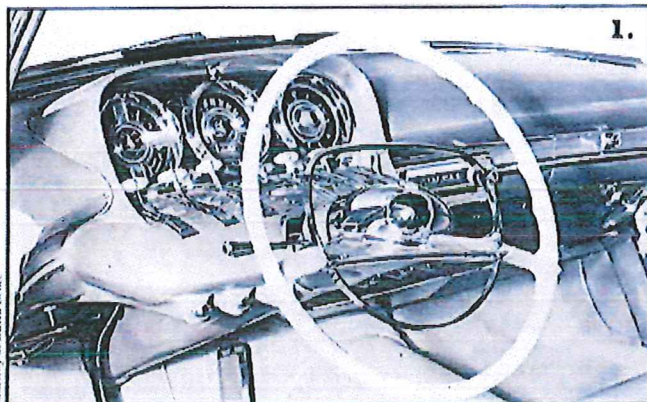
good ideas, though." David Scott feels differently, though, and told SIA: "I was dumfounded that Ghia had executed my drawings so faithfully. I felt that it was possible to go from 3/8 to full size without a lot of fiddling—this proved it true."

Whatever your feeling is for the Plainsman in metal—go back and compare the finished product with pictures of the model. In this writer's opinion, the wraparound windshield of the model makes the design; the lines flow with the body in total harmony. The windshield and large vent window of the big car tend to force the eye to recognize vertical rather than slanted lines, thus giving an illusion of greater height than is really there.

With engineering problems corrected, the Plainsman was shown in various places around the country and received wide press coverage at the time. *Motor Trend* joined other publications in praise of the car and its outstanding innovations and design, even to the extent of talking about getting the Plainsman into mass production. Goodyear featured a striking pose of the Plainsman in a 1956 ad for that company's deluxe fire line. However, initial publicity in *Motor City* tabloids was nil due to a newspaper strike. Designer Scott recalls that he had to buy a Chicago paper to read about his creation. The Plainsman went on display in the Chrysler Building in New York and drew heavy attention. In Detroit it was shown on a turntable with a western scene and cowgirl model during the 75th anniversary of J. L. Hudson's department store. The big store often put on grand shows in years gone by, and many included automobile themes sometimes rivaling an out-and-out auto show. The Plainsman was in one of the real biggies, but had no trouble stealing the show even with GM's Firebird II present.

The Plainsman's design as a sporty wagon made it nearly

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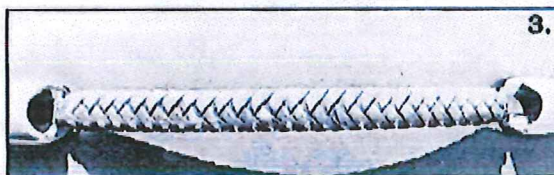
Courtesy of Harold Street

Leon Thomas

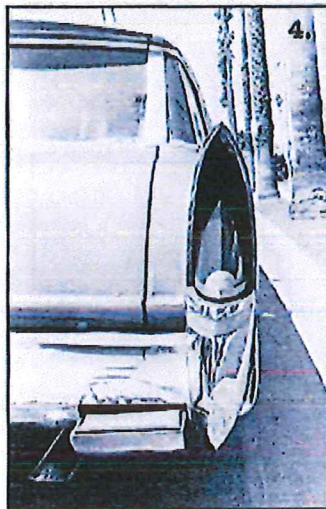
unique among Chrysler show cars. Only one other wagon-type vehicle, a non-running 1958 mock-up called the Cabana, was done during the period of 1940 to 1961. Many of the features of the Plainsman are still seen in one form or another on cars today. For instance, the Plainsman stored its spare tire *inside* the right rear quarter. Nearly every American station wagon since then has spare tire storage in the rear quarters. But the Plainsman had an innovative design which concealed the spare beneath integral body skirts. These skirts swung up on hinges for tire change, and the spare was lowered from its hiding place by means of a clever crank mechanism. With the spare out of the floor, the way was clear to apply creative design ideas to the rear of the deck area. The result was the famous rear-facing third seat, another innovation picked up and used by nearly every big carmaker to date. The third seat was a late revision added June 1, 1955, during construction at Ghia.

The tail gate, rear window and third seats were all power-operated and could be worked in conjunction or singly. The third seat could be raised or lowered from dashboard controls. The finishing touch came with power steps which could be extended for passengers using the third seat. The steps retracted flush with the bumper when not in use, neat as you please. A small triple-switch console was provided for third-seat passengers in addition to the dash controls. The nine-passenger wagon—complete with bumper steps, power rear window, and even power tail gate—is taken for granted today, but all this caused a sensation in 1956. *Motor Trend* was quick to point out the pleasant lack of ugly cables, external hinges, and latches on the Plainsman's tail gate. Other wagons of the day (including the sporty ones) were totally plagued with such clumsy paraphernalia.

Another item of advanced design was flow-through

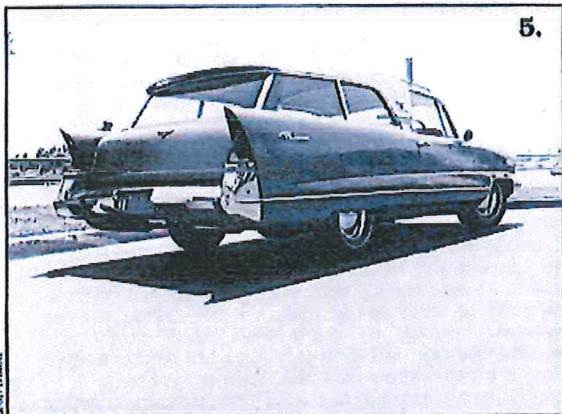


Leon Thomas



Leon Thomas

1. Dash was an amalgam of stock Chrysler instruments and dream-car design. 2. For car's stay in Australia it had to be converted to right hand drive. It remains rhd today. 3. Western motif is carried through in interior with such touches as braided leather door pulls. 4. Tail-lamps have overtones of later MoPar cars of the fifties. 5. From some angles, Plainsman has a chunky look.



Leon Thomas

Plainsman Design Philosophy

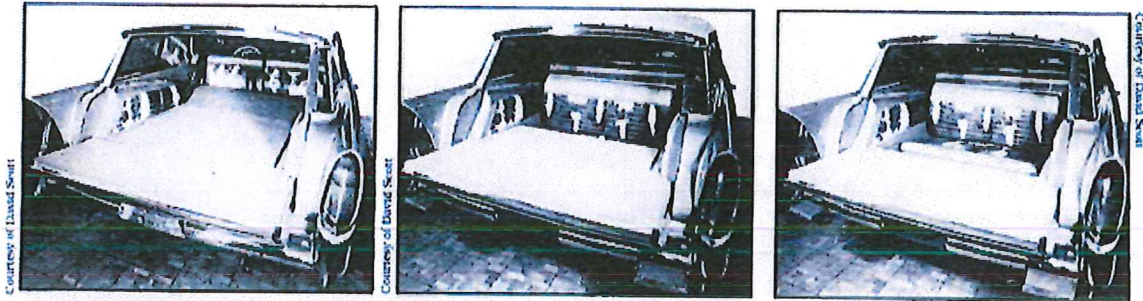
The Plainsman was designed as a luxurious vehicle to serve the variety of needs of a successful western ranchholder. It is "The Forward Look" embodying the colorful, casual way of life as expressed across the great western plains of America. The materials, colors and finishes have been keyed to the environment of the West. Seats of unborn calfskin, trimmed with natural cowhide, the Palomino Beige lacquer finish, and the Texas longhorn motif keynote the theme.

Particular emphasis has been given to the sculptured appearance of the car, relying on the beauty of form, the integration of a whole concept, and the judicious use of texture, proportion and dynamic symmetry to make an aesthetic design statement.

It is imbued with a sensitive appreciation of an automobile as an art form in itself, with a dramatic flair that I hope will capture the imagination of the young-in-heart.

David E. Scott

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Top: And now you know where Ford's better idea of a rear-facing third seat came from. **Left:** The Plainsman outside Chrysler headquarters during an era when the company was a bit more prosperous than the present times. **Bottom:** Just the right touch for a successful rancher, seats of unborn calfskin trimmed with natural cowhide.

The Saga of the Plainsman

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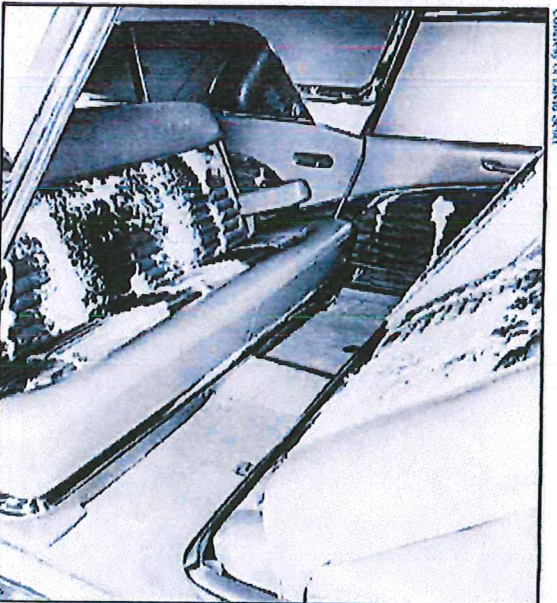
ventilation. In fact, rear seat passengers had controllable vent inlets built right into the roof of the car. The stepped-roof design added additional rear head room and acted as an air scoop. Built-in luggage tie-downs graced the front of the roof, while the rear portion was covered in a padded white orlon material. The interior of the Plainsman was as western as they have ever come, with seats covered in brown and white unborn calfskin and trimmed in beige leather. The striking interior was complemented by a Palomino Beige lacquer finish on the body.

Instruments clustered in front of the driver are the latest rage in modern automobiles, but the design was nothing new to the Plainsman. A full array of gauges and aircraft-type controls sat directly in front of the driver.

Every show car in those days had to have at least one gimmick, and we've already mentioned a few, but there was one more conversation piece. Hidden gas fillers were all the rage, but Dave Scott outdid 'em all. The Plainsman had what was termed an "automatic hidden filler." In this design, the left taillight was power-operated and could be retracted into the body. As the light housing moved forward, the filler cap was automatically lifted and moved out of harm's way. Once gassed up, the cap and light unit locked themselves back into place with no clue for even the most keen-eyed 1950s gas attendant!

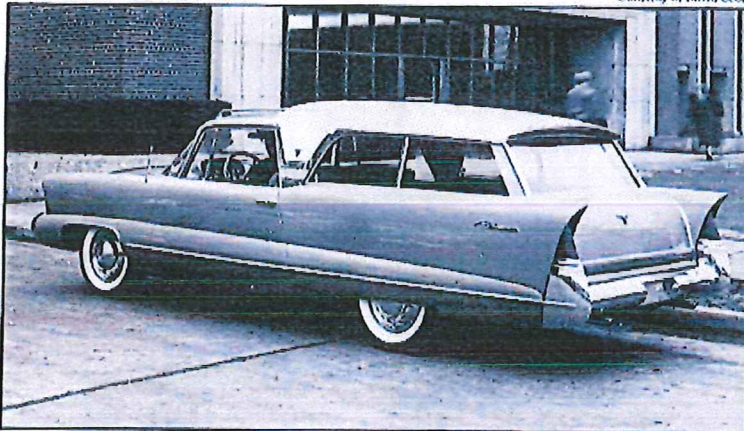
The Plainsman was powered by a 260 cid Plymouth V-8 and equipped with the obligatory power brakes and steering. The 260 engine was an unfortunate choice to power the car for everyday driving. According to the present owner, the 4900 pound car could barely get out of its own way at times and was severely underpowered when climbing hills or pulling big loads. But who ever expected the Plainsman would actually be used for anything other than a show car?

The Plainsman lived out its show career and was quietly transferred to a dealer in Havana, Cuba, thought Dave Scott. It was given to Elwood and Dorothy Parrish. Mr. Parrish at the time was vice-president of overseas marketing and Latin-American sales for Chrysler and was based in Havana. It had been necessary to banish the Plainsman from the United States. The car was brought in from Italy with one of the

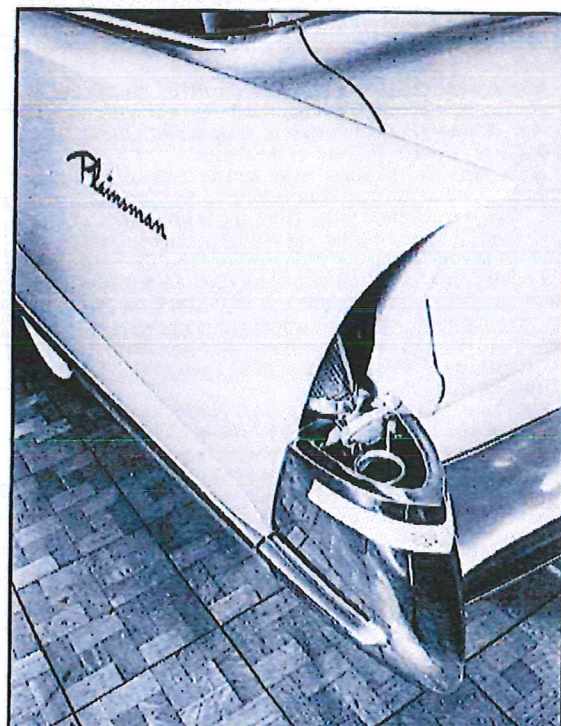
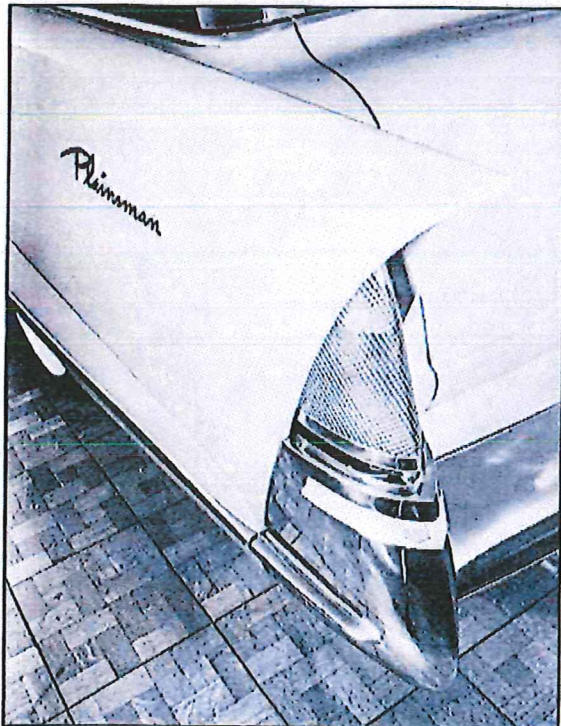
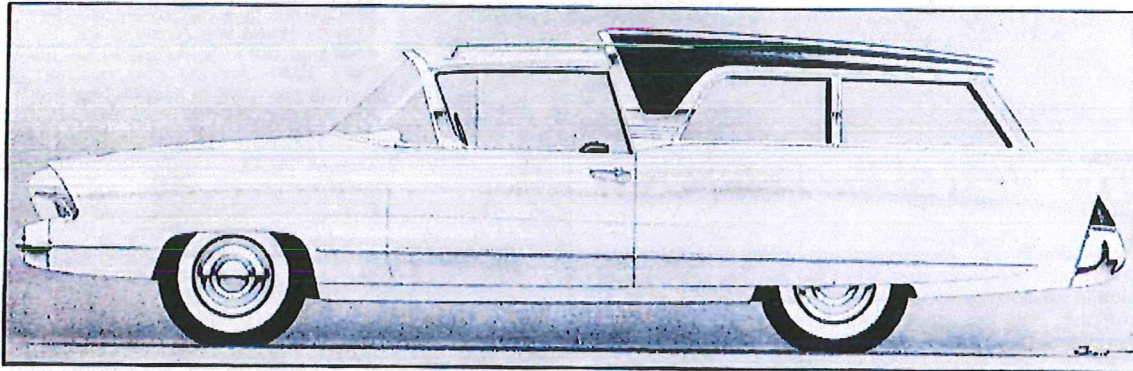


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Courtesy of David Scott



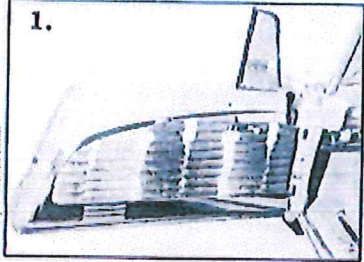
Left and below: Only major modification to Plainsman's final design came with decision to eliminate GM-like wraparound windshield in favor of MoPar-like wrap-around. Bottom: In the find-the-hidden-gas-filler competition prevalent in the fifties, Dave Scott's clever sliding tail lamp would have to be one of the top contenders.



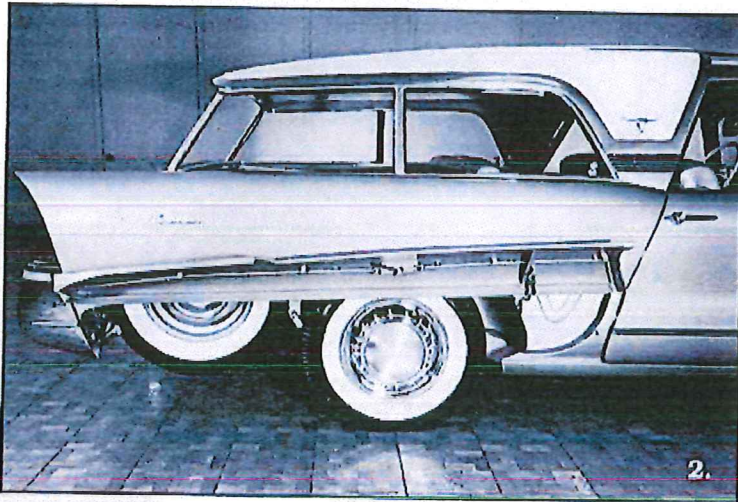
Special Interest Autos, February 1980 45

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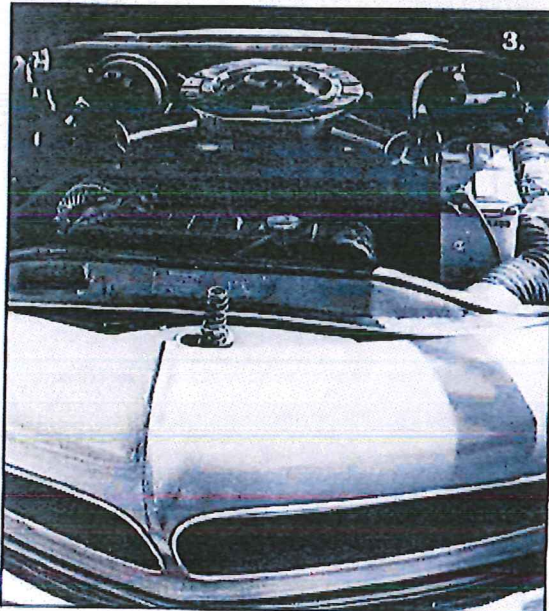
1. Plainsman featured long, wide opening doors for easy entry and exit. 2. Third seat area was gained by slick trick of mounting spare tire under right rear fender and providing flip-up panel for access. 3. Ancient Plymouth 260 V-8 finally packed it in and was replaced by husky Chrysler 440. 4. Rear styling remains clean and dramatic after nearly a quarter of a century.



Courtesy of David Scott



Courtesy of David Scott



James D'Amico



Courtesy of David Scott

The Saga of the Plainsman

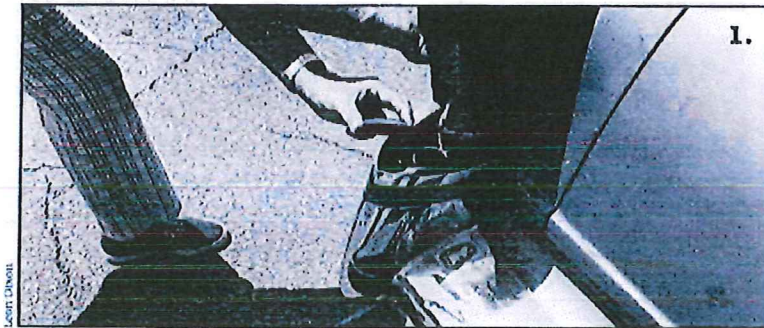
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U.S. Customs show-car clauses attached. This was the case with many other Ghia-Chrysler cars. Most of the later Ghia Turbine cars were scrapped to avoid various customs duties and taxes, and for a moment it seemed that the same fate awaited the Plainsman. The cars were, after all, imports in the legal sense of the word. Bill Newberg, according to Parrish, made arrangements for the car to be transported to Havana. It was the beginning of yet another story.

For a few years, the Plainsman and Parrishes enjoyed a happy life in Cuba. Then came Castro and the communist takeover. Before long the Parrishes discovered that their house was about to be confiscated for the use of a local official of the new regime. At the eleventh hour, Mr. Parrish was able to get his wife and the Plainsman aboard a Spanish vessel bound for Puerto Rico. Once again, the Plainsman was saved and off to new adventures.

During its life after the Cuban episode, the Plainsman has spent time in an incredible series of locales. It has lived in Mexico, New York, and was driven cross-country to San Francisco. From there, the Plainsman journeyed to Australia ("The Aussies loved it," says Parrish). Australian law required the car to be switched to right-hand-drive and an amazingly neat conversion was done. Following the conversion, the Plainsman saw use in the outback country. It was rather a strange quirk of fate that the Plainsman would be used in the wide open spaces for which it was designed. After a time in Australia, the Palomino Beige show car journeyed on with the Parrishes to Japan and finally returned to the United States to see regular use in Southern California.

Besides the right-hand-drive mods, Woody Parrish has had to make some additional changes to the Plainsman. Two years ago the old 260 V-8 finally packed it in and Mr. Parrish promptly installed a 440 cid MoPar. He claims that the car now had adequate power for the first time. The power steering unit went out some time back and couldn't be saved, so Mr. Parrish had a totally different unit from a late '60s Plymouth installed. The unit dropped right in, but the steering column and wheel had to be changed to correspond. Parrish has the original steering wheel tucked away for possible later re-installation. Work is presently being done to convert the Plainsman's six-volt system to work compatibly with the 12-volt engine setup, and Parrish expects to do a complete restoration some time in the near future. The only unfortunate loss over the years was the original hubcaps.



1.

1. Most everything on Plainsman is still in good working order including the unique gas filler. Retractable steps slide out from rear bumper for third seat entry. 2. During styling and clay model stage, plans called for Plainsman to carry Plymouth nameplate. This idea was dropped before completion of car. 3. How the Plainsman began. Designer Scott's original concept was a coupe de ville show car. Virgil Exner suggested using it as a base for a station wagon. Result: Plainsman.

These items were virtually handmade and weren't up to the stresses of normal usage. Most fell apart at high speed—a condition not anticipated either in initial construction or eventual use.

I took a ride in the Plainsman with Elwood Parrish. One turn of the key brought the 440 to life and off we zoomed. The Plainsman's ride is a bit firm, no doubt due to several modifications on the suspension which have been made over the years, but cornering is accompanied by more body lean than one might expect.

The car is deceptively low, but head room is quite adequate even for a six-footer. The front compartment is considerably larger than you might expect for a car of this type, but with the seat in full rearward position, leg room for the number-two seat is a bit cramped. The interior materials have held up amazingly well through all the years of use. Face to face, the styling rings somewhat reminiscent of Lincoln and Packard flavor, but that is all somehow overwhelmed by an intangible MoPar character. You can't put your finger on it, but it's there.

As we drove off, a late-model car full of people pulled alongside to pace. After a few smiles and admiring glances, windows were rolled down and a car-to-car conversation began. "Wow!! What is that car—who made it?" "Chrysler—it's a show car." "They makin' these for sale?" "Uh-uh. Only one was made for 1956." "Wow—rilly incredible. Too bad they didn't make 'em...I'd buy one." The car sped off ahead of us with necks straining to catch a last glimpse from the back window. I thought to myself for a minute, "Yeah—so would I...so would I." □

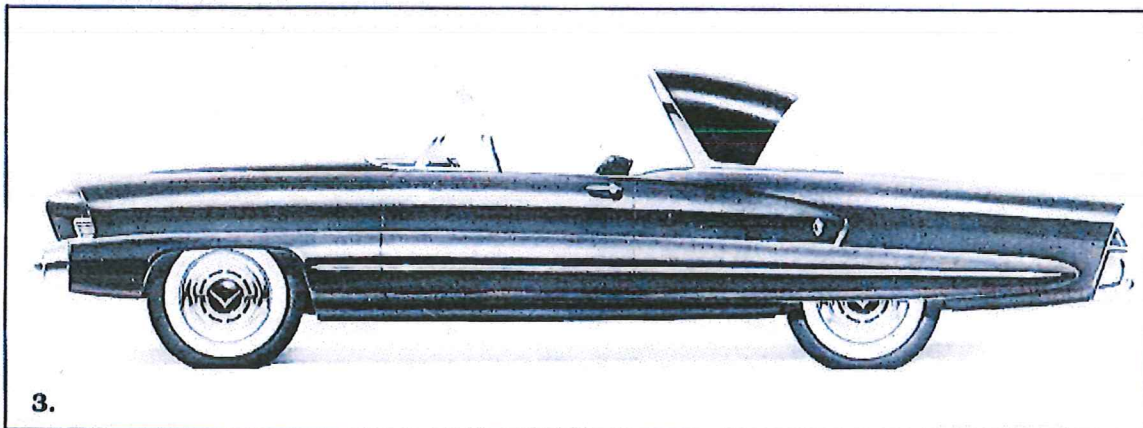
Special thanks to David Scott, Royal Oak, Mich.; Jeff Godshall, Royal Oak, Mich.; Bill Brownlie, Chrysler Corp., Highland Park, Mich.; Tom Jacobowski, Chrysler Corp., Highland Park, Mich.; Elwood and Dorothy Parrish, California; and Don Butter, Detroit, Mich.



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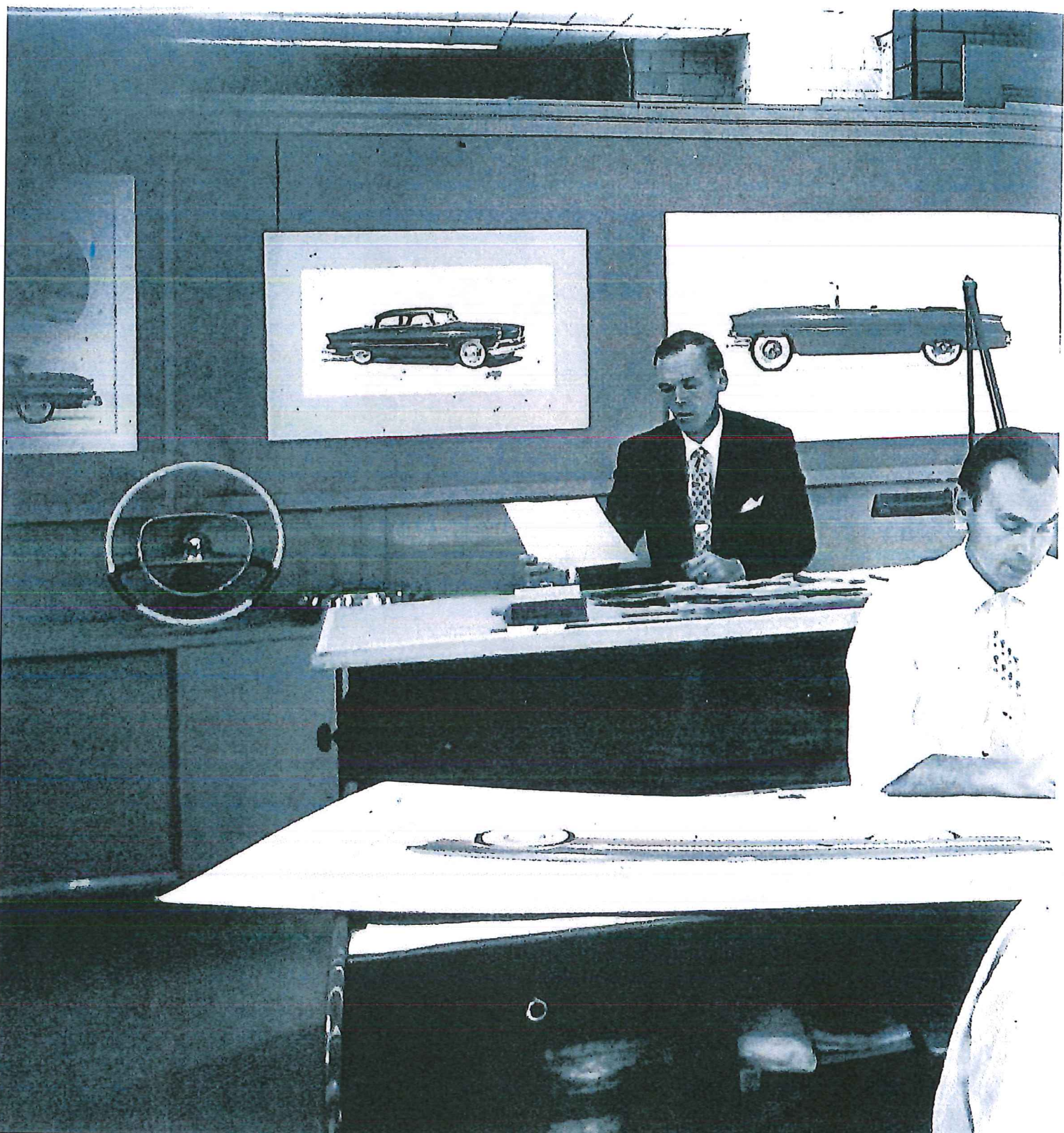
From Concept to Car— How the Plainsman Developed

- Feb. 1, 1954 Exterior design authority commissioned; styling sketches and rough 3/8 clay model begin.
- April 2, 1954 3/8 design layout begins; development is concurrent with clay model.
- June 1, 1954 Interior design authority commissioned; sketches begin.
- June 8, 1954 Interior styling scheme submitted.
- Sept. 1, 1954 3/8 clay model completed.
- Sept. 23, 1954 Four interior trim (fabric and finishes) schemes submitted.
- Sept. 29, 1954 Interior trim approved.
- Oct. 15, 1954 Ghia begins construction.
- Dec. 1, 1954 Final overall design approved, including details.
- June 1, 1955 Interior revised; third seat added.
- Dec. 5, 1955 Completed full-size car delivered to Detroit.



3.

[Click Here to Return to Reference Page ->](#)



LEON SAYS THE WHEEL ON
SHELF IS THE PLAINSMAN

PLAINSMAN WHEEL
1956 PLYMOUTH STEERING
WHEEL

JALOPNIK THE A.V. CLUB DEADSPIN EARTHER GIZMODO JEZEBEL KOTAKU LIFEHACKER SPLINTER THE TAKEOUT THE ROOT THE

1956 Chrysler Plainsman Concept Car

VIDEO JALOPNIK REVIEWS THE MORNING SHIFT NICE PRICE OR GREAT RIDE WRENCHING RACING CAR VS AMERICA WHAT CAR SHOULD

Tom Joslin
11/21/10 5:30pm •

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The 1956 Chrysler Ghia Plainsman Concept Car is the only known 50s station wagon concept car/dream car that exists today. This piece of Chrysler history led quite an interesting life before ending up on eBay.

As you can see from the pictures included, the Chrysler Plainsman Station Wagon concept, although amazingly complete is starting to show its age. Believed by many to have been designed by the great Virgil Exner, it was actually designed entirely by Dave Scott. Scott worked at Plymouth Studios during the time Exner was doing some of his best design work. Dave Scott was previously employed by Ford as a designer and it isn't hard to see a bit of the influence in the final design of the Plainsman.

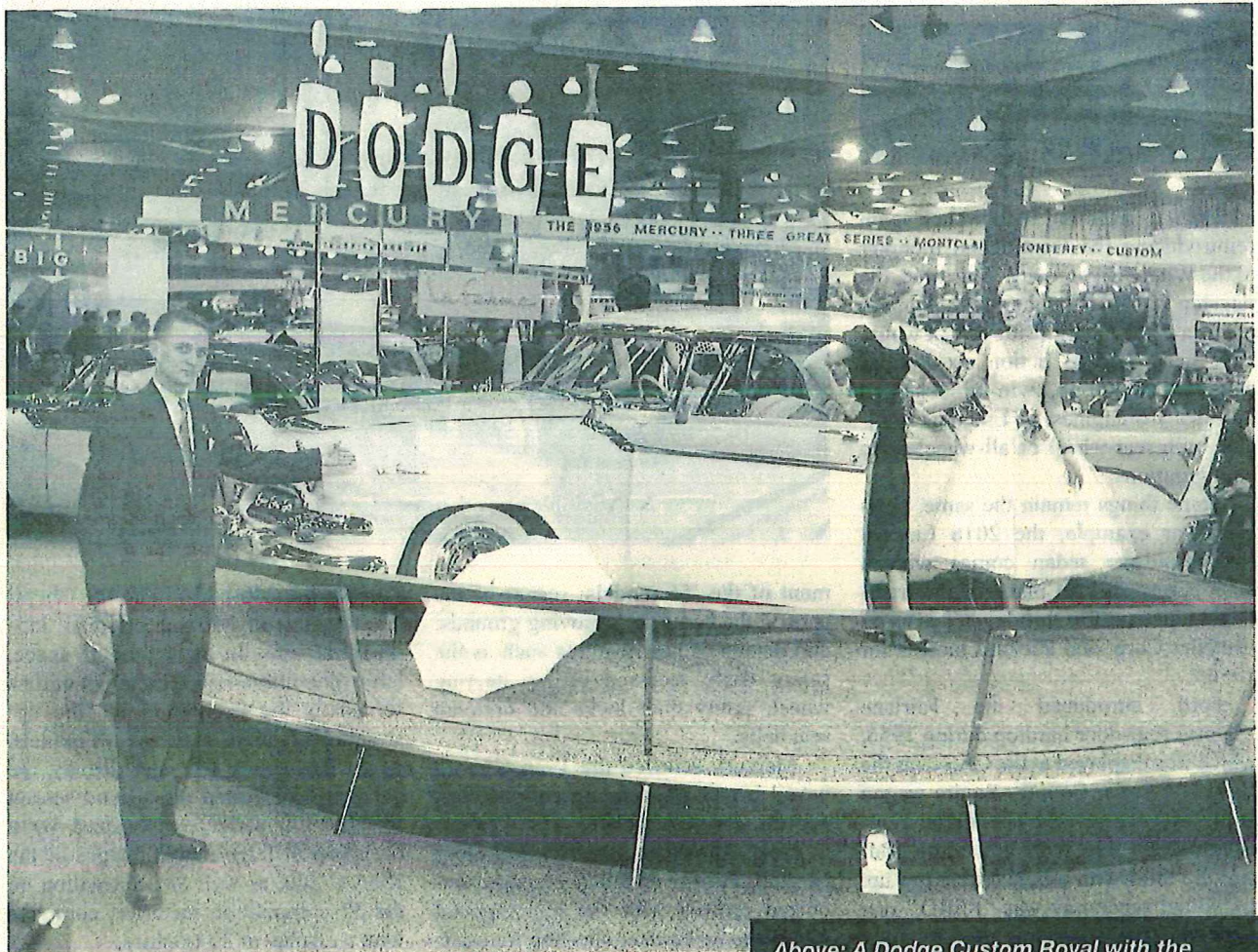
The Plainsman is the only known 50s concept car station wagon to exist today. The station wagon featured the first rear facing third seat ever in a station wagon, power rear window, and a power rear seat that folded flat. The interior on the Plainsman is made from unborn calfskin. You read that right. My guess is when someone does eventually buy the Plainsman, this feature might not be replicated during the restoration.

Because the Plainsman was bodied by Ghia in Italy, it was taken out of the country after it was shown within 18 months so Chrysler could avoid paying duty on it. Initially the Plainsman was given to the President of Cuban banks, but upon his untimely death it was returned to Chrysler. The Plainsman ended up in the hands of Chrysler's Cuban export manager. When Castro came to power the Export manager and the Plainsman managed a safe escape.

The Plainsman traveled to Australia with the Cuban export manager. During this time it was upgraded to the 440 V8 that currently sits under the hood and was briefly converted to right hand drive to comply with Australian law. The Plainsman was converted back to left hand drive when it eventually made its way back to California, where according to Ebay, it resides today.

The Plainsman has been for sale since the beginning of the year. It seems that needing a complete cosmetic restoration is making it a bit of a tough sell for some. A \$160,000 bid was refused at auction in January. This August when it made a second auction appearance, the top bid was only \$90,000. Currently, with less than a day left on Ebay, the bidding is just over \$50,000.

[Ebay]



Above: A Dodge Custom Royal with the optional La Femme package was first offered in 1955. The umbrella was just one of many female-oriented accessories included with the La Femme. Below: A Chicago Community Queen presents the new Cadillac Eldorado Seville coupe.

'56 Mix

Highlights from the 1956 Chicago Auto Show

By M.J. Frumkin, Chicago Auto Show Historian/Curator
Photos by Toivo Kaitila, Official Show Photographer

I can scarcely fathom the fact that it's been 60 years since my dad took me to the opening day of the 48th annual Chicago Auto Show (CAS). It was Saturday, Jan. 7, 1956. This marked the third CAS that I attended and the one that bonded my lifelong connection with the yearly show.

Chicagoans and Midwesterners have witnessed the history of the auto industry since Chicago's first official indoor trade and public demonstration in 1901. Manager Samuel A. Miles, considered the father of the national auto show, nearly filled the 53,000-sq.-ft. Coliseum exposition hall that year with 65 firms displaying vehicles or accessories, plus a 20-foot-wide indoor track to test drive the new-fangled machines.

There was no problem packing vehicles in the 290,000-sq.-



ft. International Amphitheatre and its newly constructed adjoining great hall for the 1956 CAS. This was the first time since the building became the home of the show in late 1935 for the 36th annual show that all exhibits were on one level of the Amphitheatre. To add to an indoor park-like atmosphere, greenery decorated the exhibits around the hall with tall, stylized trees camouflaging the building's support columns.

Ford Motor Co.

A major story from the '56 show was the reintroduction of the distinguished Continental name with the new Continental Mark II two-door hardtop. Coincidentally, a major story

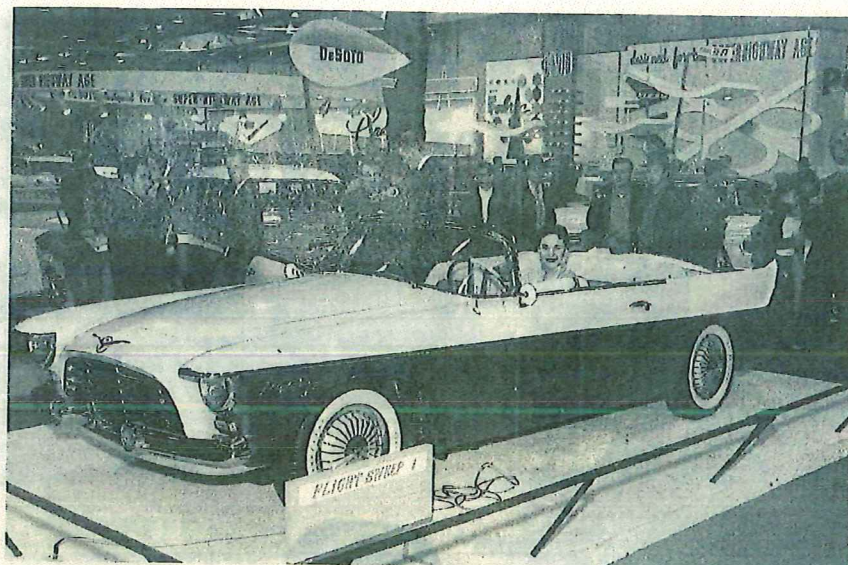
A lucky Community Queen in Chrysler's fabulous Flight Sweep I dream car that predicted styling features for future MoPars.

at the 2016 show is Lincoln once again reintroducing the Continental moniker to the Windy City crowds. This time, the flagship 2017 Continental four-door sedan is available with features that would have been science fiction six-decades ago, such as 400-hp, twin-turbocharged 3.0-liter V-6 engines, or Lincolns available with rear-wheel or all-wheel-drive configurations.

Some things remain the same, however. For example, the 2016 Lincoln MKZ midsize sedan comes with a push-button shift in place of the traditional transmission shift lever, just as on Chrysler Corp. and Packard models for 1956.

Ford introduced the Fairlane Victoria four-door hardtop during 1956, which was displayed at the CAS near the Crown Victoria, Country Squire wagon and a trio of two-seat Thunderbirds — one topless, one with a hardtop roof and the third with a convertible top up. Exhibited separately was "FERD," one of Ford's lifelike models used to study car accident injuries. But the real showstopper in the Ford area was the futuristic and highly experimental *Mystere* with its canted fins, huge glass bubble windshield, roof canopy that could be raised, swivel seats and a proposed rear-mounted gas-turbine engine.

In addition to its 9,130-sq.-ft. new car exhibit and 6,580-sq.-ft. truck display, Ford contracted floor space for its Ford Theatre, which presented wide-screen Cinemascope movies on the develop-



ment of the '56 models; scenes of the cars on the company's proving grounds; and details of new features such as the safety dash, recessed center steering wheel, safety door locks and optional seat belts.

Mercury selected the 1956 CAS to unveil a pair of stunning automobiles. For the consumer, there was the new midyear Montclair Phaeton four-door hardtop. For the dreamer, Mercury tantalized crowds with the experimental *XM Turnpike Cruiser* sporting transparent flip-up roof panels and large concave-sculpted rear fenders capped with 12-inch-wide V-shaped tail lamps. Some of these styling features later appeared on 1957-'59 Mercurys.

Chrysler Corp.

MoPar fans had one of the best years ever at the 1956 Chicago show. Chrysler selected it as the venue to introduce two midyear high-performance two-door hardtops: the new 1956 Plymouth

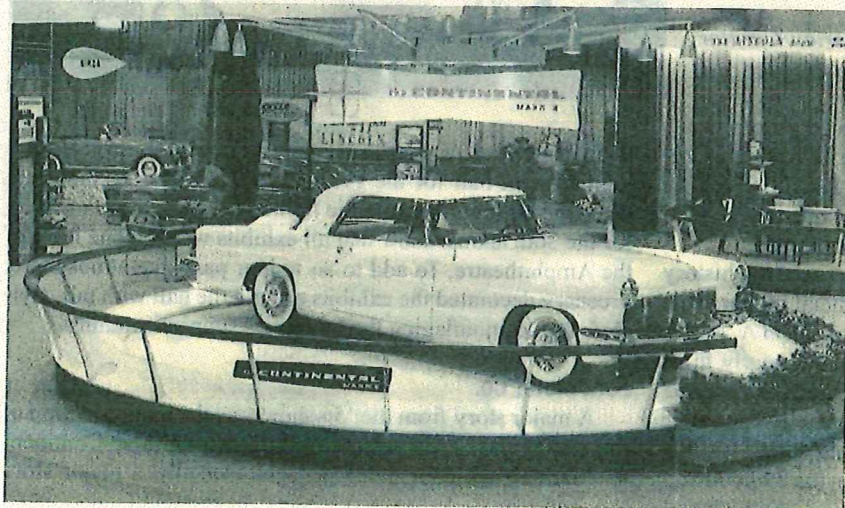
Fury with a 240-hp V-8 and the Chrysler 300-B with 340- or optional 355-hp Hemi V-8s. In the Plymouth space, large monolithic-styled metal jet tailfins served as the inspiration for the up-swept rear fenders on that year's models.

At the nearby Chrysler display, the company celebrated the second season for the '300 series, emphasized by a backdrop of large racing images of the 1955 C-300, as well as information on the 37 competition victories, complete with a display of 37 trophies.

In the De Soto exhibit, an example of the '56 Firelite Indy 500 Pacesetter convertible slowly turned on a circular platform and occasionally, the background music included the reinterpretation of Cole Porter's famous tune with the refrain, "It's delightful... It's delovely... It's De Soto!"

Chrysler also premiered its experimental eight-passenger *Plainsman* station wagon in Chicago. The Plainsman two-door "idea wagon" had a western theme and demonstrated a pair of special features that would appear on some 1957 MoPars: a rear-facing third seat and a spare tire and wheel stored behind the right rear wheel and accessed by a lift-up panel. Other 1956 "dream cars" from Chrysler were the eye-catching *Flight Sweep I* convertible and *Flight*

See CHICAGO, page 49



Only one model and body style was available from Ford Motor Co.'s new Continental Division: the exclusive Continental Mark II coupe, presented at the Chicago Auto Show on a pedestal.



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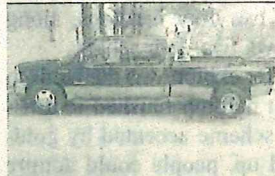
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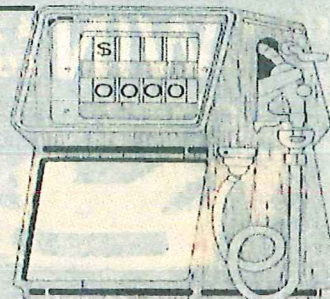


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CHICAGO, from page 34

Sweep II hardtop, both equipped with special Hemi V-8s and previews of upcoming "Forward Look" styling trends.

Imperial featured five models on the show floor plus a '56 Imperial four-door hardtop with "Official Car — Chicago Auto Show" lettering on its front doors that was used outside the Amphitheatre.

A mid-year option for all Dodge models was the potent D-500 Hemi V-8, but the exhibit's centerpiece was the lavender-and-white Custom Royal "La Femme" created for the female buyer. This was the second and final season for the Dodge La Femme, which came accessorized with an umbrella, compact case and a handbag that fit into the front seat backs. In a separate display, the '56 Custom Royal four-door sedan that shattered performance and endurance records at Bonneville was the focus of attention.

General Motors

In the heart of the Cadillac exhibit, a circular turntable spun the Cadillac *Eldorado Brougham* Motorama dream car. People milling past it swooned over its futuristic styling trends such as quad headlamps, pencil-thin white sidewall

tires and front swiveling bucket-style seats. Parked nearby as bookends to the *Eldorado Brougham* were production Seville two-door hardtop and Biarritz convertible Eldorado models.

Across the aisle from Ford, Chevro-

with at least 10 examples of its Rocket V-8-powered models, as well as the crowd-pleasing Olds *Delta* two-door hardtop dream car. It featured a four-passenger fiberglass body and brushed-aluminum roof.

Across the aisle, Buick's 10,000-sq.-ft. exhibit was filled with 10 colorful models, plus the handsome *Wildcat III* show car reportedly equipped with a 280-hp V-8.

People strolling through the large Pontiac exhibit were treated to the Motorama *Strato-Star* six-passenger coupe design study that was a showcase for Pontiac's new production V-8 engine.

Independents & Imports

A huge draw at the 1956 CAS was the jet age-inspired Packard *Predictor* prototype with a distinctive vertical grille bar, hidden headlamps, wrap-over windshield, retractable roof panels, dashing tailfins, swivel seats and reversed rear window. Most folks attending the '56 show didn't realize that this dream machine was to be the forecaster of the coming 1957 Packard, but it never came to fruition. Instead, Packard bodies were based on Studebakers for 1957 and '58.



A Community Queen in a formal gown sits in a 1956 Studebaker Golden Hawk two-door hardtop.

let exhibited its the second-year Nomad station wagon, V-8-powered Corvette and the camouflaged black-and-white-striped '56 Chevy that won the Pikes Pike challenge and was featured in Chevrolet advertisements.

Oldsmobile's exhibit was outfitted

History of the Chrysler "Plainsman" with body by Ghia

This car is one of a series of design idea cars commissioned by Chrysler Corporation to Ghia Studios in Torino, Italy. In late 1955 a Chrysler chassis and engine was sent to Ghia with the instruction to build the "dream" station wagon of the future. It was Chrysler's lead show car at the 1956 Paris Auto Show.

Ghia proceeded to build a unique car based based on an "old west" United States theme thus the name "Plainsman". The theme was set by using brown and white unborn calf skin as the upholstery material. This was accentuated by the use of hannel brown leather as edging material. The interior has controllable air vents for the rear seat passengers. The instruments for the first time in the industry were concentrated in a pod and elevated from the dash for easy visibility.

An internal body innovation was the industry's first rear facing third seat which has been incorporated in many Chrysler Corporation station wagons. One exclusive feature of this seat in the Plainsman has not yet entered production. The seat was constructed so that it raises and lowers by remote control from the dashboard. In addition the rear window glass lowers, the tail gate comes down and steps come out of the rear bumper so that passengers can easily step up into the seat.

Exterior body features include the first 'step down' roof over the front seat. The first Chrysler production model to incorporate this feature was the 1958 Imperial which featured a stainless steel roof panel. The rear 3/4's of the Plainsman roof is covered with white sailcloth making it the first of the luxury padded tops.

The original engine was a 260 cubic inch V-8 which did not have

sufficient power to adequately handle the 4,900 pound weight of the vehicle. A Chrysler 440 Magnum with Ansen Stick/automatic shift has been incorporated to provide adequate power.

Although originally built as a left hand drive car the owners were forced to modify it to right hand drive when they moved to Australia on one of their overseas assignments.

The Plainsman is owned by Dorothy and Elwood Parrish and is in daily use in California. No one but Chrysler and the Parrish's have ever owned the car. They acquired the car when Mr. Parrish was Vice President of Latin American Marketing for Chrysler International Corporation. At that timethe Parrish's were resident in Havana, Cuba which was the Latin American headquarters for Chrysler International. When Castro's communism took over Cuba Mr. Parrish was forced to flee to Puerto Rico. He then arranged for Mrs. Parrish and the Plainsman to be picked up by a Spanish ship and transported to Puerto Rico.

The Plainsman is in amazingly good condition considering it's age and the number of countries in which it has been operated. The Parrish's are currently in the process of completing a full mechanical, interior and exterior restoration of the Plainsman.

Statement typed up by Elwood Parrish and

Given to Leon Dixon in 1979...

Note mention of no other owners ever!