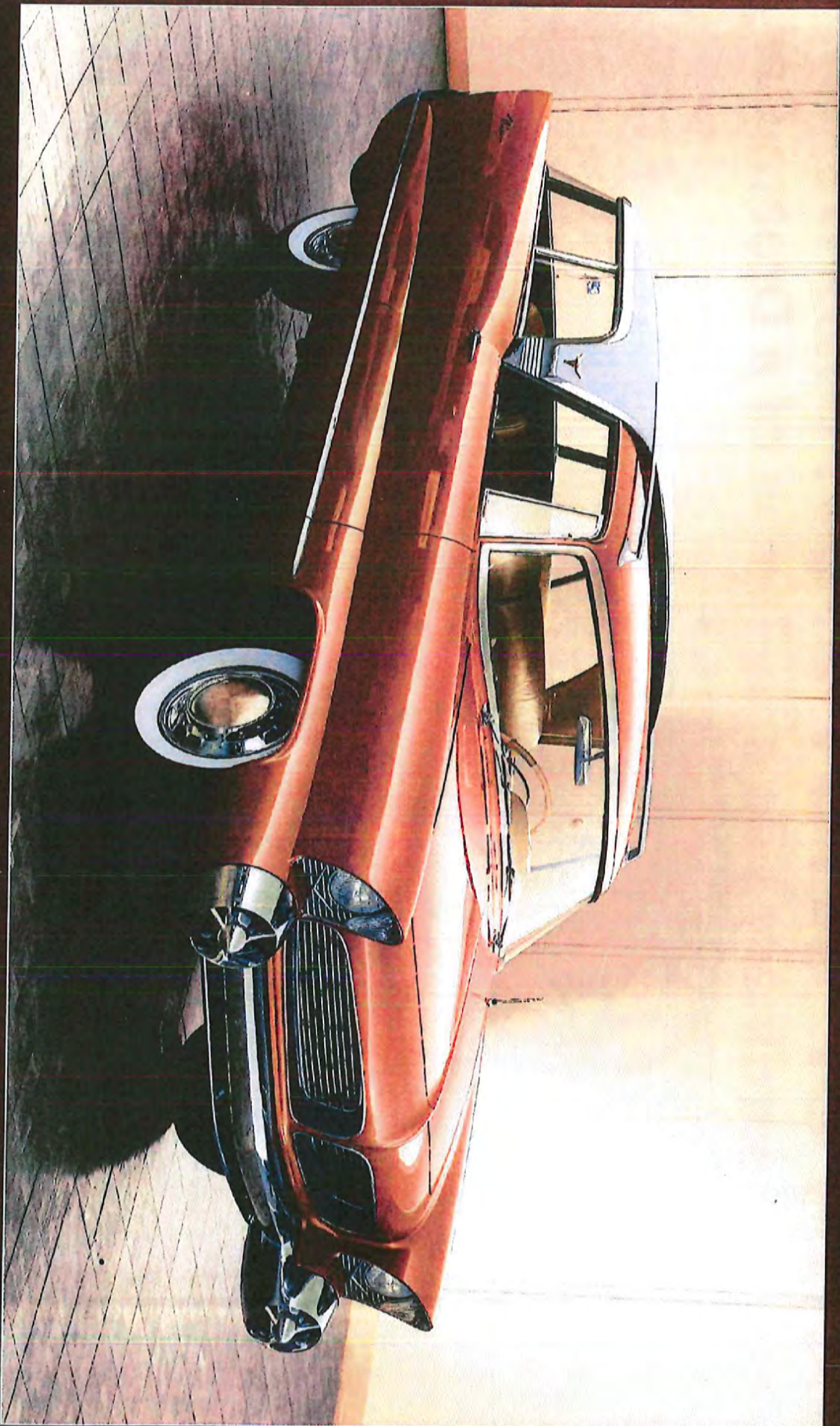


SAGA OF THE PLAINSMAN

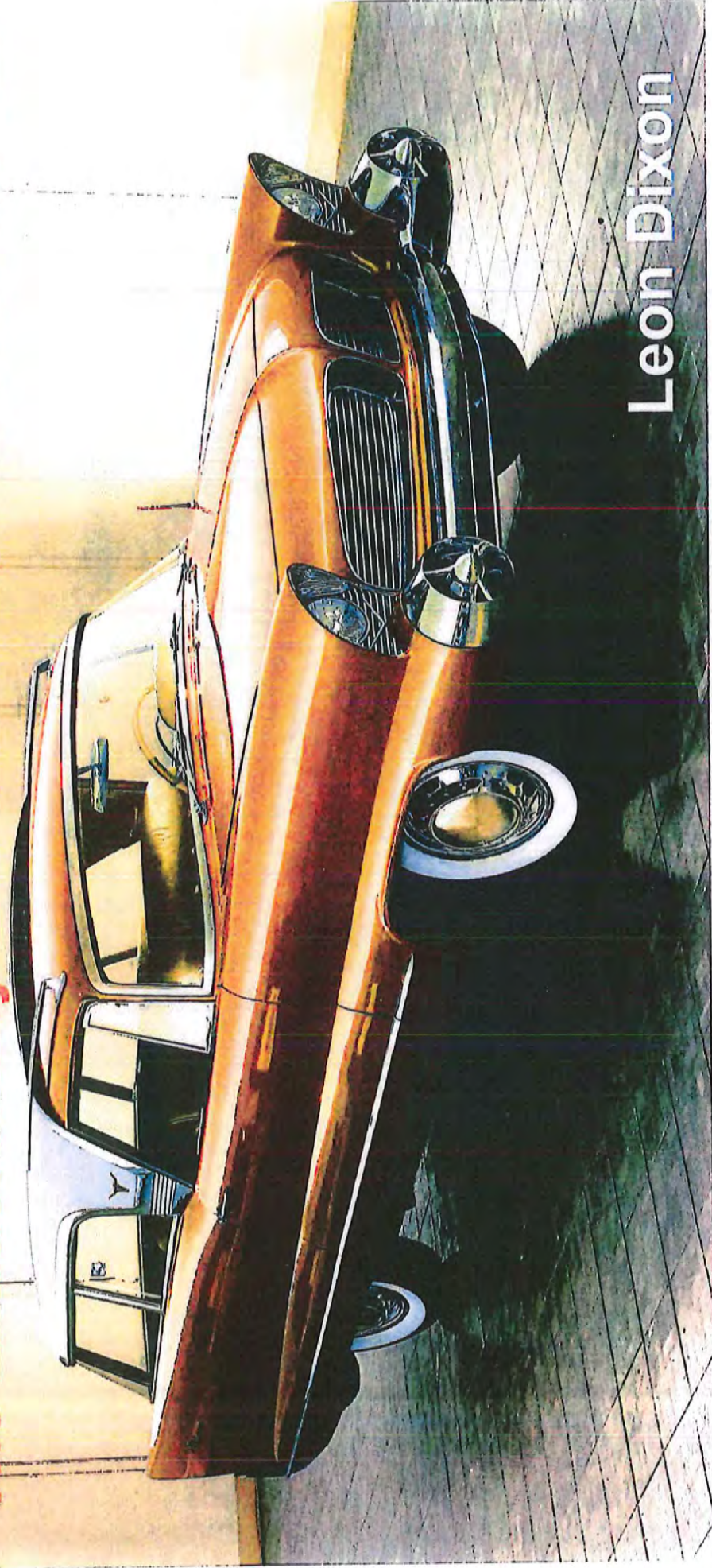
The Extraordinary Life and Time of a Dream Car



Leon Dixon

SAGA OF THE PLAINSMAN

The Extraordinary Life and Times of a Dream Car



Leon Dixon

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 on an "old west" United States Theme thus the name "Plainsman". The theme was set by using brown and white unborn calfskin as the upholstery material. This was accentuated by the use of tanned 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 time the 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.

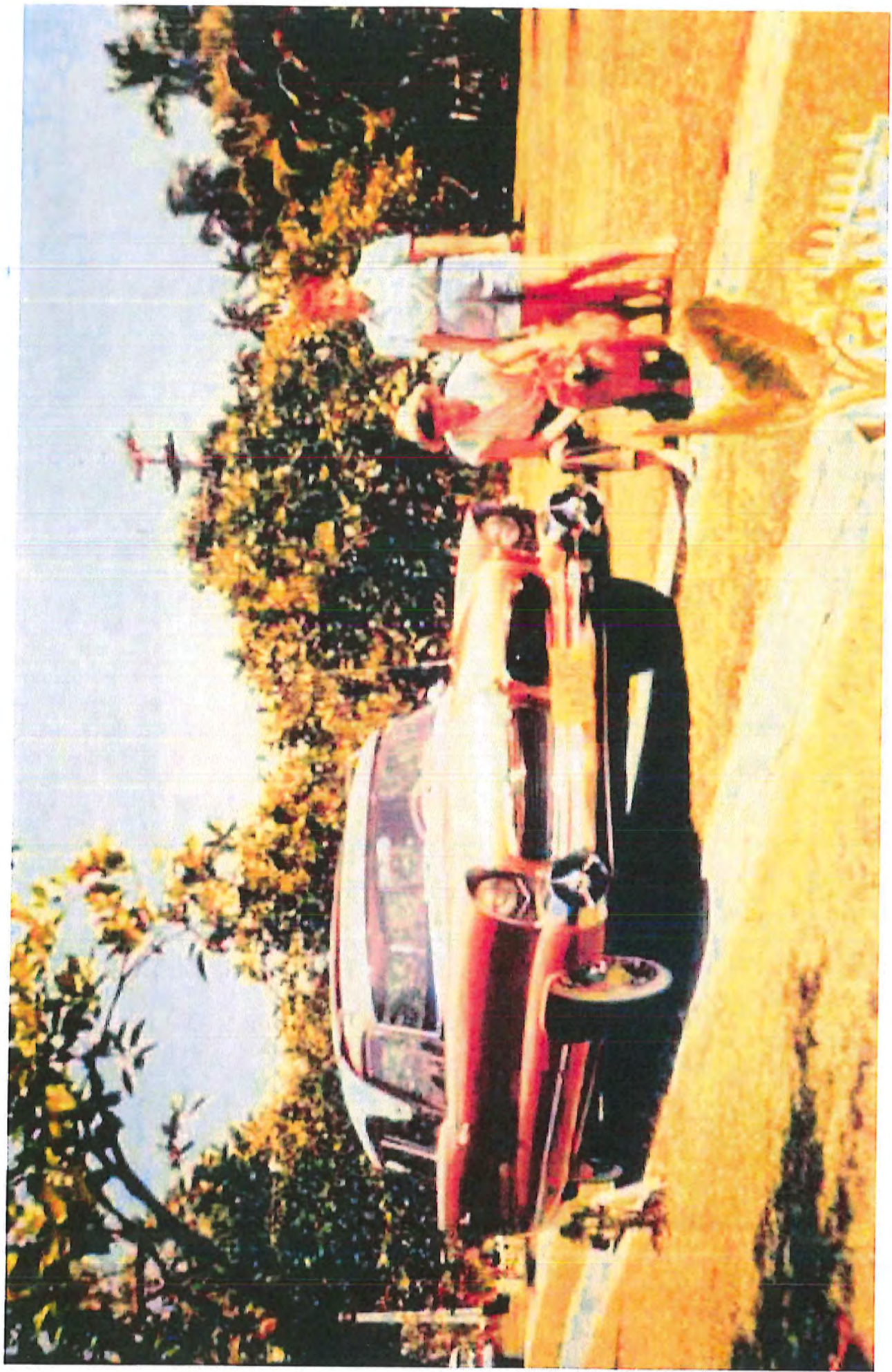
The Plainsman is in amazingly good condition considering it's age and the number of countries in which it has been operated. The Parrish's are currently in the process of completing a full mechanical, interior and exterior restoration of the Plainsman.

**Statement typed up by Elwood Parrish and
Given to Leon Dixon in 1979...**

Note mention of no other owners ever!



PLAINSMAN STEERING WHEEL
ON REAR COUNTER AS PER
LEON DIXON 4-1



HAVANA CUBA 1958



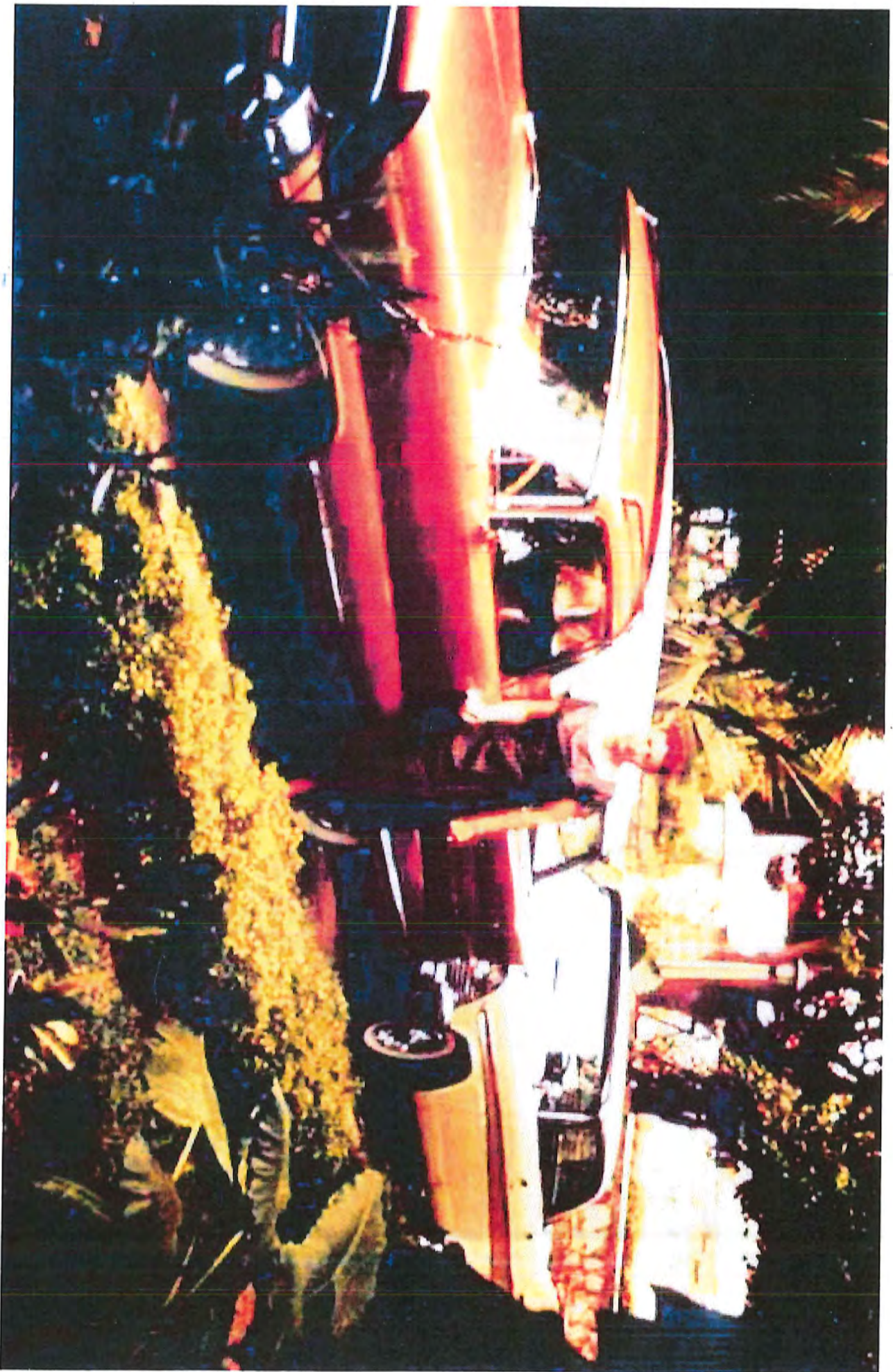
HAVANA CUBA 1958



HAVANA CUBA - 1958

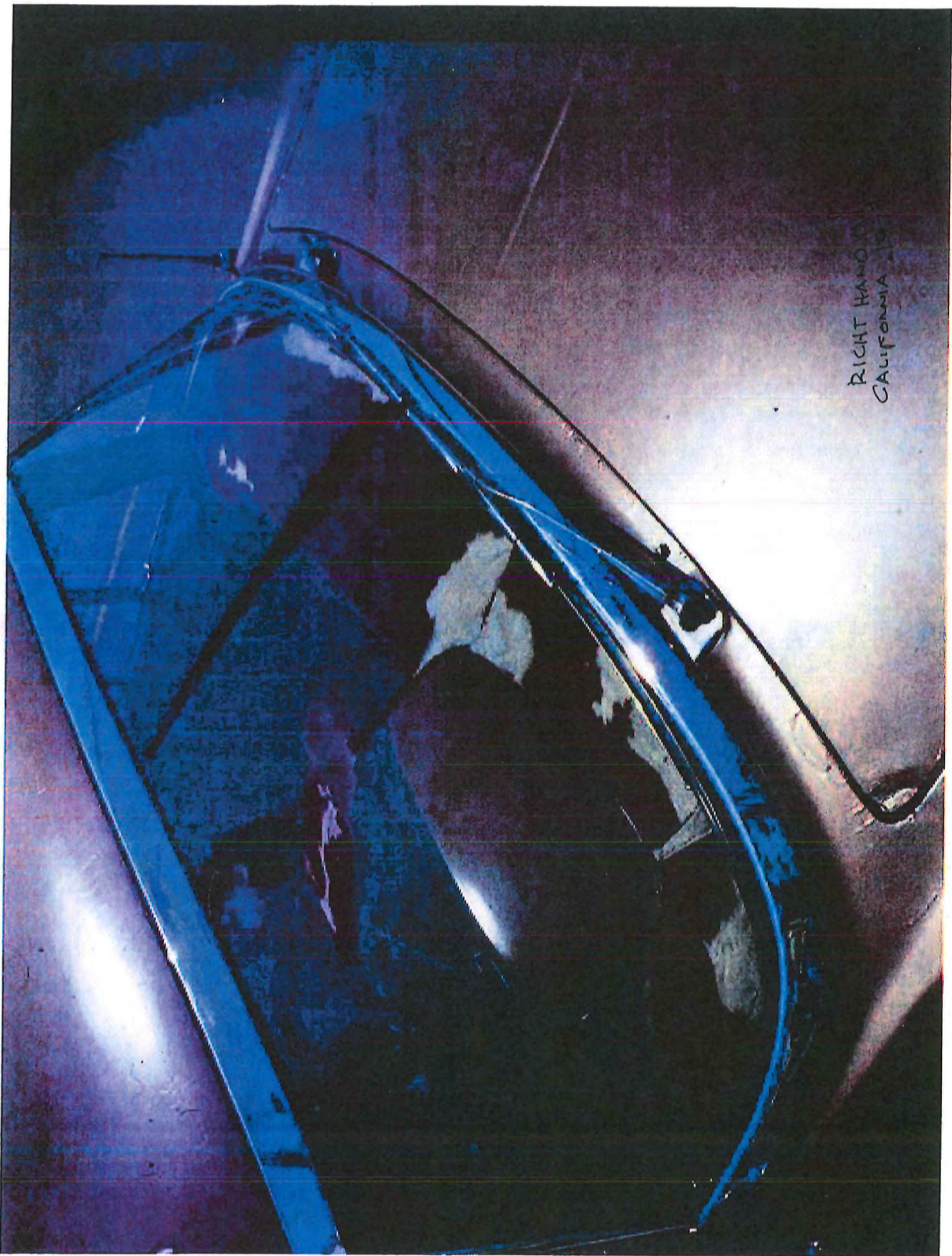


HAVANA CURSA 1958

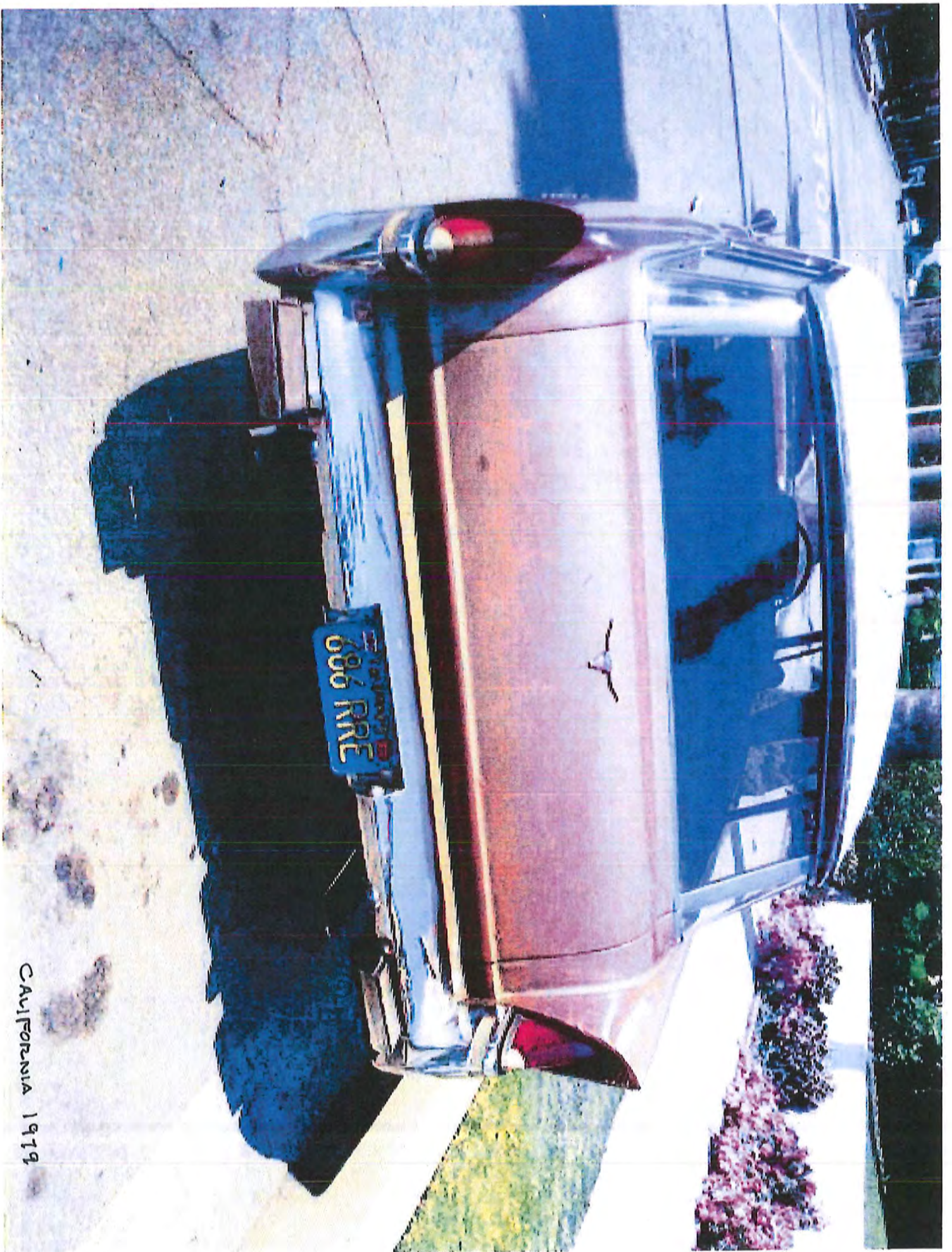


HAVANA CUBA. 1958

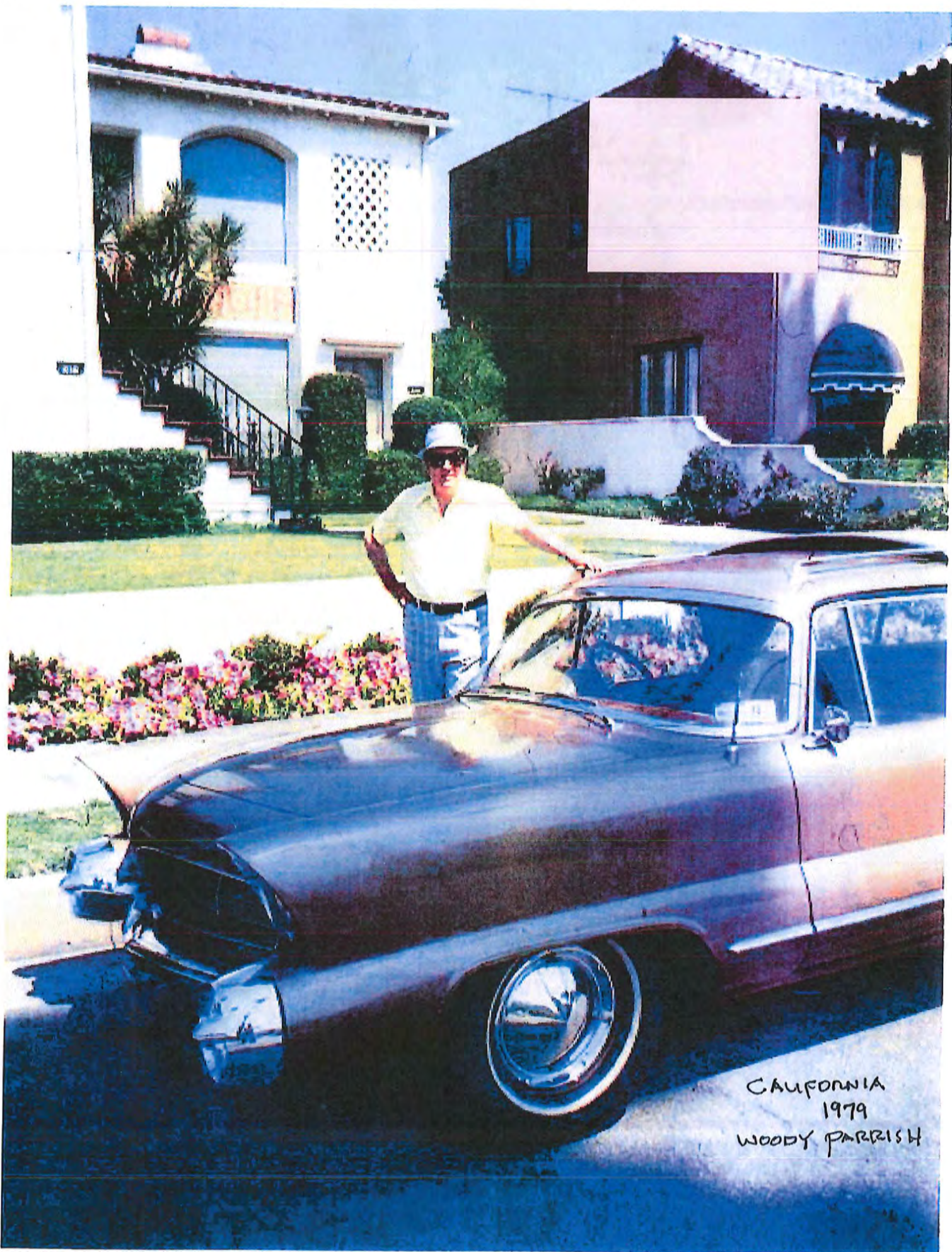




RIGHT HAND
CALIFORNIA



CALIFORNIA 1919



CAIFORNIA
1979
WOODY PARRISH



LEON DIXON PHOTOGRAPH.
CALIFORNIA 1979



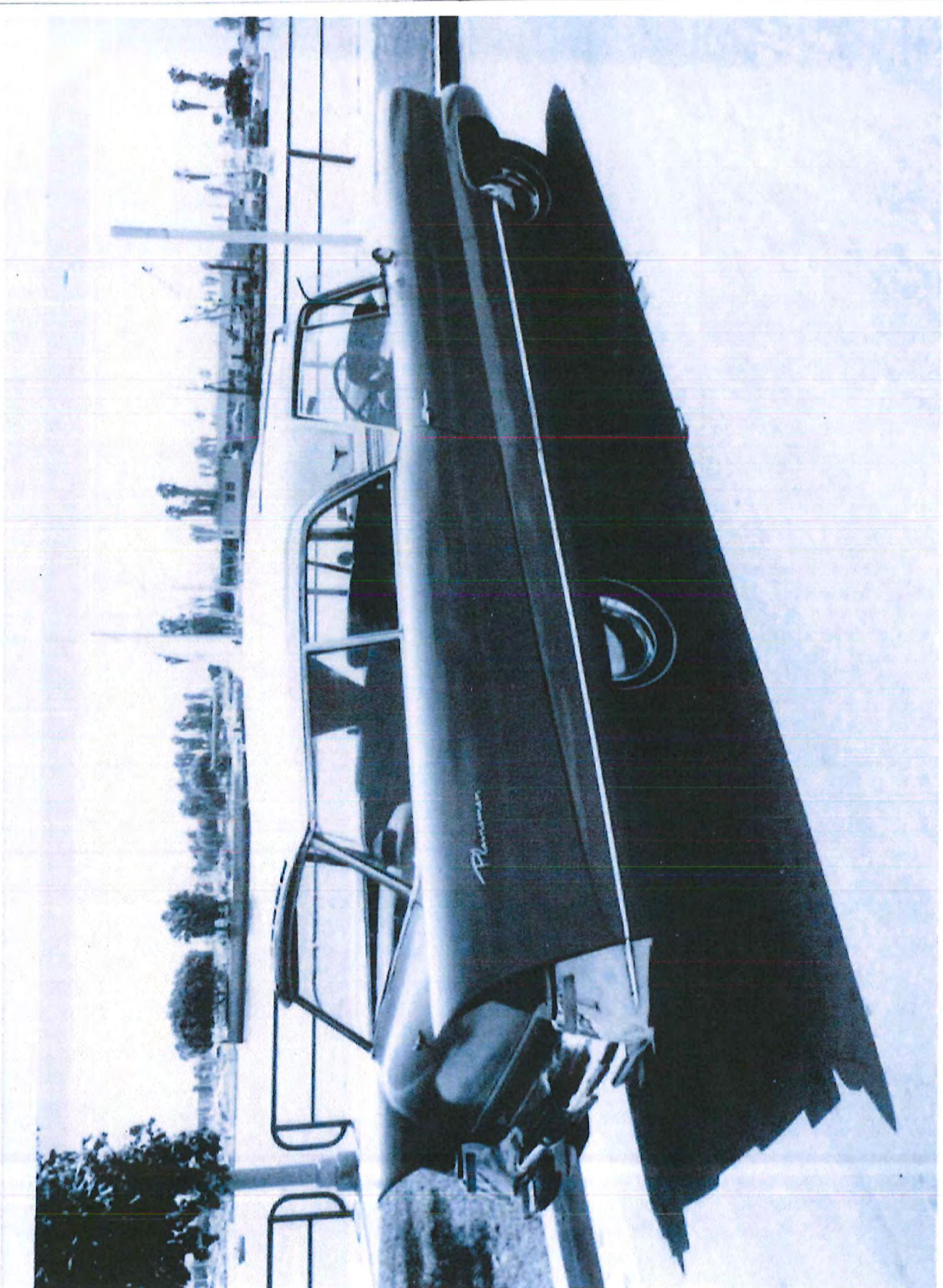
LEON OIXON PHOTOGRAPH
CALIFORNIA 1979

LEON DIXON PHOTOGRAPH.
CALIFORNIA 1979

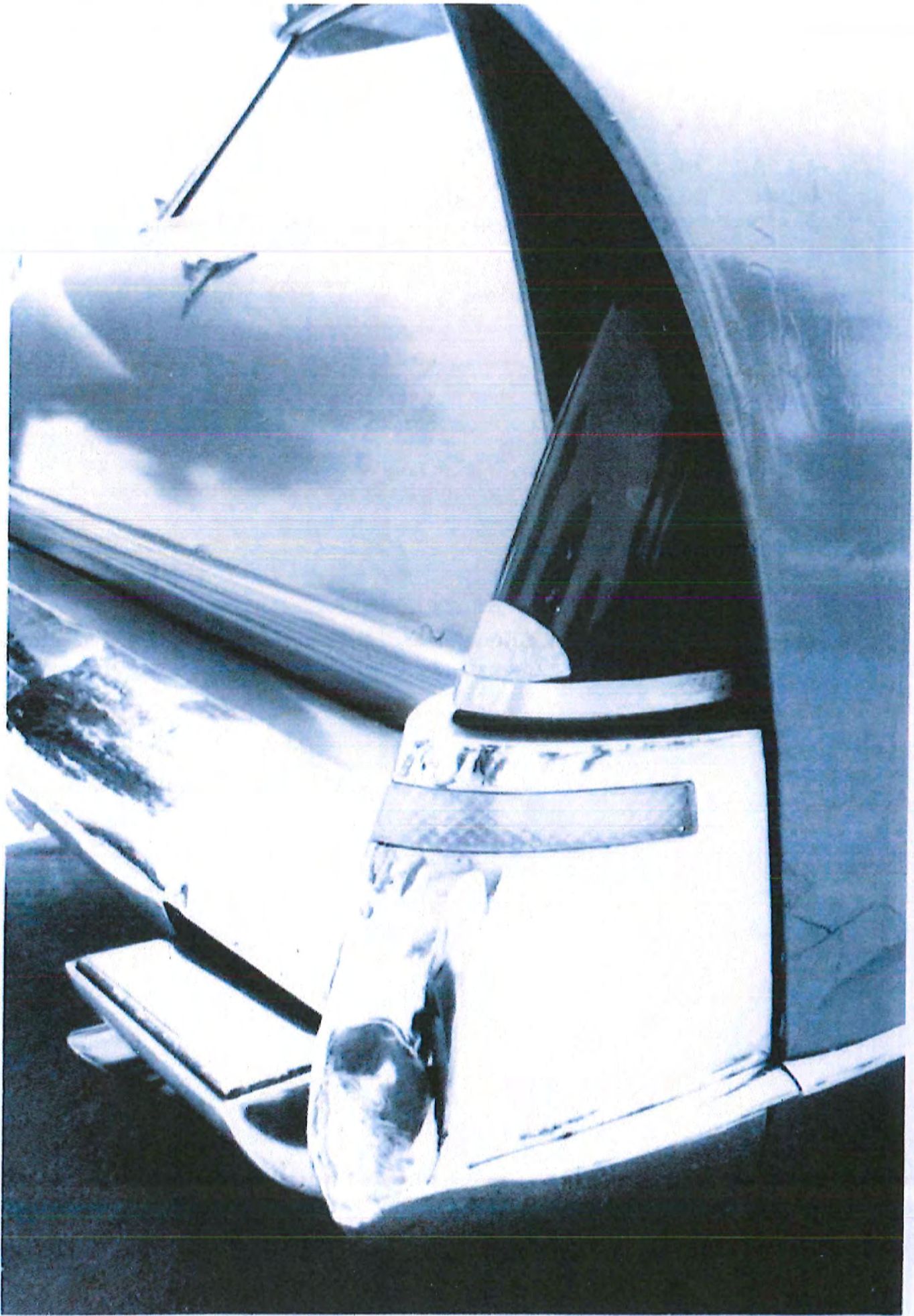




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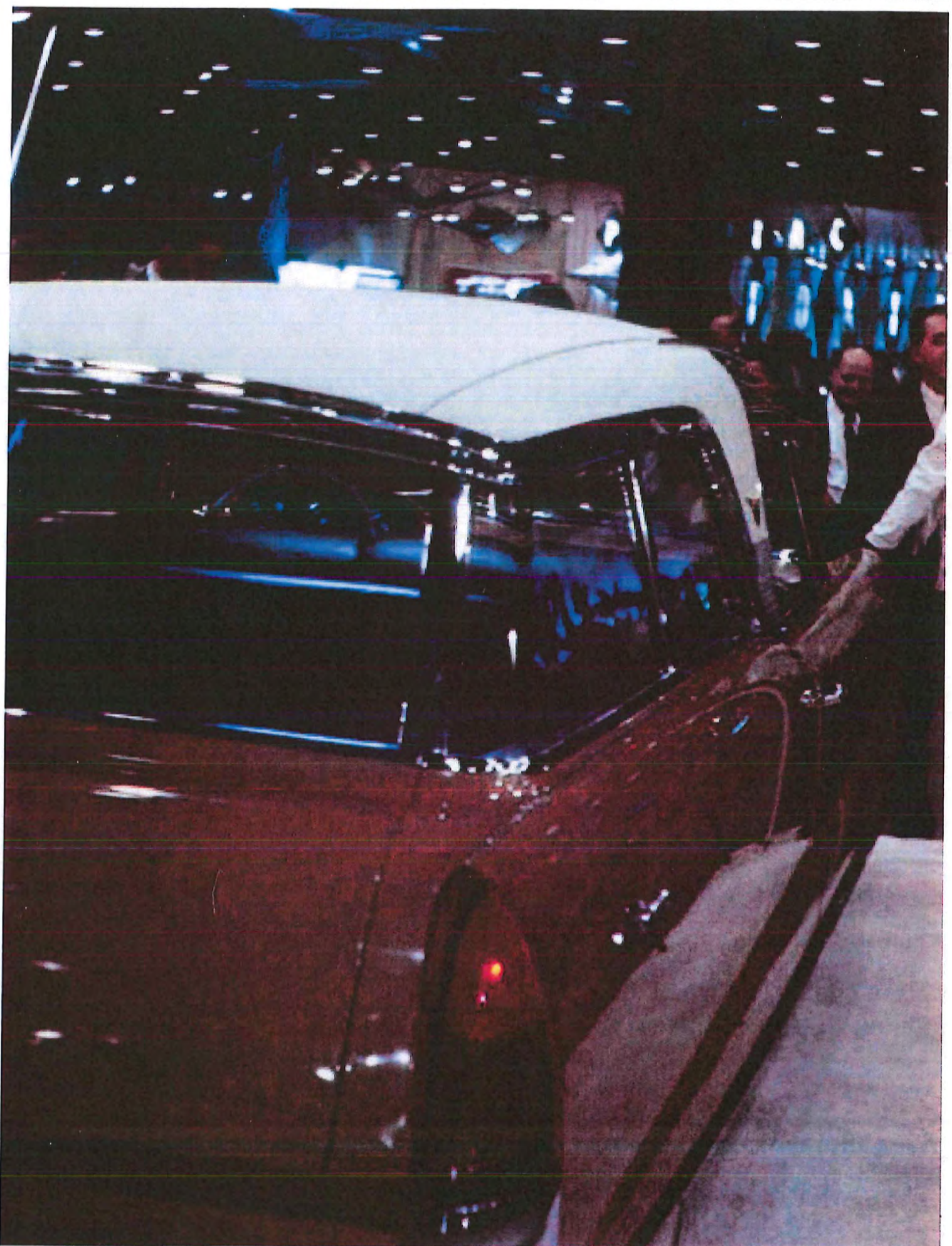


LEON DIXON PHOTOGRAPH CALIFORNIA 1979



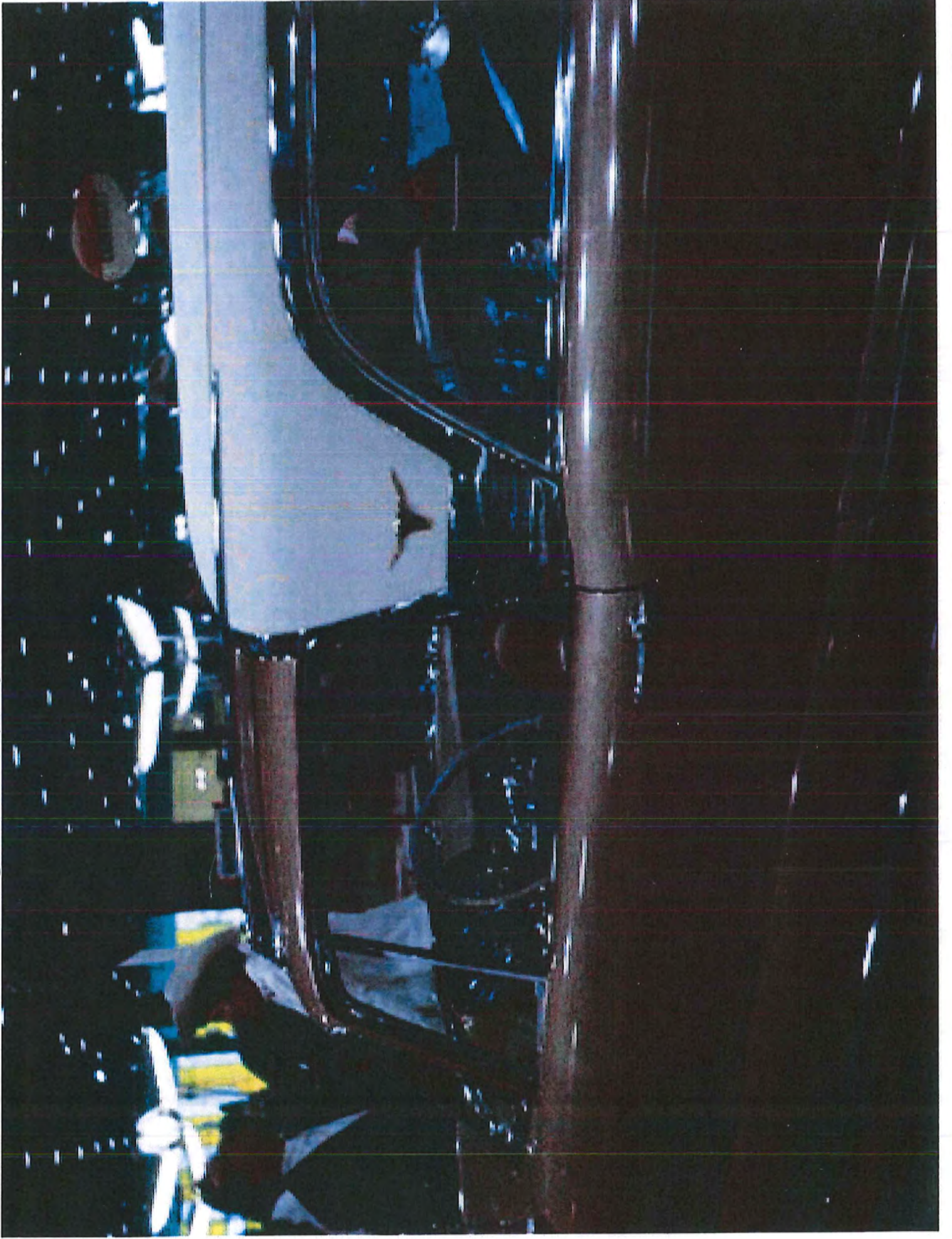
LEON DIXON PHOTOGRAPH CALIFORNIA 1979





1936 CHICAGO AUTO SHOW

ORIGINAL 1956 CHICAGO AUTO SHOW





AMELIA ISLAND



A to Z Concours



■ Story and photos by Rich Luckin

They say variety is the spice of life and the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance fits that saying and then some. Due to a gloomy Sunday forecast, the 23rd annual event at Amelia Island, Fla., moved its elegant, chrome-laden concours to the preceding Saturday for the second time.

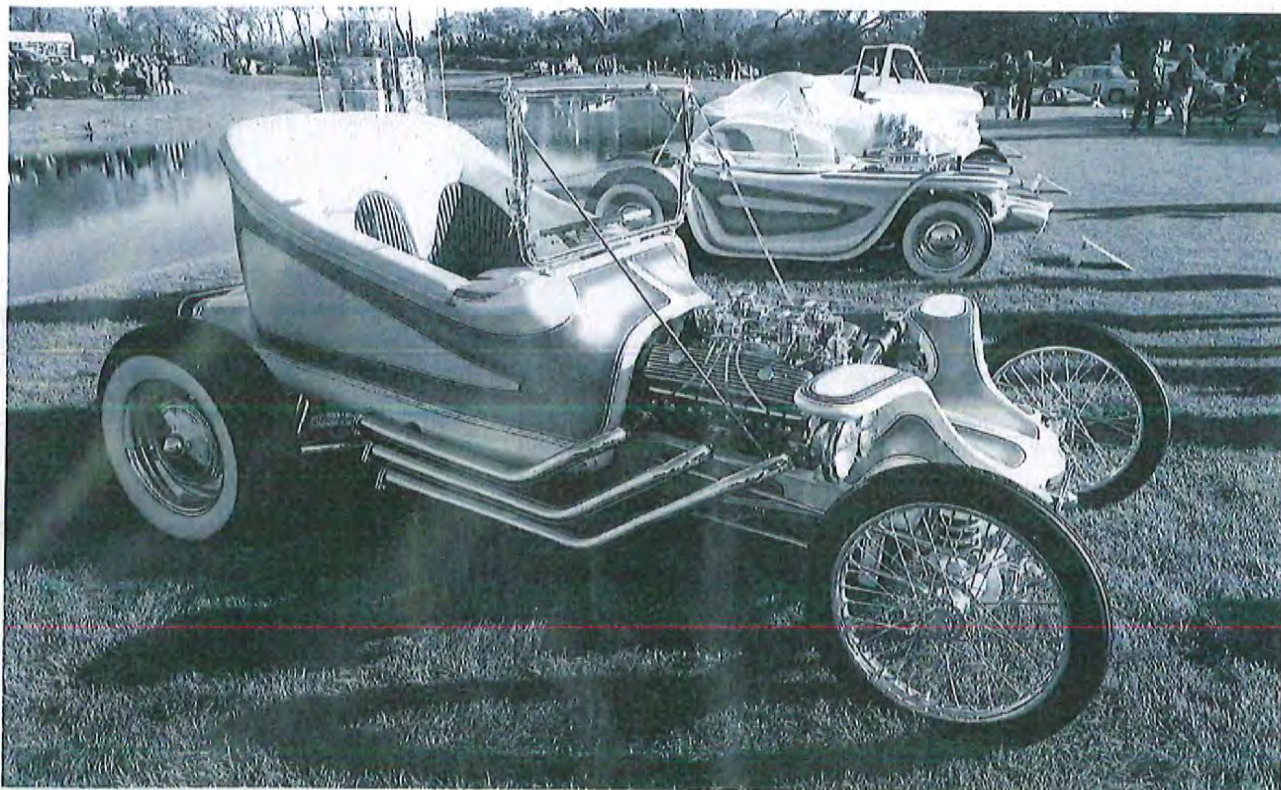
The March 10 show included a variety of vehicles from A (Auburn) to Z (Zagato) and everything between. In addition to this vast variety, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance also packs many wonderful surprises each year. Often, those sur-

prises are vehicles spectators have only seen in pictures.

For example, the Chrysler *Thunderbolt* (one of five produced in 1941) was on display, as was the finally restored, one-of-a-kind 1956 Chrysler *Plainsman* concept car. This station wagon concept features a body built by Ghia of Italy trimmed with door panels made of unborn calfskin.

The variety this year encompassed more than 300 automo-

Top: The two Best of Show winners at this year's Amelia Island Concours were this 1963 Ferrari 250/275P and 1929 Duesenberg convertible coupe.



Above: Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's 1959 "Outlaw" was one of the first custom rods with a fiberglass body. The engine is from a Cadillac.



Left: This 1941 Chrysler Thunderbolt is one of five produced and was one of the earliest concept cars.



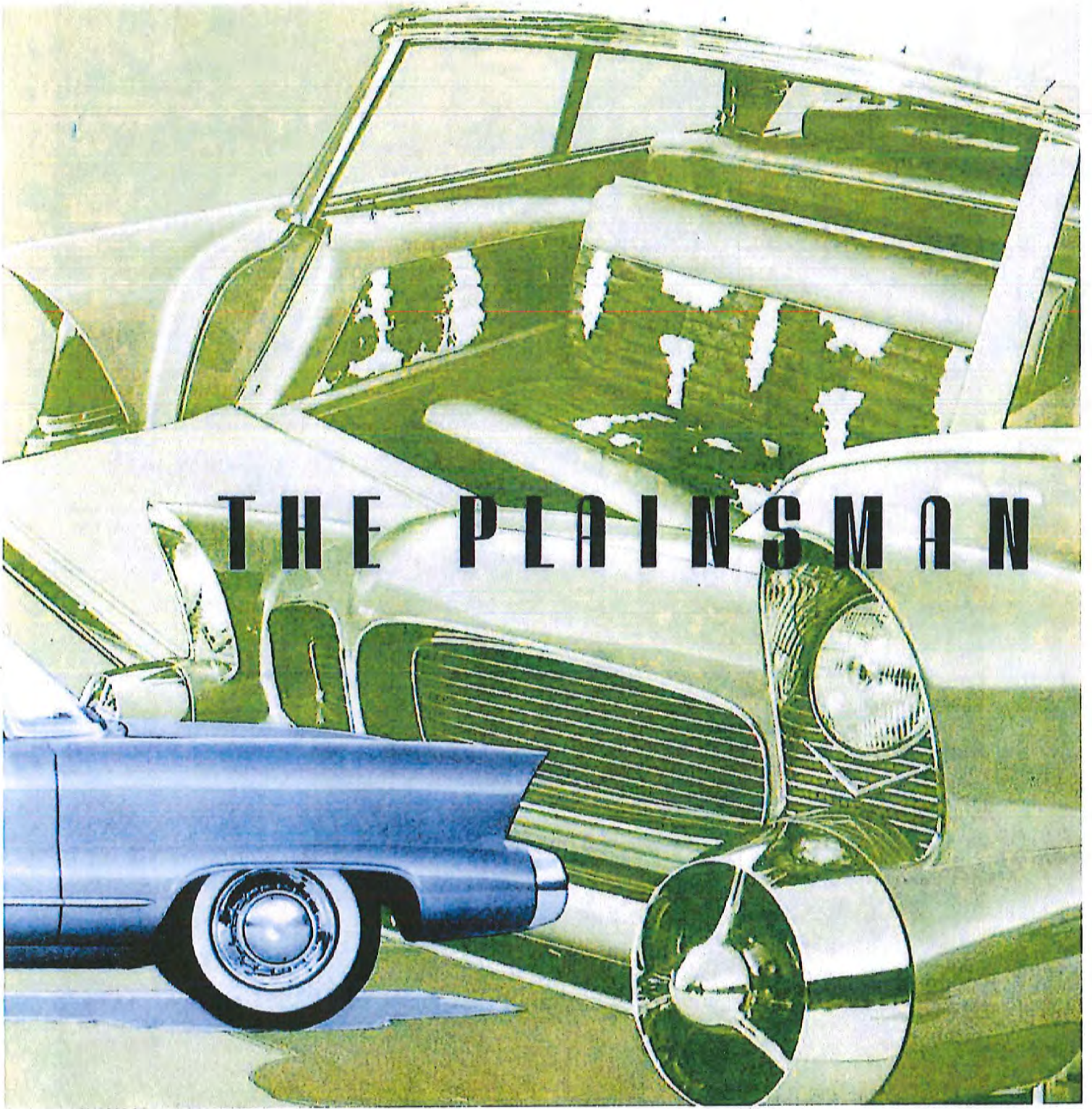
Auburn was featured at this year's Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, and several Speedsters were on display.



The Ghia-built 1956 Chrysler Plainsman was a bold concept wagon from Virgil Exner's studios.

ORIGINAL FACTORY
PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRESS
RELEASES
CHRYSLER HISTORICAL RECORDS

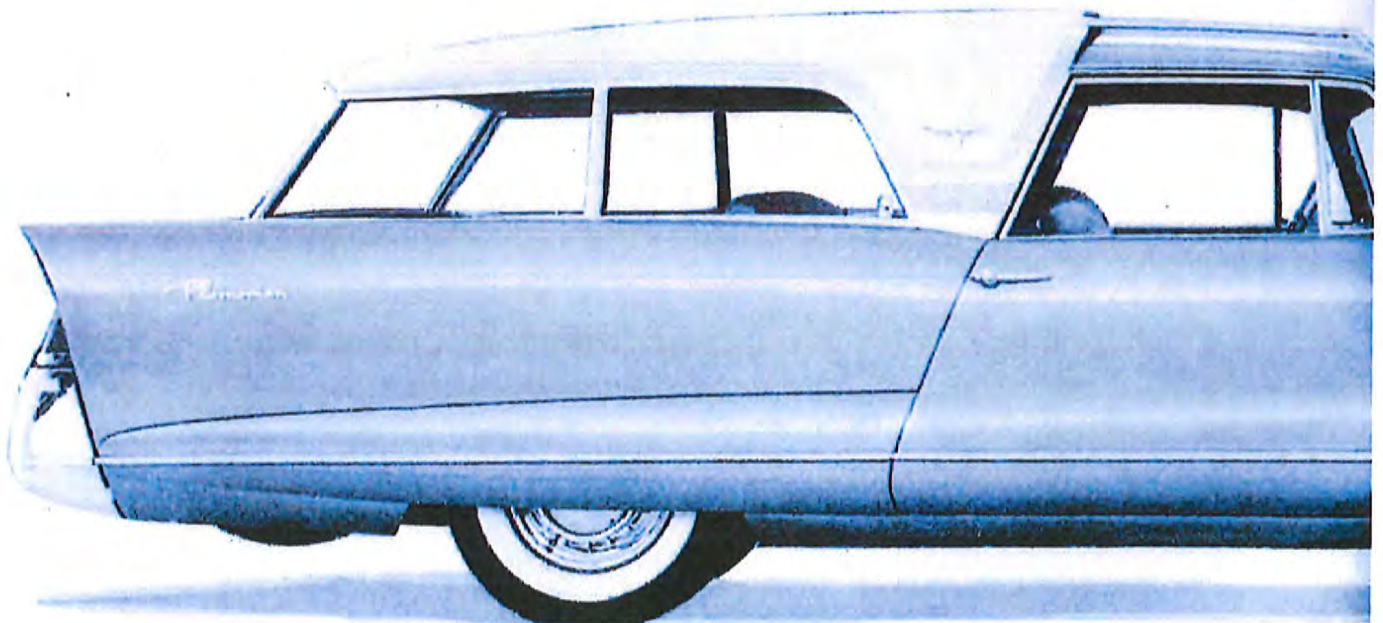
THE PLAINSMAN



A BOLD NEW CONCEPT IN STATION WAGON DESIGN, the Plainsman "Idea Station Wagon" reflects the colorful and casual way of life that typifies the nation's westward movement. It seats eight passengers in "sedan comfort" and features such striking innovations as an "observation car" rearward-facing third seat and a spare tire concealed in the right rear fender. Third seat and

tailgate operate electrically. Safety access steps, used to enter the rear seat, disappear into the end of the bumper when the tailgate is closed. Interior trim is natural calf hide with leather bolsters and the all-steel cantilever top is two-thirds covered by padded white fabric. The Plainsman's exterior finish of Palamino beige metallic fully complements its western flavor.

Overall length	208 inches
Overall width	79.4 inches
Overall height	60.2 inches
Wheelbase	115 inches
Engine	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8
Transmission	PowerFlite
Maximum cargo deck length (Tailgate open).....	106.5 inches
Cargo deck length with tailgate closed.....	86.7 inches
Maximum cargo deck width.....	63.5 inches
Steering	Coaxial Power
Brakes	Safety Pedal Power

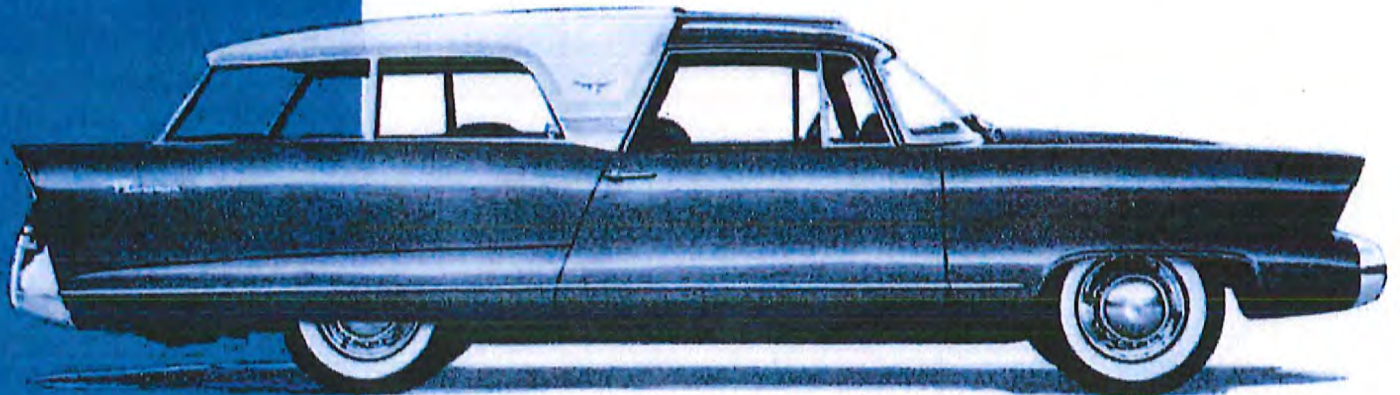




THE PLAINSMAN

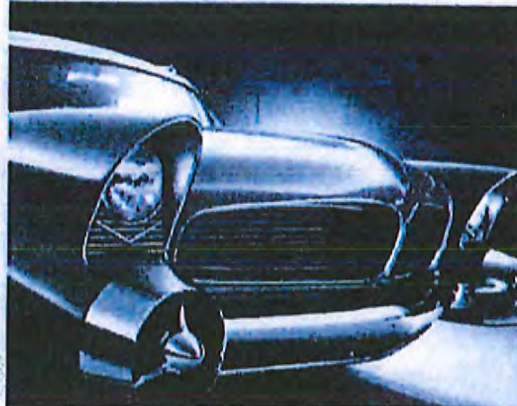
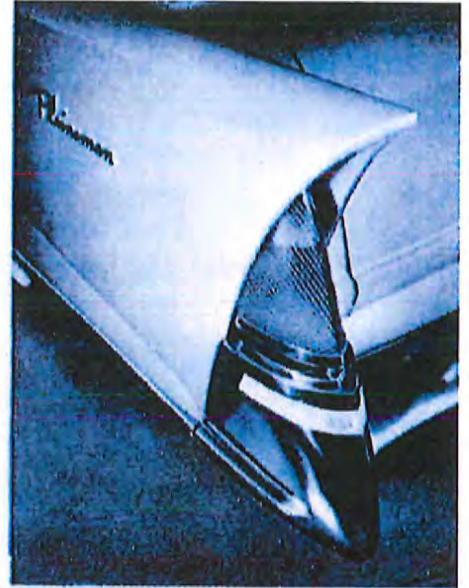
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A bold new concept in station wagon design from the forward-looking stylists in Chrysler Corporation's Engineering Division, this 8 passenger "idea station wagon" features such striking innovations as an "observation car" rearward-facing third seat 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
Transmission.....	PowerFlite
Tires.....	7.10 x 15
Maximum cargo deck length (Tailgate open).....	106.5 inches
Cargo deck length with tailgate closed.....	86.7 inches
Maximum cargo deck width.....	63.5 inches
Steering.....	Coaxial Power
Brakes.....	Safety Pedal Power



For Use in Afternoon Newspapers of
Monday, October 1, 1956

NEW STATION WAGON IDEAS

NEW STATION WAGONS AND SUBURBANS INCORPORATE

MANY FEATURES INTRODUCED BY "PLAINSMAN"

DETROIT--In just nine months Chrysler Corporation has transformed the widely acclaimed experimental "Plainsman" into a glamorous production station wagon.

Rear-facing third seats, first introduced by "The Plainsman" at its Chicago automobile show debut in January, 1956, will be available in the 1957 four-door, nine passenger Plymouth Suburbans and Dodge and DeSoto station wagons.

Folding away flush with the car floor is the new arrangement eliminating the task of taking out and storing third seats as is done on all competitive-make station wagons when cargo space is needed. The seat back then becomes part of the floor, providing greatly increased carrying space.

As in "The Plainsman," the action and positioning of the third seat is made possible by relocating the spare tire in the right rear fender behind a clip-on access panel and by locating the gas tank in the left rear fender.

Entry to the third seat is by way of the tailgate, with passengers using carefully located rubber-covered step pads mounted on the bumper. The tailgate window may be operated electrically by switches located on the instrument

panel, and adjacent to the third seat. The tailgate window may also be opened by inserting a key and turning it in the tailgate keyhole located on the outside of the vehicle.

Among other features to be found on all Chrysler Corporation six and nine passenger Suburbans and station wagons are extra wide tailgates that employ a torsion bar hinge, permitting one-hand raising and lowering; wrap-around rear corner windows, with no corner posts to give better visibility for both drivers and passengers, and a gas tank located in the left rear fender. Air conditioning is also offered for the first time as an option.

The fender mounted spare tire is offered as an optional feature on some of the companies six passenger Suburbans and station wagons.

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
Press Information Service
Detroit 31, Michigan
Tulsa 3-4500

35455-A

THE PLAINSMAN

An "Idea Station Wagon" Designed by Chrysler Corporation

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- * Rearward-facing "observation car" rear seat for two adult passengers. Safety access steps, used to enter rear seat, disappear into ends of bumper when tailgate is closed. Rear seat unfolds, tailgate opens and closes electrically.
- * Interior trim of natural calf hide, with leather bolsters.
- * Aircraft-type instrument panel controls.
- * Seats eight passengers in "sedan comfort".
- * Spare tire carried in right rear fender panel.
- * All-steel cantilever top, two-thirds covered by padded white fabric.
- * "Automatic" gasoline filler pipe, located in left taillight opens in one motion as taillight is lifted forward.
- * Parking lights integrated in massive front bumper guards.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Over-all length ----	208 inches
Over-all width ----	79.4 inches
Over-all height ----	60.2 inches
Wheelbase ----	115 inches
Tread, front ----	58.4 inches
Tread, rear ----	58.5 inches

(more)

For Use in Afternoon Papers of
Thursday, January 5, 1956

NEW CHRYSLER PLAINSMAN "IDEA STATION WAGON"

FEATURES SHARPLY SCULPTURED FENDER LINES

Conceived as an experiment in station wagon styling, the new eight-passenger Chrysler Corporation "Plainsman" makes its public debut at the Chicago Automobile Show, January 7-15. One of the most interesting features of the new "idea wagon" is the rearward-facing third seat in the back, which comfortably accommodates two adults. The car, which has a definite Western flavor, is finished in a metallic "Palomino beige", with two-thirds of its all-steel, stepped cantilever roof covered by a padded white weather-resistant fabric. Chrysler Corporation has no plans for commercial production of the Plainsman, which was built primarily to get public reaction to its novel features.

(122855)

Plainsman

The Plainsman, the latest addition to Chrysler Corporation's family of "Idea Cars," is a unique two-door, eight passenger station wagon. It represents a new and vigorous type of automobile design: luxurious, versatile, able to cope successfully with the rapidly changing needs and demands of the American motorist. For its inspiration Chrysler Corporation stylists looked to the Great Western Plains of America--to their vivid, colorful, and casual way of life. Materials, colors, and finishes have been dramatically keyed to the Western motif, from the Palomino Beige exterior to the white and brown natural calf skin trimmed interior. Gold Texas Longhorn medallions on the tailgate and both sides of the roof add to this theme.

Measuring 208.0 inches from bumper to bumper, 60.2 inches in height, and 79.4 inches in width, the Plainsman exhibits clean sweeping lines that give it the appearance of being much longer and lower than it actually is. It is powered by a special Chrysler Corporation V-8 engine and is equipped with numerous automatic and power assisted accessories such as PowerFlite, power brakes, power steering, electric window lifts, and an electrically operated tailgate and rearward facing third seat.



from the heater is ducted through the door directly into the rear compartment. Full cargo area is available simply by folding the rear seat back forward on top of the seat cushion. A folding panel attached to the seat back is then firmly fixed to the floor by chrome support rods, and provides a completely flush, carpeted loading area 86.7 inches long with the tailgate raised.

Function and convenience are especially noteworthy in the aircraft type instrument panel. All of the engine gauges and instruments, including a clock, are clustered directly in front of the driver in one large, hooded console. Six levers located on a flat projection of the instrument panel operate the PowerFlite controls, windshield washer control, windshield wiper, and lights. Below this projection are located the controls for the heater, defroster, and cigar lighter. The entire top surface and leading edge of the panel is padded and covered with natural cowhide.

SPECIFICATIONS

Over-all length	208.0 inches
Over-all width	79.4 inches
Over-all height (unloaded)	60.2 inches
Wheelbase	115 inches
Tread, front	58.4 inches
Tread, rear	58.5 inches
Engine	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8 engine
Transmission	PowerFlite
Tires	7.10 x 15
Steering	Chrysler Corporation Coaxial Power Steering
Brakes	Chrysler Corporation Safety Power Brakes
Max. cargo deck length, tailgate open	106.5 inches
Max. cargo deck width	63.5 inches

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
Press Information Service
Detroit 31, Michigan
TUlsa 3-4500

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For Use in Newspapers of
Sunday, January 15, 1956

AUTO SHOW OPENS AT CHRYSLER SALON

NEW YORK, January 15--An 18-car exhibit, featuring an "idea" station wagon and many other new styling and engineering developments from Chrysler Corporation, will be open to the public in the Salon of the Chrysler Building, January 18-27.

Headliners in the show include:

The Plainsman--an "idea" station wagon embodying an entirely new concept in automotive design. Unique in the Plainsman are an "observation car" rear seat facing toward the back, an electrically operated tailgate and a spare tire concealed in the right rear fender.

The Fury--Plymouth's latest production model combining the features of a high performance sports car and the conveniences of deluxe American production car design.

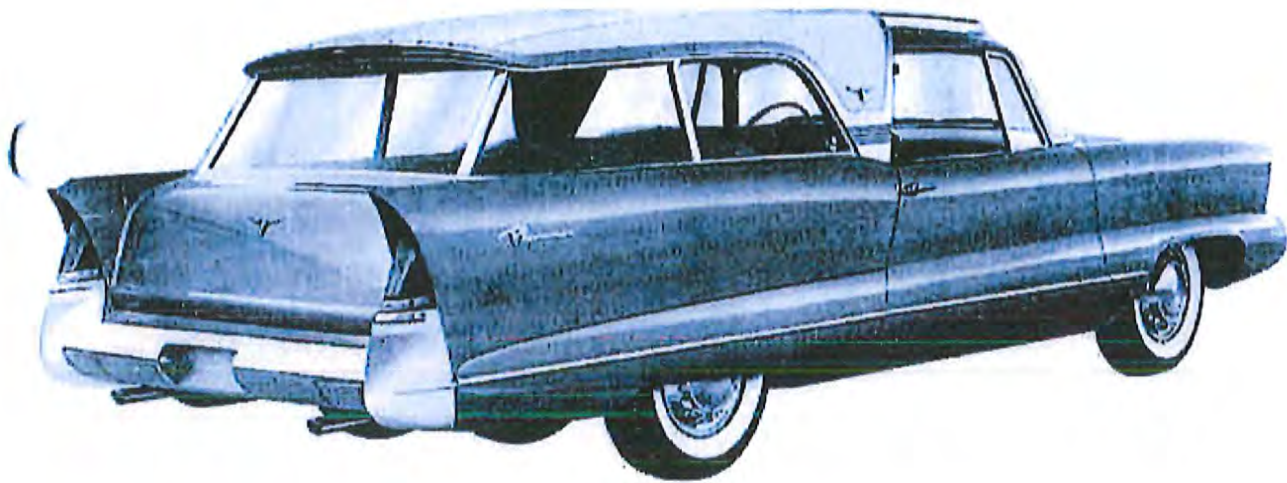
The Chrysler 300-B--America's highest powered car with a 340 horse power engine and special sports type suspension.

The Dodge LaFemme--The 1956 car designed exclusively for women, even to the extent of being equipped with a complete woman's rain ensemble to match the interior trim.

The DeSoto Pace Car -- a special DeSoto Fireflite convertible selected to pace the 500-mile Memorial Day race at Indianapolis.

The exhibit is entitled "The Forward Look Sets the Pace" and will be open to the public at no charge from 9 a. m. to 6 p. m. on weekdays and Saturday and 12 noon to 6 p. m. on Sunday, January 22. The Salon is located at 405 Lexington Avenue.

(1956)



left taillight lens. When the lens is pushed in, the filler cap automatically opens. Pushing the lens slightly further releases the lens and it returns to its normal position, simultaneously closing the filler cap.

Another outstanding feature of this advanced vehicle is the location and operation of the third seat. The tailgate window and tailgate are both lowered electrically, actuated by switches located at the instrument panel and in the rear compartment. Another button causes the rearward facing third seat to unfold from its completely concealed position in the floor. Entry to this seat is by way of the tailgate, made convenient by steps which automatically project from the bumper after the tailgate is lowered, and by a neatly designed grab handle forming the trailing edge of the roof.

The interior of the Plainsman harmonizes perfectly with the Western theme embodied by the exterior of the car. Pleated natural calf skin upholstery is used on the seats, the door panels, and the rear wheel housings.

Natural cowhide trim, luxurious tan carpeting, and the novel cowhide and fabric headlining complete the interior appointments. Retractable arm rests, built into the seat backs, are another of the luxury features of the Plainsman. For extra comfort, front seat backs are individually adjustable to tilt through an angle of about fifteen degrees. Sliding inside door handles are another of the many design innovations found on

From front to rear, top to bottom, the Plainsman embraces the true concept of the "Idea Cars"--the stylist's laboratory on wheels. Its graceful and eye-appealing proportions are enhanced by a cantilever type all-steel roof covered with a white synthetic fabric that gives the car a light, airy appearance. The low, sleek appearance is achieved by an unusual stepped-roof design that allows the use of a lower section over the front seat compartment. A fresh air intake is provided in this step; on the inside, louvers can be conveniently regulated by the passengers so that air is circulated freely but never directly on the passengers themselves.

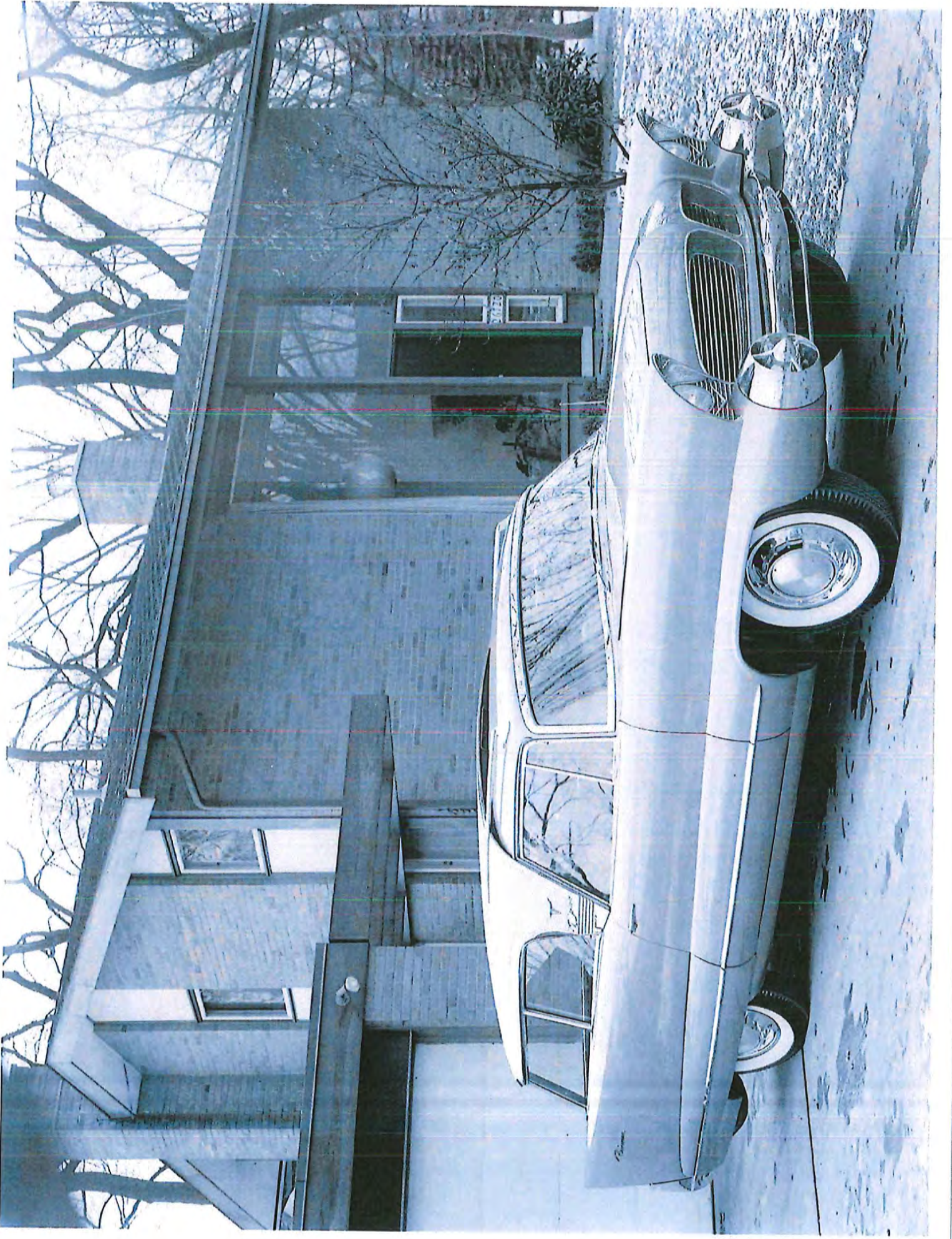
Accenting the road hugging appearance of the Plainsman is a bomb-like projection which flows from the massive front bumper guards along the full length of the lower body and gives the feeling of mass concentrated close to the ground. On both sides of the car, hinged portions of this projection lift to provide access to the rear wheels. On the right side, behind the rear wheel is a completely new location for the spare tire. No lifting of the spare tire is required because of a built-in jack which raises and lowers it quickly and easily. By utilizing this ordinarily wasted space, it is possible to incorporate the flush folding third seat.

An exceptionally wide door provides extra entrance space for the convenience of rear seat passengers.

Highlighting the front-end of the Plainsman is a simple, functional divided grille flanked by large round bumper guards with integral parking lights. Added air flow and engine cooling is accomplished by the use of a slot in the underside of the front bumper. The hooded headlights are framed by the curved reverse angle of the fender and set against a background of thin horizontal chrome bars. As the fender and belt line flows back toward the taillight, it flairs up slightly just behind the door, creating a fin-like rear fender--a further expression of Chrysler Corporation's well known Flight Sweep theme.

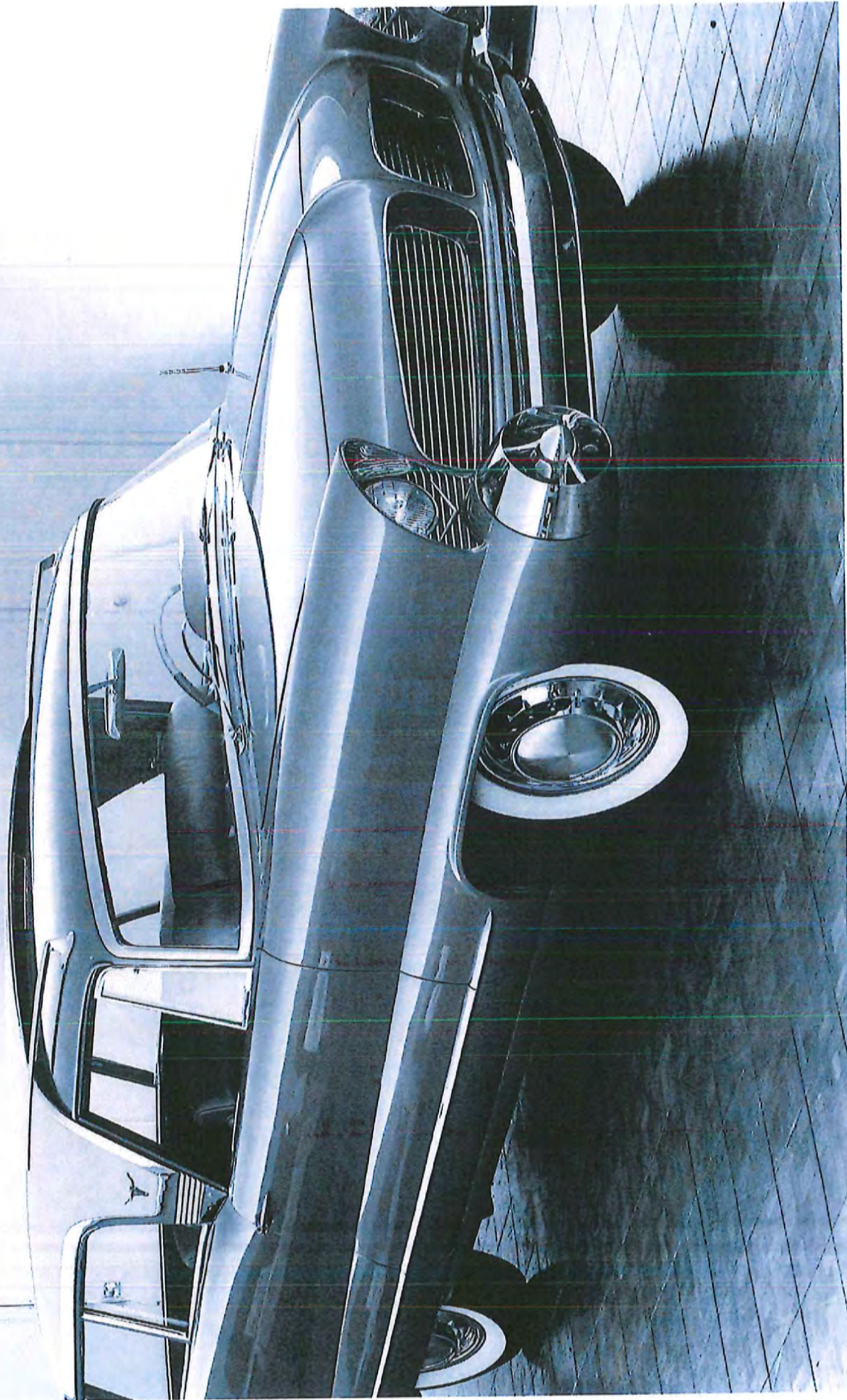
At the rear the Plainsman displays several completely new design innovations. One of these is the concealed gas filler tube located behind the



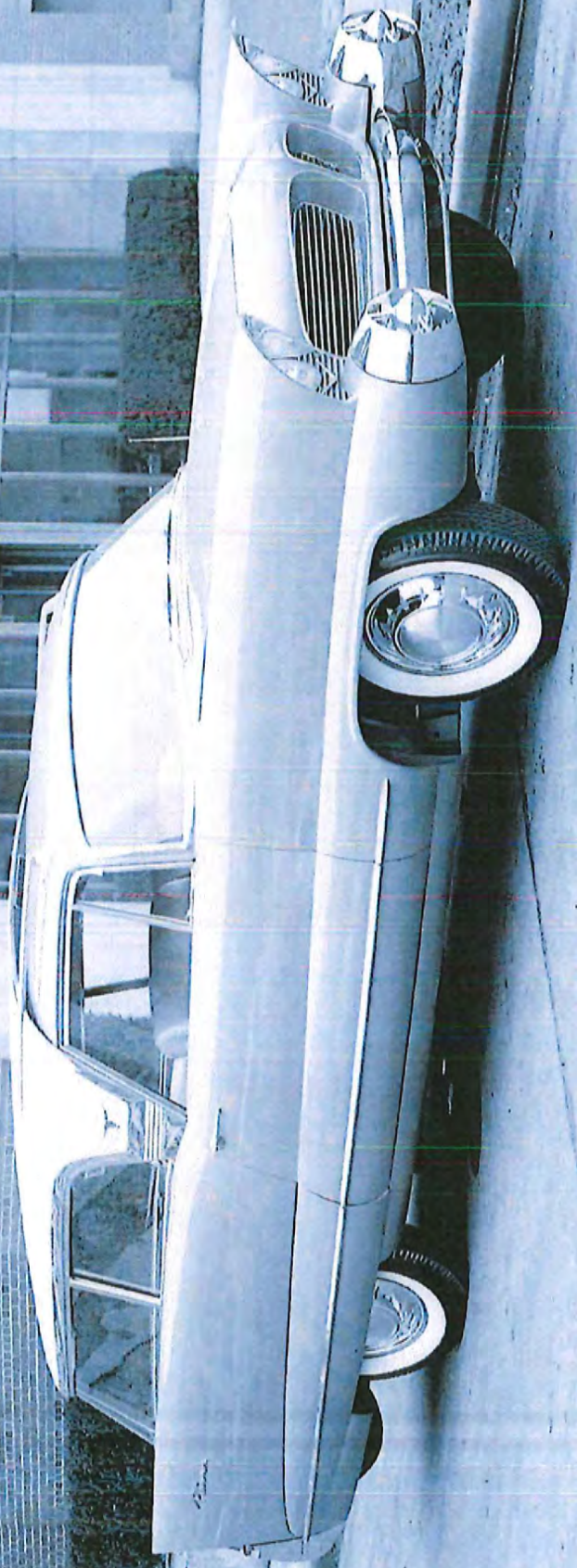






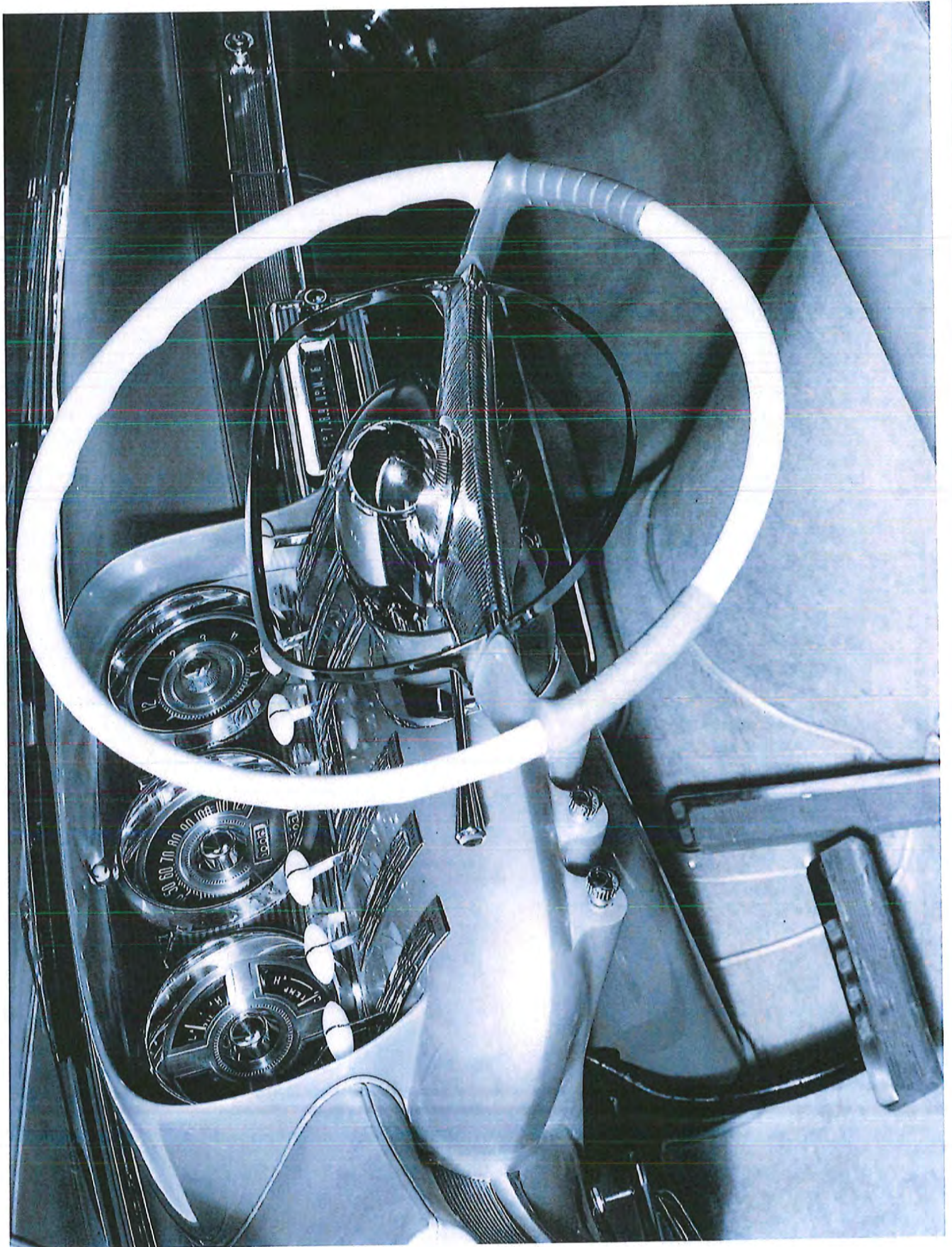


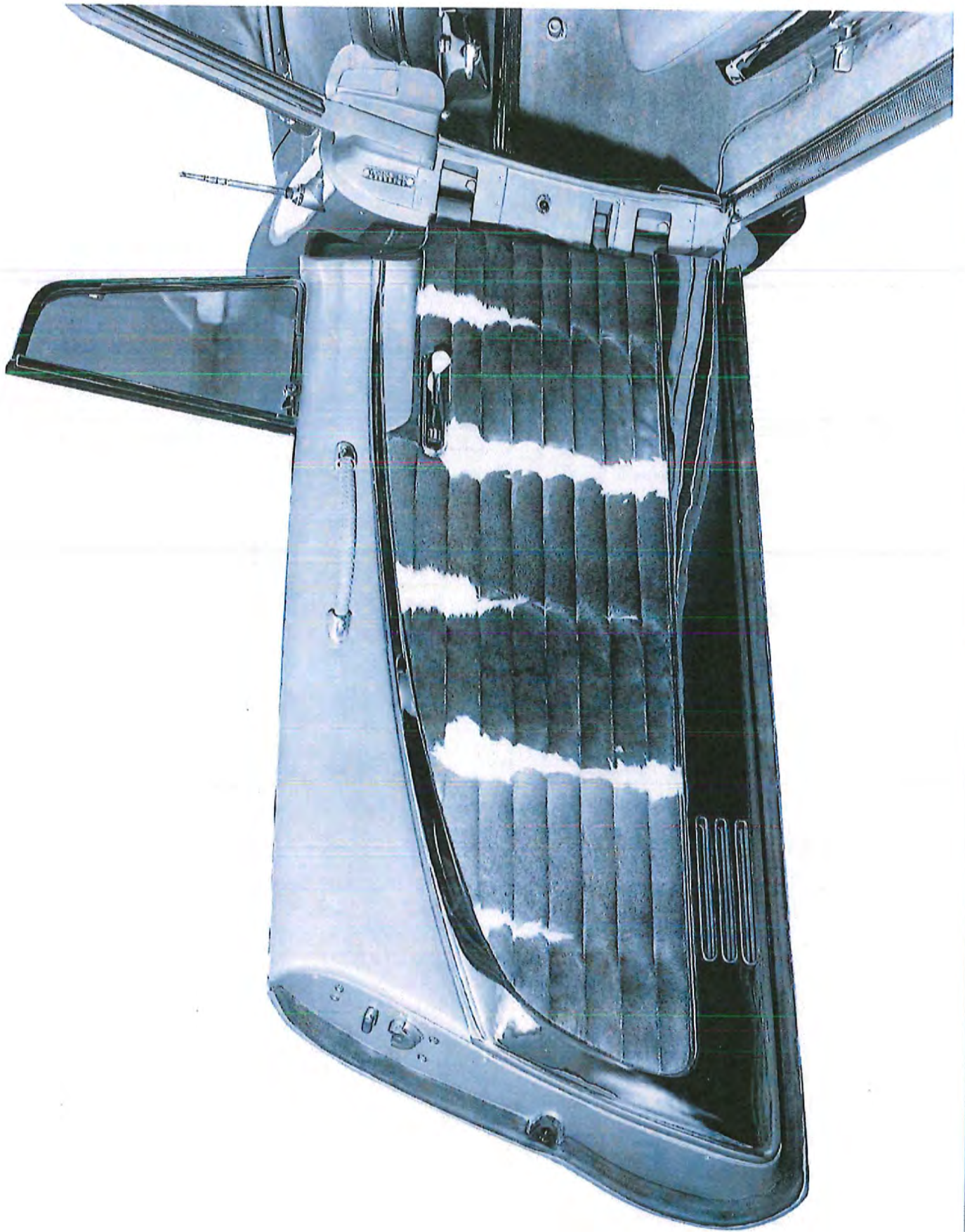
CHRYSLER

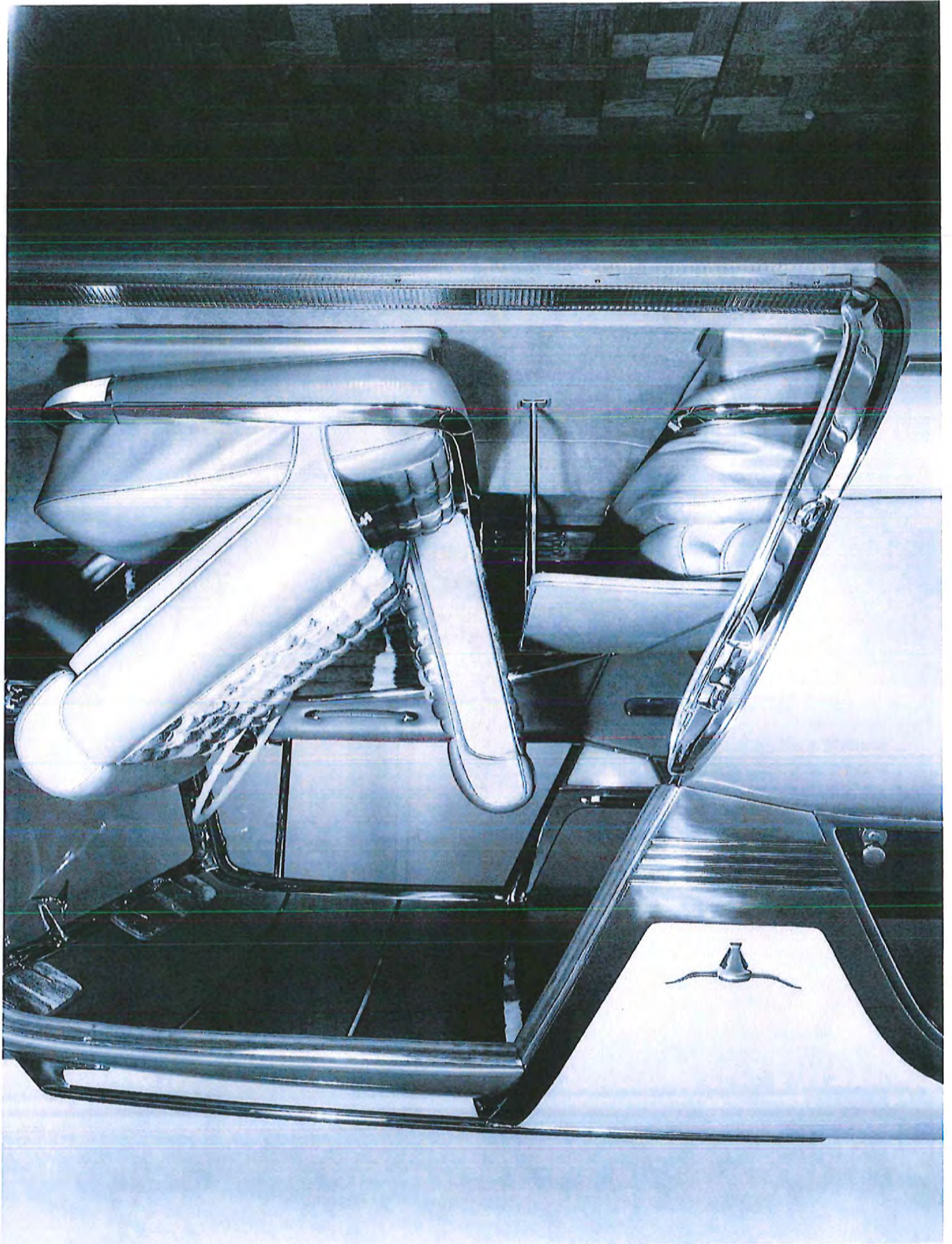




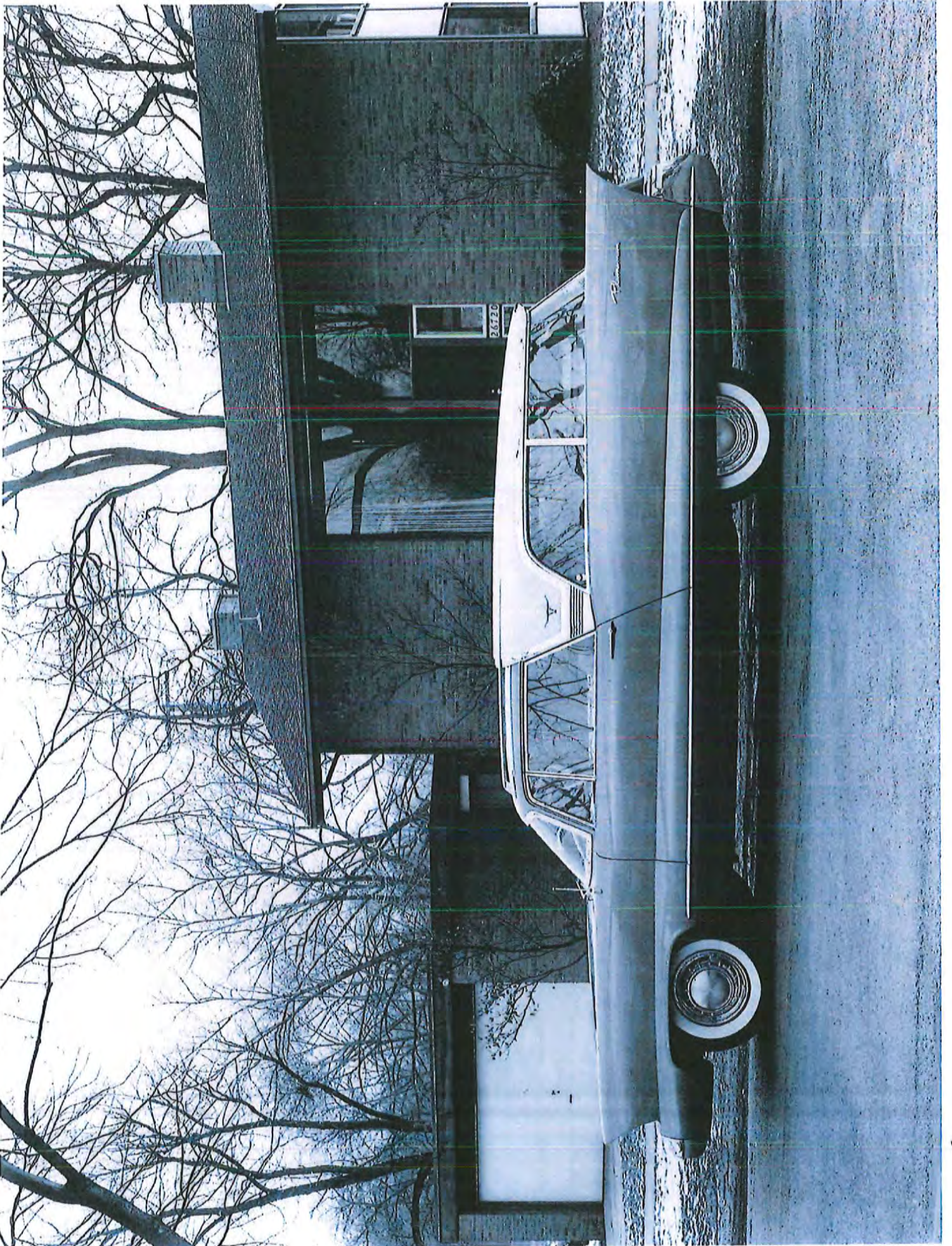


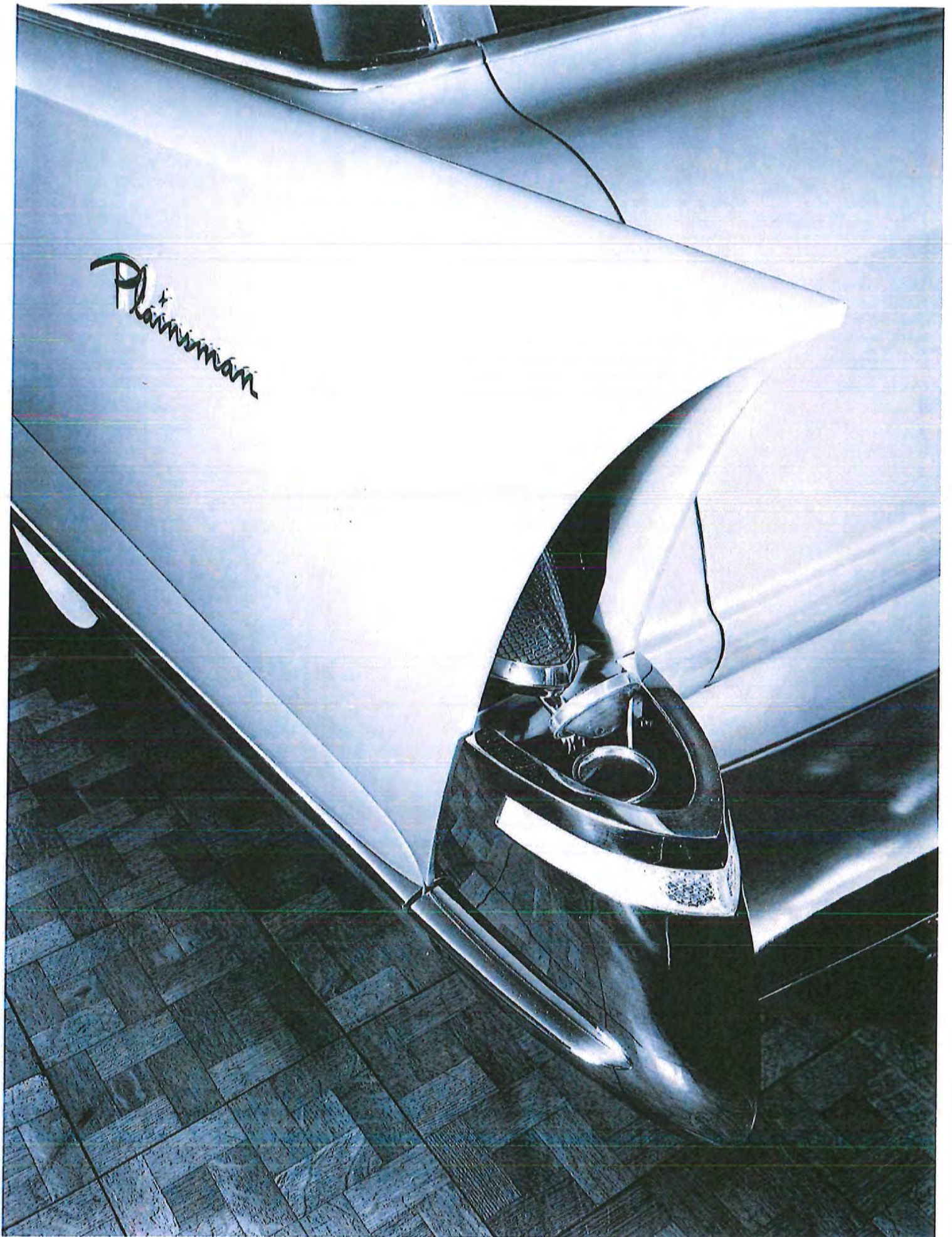




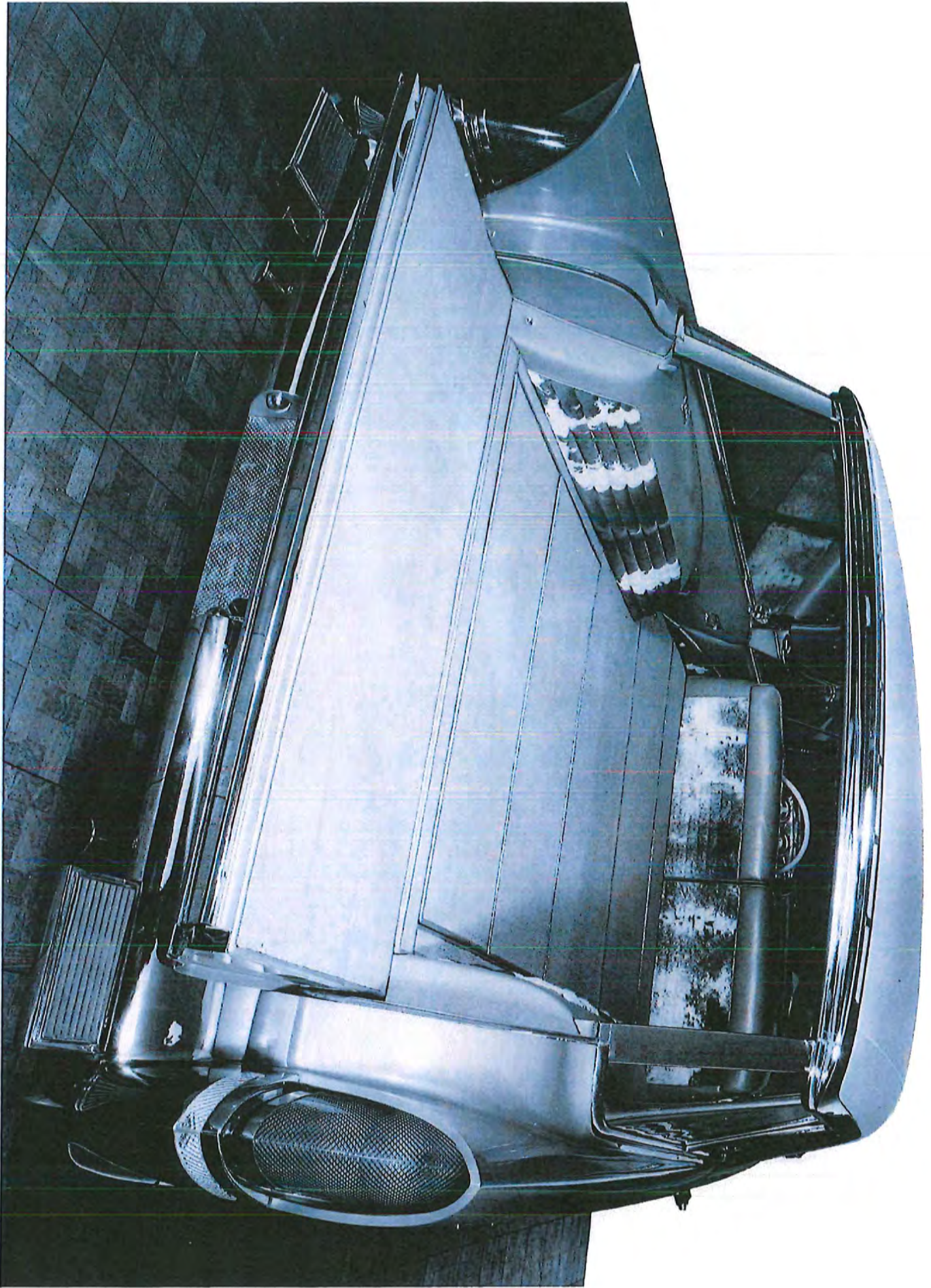


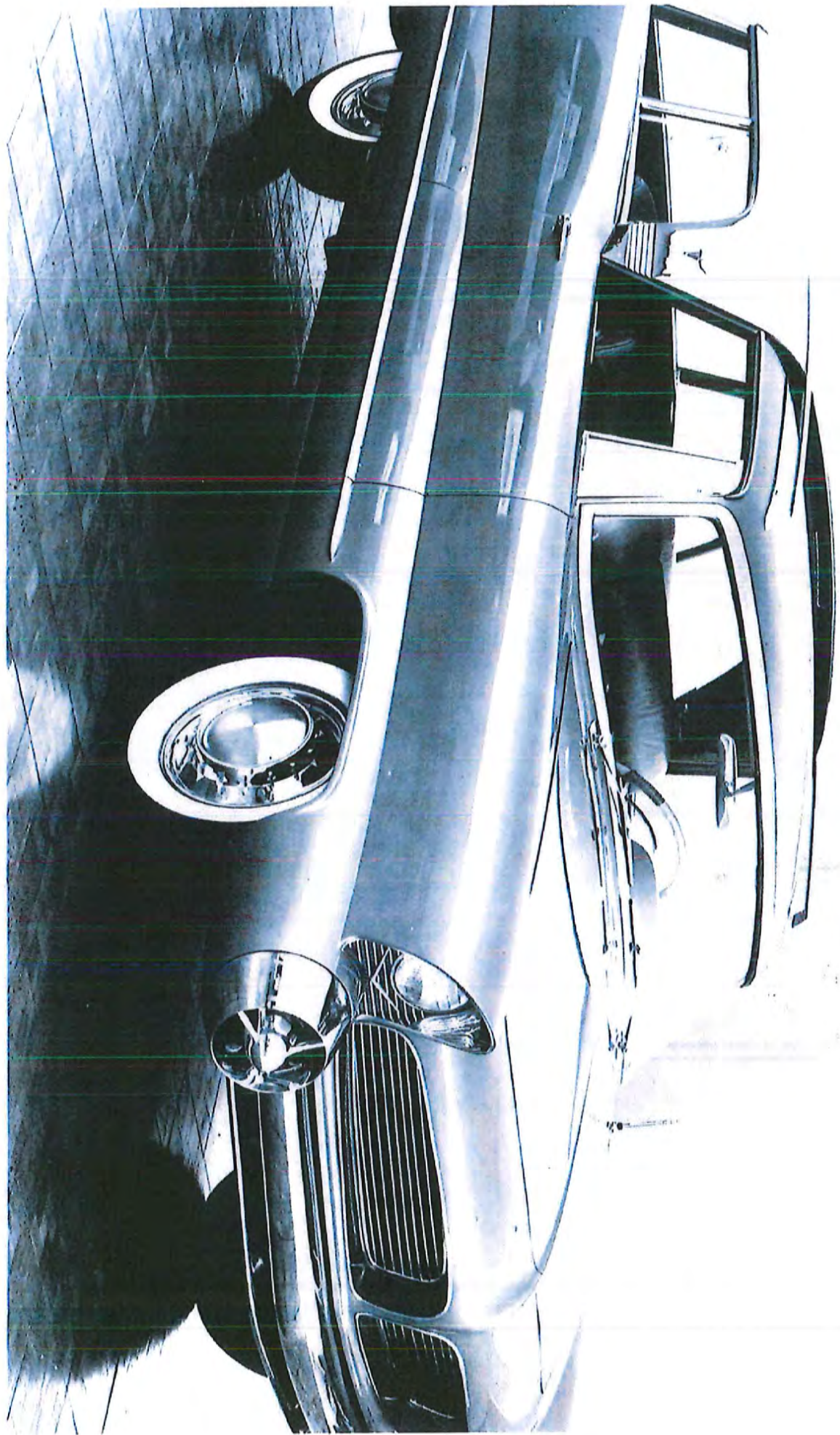










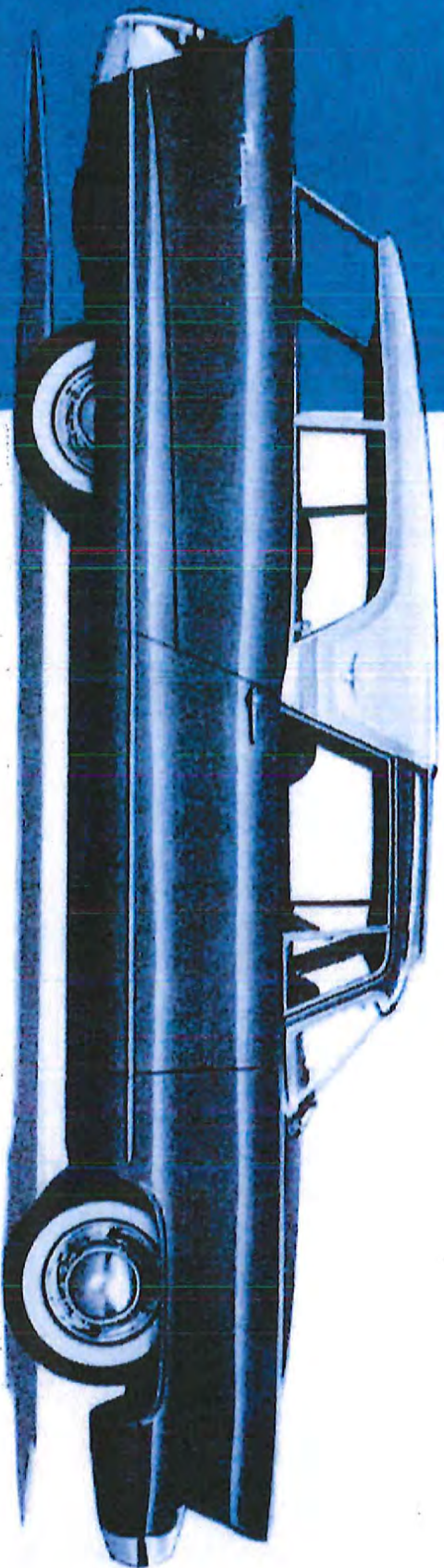




THE PLAINSMAN

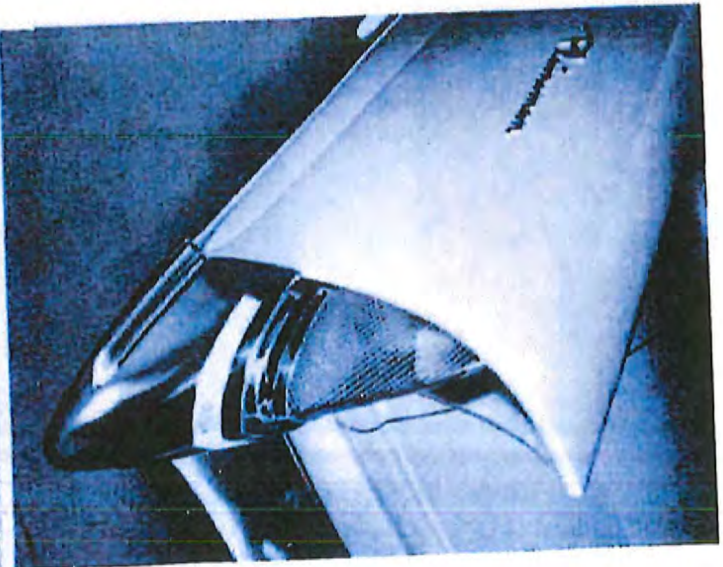
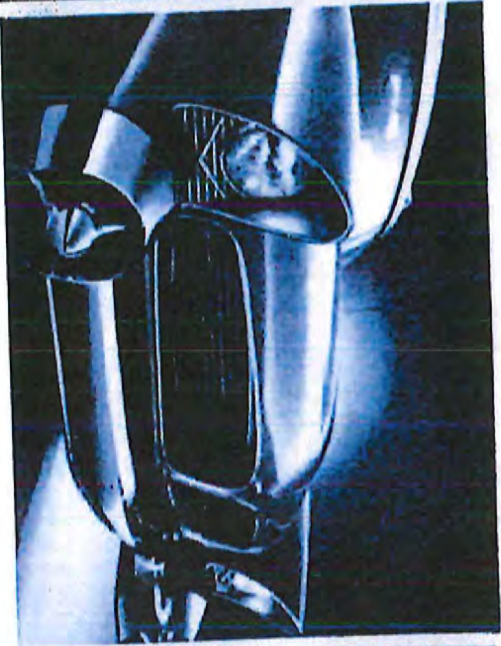
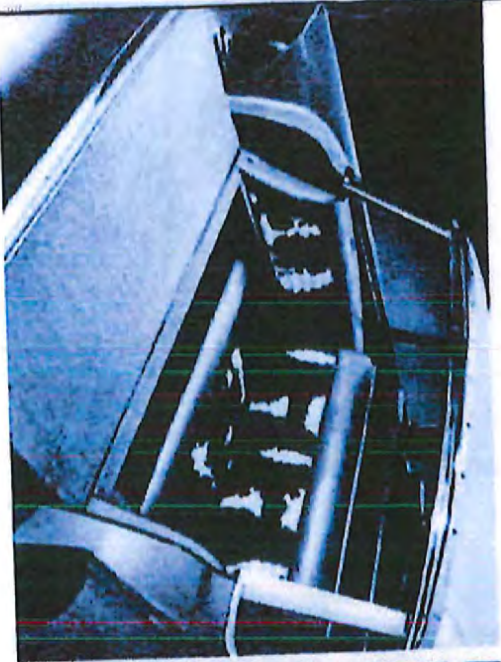
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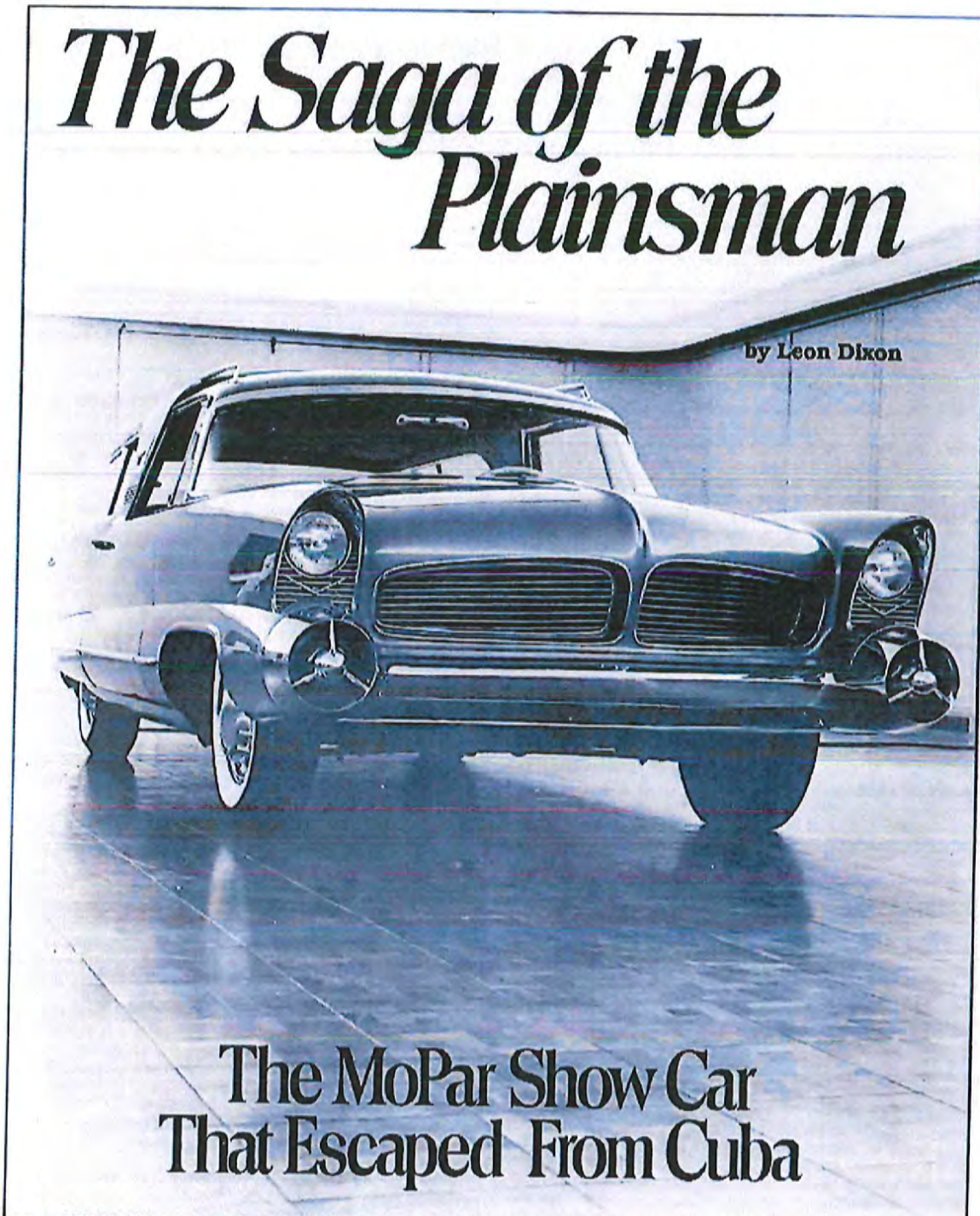
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P L A I N S M A N S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

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.....	



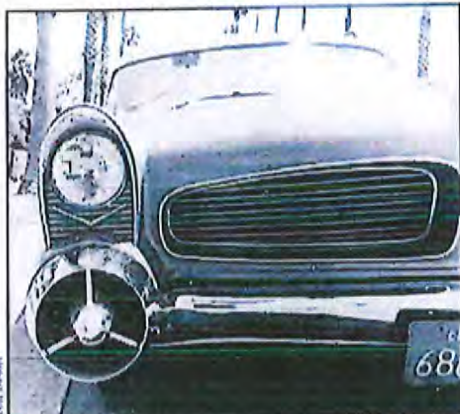


The Saga of the Plainsman

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.

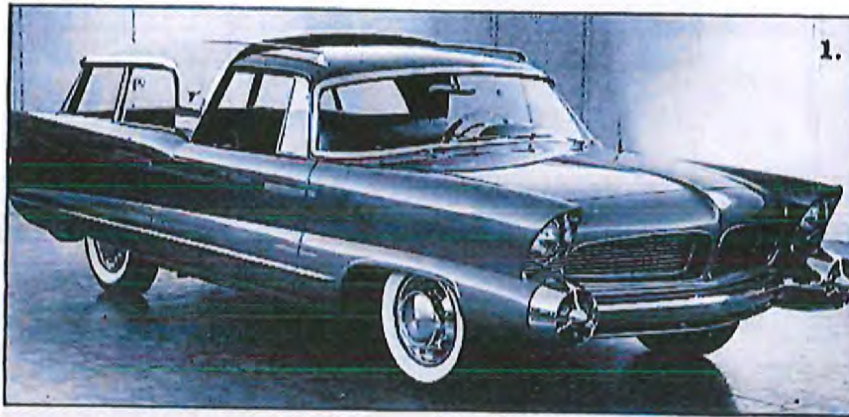
Dave Scott recalls: "The car was in a huge crate with the axles lashed down onto big 4 x 8 wood blocks...the wheels were off and in a separate compartment. Imagine our surprise when we bolted the wheels on and lifted the car out of the crate base to sit on its own...it sank right down to the rubber snubbers! 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

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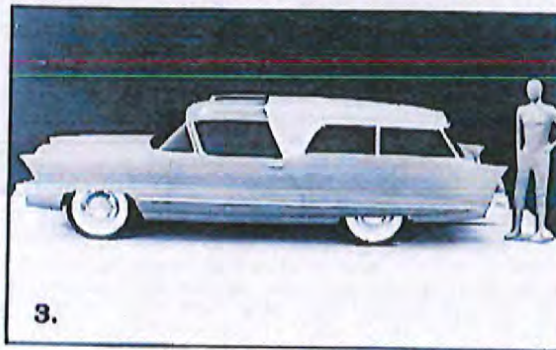
1. Plainsman went to full-size operational automobile directly from 3/8 clay studies 2. and 3. This was a very unusual move, but David Scott feels that Ghia did a superb job in building the car from the 3/8 clays.
4. Plainsman's rear fenders break at a very sharp rake.



Courtesy of David Scott



Courtesy of David Scott



Courtesy of David Scott



John Deason

The Saga of the Plainsman

continued

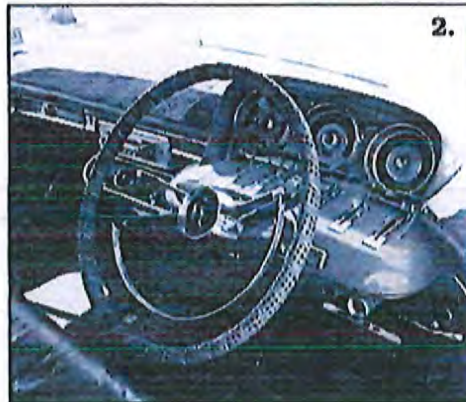
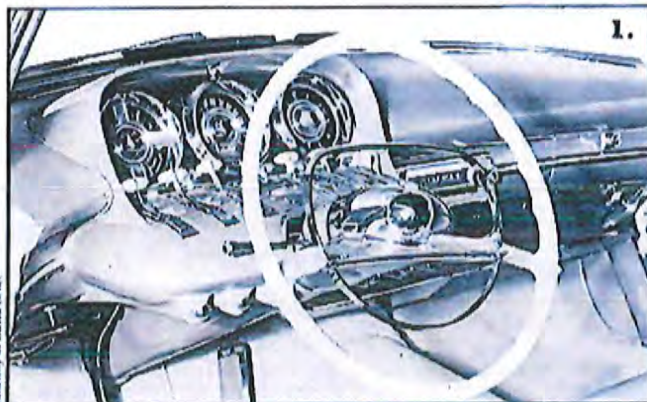
good ideas, though." David Scott feels differently, though, and told SIA: "I was dumfounded that Ghia had executed my drawings so faithfully. I felt that it was possible to go from 3/8 to full size without a lot of fiddling—this proved it true."

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

[Click Here to go to Next Page ->](#)



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



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.



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 longhorns 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



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

continued

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?

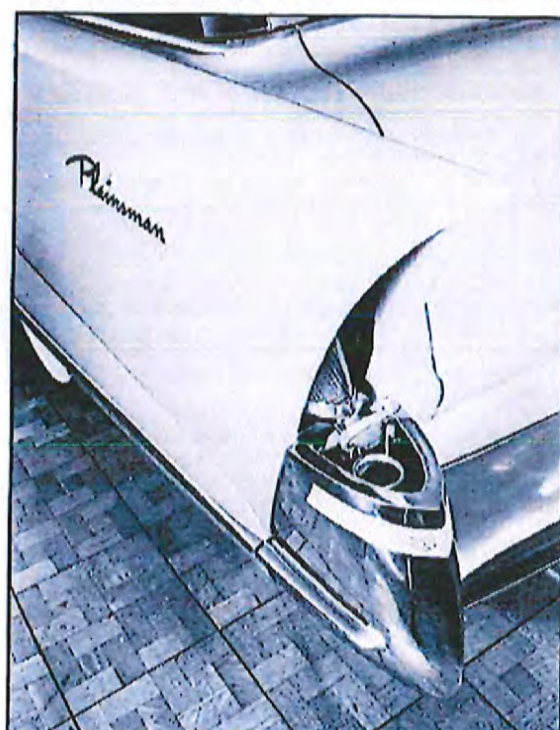
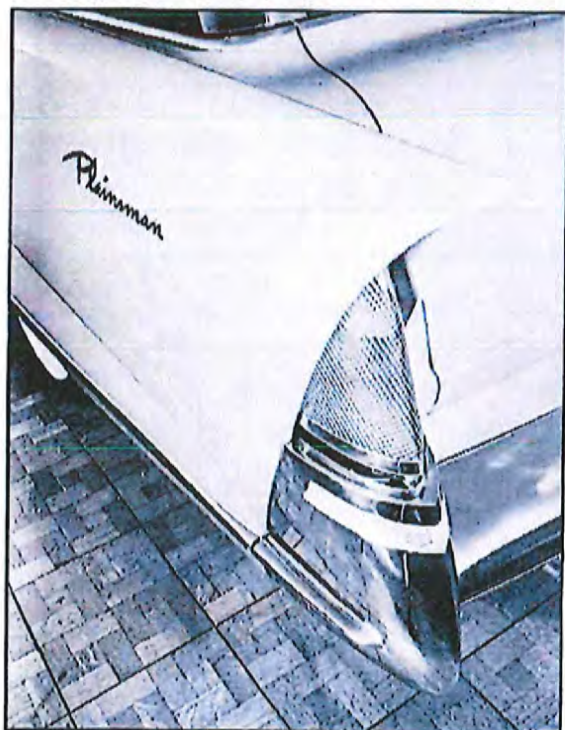
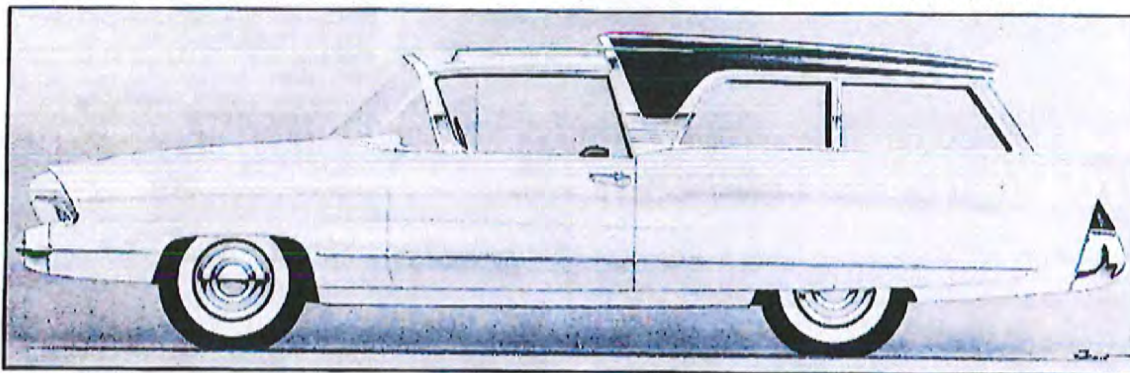
The Plainsman lived out its show career and was quietly transferred to a dealer in Havana, Cuba, thought Dave Scott. It was given to Elwood and Dorothy Parrish. Mr. Parrish at the time was vice-president of overseas marketing and Latin-American sales for Chrysler and was based in Havana. It had been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



Courtesy of David Scott



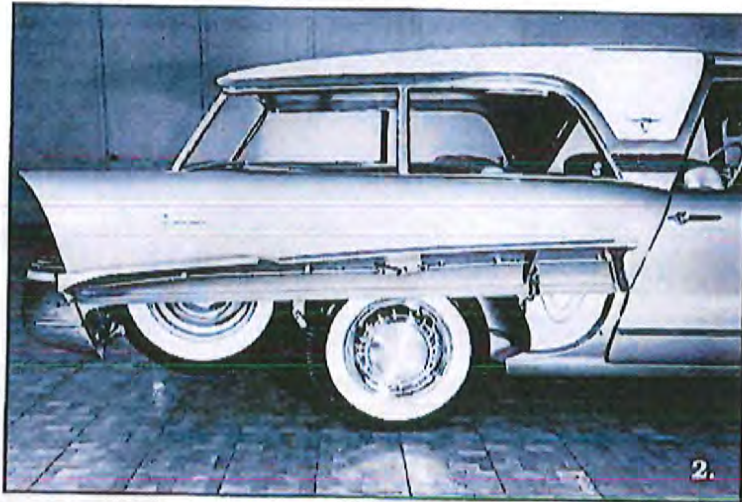
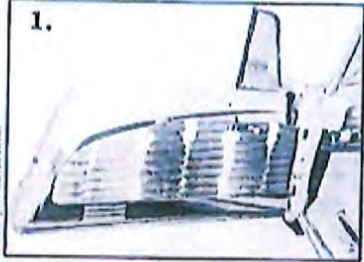
Left and below: Only major modification to Plainsman's final design came with decision to eliminate GM-like wraparound windshield in favor of MoPar-like wrap-around. Bottom: In the final hidden-gas-filler competition prevalent in the fifties, Dave Scott's clever sliding tailamp would have to be one of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



The Saga of the Plainsman *continued*

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.

[Click Here to go to Next Page ->](#)



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." □

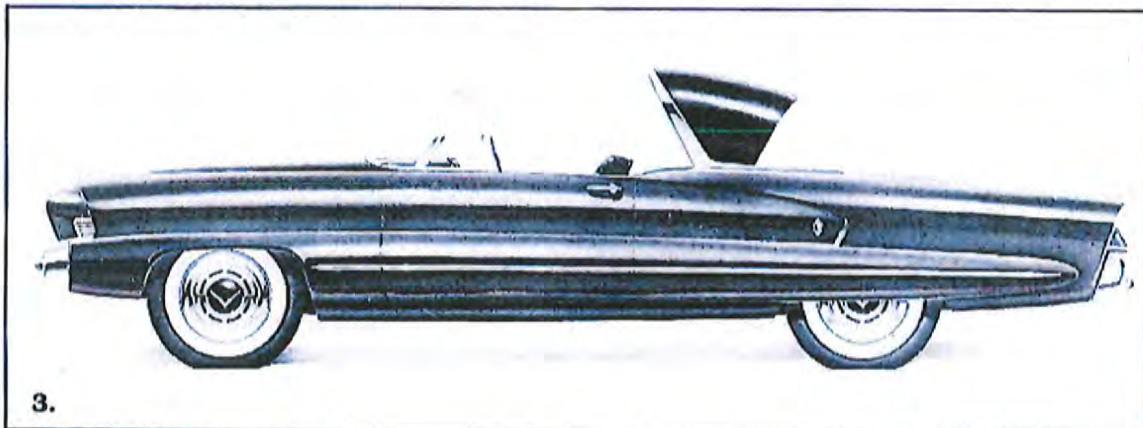
Special thanks to David Scott, Royal Oak, Mich.; Jeff Godshall, Royal Oak, Mich.; Bill Brownlie, Chrysler Corp., Highland Park, Mich.; Tom Jacobowski, Chrysler Corp., Highland Park, Mich.; Elwood and Dorothy Parrish, California; and Don Butter, Detroit, Mich.



2.

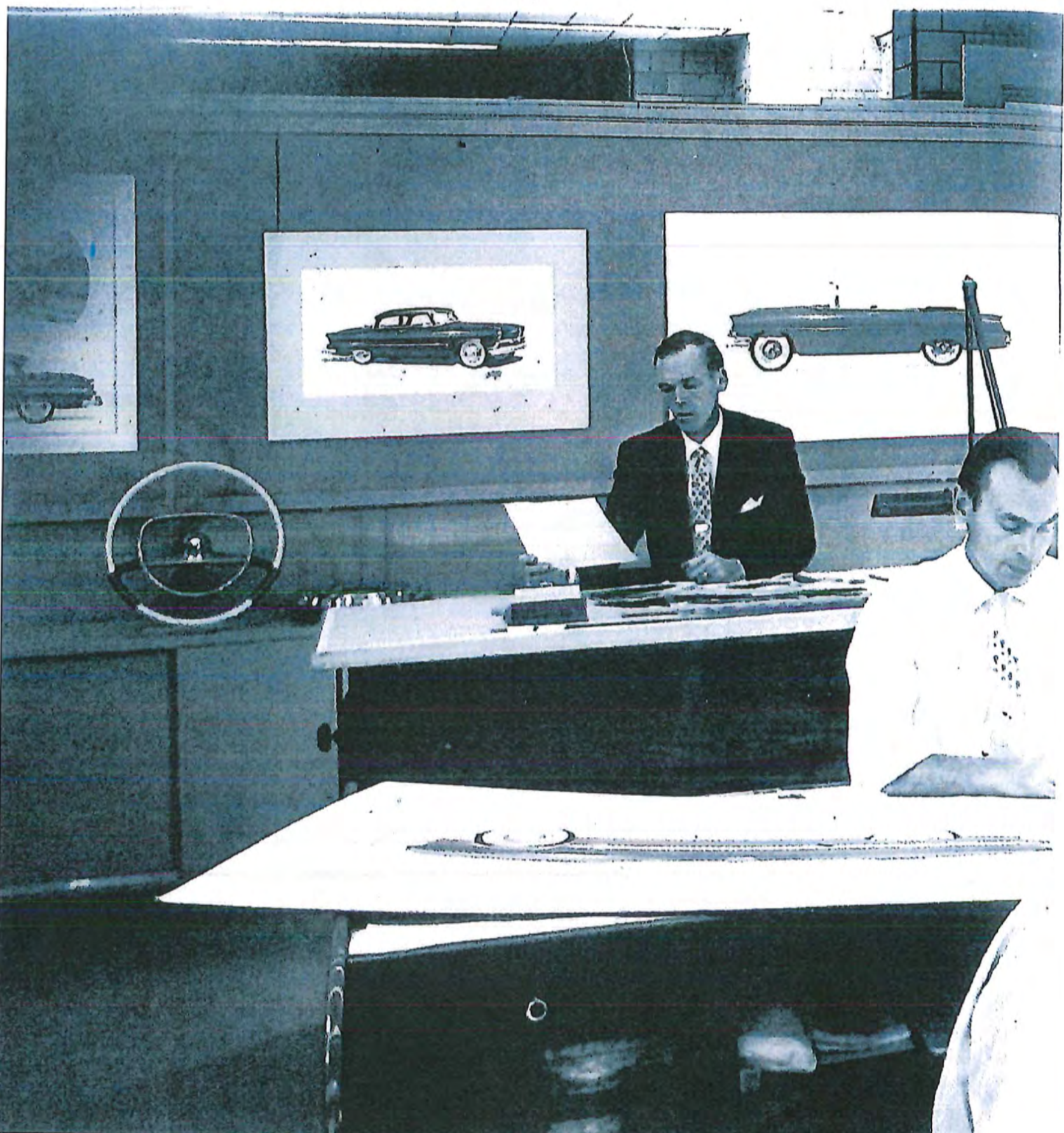
From Concept to Car— How the Plainsman Developed

- 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 DEVENTS THE MORNING SHIRT NICE PRIDE OR GREAT PRIDE WRENCHING RACING CAR VS AMERICA WHAT CAR SHOULD



Tom Joslin
11/21/10 5:30pm

90



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.

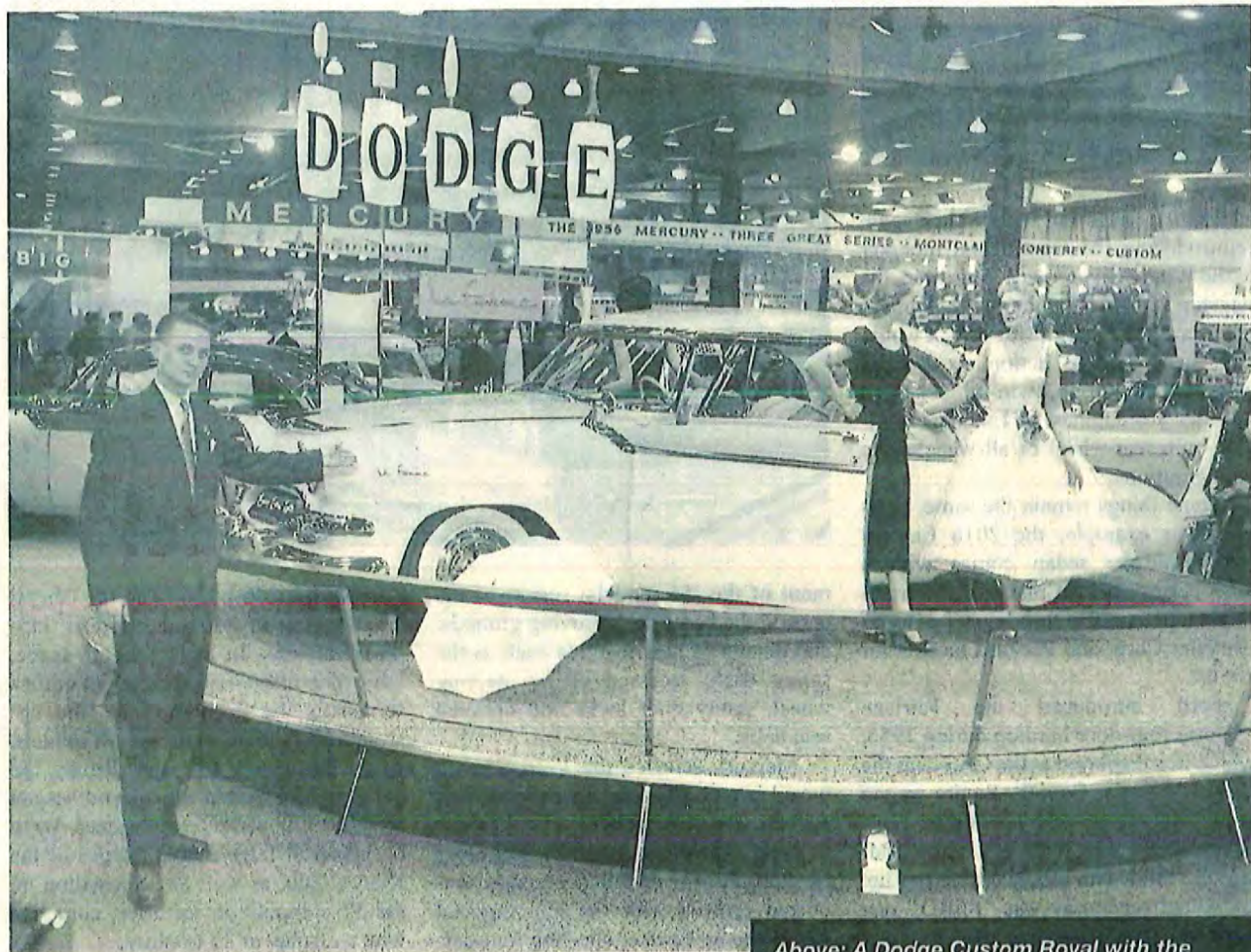
The Plainsman is the only known 50s concept car station wagon to exist today. The station wagon featured the first rear facing third seat ever in a station wagon, power rear window, and a power rear seat that folded flat. The interior on the Plainsman is made from unborn calfskin. You read that right. 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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TO BALL STUD CLIP 1931-54 \$9.
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\$100 (\$100 Core). CLUTCH DISK 9"
1938-54 \$190 (\$40 Core). CLUTCH
DISK 10" 1954-57 \$80 (\$40 Core).
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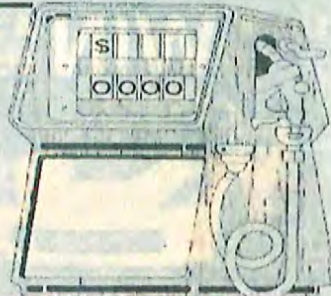
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CHICAGO, from page 34

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-

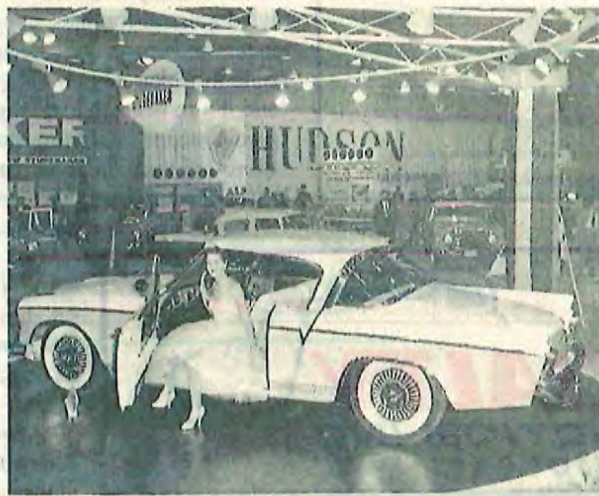
with at least 10 examples of its Rocket V-8-powered models, as well as the crowd-pleasing Olds *Delta* two-door hardtop dream car. It featured a four-passenger fiberglass body and brushed-aluminum roof.

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 tan and 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 Amsen 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!

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Shows Costs
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number of persons	Cost for month	Avg. per person
95,956	\$2,348,625	\$24.58
55,390	2,034,598	36.73
1,484	109,547	73.82
2,368	196,806	84.13
95,193	\$4,691,676	\$49.28

New Styling in Station Wagon



The Plainsman, an experiment in station wagon styling by Chrysler corporation, will be displayed at the Chicago Automobile show.

People and Events

Thomas M. Thomas, partner in the law firm of Kirkland, Fleming, Green, Martin & Ellis, was appointed chairman of the general, industry, and business sections of the 1956 Chicago Boy Scout finance drive beginning Jan. 18. Goal of the campaign is \$454,181.



Thomas

David S. Mackie was appointed assistant vice president of the New York Central railroad in charge of freight sales and service with headquarters in Chicago.

H. H. Hasselbacher will retire as general superintendent of the Burlington railroad's communications department and will be succeeded by T. W. Wigton.

Appointment of Jack L. Camp as chairman and Bryan H. Doble as vice chairman of the 1956 World Trade conference to be held Feb. 28 and 29 in the Morrison hotel was announced. Camp is assistant director of foreign operations

NEW CHRYSLER
PLAINSMAN HAS
REAR VIEW SEAT

An eight passenger, two door "idea" station wagon called the Plainsman, featuring an "observation seat" that faces the rear, has been designed by Chrysler corporation and will be put on public display for the first time at the Chicago Automobile show.

The show, which will be held in the International Amphitheater, Halsted and 42d sts., will open tomorrow and continue thru Jan. 15.

In keeping with its western name the Plainsman has a Palomino beige metallic exterior finish. The interior is trimmed with reddish brown and white calf hide upholstery.

The rearward facing rear seat is electrically operated and folds under the rear deck floor when not in use. Tail gate and rear window also are electrically operated.

ADMIRAL UNIT
WILL MOVE TO
NEW LOCATION

Appliance Distributors, Admiral corporation's distributing division for the Chicago area, will move its offices, display rooms, warehouse, and service department over the week-end from 3838 51st st. to

CHICAGO TITLE
NET EARNING
HIGHER IN 1955

Record Peak Set
Gross Income

Net income of Chicago Title and Trust company in 1955 rose to \$3,433,536, or \$5.77 a share, from \$3,070,040, or \$5.10 a share, a year earlier, the company announced yesterday. For the third consecutive year gross income reached a new high, climbing in 1955 to \$16,435,370 compared with \$14,749,186. During 1955 the company paid a record high quarterly and extra dividend totaling 3 million dollars or \$3 a share.

List Total Assets

Net worth of the company at year-end was \$67.33 a share compared with \$66.48 a share in 1954 and \$59.40 at the end of 1953. This was based on market value of marketable securities and book value of investments in associated companies. Cash and marketable securities at market value totaled \$3,268,000, compared with \$5,232,000 at the end of 1954. Total assets were \$69,341,000 against \$65,390,008 at the end of 1954.

Activity Level High

The annual statement to stockholders, signed by Chairman D. Pettibone, chairman and Paul W. Goodrich, president, said: "The high level of estate activity and favorable general business conditions which accounted for the company's expanding income

Henry Shane

From: pete@petevicari.com <pgvicari@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2015 10:07 PM
To: Henry Shane
Subject: Fw: Plymouth Plainsman
Attachments: Buick Landau.jpg; buick-car-show-02.jpg

From: Bill Warner <bwarn@ameliaconcours.org>;
To: Pete Vicari <pete@petevicari.com>;
Cc: Donnie Gould <donnie@rmauctions.com>; Brandt Rosenbusch (bjr@chrysler.com) <bjr@chrysler.com>; Mark Becker <MBecker@ameliaconcours.org>;
Subject: Plymouth Plainsman
Sent: Thu, Aug 7, 2014 8:55:23 PM

Dear Pete:

I enjoyed our conversation today and congratulations on buying the Plymouth Plainsman. That is probably the most traveled concept car in the world (Cuba, Australia, US, etc.). By copy of this note, I am advising Mr. Brandt Rosenbusch at Chrysler that you have the car and intend to restore it. We would certainly like to have it for Amelia in March, but time is short for a full restoration. That will be your call, but when it is done, we'd be honored if you would debut it with us on Amelia.

The glass company I was referring to is Fox Fire Glass LLC, 3071 W. Thompson Road, Fenton, Michigan 48430, PH 248-332-2442. They are on the internet....google "Fox Fire Glass". They do a lot of prototype work for the manufacturers.

Brandt: If you have any material on the Plainsman, Pete would be much appreciative of images to assist him in the restoration:

Pete Vicari
1900 Destreham Ave.
Harvey, LA 70058
(PH: 504-329-6098)

Pete: If you have not heard, the Dodge Granada show car will be auctioned off on the 20th. Not a pretty car, but built about the same time as the Plainsman, in case you are looking for another project. Google

"Dodge Granada" and it will pop up.

Attached is a shot of the Buick Landau I once owned. Nice car, but just not my style.

Please keep in touch and let me know how the restoration progresses.

Brandt: As always, thanks for the help.

Bill

Bill Warner

Founder and Chairman

The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance Foundation

3016 Mercury Road South

Jacksonville, Florida 32207

Ph: 904-636-0027



About The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

Winner of Octane Magazine's 2013 International Historic Motoring Event of the year, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is among the top automotive events in the world. Always held the second full weekend in March, "The Amelia" draws over 250 rare vehicles from collections around the world to The Golf Club of Amelia Island and The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, for a celebration of the automobile like no other. Since 1996, the show's foundation has donated over \$2.5 million to Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, Inc. and other deserving charities on Florida's First Coast. The 20th annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is scheduled for March 13-15, 2015. For more information, visit www.ameliaconcours.org or call 904-636-0027.

INTRODUCTION

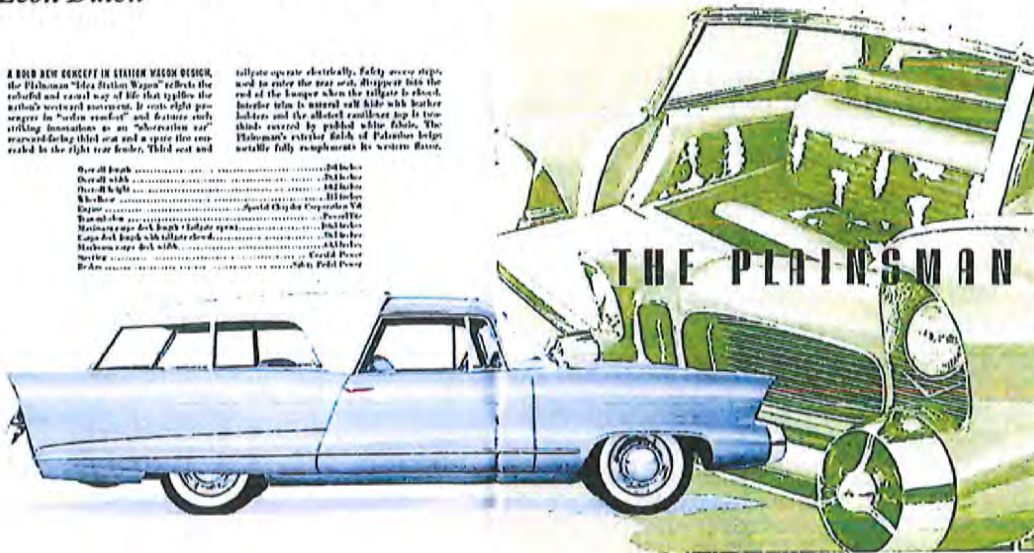
(Or... How I First Fell In Love With The Plainsman!)

By Leon Dixon

A BRAND NEW CONCEPT IN STATION WAGON DESIGN, the Plainsman "Hot Station Wagon" reflects the relaxed and casual way of life that typifies the nation's western movement. It costs eight percent less than "modern wagons" and features such striking innovations as an "adjustable seat" rearward-facing third seat and a spare tire mounted in the right rear fender. Third seat and

tailgate operate electrically. Safety seats slip on to enter the rear seat. Slippers hold the end of the bumper when the tailgate is closed. Interior trim is natural wall hide with leather holders and the all-new overhead bag. It has a trunk covered by padded white fabric. The Plainsman's exterior finish of Palmetto helps weather fully complements its western flavor.

Over all length 181 inches
Over all width 70 inches
Over all height 64 inches
Wheel base 108 inches
Engine 200 cu. in. Ford V8
Transmission 3 speed
Rear axle ratio 3.75:1
Fuel tank capacity 24 gal.
Horsepower 100
Weight 2,800 lbs.
Brakes Ford Power
Ford Auto



My maternal grandparents lived in a very large three-story house with a side yard on Iroquois Street in Detroit, Michigan. It was just one of a number of avenues that ran through the middle of a very posh residential area known to Detroiters as Indian Village. Thus the names of the streets: Iroquois, Seminole, Seneca, etc.

The very top floor of the house was actually done up like a bachelor's apartment wherein the walls were trendy (at least for those times) knotty pine. Everything on that top floor had a kind of male-ness about it. But I don't mean man-cave, as it is understood today. No. There was a record player, but no big-screen TV—that hadn't been invented yet.

Colorful silk ties hung from a special rotating holder. Shirts and suits in the closet were neatly hung from wooden hangers. Glistening polished shoes sat in a tilted rack along the base of one wall. The leather of each shoe was stretched taut by wooden shoetrees.

Anyway, the third-floor quarters were kept sanitary and as neatly arranged as a military barracks. My Uncle Louie lived here.

Louie Curtis had been a Navy man in World War II, but he lived with a certain discipline even in civilian life. Louie was also a diehard Plymouth fan and bought a sporty new Belvidere coupe in 1953. It was bright red.

After leaving the Navy, Louie went to work for Chrysler Corporation and ultimately moved to Ohio to help start a new Chrysler plant there. He would remain at the company for the rest of his career and never bought anything but Chrysler products. My Uncle Louie lived, ate, slept and breathed MoPar. But there were other diehard Chrysler fans in my family.

Two flights downstairs back in the big house on Iroquois was a grand living room with a big fireplace. To the left, over in the corner was a big, overstuffed leather armchair. Next to it was an end table with a tooled leather top. This table held a rather grand pipe rack, accompanied by the faint aroma of Cherry-blend tobacco. It was my grandfather's favorite place to sit when he was home and not running his massive electric trains layout in the basement.

My grandfather, Rod G. Shuster, had founded an insurance business in the 1920s and he had done quite well for himself. By the 1950s, R.G. had become known not only for the success of his business, but also for his love of Chrysler products. By the 1950s he bought one nearly every year. Grandpa had a particular soft spot for Imperials and bought several of them.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

So as you might imagine, the Chrysler salesman made it a point to arrive each year at my Grandpa's office to take him (and sometimes me as well) to see advanced showings of the new Chryslers and Imperials.

Back in those days when cars changed every 365 days, Detroit's car companies held next year's models in ultra-tight secrecy. New styling changes were treated as closely guarded secrets. So it was a big deal to see the new styling and features—especially if you got to see them before the general public.

At new model time, cars were kept fully covered on trucks and stored well away from prying eyes. Dealerships would either cover their showroom windows or fog them over. For instance, ample amounts of "Glass Wax" cleaner worked well if smeared with a rag or sponge and allowed to dry on the inside of the windows.

Then with the view safely shielded, top salesmen would fan out invitations to their premium customers in hopes of making an instant sale. Such a customer would be brought in and ushered past the fogged-up windows and temporary partitions all to be wowed by the newest models.

But in my case, the super sales treatment was not the only benefit I experienced. Because of my grandfather, I was one of the youngest people in the country on the Chrysler Press Preview list in the 1950s. I would often receive invitations for special showings. Accompanied by my grandparents, I not only got to see next year's cars but ultimately Chrysler dream cars as well!

Now, my grandmother had a brand-new Dodge in the garage, but she rarely drove it—especially if she was going downtown. She preferred using taxis for such outings. And so it was not a surprise one day to hear a taxi tooting its horn out in the driveway.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

But other than the taxi, the day at hand was a complete mystery for me. All I had been told was to dress up for a trip downtown (we did these kinds of things back then). My dad dropped me off early at my grandparents' house, so all morning long I had been waiting in eager anticipation.

No encouragement was needed because I was ready to go! So, quickly we spilled out of the front door, down the porch steps and into the back seat of the waiting taxi.

Unlike today, this taxi was incredibly clean inside. One might even say pristine. It was a spotless, shining 1952 Plymouth Checker taxicab in dark green color. It had a dark red vinyl interior. As further evidence of the time, there was no glass partition. Nor was there a full front bench—only a driver's seat. To the right on the passenger's side was a rather large rear-facing jump seat where I was invited to sit for the ride.

The uniformed driver smiled and asked if we were going to Hudson's. My grandmother replied, "Yes, driver... J.L. Hudson's. I'm taking my grandson downtown for a surprise." The cabbie acknowledged and backed out of the driveway as smooth as one could imagine and headed for Gratiot Avenue.

Now, J.L. Hudson's was a landmark in Detroit, Michigan. Hudson's was the largest department store in the world. It was also the tallest department store with twenty-five floors. Nearly everything about Hudson's was big. The store took up more than an entire downtown city block and was composed of multiple buildings all stuck together.

At certain times of the year, Hudson's would display the world's largest American flag draped across the front of the building facing Woodward Avenue. At Christmas time they had a gigantic toyland and Christmas display that was unparalleled.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

A shopping trip to Hudson's could very easily occupy an entire day. There was floor after floor, department after department of everything imaginable from perfumes and women's clothing to household goods and appliances to lawnmowers. If you wanted to buy a parrot or an iguana, they had a pet shop there. If you wanted diamonds, there was a very large jewelry department. If you needed your watch fixed, they had an old European watchmaker there with a clock and watch department.

But a trip to J.L. Hudson's in the 1950s also could amount to a very elegant outing—especially by today's standards. Upstairs there were elegant beauty salons and day saunas. And there was a restaurant that was as chic and posh as one could possibly imagine. Ladies could be seen there wearing things like white gloves and pillbox hats with nets that covered their eyes. They could even have high tea there—as my grandmother sometimes did.

Now if the store name sounds familiar to automotive fans, yes it was owned by the same family of Hudson Motorcar Company fame. But the car connection didn't stop there, as we shall see.

My grandmother tipped the driver as we exited the taxicab and walked through the heavy bronze doors into the perfumed atmosphere of magnificent J.L. Hudson's. But we weren't there for shopping. Instead, my grandmother made a beeline straight for the big bank of elevators. You could tell if the elevator was going to be available by the ball-shaped globe lights that hung over each door. And there was often a special uniformed guide to direct you to the nearest available elevator entrance. Only a few moments passed and it was our turn.

The big brass doors of the elevator slid open with a quiet whoosh as a female operator in a dark blue dress and white gloves smiled and ushered us inside. She asked for our floor as my grandmother looked at me and smiled. "Twelfth floor please!"

The operator acknowledged, "Yes ma'am. You must be going to..."

My grandmother interrupted before the elevator operator could blurt out everything. "Yes... yes we are. It's a surprise for my grandson—he loves cars." My heart began to race as my imagination was now running wild. At least now I had a clue, but cars at J.L. Hudson's? What was this all about?

"Ahhhh!" The elevator operator knowingly said as she first closed the big metal doors and then the clacking brass accordion inner gate. She smiled at me, and then held her white-gloved finger up to her lips in a sign of hush-hush secrecy as she began operating the elevator controls. As smooth as silk, we began to glide silently upward to our floor.

As we finally reached our destination, we could see the lighting coming through the small glass windows with wire mesh inside. The elevator operator skillfully adjusted the height of the elevator to smoothly match the exact floor level. Then she slid the brass cage gate open followed by the big outer doors. We strode out of the elevator as my grandmother reached into her purse and pulled out an envelope embossed with the "JLH" logo. She handed a smiling lady a card out of the envelope as the lady unhooked a velvet rope and waived us into what I could only describe as a combination of museum and dream car show. Now I understood. My grandparents had arranged for me to visit at an advanced showing of a special J.L. Hudson automotive exhibit. We were some of the first people through the door and I was in heaven.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

It was all incredible. Somehow Hudson's had managed to bring real cars all the way up to the twelfth floor and set them up on display. In one direction was GM's jet-like Firebird gas turbine car. Also there was the ancient King car...first automobile driven on Detroit's streets.

Hudson's had magically converted their large auditorium/salon into a kind of car world. For me, it was like entering Disneyland—or at least what I imagined it would be at that time. I looked at the cars and displays and then suddenly... there it was. In shimmering Palomino Beige metallic: the Plainsman dream car!

Now, to some jaded 21st-Century minds, perhaps the wide-eyed wonder of these experimental styling one-offs in 1956 may all seem lost today. But to put things in perspective, dream cars were just coming into their heyday at that time. And as frivolous as they may seem in today's cynical world, dream cars were supremely important.

These vehicles often forecasted what might be coming in the future in design, technology and in features. They excited the public and got people talking about the very notion of the future and things yet to come. They helped car companies to gauge the wants and needs of the market. In short, dream cars made automotive design into a genuine science all its own.

The 1950s was the zenith of the American dream car era and these cars were the talk of the auto shows. Whether you loved them or not, dream cars were the real buzz of the 1950s and 1960s. People like me had an unquenchable thirst in those days for dream cars and knowledge about them. Year after year, I couldn't wait to see what new wild wonders would be unveiled by carmakers. Dream cars were on every magazine cover and vivid in the minds of those who truly loved automobiles.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

Yes, we call them “concept cars” today but the original term we all used to describe these wondrous vehicles was “dream cars.” So if you cared about automobiles, *dream cars* were the things to see back then! It was a very different era. I know. I was there.

And in those pre-cynical days of promise and optimism, there were also many other things of wonder and inspiration about the world of the future. It was a new awakening.

Amazing new electronics debuted that would change the entire world of music. From the recording studio, to the artists, to the instruments like electric guitars it was all just breaking out of a slumber. Les Paul and Mary Ford had a TV show where they showcased not just their talent but amazing new sounds that could come out of a guitar. Les played while Mary played and sang “*How High The Moon*” in what seemed like an impossible, incredible, miraculous futuristic rendition. It was a wondrous time.

1956 was the year I first saw the iconic sci-fi movie, “*Forbidden Planet*” when it debuted at Detroit’s Grand Circus Theater, just a few blocks from J.L. Hudson’s. Not only did the movie have a serious treatment of science fiction, but also everything up on the screen looked real and believable. And it had *Robby, The Robot*, the most iconic robot ever. Detroit opened an “*Automat*” fully automatic electronic restaurant where you bought pre-made meals, drinks and treats behind little clear plastic doors in a wall. And I also saw the Ford Mystere and the Packard Predictor that year. And now upon seeing the Plainsman, my hunger for the future and dream car close-ups was satiated—at least for the time being.

Dixon/Life & Times of the Plainsman

But just like those other dream cars and wondrous marvels of the 1950s I had seen, there was an indelible memory attached. I would never, ever forget how magnificent the Plainsman looked while cowgirls in Stetsons and fringed white leather outfits pranced around it. The Plainsman glowed and shimmered in the lights and it seemed so very modern. Like the incredibly popular minivans that would follow it from Chrysler decades later, the Plainsman had anticipated every possible need or want. It seemed that Chrysler had thought of everything with this dream car.

The Plainsman almost seemed to say, “Hello! Welcome to the future...I’ve been waiting for you! Whatever you want in a station wagon or family car, I’ve got it—and more!”

And the best part of all was that this was no science fiction car. This was a car that looked as if you could just climb in and drive off into the sunset. From that moment on, I fell in love and fantasized of someday owning the magnificent Plainsman. And I never stopped dreaming.

Whether you lived in the 1950s and loved it as I did... or missed the era but still love the cars, I invite you to turn the pages of this book and see it all through eyes of wonder. Come travel back in time with me to a place where no GPS will ever take you. And for the first time ever, see the story of one of the most iconic dream cars of the 1950s—as seen not just by someone who was there, but by someone who rediscovered the car decades later when everyone said it had been destroyed. Come back with me now as I tell you the story of the Plainsman as you have never seen it before...

Leon Dixon

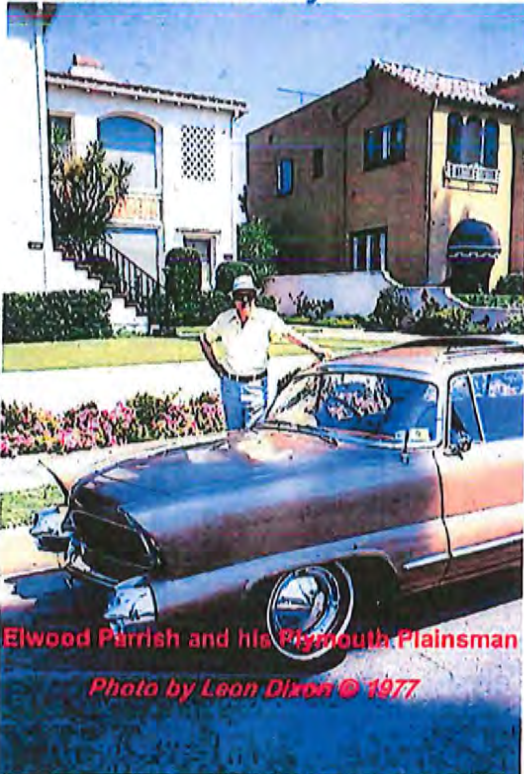
Henry Shane

From: leeedy@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 4:41 PM
To: Henry Shane
Subject: Re: Mike Parrish

Hello Henry,

I'm still doing formatting today, having wasted a little time with this silly banker assassination stuff and emergency eye surgery last month.

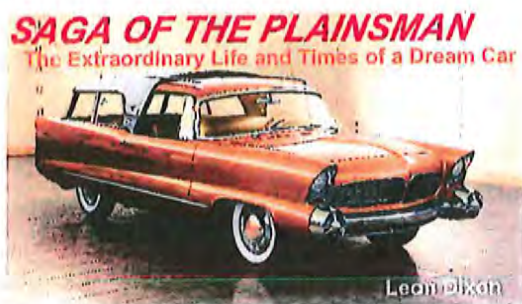
I'll call Mike and see what he has to say. But I have no intention of getting into a peeing contest with him. I'll be cordial, but I'm not buying the bullet-proof glass and assassination story.



Here is a shot of Woody that I took in front of his house in SoCal. You will note at the time that the dash was covered in calf hide and the car was still in right-hand drive configuration. You will also note 1972 inspection stickers on the left side of the windshield. You will also note that the car is NOT painted diarrhea butterscotch. By the way... when we went to lunch or dinner, we went in the Plainsman.

Regards,

Leon Dixon



-----Original Message-----

From: Henry Shane <HenryS@1st-lake.com>
To: leedy <leedy@aol.com>
Sent: Tue, Dec 5, 2017 1:46 pm
Subject: Mike Parrish

Leon

I have raised the Banker issue with Shane Parrish who finally gave me Mike his dad's phone number. Shane has suggested that you might want to speak with his Dad directly.

Mike Parrish's office phone number is 909 987 9000.

Please let me know how the phone call goes.

Henry

Henry Shane

From: pete@petevicari.com <pgvicari@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 3:21 PM
To: Henry Shane
Subject: Fw: Plainsman: official Chrysler Engineering Division 260 C.I. Plainsman
Attachments: Scan0049.pdf

Peter G. Vicari

Pete Vicari General Contractor, LLC

Vicari Auction Company, LLC

1900 Destrehan Ave./ Harvey, LA 70058

Office: (504) 347-1196 ext.3564 / Cell:(504) 329-6098

Fax: (504) 347-1522 / email: pete@petevicari.com

On Wednesday, September 10, 2014 1:37 PM, Ed Jasinski <ed5000@earthlink.net> wrote:

Pete,

It is fair to speculate that this log may reference the return of the car from Italy before an engine upgrade at Corporate.

We do know many changes were made at Corporate upon its return from Ghia. But given the inconvenience of that engine change-out scenario so late in the game, it would make better sense to suppose that Corporate delivered an alternate engine to Ghia during the build process; if it was changed at all.

But that intentional display of dual exhaust means something. It means power at the very least. And the engine was heralded as "Special Chrysler Corporation V-8": Unique. And one could certainly understand why they shunned labeling it Fury related. That was another campaign all together.

I tried to get closer to this question of engine appointment with the Parrish grandson. Perhaps through maintenance receipts it would be revealed. But I didn't make any headway. Perhaps now that Dixon is aboard new insight will develop. I would like to know as well.

Ed



Chrysler Power Legends

THE PLAINSMAN WAGON

Debuting publicly at the Chicago Automobile Show in January of 1956, this concept vehicle continued the corporation's "Flight Sweep" styling theme. Based on a wheelbase of 115", this two door, eight passenger wagon featured concepts that were to become accepted as commonplace throughout the industry for years to come. Notable styling fea-

tures included the use of metallic "Palomino Beige" paint, a padded white vinyl roof, gold accented exterior badges, a split front grille, and hooded headlights.

The interior trim consisted of a highly specialized package of natural cured brown and white calfskin upholstery, with leather trim on seat bolsters, arm rests and the headliner above the cockpit areas. The front seats were individ-

by William Mark Senefsky

ually adjustable, and the doors featured European pull straps. The passenger areas were climate controlled with a combination of fresh air and separate heater ducts, to allow passage of the circulated flow to occupants.

Engineering ideas included a self-enclosed spare tire compartment, concealed in the right rear fender. When opened it revealed a specialty jack setup to lower the spare and lift the original into the storage area. Another was the fuel filler pipe concealed behind the left rear taillight. It functioned by pushing the lens for access, slightly further for release and relock. The observation third seat was mounted facing the rear and was electrically operated. It had the capacity to be slowly lowered beneath the rear floor for storage. The tailgate, tailgate window, and safety access rear steps were also powered electrically.

Other features included power steering, power brakes, Powerlite automatic transmission, and an aircraft designed modular instrument panel. The vehicle was powered by a special Chrysler 303 cubic inch V-8 with dual exhausts.

Although the concept as a whole did not reach production, the majority of its specialized features did. These again reinforced the corporation's lead in engineering.



POWER PLANT AND DRIVE TRAIN

Car Name	Engine Data							Transmission	Page No.
	Type	Bore	Stroke	Piston Displ.	Comp. Ratio	Carb.	Rated H.P. @ RPM		
Thunderbolt	8-L	3-1/4	4-7/8	323.5	6.8	1-2B	143/3600	Fluid-Drive	6
Newport	8-L	3-1/4	4-7/8	323.5	6.8	1-2B	143/3600	Fluid-Drive	7
Plymouth XX-500	6-L	3-1/4	4-3/8	217.8	7.0	1-1B	97/3600	3-Speed Man.	8
Chrysler K-310	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	Fluid-Torque	9
Chrysler C-200	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	Fluid-Torque	10
Chrysler Special	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	Fluid-Torque	11
Chrysler Spec. (Mod.)	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	PowerFlite	12
Chrysler GS-1	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	PowerFlite	13
De Soto Adventurer I	V8-OHV	3-5/8	3-11/32	276.1	7.5	1-2B	170/4400	Fluid-Torque	14
Chrysler D'Elegance	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-2B	180/4000	Fluid-Torque	15
Plymouth Belmont	V8-OHV	3-7/16	3-1/4	241.3	7.5	1-1B	150/4400	Hy-Drive	16
Plymouth Explorer	6-L	3-1/4	4-5/8	230.2	7.25	1-1B	110/3600	Hy-Drive	17
Firearrow Roadster (1)	Body Mock-up Only								18
Firearrow Roadster (2)	V8-OHV	3-7/16	3-1/4	241.3	7.5	1-2B	150/4400	PowerFlite	19
Firearrow Coupe	V8-OHV	3-7/16	3-1/4	241.3	7.5	1-2B	150/4400	PowerFlite	20
Firearrow Convertible	V8-OHV	3-7/16	3-1/4	241.3	7.5	1-2B	150/4400	PowerFlite	21
De Soto Adventurer II	V8-OHV	3-5/8	3-11/32	276.1	7.5	1-2B	170/4400	PowerFlite	22
Falcon	V8-OHV	3-5/8	3-11/32	276.1	7.5	1-2B	170/4400	PowerFlite	23
Flight-Sweep I	V8-OHV	3-5/8	3-11/32	276.1	7.5	1-2B	170/4400	PowerFlite	24
Flight-Sweep II	V8-OHV	3-5/8	3-11/32	276.1	7.5	1-2B	170/4400	PowerFlite	25
Plainsman	V8-OHV	3.563	3.25	260.0	7.6	1-2B	167/4400	PowerFlite	26
Norseman	V8-OHV	3-13/16	3-5/8	331.1	7.5	1-4B	235/4400	PowerFlite	27
Dart	V8-OHV	4.0	3.9	392.0	9.25	2-4B	375/5200	TorqueFlite	28
Plymouth Cabana	Body Mock-up Only								29
Imperial D'Elegance	Body Mock-up Only								30
De Soto Cella I	- 3/8 Scale Model Only - Proposed for Fuel Cell Power								31
Plymouth XNR	6-OHV	3.4	3.125	170.0	8.5	1-1B	101/4400	3-Speed Man.	32
Dodge FliteWing	V8-OHV	4.25	3.38	383.0	10.0	2-4B	330/4800	TorqueFlite	33
TurboFlite	- Chrysler CR2A Gas Turbine -						140/39000	TorqueFlite (Modified)	34

BODY AND DIMENSIONS

Car Name	Body Style	Year Introduction	Over-all Dimensions			Wheel-base	Tire Size	Page No.	
			Length	Width	Height				
Thunderbolt	Retr. H.T.	1940	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	127.5	7.00 x 15	6	
Newport	Phaeton	1940	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	145.5	7.50 x 15	7	
Plymouth XX-500	4-Dr. Sedan	1950	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	118.5	6.70 x 15	8	
Chrysler K-310	2-Dr. Hardtop	1951	220.5	76.0	59.0	125.5	8.00 x 17	9	
Chrysler C-200	Convertible	1952	220.5	79.3	58.0	125.5	8.00 x 17	10	
Chrysler Special	Sport Coupe	1952	214.0	72.5	55.0	119.0	7.00 x 16	11	
Chrysler Spec. (Mod.)	Sport Coupe	1953	204.0	75.3	57.5	125.5	8.20 x 15	12	
Chrysler GS-1	Sport Coupe	1953	204.0	75.3	57.5	125.5	8.20 x 15	13	
De Soto Adventurer I	Sport Coupe	1953	189.8	67.0	53.5	111.0	6.70 x 16	14	
Chrysler D'Elegance	Sport Coupe	1953	204.5	74.0	54.5	115.0	7.60 x 17	15	
Plymouth Belmont	Roadster	1954	191.5	73.3	49.3	114.0	6.70 x 15	16	
Plymouth Explorer	Sport Coupe	1954	185.2	76.9	54.5	114.0	7.10 x 15	17	
Dodge Firearrow	Roadster (1)	1953	188.8	75.5	46.3	115.0	7.10 x 15	18	
Dodge Firearrow	Roadster (2)	1954	194.0	76.3	50.9	119.0	7.10 x 15	19	
Dodge Firearrow	Sport Coupe	1954	190.6	76.5	55.0	119.0	7.10 x 15	20	
Dodge Firearrow	Convertible	1954	189.6	75.8	54.9	119.0	7.10 x 15	21	
De Soto Adventurer II	Sport Coupe	1954	214.3	77.9	55.5	125.5	7.60 x 15	22	
Falcon	Roadster	1955	182.0	68.3	51.2	105.0	7.60 x 15	23	
Flight-Sweep I	Convertible	1955	207.0	70.4	53.5	120.0	7.10 x 15	24	
Flight-Sweep II	2-Dr. Hardtop	1955	207.0	70.4	53.5	120.0	7.10 x 15	25	
Plainsman	Station Wagon	1956	208.0	79.4	60.2	115.0	7.10 x 15	26	
Norseman	2-Dr. Hardtop	1956	227.5	82.0	56.0	129.0	8.20 x 15	27	
Dart	Retr. H.T.	1957	223.0	80.0	54.0	129.0	8.00 x 15	28	
Plymouth Cabana	Station Wagon	1958	215.8	80.0	55.9	124.0	8.00 x 14	29	
Imperial D'Elegance	4-Dr. Hardtop	1958	228.0	79.3	52.3	129.0	9.50 x 14	30	
De Soto Cella I	Hardtop	1959	- 3/8 Scale Model - Dimensions N. A.						31
Plymouth XNR	Roadster	1960	195.2	71.0	46.0	106.5	8.00 x 14	32	
Dodge FliteWing	2-Dr. Hardtop	1961	215.6	77.9	52.8	118.0	8.50 x 14	33	
TurboFlite	2-Dr. Hardtop	1961	218.0	75.4	52.1	118.0	8.00 x 14	34	

IMPERIAL WEB PAGES



1956 Chrysler GHIA Plainsman Concept Station Wagon

[Imperial Home Page](#) -> [Imperials by Year](#) -> [1956](#) -> [Chrysler GHIA Plainsman Concept Station Wagon](#)



From Ebay 2010:

- VIN: 9999760
- Mileage: 50,354 miles
- Body type: Wagon
- Engine: 8 Cyl.
- Exterior color: Tan
- Transmission: Automatic
- Fuel type: Gasoline
- Interior color: Brown

1956 Chrysler Ghia Plainsman Station Wagon Concept Car

This is a Chrysler Auto Show Car displayed through out the United States in 1956 at all of the auto shows. □ □ This car was recently on the cover of Old Cars Weekly, January 21, 2010. □ This rare, original, as found 1956 Chrysler Ghia Plainsman Station Wagon concept car has been on display at all the important museums in the United States including the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum, the Petersen Auto Museum, the Gilmore Museum and others. □ This is the only known 50's concept car/dream car station wagon that exists today. At the RM Auction at Meadow Brook a 1953 Chrysler Ghia, 2-door hardtop, fully restored car sold for \$850,000.00. You could restore this car and sell it and maybe profit up to half a million dollars.

This car featured such advanced styling cues and mechanical functions as including the first station wagon to have a rear facing third seat. □ Also the rear window lowers by power into the tailgate and then the tailgate opens as power operated. □ The rear tailgate opens to step plates that were designed to come out of the rear bumper. □ The third seat is also power operated so that it will either setup into a seat or flatten into the floor all by power. □ The interior was finished with unborn baby calfskin. □ The spare tire is stored in the rear fender. □ The gas cap is under the left rear taillight, which sucks in under vacuum to expose the filler cap for filling the car with gasoline.

Virgil Exner designed 95% of Chrysler concepts and then the Chrysler chassis' were shipped to Ghia. □ The completed concept cars were then returned to the United States for show purposes but had to be exported out of the United States within eighteen months in order for Chrysler not to have to pay duty. □ This particular car was shipped to Cuba after its show purposes and was given to the president of all of the Cuban banks. □ After his death the car was returned to the main Chrysler dealership in Cuba. □ The export manager for Chrysler Corp. lived on a large estate in Cuba and was given the car by the Chrysler Corporation and shortly thereafter Castro took over Cuba and chased out all of the Americans. □ □ The Export manager for Chrysler escaped from Cuba with all of his worldly belongings including this Chrysler concept car and returned to the United States. □

The Export Manager had the car refitted by Chrysler with a Chrysler 440 engine, which currently powers it. □ This car was produced as a 2-door station wagon because Chrysler anticipated the success of the Chevy Nomad and wanted to have a competitive vehicle. □ However, this is the one

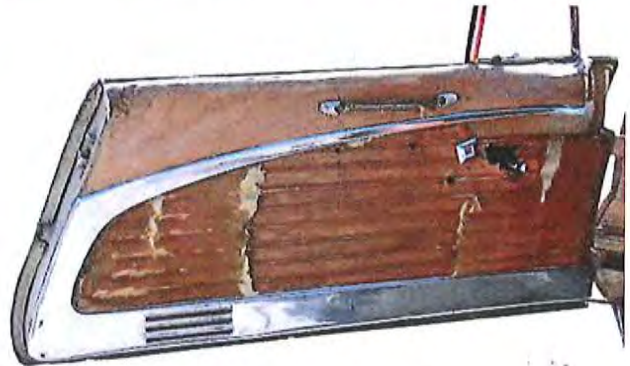
and only 'show' 2-door prototype station wagon that exists today. He was later promoted to the Export Manager of Australia where he lived for many years and then retired to California. □ Again taking this concept car with him. The car was given to his son and the son later gave it to his son. □ In the late 80's the car was sold to a famous auto collection where it remained for a number of years before it was sold to the present owner. □ It was the intent of the present owner to restore the car to its original pristine condition but the financial climate in the United States has forced him to put the car up for a reluctant sale. □

This car is highly documented and similar restored concept cars to this have sold previously within the last six years for \$1 to \$3 Million Dollars. Again the financial climate in the United States forces the current owner to sell this car for a more than attractive price. This is one of the rarest Chrysler concept cars and the only concept station wagon known to exist from the 50's and the 60's from American Manufacturers. This car runs down the road just fine. The power tailgate and power rear seat are fully functioning. The Italian custom body manufacturer Ghia also manufactured bodies for other foreign automotive manufacturers. Ghia is considered such an important company that this year the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance featured Ghia cars. Yes, the car needs all cosmetics. A ONCE in a lifetime opportunity to have one of the finest American concept cars in your collection! □ This car is listed at a very low reserve. □ The owner and car are both located in San Mateo, CA. □ Factory photos are in Black & White.

More information about this incredible station wagon can be found on our [1955 page](#).









You won't need everything this tire can give you

THEir advantages are possible only because you can't see them. It's not what you can see that counts. It's what you can't see that counts. It's what you can't see that counts. It's what you can't see that counts.

When you drive a Goodyear Double Eagle, you know you're getting the best. You're getting the best. You're getting the best. You're getting the best.



New 3T Nylon Cord Tubeless Double Eagle

GOODYEAR

The world's finest tires... by miles!

WESTWARD HO — to the suburbs!

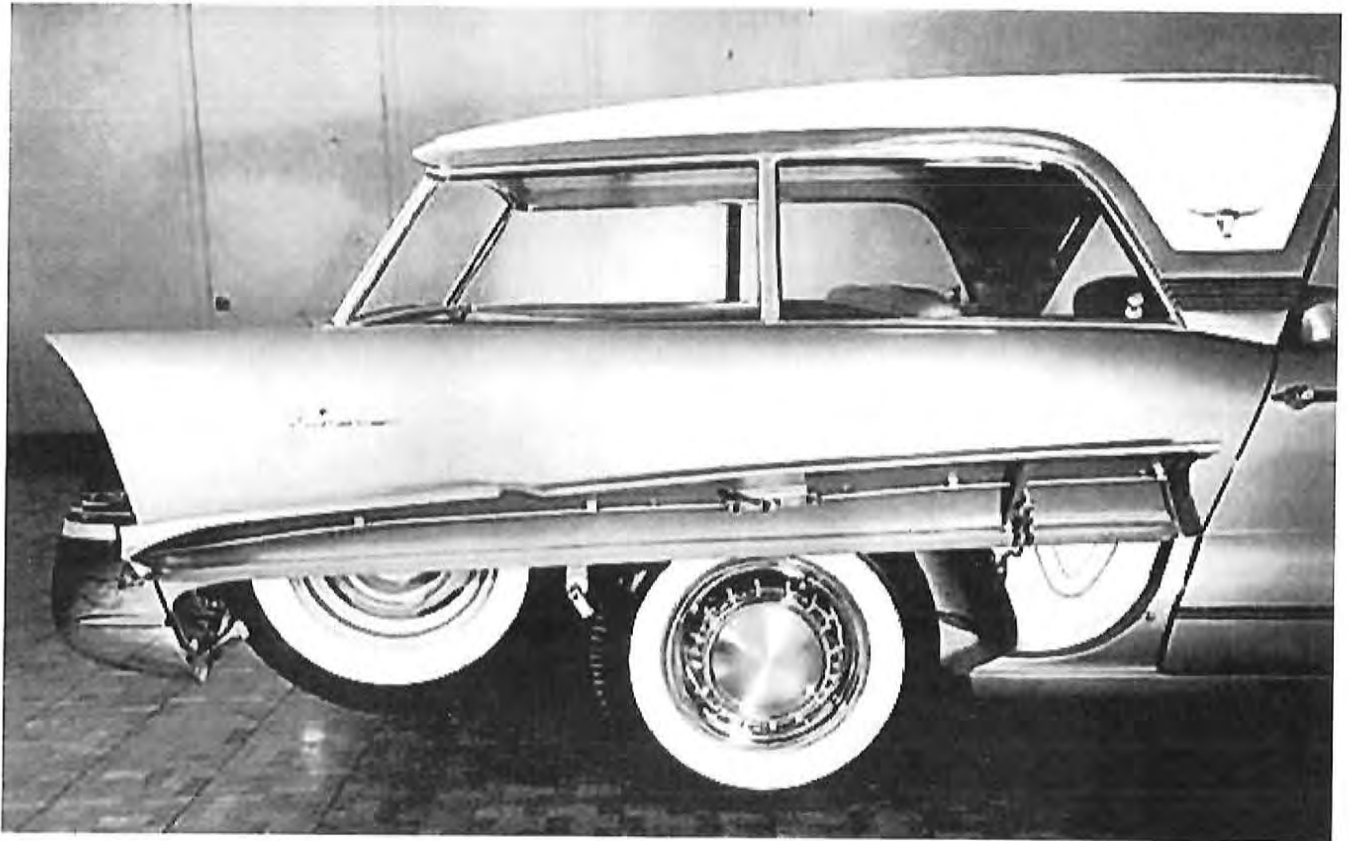
It's the new! Westward Ho! Station Wagon. 55 1/2 cubic ft. of storage space. A real life storage space for your car. It's the new! Westward Ho! Station Wagon. 55 1/2 cubic ft. of storage space. A real life storage space for your car.

The spacious interior of Westward Ho! is a real life storage space for your car. It's the new! Westward Ho! Station Wagon. 55 1/2 cubic ft. of storage space. A real life storage space for your car.

It's the new! Westward Ho! Station Wagon. 55 1/2 cubic ft. of storage space. A real life storage space for your car. It's the new! Westward Ho! Station Wagon. 55 1/2 cubic ft. of storage space. A real life storage space for your car.

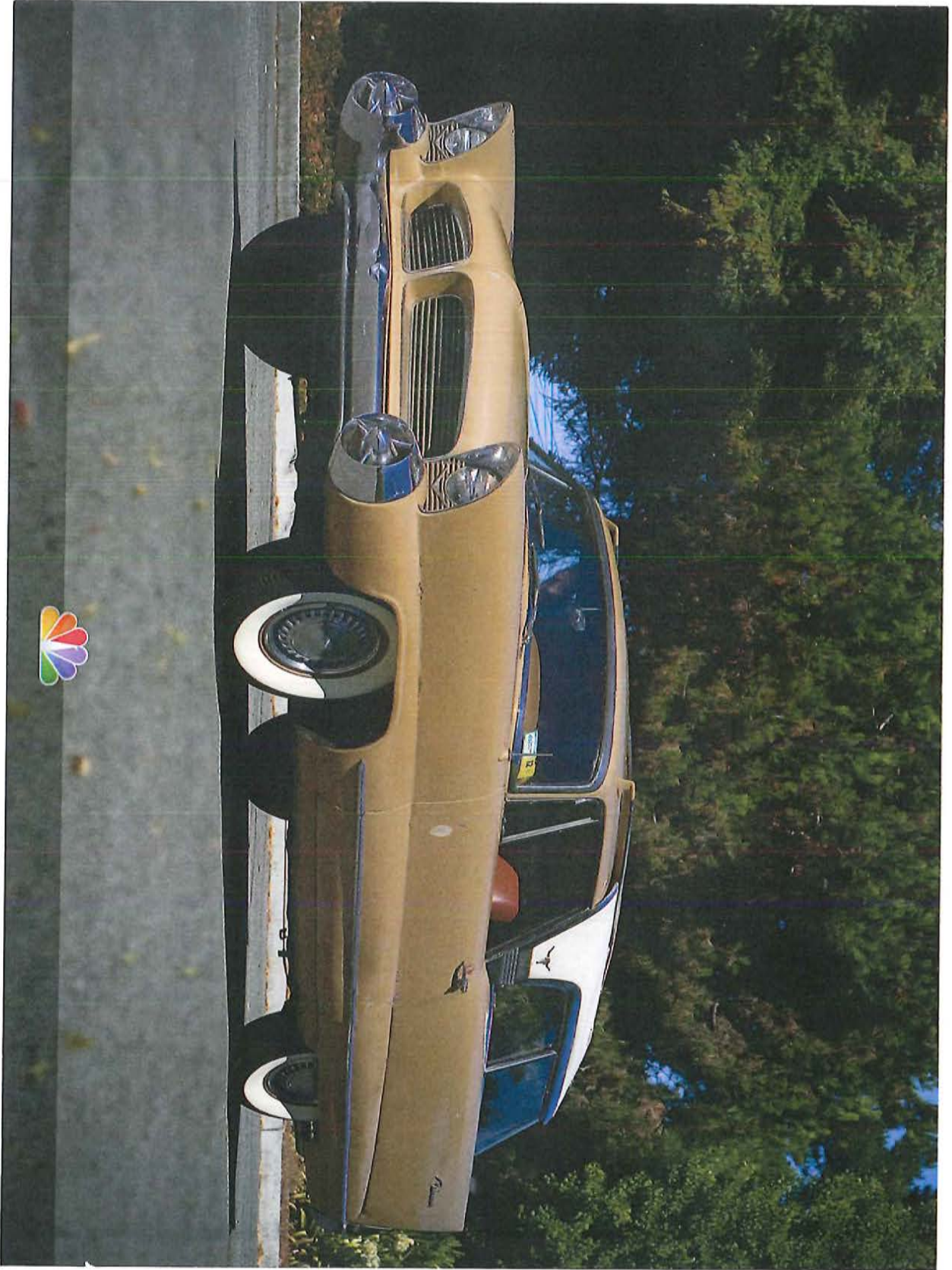
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Lot 3088

1956 Chrysler Plainsman Concept Car by Ghia

During the banner years of Detroit's "Dream Cars," the annual auto shows were must-see events and the best place to witness what tomorrow may hold for motorists. The American buying public was treated to the latest styling trends, innovations, technologies and advancements in engineering.

One of the fastest growing segments in this automotive market in the mid-1950s was that of the station wagon. Chrysler design guru Virgil Exner's response to this trend was the dream car he called "Plainsman." The task of transforming Exner's designs to a finished product fell to the famed Italian coachbuilders, Ghia.

Factory promotional material stated the Plainsman was designed to reflect the "colorful and casual way of life that typifies the nation's westward movement." The effect was magnificent and the buying public was in love. The Plainsman

won rave reviews wherever it was shown, but as so often happens with one-of-a-kind vehicles of this type, it had to be retired from the limelight. Unlike a number of show cars that were destroyed after their show life expired, the Plainsman was more fortunate. With many colorful stories involved, it ended up in the hands of owners in Cuba, then in Australia with a Chrysler Export Manager. For many years, the legend of the Plainsman circulated around Australia and came back to the United States when this Export Manager retired.

It was enjoyed for nearly 20 years as a family car in the United States. Presented in unrestored and "as-found" condition, this car is a tribute to the skill and craftsmanship of a bygone era of show cars. It retains a replacement 440-cid V-8 engine and automatic transmission and continues to be very drivable and street legal. Please note the Chrysler is currently offered on a bill of sale, however a title may be available by the auction.

Estimate: \$150,000 - \$200,000



888.990.3910

229

January 10, 1980

Dear Mr. Dixon:

This week I received a dozen copies of the February issue of "Special Interest Autos" containing your article concerning the "Pacemaker."

Please accept my sincere thanks for your interest, and for the very fine job you did on the story. It was very objectively written, yet I was very flattered by your kind comments. The treatise was much longer than I expected, and was certainly replete pictorially. For me personally it was a "fun trip."

Please accept my thanks again, along with my best wishes for your continuing literary efforts!

Sincerely

Dave Scott

Feature Article from Hemmings Classic Car

July, 2006 - David LaChance

When the Oldsmobile F-88, a 1954 concept car from General Motors' fabled Motorama road show years, sold for \$3.24 million at auction in January 2005, the collector-car world was astonished. The selling price was fully six times what the experts thought the car would bring, and a new record for a concept car. Joe Bortz was not surprised.

One year later, proving that the F-88 was no fluke, a green 1954 Pontiac Bonneville Special brought \$3.02 million at auction. Overnight, it seemed, the market for significant American dream cars had rocketed into the stratosphere. If Joe was surprised, it was only that the market had taken this long to come around. "The Bonneville Special didn't break into new territory, but it showed that there's a solid (price) floor under these cars," said Joe, a restaurant and nightclub developer whose Highland Park, Illinois, Bortz Auto Collection contains about 20 dream cars, including the Bonneville Special's all-original, copper-colored twin. "Right now, the trend is straight up. I would call this the year of the dream car. The press has just been on a frenzy, and so has the public."

You might think that Joe would be eager to talk about values, like an investor whose stock portfolio has suddenly swollen to ten times its value, but he's not. He argues that the dream cars he loves and collects are works of art, not "some commodity like a Rolex watch. If you go to a museum and look at a Monet, you're not going to talk about the value of the Monet." Still, he ventures, "I do think that the cars are in their infancy in terms of value. Even though they have generated some numbers that have gotten people's attention, I think that's just the beginning."

What's driving up the values? Obviously, the laws of supply and demand are in charge; because the supply is fixed--there are only so many dream cars to go around--it must be that demand has increased. Joe asserts that the competitive spirit is a large part of the reason. "I always say, in the world of collecting, the whole basic psyche behind the whole thing is 'I've got it, you don't. I'm king.'"

In that world of collecting, what could be more desirable than a one-off car? "A concept car is the cherry on the top of any major collection," he continued. "In the future, a major collection will not be considered fully developed unless it has one or more concept cars."

It was a sign of what was to follow. Purely by chance, he was given the opportunity to buy the Bonneville Special, "my first real concept car. I thought that I had the only concept car that ever escaped," he said. It was routine for General Motors to have its dream cars destroyed after their turntable days were over, with many going to the Warhoops Auto Salvage Yard in Sterling Heights, Michigan. But Joe learned that a funny thing sometimes happened on the way to the crusher; a car might be hidden away in the yard like the 1955 La Salle II Sports Coupe, or cut into pieces and left to rot, like the 1955 Chevrolet Biscayne.

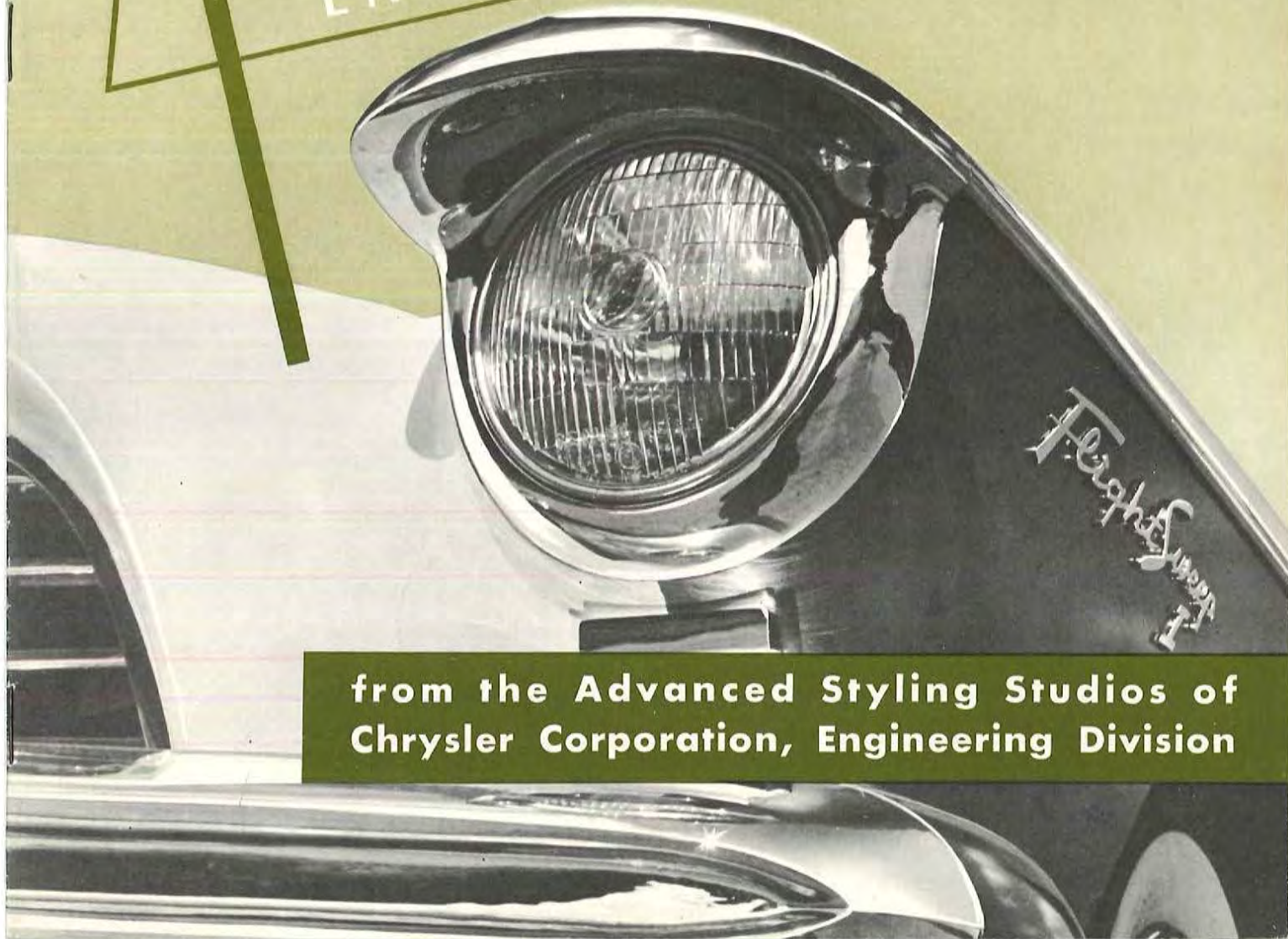
Joe said it was difficult for the designers, who had in many cases done the finest work of their careers, to accept the idea that their creations would be destroyed. "A designer would go into the executive's office and cry--literally break down and cry. It was like telling Rembrandt, 'We're going to destroy a few of your paintings.'" The executive, sometimes GM's chairman himself, might soften, and let the designer take the car home on one stipulation: "I don't want to hear about it for 25 years."

When he began looking around for other dream cars in the early 1980s, those 25-year agreements were just beginning to expire, and cars long thought lost were coming to light. "My timing was perfect," he said. "Nobody else was looking for them. I was able to make an end-run play."

News stories about the Bonneville Special brought more telephone calls, leads about other survivors or sale offers. He found that each of the Big Three had a different way of dealing with its retired show cars: GM, being a "political" organization, would occasionally allow a car or two to escape; Ford, as a family-owned company, exercised much greater control and let very few go; and Chrysler, which had most of its dream cars built by Ghia in Italy, would ship the cars out of the country within 18 months to avoid having to pay duty on them.

In the hunt for dream cars, great patience and a philosophical outlook are great assets. Joe recalled the story of the 1956 Chrysler Plainsman station wagon that was given to the president of the Bank of Cuba, who was murdered by Fidel Castro's agents while riding in the car. The Plainsman became the property of Chrysler's export manager, who learned that he, too, was marked for death; he packed his family into the wagon and escaped to a waiting tugboat back to the United States. Later transferred to Australia, he brought the Plainsman with him, having it converted to right-hand drive as Australian law demanded.

EXCITING IDEA CARS



from the Advanced Styling Studios of
Chrysler Corporation, Engineering Division





► Chrysler Corporation is proud to present these four exciting Idea Cars for the inspection of the car-loving American people. Each of them was designed in the Advanced Styling Studios of the Engineering Division, Chrysler Corporation.

In these idea cars the spirit of progress — **THE FORWARD LOOK** — finds three-dimensional expression in metal by Chrysler Corporation. They reflect the finest in contemporary trends in American automotive design. From their creation and testing come valuable ideas for future cars of **THE FORWARD LOOK**.

Some or many of the innovations found in these cars may appear on future production models of the cars of **THE FORWARD LOOK** — Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto, Chrysler and Imperial. But that decision is largely yours — for it is the American people who will decide the kind of cars they want and, as in the past, Chrysler Corporation will build its cars to reflect their preferences.

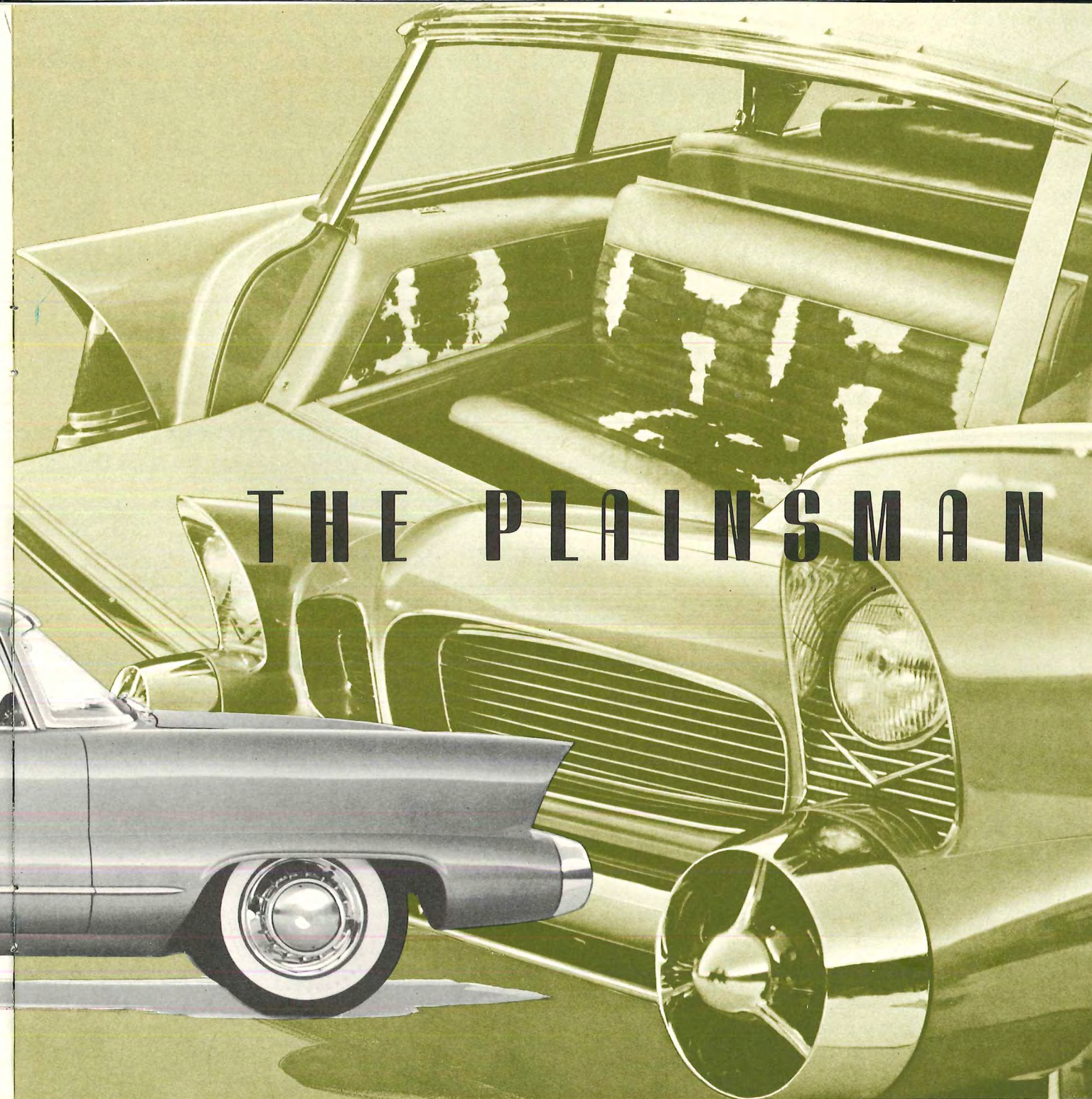
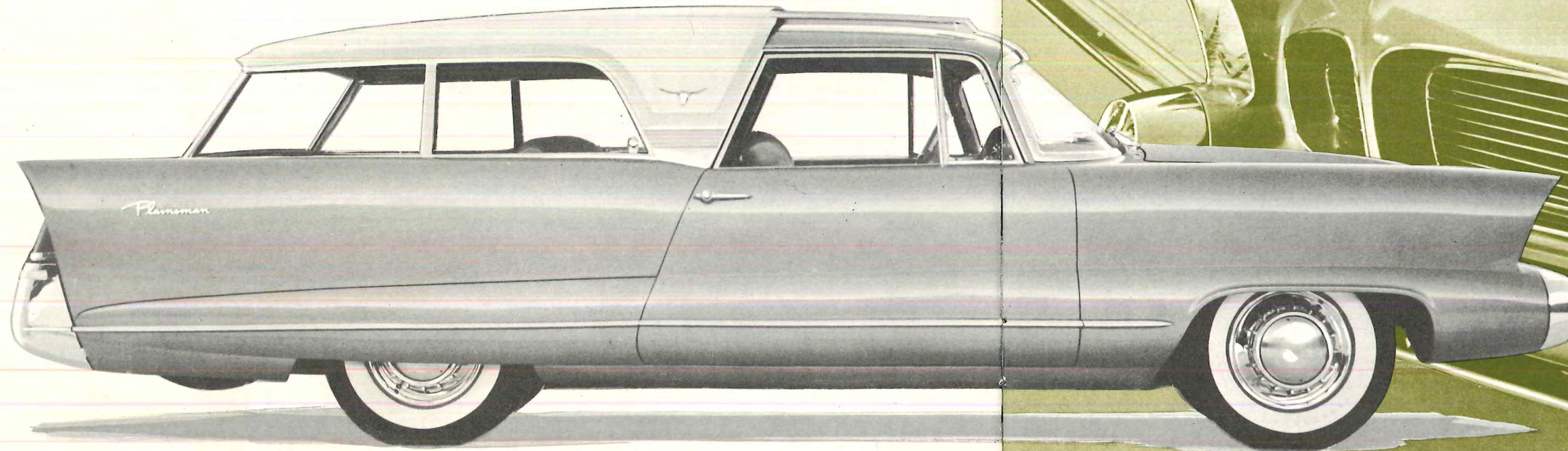
Sorry, but these Idea Cars are not for sale. However, we are sure that you will find all that your heart desires in automotive beauty and performance in one of the current cars of **THE FORWARD LOOK '56** featuring **FLIGHT-SWEEP** styling and the revolutionary pushbutton driving. Your Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto, Chrysler or Imperial dealer is the man to see.



A BOLD NEW CONCEPT IN STATION WAGON DESIGN, the Plainsman "Idea Station Wagon" reflects the colorful and casual way of life that typifies the nation's westward movement. It seats eight passengers in "sedan comfort" and features such striking innovations as an "observation car" rearward-facing third seat and a spare tire concealed in the right rear fender. Third seat and

tailgate operate electrically. Safety access steps, used to enter the rear seat, disappear into the end of the bumper when the tailgate is closed. Interior trim is natural calf hide with leather bolsters and the all-steel cantilever top is two-thirds covered by padded white fabric. The Plainsman's exterior finish of Palamino beige metallic fully complements its western flavor.

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
Transmission	PowerFlite
Maximum cargo deck length (Tailgate open).....	106.5 inches
Cargo deck length with tailgate closed.....	86.7 inches
Maximum cargo deck width.....	63.5 inches
Steering	Coaxial Power
Brakes	Safety Pedal Power



THE PLAINSMAN

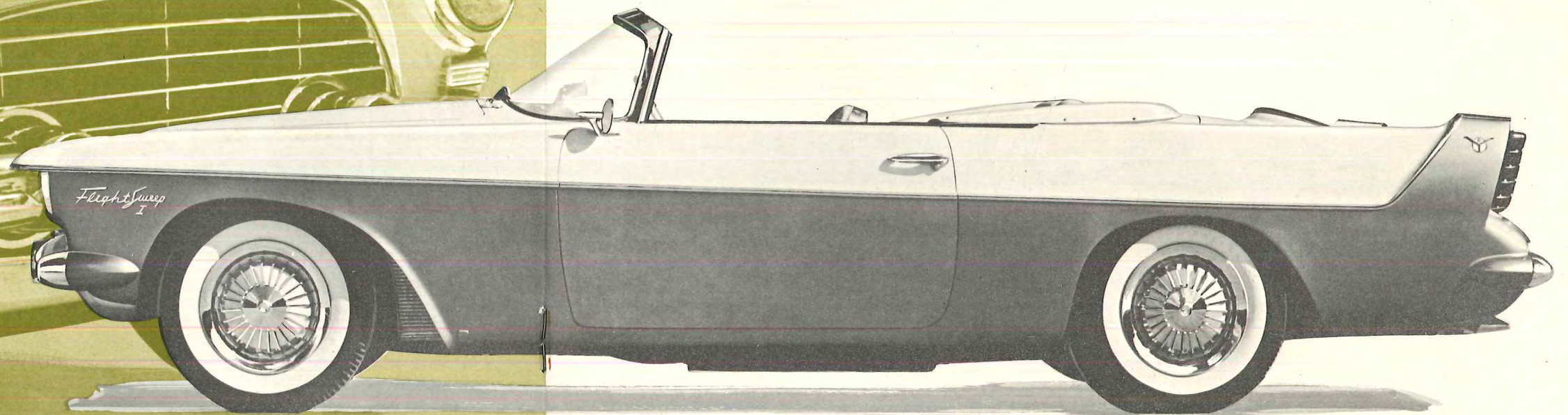


FLIGHT-SWEEP I AND FLIGHT-SWEEP II

Both the Flight Sweep I and Flight Sweep II are built on a modified production chassis, incorporating many unique details of construction. For example, in order to allow smooth clean body lines unbroken by seams or joints, the front fenders, cowl, and body are welded integrally to the frame. Furthermore, the sheet metal, both front and rear, is made to sweep under the bumpers. This new design concept gives a finished, closed-in effect.

These rakish, highly maneuverable cars are 207 inches long and a mere 53½ inches high. They seat four passengers in spacious comfort. Their sharply sloped windshields, with a slant angle of 56°, allow greatly increased visibility for both driver and passengers.

The Flight Sweep I and Flight Sweep II are equipped with Chrysler Corporation's PowerFlite fully-automatic transmission, Full-Time Coaxial Power Steering, Safety Power Brakes, and electric window lifts.



FLIGHT-SWEEP I—FOUR PASSENGER SPORTS CONVERTIBLE

FLIGHT-SWEEP I AND FLIGHT-SWEEP II

STYLING HIGHLIGHTS

- Forward Look styling, emphasized by:
 - Clam-shell type front fender extensions.
 - Sharply sloping, wide-horizon windshield.
 - Sweeping side character line.
 - Upswept rear fenders and taillights formed into a trailing fin motif.
 - Fully flared wheel openings.
 - Forward sloping, door-type hood.
- Functionally integrated bumpers punctuated by massive parking lights.
- Flight Sweep I Colors—Vapor White—Solar Bronze.
- Flight Sweep II Colors—Airfoil Green—Jet Black.
- Unique two-piece counterbalanced deck lid, with spare tire externally mounted in lower lid, and tire cover mounted in upper lid.
- Curved side window glass.
- Dramatic wheel cover treatment simulating exposed brake drum and cooling fin design.
- Flush-mounted, locking gasoline filler door with combined filler cap.
- Custom quality leather upholstery covering seats, door panels, instrument panel. In Flight Sweep I—bronze and white, in Flight Sweep II—green and black patent leather.

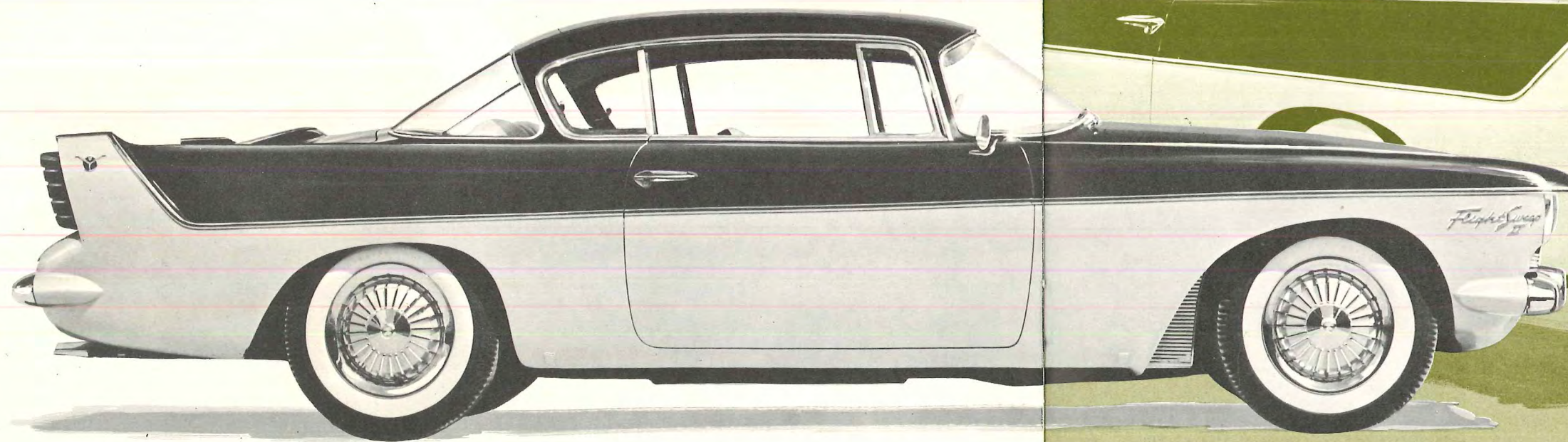
- Separately adjustable air-foam cushioned bucket front seats and bench rear seat with rear seat center armrest.
- Large circular instruments, including engine tachometer and speedometer, combined with toggle switch headlight, parking light, and windshield wiper controls.
- Unique electrical console between seats for heater controls, turn signal controls, PowerFlite selector, and radio.
- Spring-balanced convertible top mechanism on Flight Sweep I, hand-operated, very easy to raise or lower.

SPECIFICATIONS

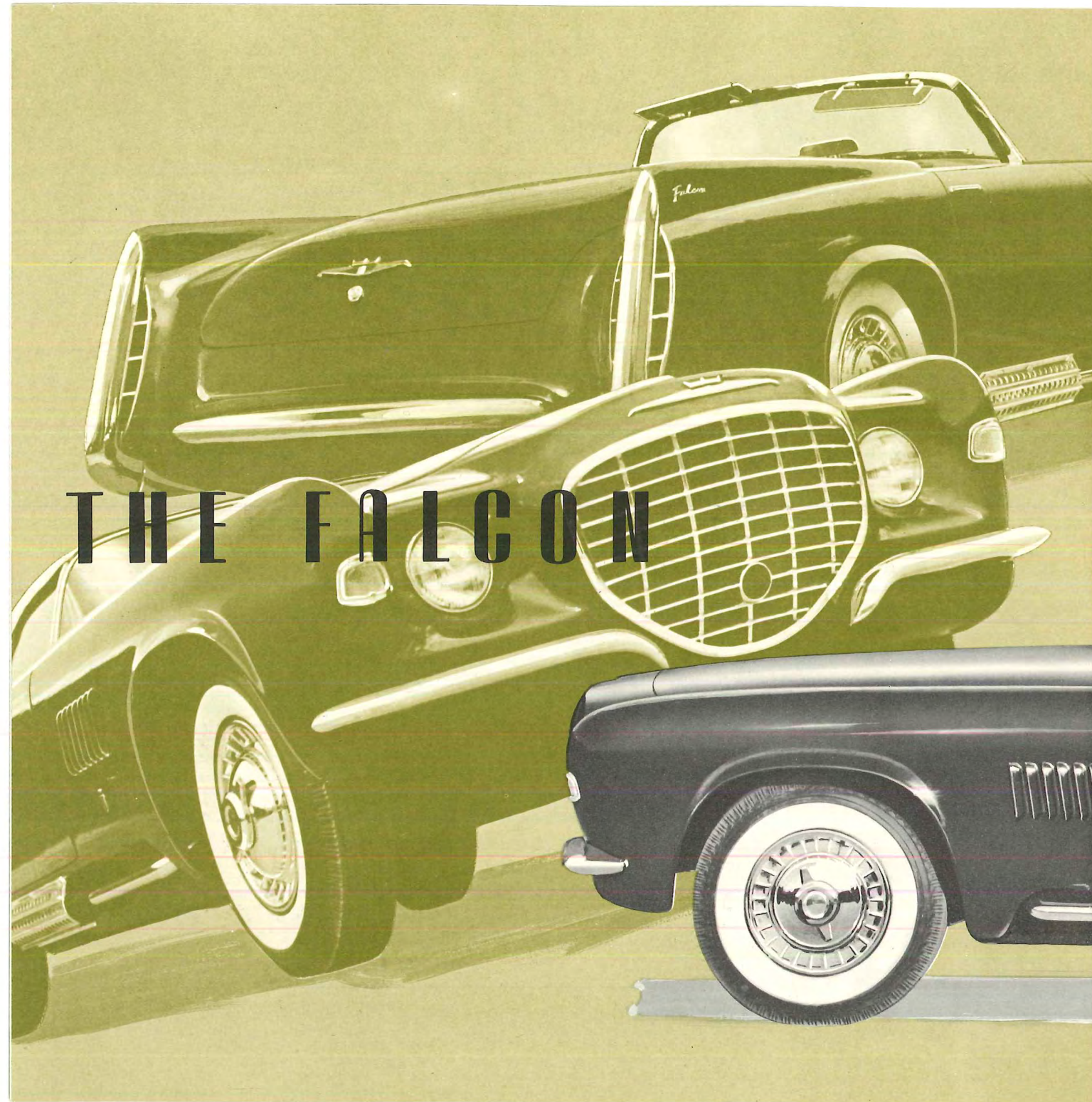
Overall length	.....	207 inches
Overall width	.....	70 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
Overall height	.....	53 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Wheelbase	.....	120 inches
Tread, front	.....	56 $\frac{5}{16}$ inches
Tread rear	.....	59 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches
Engine	.....	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8, hemispherical combustion chamber.
Tires	.....	7:10 x 15
Steering	.....	Chrysler Corporation full-time power
Rear axle ratio	.....	3.54:1



FLIGHT SWEEP II



FLIGHT-SWEEP II—FOUR PASSENGER HARDTOP



THE FALCON—A SPORTS ROADSTER—Built on a 105 inch wheelbase modified production chassis, the Falcon breathes power and performance in its every line. It is a low-slung two-passenger roadster whose mechanical capabilities are suggested by its sports car appearance. The car is only 51 $\frac{1}{8}$

inches high, yet has adequate road clearance. The Falcon is equipped with Chrysler Corporation's PowerFlite fully-automatic transmission (with centrally mounted floor selector lever), Full-Time Coaxial Power Steering, Safety Power Brakes, and electric window lifts.

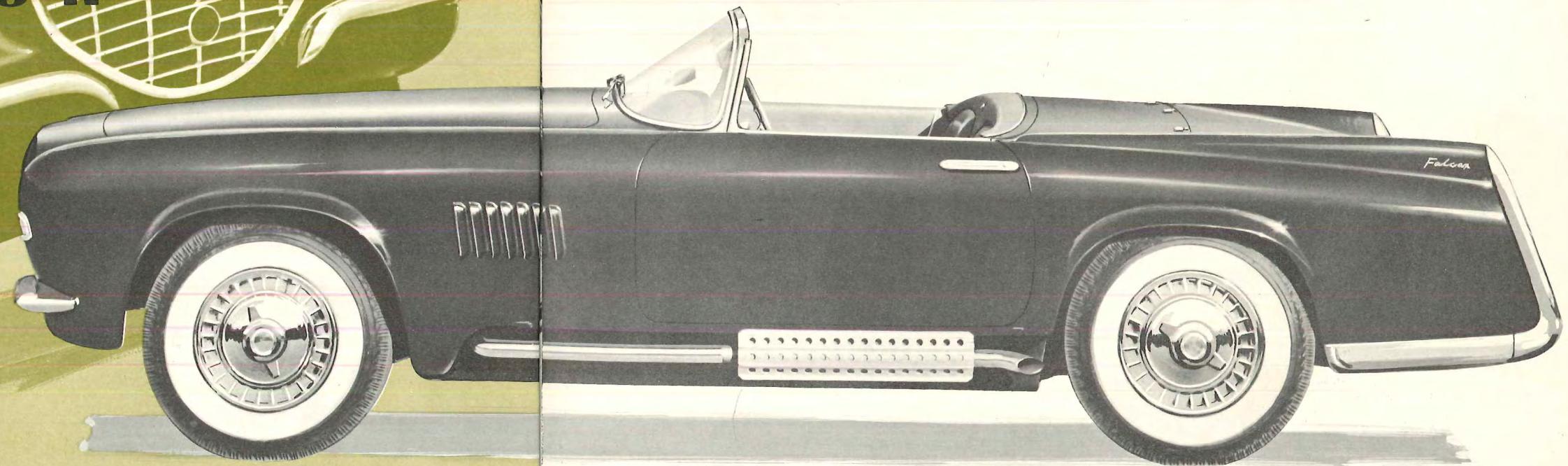
STYLING HIGHLIGHTS

- Forward Look styling, emphasized by:
 - Rearward sloping Wide Horizon windshield.
 - Sharply defined forward sloping front fenders.
 - Upswept rear fenders. ● Full wheel openings.
 - Forward thrusting, grid-type grille.
 - Recessed headlights and taillights.
 - Forward sloping, door-type hood.
 - Sharply-angled rear fender back guards.
 - Fender lowers.
- Folding lid which completely covers top well. Control button in cockpit.
- Wire wheels with simulated knock-off hubs.
- Spring-balanced, manually-operated, folding top.
- Externally mounted dual exhaust system for powerful mechanical look and improved performance.

- Soft custom quality red and ivory leather upholstery.
- Individual, adjusting bucket seats.
- Concave inner door panels emphasizing cockpit feeling.
- Exterior color—Gauntlet Black.

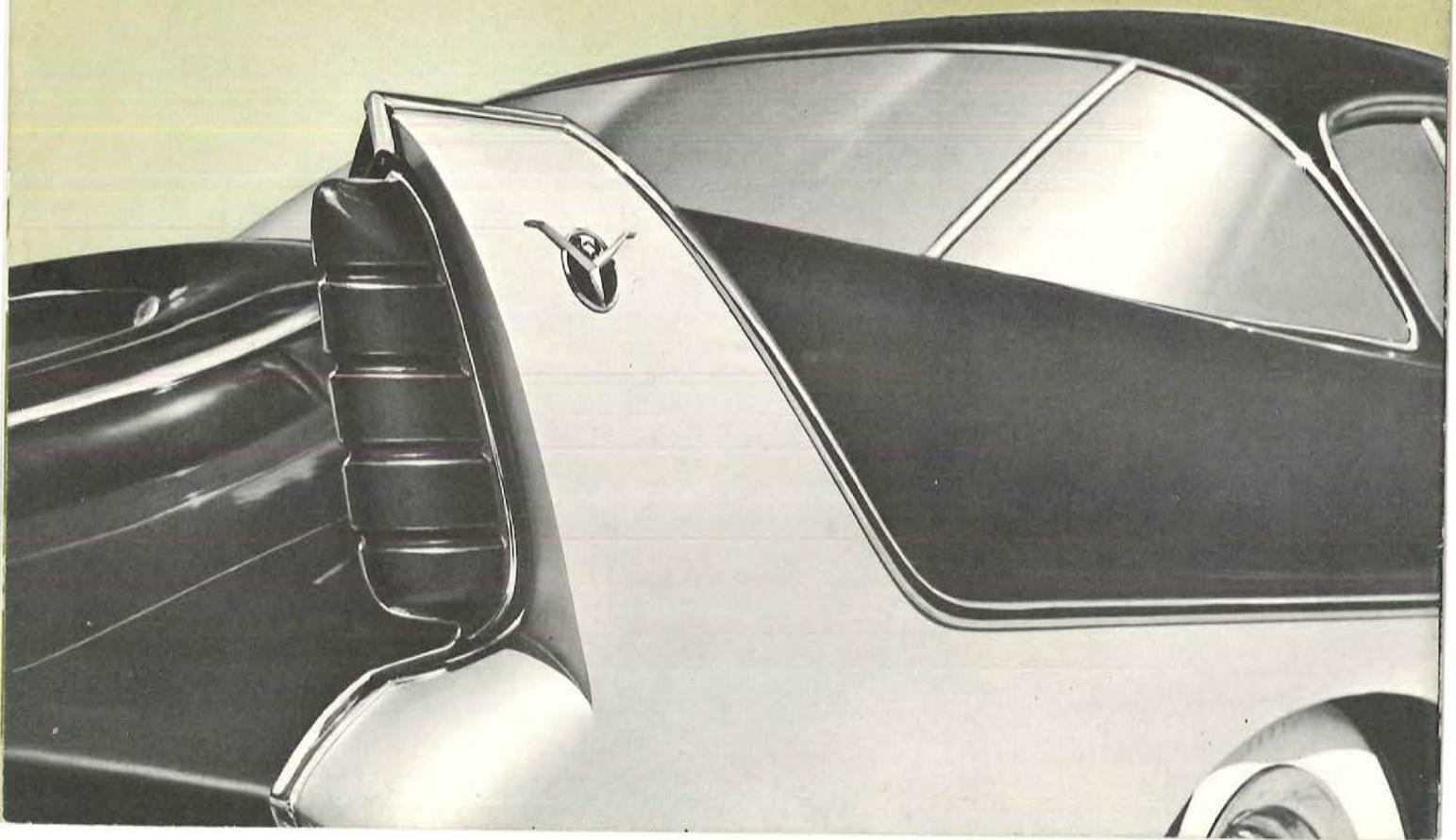
SPECIFICATIONS

Overall length	182 inches
Overall width	68 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Overall height	51 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches
Wheelbase	105 inches
Tires	7:60 x 15
Engine	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8, hemispherical combustion chamber.



THE

FORWARD LOOK



PLYMOUTH

U.S.A. 1956

Type "Plainsman", 8 pass.
Experimental Station Wagon
(body by Ghia).

Special 8-cyl. o.h.v. engine in vee.

Automatic transmission.

Automatic control for seats and
rear door. Overall length 208 in.,
overall width 79 in., overall height
60 in.

PLYMOUTH—U.S.A.



1956

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 $\frac{1}{8}$ -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 Mol'ar 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 $\frac{1}{8}$ 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. *Christoforo 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 $\frac{1}{8}$ model to full scale with no aesthetic adjustments. The car had a lot of



THE FORWARD LOOK '55

PLYMOUTH FURY

DODGE LA FEMME

DE SOTO PAGE CAR

CHRYSLER 300B

THE PLAINSMAN

Sets the Pace!

A Special Showing of 5 Exciting Cars
 Jan. 20-27, 1955 (incl. Sun. 22 to 4 P.M.)
CHRYSLER INTERNATIONAL SALON
 400 Lexington Ave., 42nd Street
 New York, New York

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, the 8-passenger "dome-topped" wagon features such styling innovations as an "open-top" 21" overhanging front end and a spare tire compartment in the rear fender. The Plainsman reflects the exclusive and original way of life that has made the nation's westward movement from its frontier and into the more advanced days of today an ever-broadening and more enjoyable experience. It's not for sale. However, we're sure you'll find it your best friend in accessible beauty and power in one of the outstanding cars of THE FORWARD LOOK '55. Write for your Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto, Chrysler or Imperial dealer name.



WESTWARD HO — to the suburbs!



The Palomino station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.



The station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.

At 100 mph, the station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.

The station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.



The station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.

The station wagon is a practical design in any neighborhood. It means more than a car, it means a partner in your life. But it's not just a car, it's a family member.

BOLD NEW EXPERIMENT IN STATION WAGON DESIGN



"THE PLAINSMAN"

Chrysler Corporation has unveiled the newest member of its family of experimental cars . . . an eight-passenger two-door "idea station wagon" called the Plainsman. Created by stylists of the Engineering Division, the Plainsman has a Palomino beige metallic exterior finish, interior trim of natural calf hide, rearward-facing "observation car" rear seat, and an all-steel cantilever top which is two-thirds covered by padded white weather-resistant fabric.

Model 1954
1-12-54



[View all sizes](#)

[Photostream](#)

[That Hartford Guy](#)

[1956 Chrysler Ghia Plainsman Station Wagon Concept Car](#)

Virgil Exner designed 95% of Chrysler concepts and then Chrysler would ship the chassis' to Ghia to make the cars. The completed concept cars were then returned to the United States for show purposes but had to be exported out of the United States within eighteen months in order for Chrysler not to have to pay duty. This particular car was shipped to Cuba after its show purposes and was given to the president of all of the Cuban banks. After his death the car was returned to the main Chrysler dealership in Cuba. The export manager for Chrysler Corp. lived on a large estate in Cuba and was given the car by the Chrysler Corporation and shortly thereafter Castro took over Cuba and he was and all Americans were chased out of Cuba.

The Export manager for Chrysler escaped from Cuba with all of his worldly belongings including this Chrysler concept car and returned to the United States.

The export manager was later promoted to the Export Manager of Australia where he lived for many years and then retired to California. Again taking this concept car with him. The car was given to his son and the son later gave it to his son. In the late 80's the car was sold to a famous auto collection where it remained for a number of years before it was sold to the present owner. It was the intent of the present owner to restore the car to its original pristine condition but the financial climate in the United States has forced him to put the car up for a reluctant sale

Henry Shane

From: Leon Dixon <leedy@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2014 12:16 PM
To: Henry Shane
Subject: Re: The Plainsman
Attachments: A493AuthorizationDIXON.PDF; A493DesnPhilosophyDIXON.PDF;
A493ExnerApprovalDIXON.PDF; A493ExnerApproval2DIXON.PDF;
A493Overview54DIXON.PDF; A493PjtRequestSuppDIXON.PDF;
PlainsmanFillerPatDIXON.PDF; PlainsmanNotes54DIXON.PDF;
PlainsmanSpecsGhiaDIXON.PDF; PlainsmanRenderingCoupeDixon.jpg

Hello Henry,

I am attaching more info from my files for you to see. These are all in PDF so you can either look at them on computer or print out.

I will also further explain some of them.

- 1.) Authorization of several cars to be built by Ghia. This is the original authorization that approved the project and expenditures.*
- 2.) Dave Scott's written (okay, typed) design philosophy for the Plainsman, signed by Dave. As you can see, Exner never had a hand in the car at this point and merely gave it comments and a blessing.*
- 3.) Exner approval or Dave Scott's proposal... here is probably Virgil Exner's biggest amount of participation in A-493, which was all the car was known as up to this point. There were four official proposals/themes/names for A493. These were as follows:*
 - Safari*
 - Saratoga*
 - Deauville*
 - Commanche**Each version would have had different trim, color and theme variations. The "V.M.E." note in the left margin was Exner signing off on the car. You will note at this time, Exner crossed out "Safari" because Chrysler just got wind that Pontiac was using the name on a production sporty wagon for 1955. But that was the original intended name for A493. Instead, Exner penciled in "Plainsman" along with a change in the top fabric covering to "Orlon" ... which, of course did not remain in the final version. So Dave told me he suggested the Plainsman name as an alternative, however, in the end it was VME who approved it.*
- 4.) Page 2 of the Exner approval papers. You can see here that Dave originally preferred the Safari/Plainsman or the Commanche versions most.*
- 5.) Body Engineering Division overview of the program*

6.) *Project Request Supplement (due to cost overrun in styling and engineering). In short, they ran out of money in the original budget. You can see the the project is attributed to "Plymouth" styling studio, yet Dave came from Dodge and thus there were many references to "Dodge" in the A493 papers. However it was originally considered to be a Plymouth and indeed the clay models carried Plymouth badging.*

7.) *Patent paper filing for the retractable tail light/gas filler. When Chrysler got the notion that this feature might be copied, they slapped a patent on it. A similar feature was planned for the Packard Predictor (which was being built at Ghia about the same time as Plainsman). It would have also been a feature on 1957 Detroit-Built production models, but again these never happened. The patent prevented Packard from doing this gas filler. There was no money and Nance probably would have never paid for a license even if there was.*

8.) *I believe these notes were hand-written by Exner. His handwritten print "A" letters always had a taller peak on them than other words.*

9.) *A493 Specifications along with other Ghia-built cars. Remember when I told you that Woody told me he had NOS extra tail light lenses? I was not merely making that up. Here (lower right) is proof that Ghia supplied extra plastic lenses with this vehicle and others. Whatever happened to them? I don't know. But Woody Parrish had a set and he told me so. Neither Woody nor myself has had any reason to B.S. anyone regarding these extra lenses. Here is proof that they once existed. When I tell you something about this vehicle, my memories are still pretty accurate and detailed.*

10.) *I will need to get this onto a much bigger scanner, but this is the original 2-door coupe design upon which the Plainsman was based. This illustration was given to me by the original designer in the 1970s. It bears his autograph.*

More later,

Leon Dixon

P.S. I still think you ought to have me do a good history on the Granada. You might be surprised.

-----Original Message-----

From: Henry Shane <HenryS@1st-lake.com>

To: 'Leon Dixon' <leeedy@aol.com>

Sent: Fri, Sep 12, 2014 7:18 am

Subject: RE: Granada

E. E. Orcutt

445

Central Engineering

444

Central Engineering

September 22, 1954

SECOND SERIES GHIA CARS, NOS. A-492, A-493, A-494, A-495, A-496, A-497, A-498

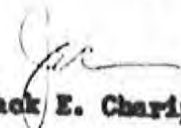
Mr. Zeder has authorized the design and construction of the proposed second series of seven cars in the current Ghia program. These cars are as follows, in the approximate order in which they will be built:

<u>CAR</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>Construction Begins</u>
1. A-493	115" Suburban	Oct. 15
2. A-494	129" 2 door hardtop	Nov. 1
3. A-492	118" 4 door sedan	Nov. 15
4. A-497	129" Metal convertible	Nov. 15
5. A-498	129" Metal convertible	Dec. 1
6. A-495	125 1/2" 4 door hardtop	Dec. 1
7. A-496	133" Imperial sedan	Dec. 15

Please make the necessary arrangements to perform procurement operations on chassis and electrical components and trim materials for these cars. A-416 type front suspension and A-603-2 rear suspension designs are to be incorporated into the chassis of all cars with the exception of A-493, which will use a standard P-27 Plymouth H Series chassis. The chassis layouts for all cars except the A-493 are based on Dodge and Chrysler A-600 specifications as established by Department 488. Production H Series chassis will be furnished to Ghia for cars A-492, A-494, A-495, A-496, A-497, A-498 as the best means of supplying them the necessary chassis components for use in the platform type unitized construction to be employed in these cars.

Trim and paint materials will be specified in advance on each car to permit shipping chassis and electrical items and trim materials together in order to facilitate the Ghia Company's obtaining the customs clearances of these materials into Italy.

Mr. C. B. Thomas has begun financial and delivery terms negotiations with Ghia on these units.


Jack E. Charipar

JEC/jt

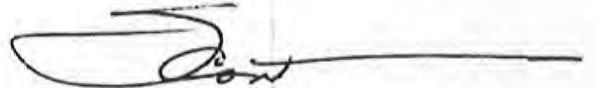
cc: H. E. Chesebrough
V. M. Emer
O. D. Dillman
M. F. Baldwin
H. F. Weissinger ✓
C. C. Voss
L. B. Wisser
H. D. Clark

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF THE A-493 - PLAINSMAN

The Plainsman was designed as a luxurious vehicle to serve the variety of needs of a successful western ranch-holder. 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 keynotes 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 esthetic 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

DES:ap

V. M. Emer

444

Central Engineering

468 (Dodge)

Central Engineering

September 23, 1954

The following themes are suggested for your consideration to be used on the A-493.

PROPOSAL "A" ("SAFARI"): "PLAINSMAN"

INTERIOR - Seat and door inserts: Unborn Calfskin - Tan on White
Bolsters, Crash Pad, and Door Trim: Natural Tan Saddle Leather
Header, front: Tan
Header, rear: White
Carpet: Tan

EXTERIOR - Lower body: Natural Tan Sparkle Tone to match interior leather
Cargo top: White Leather - (Vinyl) → ORLON

PROPOSAL "B" ("SARATOGA"):

INTERIOR - Seat and door inserts: Natural Linen
Bolster, Crash Pad, and Door Trim: Natural Tan Saddle Leather
Header, front: Natural Tan
Header, rear: Natural Linen
Carpet: Tan

EXTERIOR - Lower body: Natural Tan Sparkle Tone to match interior leather
Cargo top: Natural Linen

PROPOSAL "C" ("DEAUVILLE")

INTERIOR - Seat and door inserts: Genuine Suede; color, Green
Bolsters, Crash Pad, and Door Trim: White Leather
Header, front: Green
Header, rear: White
Carpet: Green

EXTERIOR - Lower body: Green Sparkle Tone
Cargo top: White, Crinkle - finish

PROPOSAL "D" ("COMANCHE"):

INTERIOR - Seat and door inserts: Unborn Calfskin, Tan on White
Bolsters, Crash Pad, and Door Trim: White Leather
Header, front: White
Header, rear: Tan
Carpet: Tan

approved
V.M.E.
9-29-54

Page 2
September 23, 1954

EXTERIOR - Lower body: White Pearllescence
Cargo top: Tan Sparkle Tone

As the designer of this car, I personally favor proposals A or D. I hope these meet your approval.

David Scott
Dodge Styling

DS/cab

cc: H. D. Clark

Central Engineering

Body Engineering

Central Engineering

August 5, 1954

GHIA CAR PROGRAM SUMMARY -- IV

Attached is the fourth edition of a brief tabular summary of information on the Ghia engineering prototype program which will be supplemented as necessary to keep you informed on significant changes in the status of the program and the specification of the cars. This edition of the summary is Supplement Four to the original program outline issued on March 26, 1954. Please note the progress of Ghia work, which you will note is well underway.

J. E. Charipar

JEC/jt

cc: C. D. Thomas
U. L. Thomas
H. E. Chesebrough
A. G. Lockbourrow
D. F. Toot
V. M. Exner
O. D. Dillman
M. F. Baldwin
C. C. Voss
H. F. Weissinger ✓
J. L. Gilmour
H. E. Green
E. E. Orcutt
L. B. Wiser

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
ENGINEERING DIVISIONCP-6
10-54CHARGE NO. DO-33209**PROJECT REQUEST SUPPLEMENT**Issued by Dept.: Name Art and Styling Plymouth No. 468 Date Supplement written 8-27-54TITLE EXTERIOR BODY STYLING FOR THE A-493 CRR, 115" W.B., TWO SEAT, TWO DOOR SUBURBAN

List all Supplements issued on this Project

	MATERIAL	LABOR	BURDEN	TOTAL	DATE
Original Appropriation	250.00	4,800.00	7,200.00	12,250.00	4-5-54
Supplement No. 1	50.00	1,250.00	1,875.00	3,175.00	8-27-54
Supplement No. 2					
Supplement No. 3					
Supplement No. 4					
Supplement No. 5					
Supplement No. 6					
Supplement No. 7					
TOTAL	300.00	6,050.00	9,075.00	15 425.00	

Why is this Supplement necessary?

This project covers the cost of styling time on the proposed A-493 car, 115" W.B., two seat, two door suburban.

The expense on this project includes designs, sketches, illustrations and building of a 3/8 scale clay model.

At the present time, the 3/8 model has been completed and has been accepted. Work remaining involves sketching, illustrations and designs.

Funds originally requested are now overrun necessitating this supplement (No. 1) which is estimated to complete the project.

Approved by H. T. King Noted by V. M. Exner
Head of Department

Approved by G. S. Morrow Noted by _____ Approved by H. E. Chesebrough
Eng. Administration Dept. Chief Engineer

469-1

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
Patent Department

Mr. David E. Scott

Dept. 468 Disclosure No. 56-1027

Invention Combination Tail Lamp and Fuel Tank Inlet Cover

We wish to acknowledge your disclosure of an invention which has been signed, dated, and assigned the above disclosure number.

You can be of considerable assistance in following this idea by keeping us informed as to further developments, tests, and production releases. A brief note referring to the above disclosure number will suffice for this purpose.

We also wish to acknowledge receipt of the following material as a part of your disclosure:

Items Received:

Drawings One print copy with pencil changes - detail A-493 tail lamp and filler pipe dated June 23, 1954.

Description _____

Miscellaneous _____

George W. Talburt
Patent Department
GEORGE W. TALBURT

Date 2-21-56

GWT:bb

A-493 "PLAINSMAN"

TRIM MATERIALS:

Central Engineering

September 23, 1954

HEADER, FRONT - TAN SADDLE LEATHER

HEADER, REAR - OFF-WHITE VINYL

VISORS - TAN SADDLE LEATHER +
UNBORN CALFSKIN

CRASH PAD - TAN SADDLE LEATHER

INST. PANEL LOWER - TAN METALLIC
LACQUER TO MATCH LEATHER

INST. CLUSTER - OFF-WHITE LACQUER

PEDALS - BROWN (TAN) RUBBER +
CHROME

DOOR PANELS + INTERIOR SIDES:

TAN SADDLE LEATHER +
UNBORN CALF

SEATS - TAN SADDLE LEATHER +
UNBORN CALF

FLOOR - TAN. (MATERIAL NOT CHOSEN)

EXTERIOR -

LOWER + FRONT OF CAB

ROOF: TAN METALLIC
LACQUER TO MATCH LEATHER.

REAR ROOF AREA: COVER
WITH OFF-WHITE LEATHER-

SIMULATED VINYL.

TIRES - WHITE SIDEWALLS

Engineering

consideration to be used on

Calfskin - Tan on White
Trim: Natural Tan Saddle Leather

Tone to match interior leather
(44) -> ORLON

Linen
Trim: Natural Tan Saddle Leather

Tone to match interior leather

Suede; color, Green
Trim: White Leather

ish

Calfskin, Tan on White

Bolsters, Crash Pad, and Door Trim: White Leather

Header, front: White

Header, rear: Tan

Carpet: Tan

FLANSMAN

GHIA PROGRAM SUMMARY
SUPPLEMENT NUMBER VI
SEPTEMBER 24, 1954

NUMBER	WHEELBASE	TREADS	BODY STYLE	QUANTITY	STRUCTURE	STYLED BY	STUDIO	SIMILAR TO	CHASSIS SHIP. DATE	SPECIAL FEATURES	STATUS
A-493	115	58.4/58.5	2-Dr. Suburban	1	G or H Fr/By Chrysler Dodge				10-15	Modified 115" H P-27 chassis 7.10 tires on 15x5.00 K wheels Chassis & elec. parts on 9-13	3/8 dwg., clay, pics complete, 1/4 scale chassis adaptation comp. Interior design layouts comp. Renderings under way.
A-494	129	61/63	Hardtop	1	Monocoque Chrysler Chrysler				11-1	55"-56" high A-600-B chassis lay- out. A-416 K series susp. No A pillar stressed w/s Midship trans. Mockup to be supplied.	603-2 rear sus. 3/8 clay 60% comp.
A-495	125.5	61/63	4 Dr. Hardtop	1	Monocoque Chrysler Advance				12-1	55"-56" High A-600-B Dodge A-416 K Series suspension Conventional trans., rear convertible front compartment	Revised 3/8 clay to be revised. Chassis lay- out complete on 129 v.b.
A-496	133	61/63	4-Dr. Imperial	1	Monocoque Chrysler Chrysler				12-15	57" high A-600-B Imp. chassis lay. A-416 susp. midship trans. 603-2 rear sus.	3/8 clay to be revised. Chassis lay- out complete on 129 v.b.
A-497	129	61/63	4-Pass. Metal Conv.	1	Monocoque Chrysler Advance				11-15	A-600-B Chrysler chassis Metal top lwr. scheme by Chrysler	3/8 clay 50% complete
A-498	129	61/63	4-Pass. Metal Conv.	1	Monocoque Ghia				12-1	Metal top lwr. by Ghia	

3. Spare plastic lenses to be supplied by Ghia with each car.
4. Chassis items, electrical components, trim & paint materials to be supplied by Chrysler.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS ON ALL CARS

1. All deck lids and bumpers to be of steel.
2. Gasoline tank filler caps not to be located in luggage compartment.



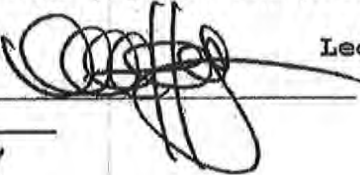
Dennis Deen

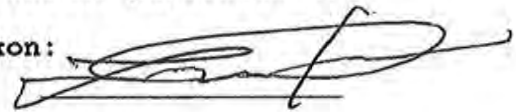
Special Book Proposal and Synopsis of The Plymouth Plainsman

***The Futuristic Concept Car That Actually Predicted The Future
by Leon Dixon***

Terms:

- This agreement is between Henry Shane and Leon Dixon. Mr. Dixon shall be sole author/editor of this project resulting in a book. Mr. Shane will provide finance and records.
- Book is to be hardbound, approximately 150 pages and devoted to all related history, development and design of the Plainsman concept car.
- Author will do selection of materials, layout, and text/editorial as well as interface with private publishing house that will bind and print the final product.
- Author's compensation and production fees of this book will be paid for by Henry Shane, owner of the Plainsman.
- Author agrees to commence work upon paid initial retainer of \$2500 plus either open round-trip California airplane ticket or \$1000. Payment to be made via PayPal.com.
- Author agrees to review and use photos and information from Author's files as well as existing records. These records would be sourced from the Plainsman owner, Chrysler Historical and the author's own records. **FORMAT OF BOOK TO FOLLOW THE 9 PAGE OUTLINE SUBMITTED BY AUTHOR ON 8/25/14**
- Author agrees to complete book by September, 2015, at which time author is to be paid additional \$2500 along with extra books from the print run which can then be sold by the author. Exact number of extra books will depend on separate agreement after precise production costs are set.
- Progress reviews will be provided by the author to Mr. Shane at three-month intervals or at appropriate occasions when needed.
- Final review copy of the book will be provided to Henry Shane with final payment and prior to actual publication.

Henry Shane: 

Leon Dixon: 

DATE


8-28-14

Special Book Proposal and Synopsis of **The Plymouth Plainsman**

The Futuristic Concept Car That Actually Predicted The Future
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Henry Shane: 

Leon Dixon: _____

DATE

8-28-14

ATTACHMENT 3/25/14
to email

The Saga of the Plainsman

by Leon Dixon



**The MoPar Show Car
That Escaped From Cuba**

***Special Book Proposal and Synopsis of
The Plymouth Plainsman***

***The Futuristic Concept Car That Actually Predicted The Future
by Leon Dixon***

CONTACT:

Leon Dixon
P.O. Box 787
Davis, California 95617

-OR-

c/o Davis Productions
P.O. Box 1964
Danville, Kentucky 40423

Email: oldbicycle@aol.com

Telephone: 714-335-9072

BACK STORY OF THIS BOOK...

The time was the late 1970s and the place was Southern California. I had happily arrived at the end of a very long quest.

For many years I had made an exhaustive, yet fruitless search for this wild concept car. I had known it since it first appeared in 1956 and it was one of my favorites-ever.

After decades of stories circulating in automotive publications from everyone who claimed to know, I found a car they all said had been destroyed. The upshot of this joyous discovery was an in-depth historical article I wrote about this great concept. The article appeared in the February, 1980 issue of *Hemmings Special-Interest Autos* magazine. It was entitled, "Saga of The Plainsman" and subtitled, "The MoPar Show Car That Escaped Cuba." At least for a while, it had everyone in the old car hobby who was interested in concept cars talking! This article revealed the true, exciting history of Plainsman and corrected many myths about the car. It even revealed the actual designer who was David Scott and not Virgil Exner.

While this concept was originally intended to be "Safari," Pontiac grabbed that name, so Chrysler relented and eventually named this car "Plainsman."

It was a futuristic, yet practical station wagon with a very western motif. Little did anyone ever realize that this one-off concept car would actually come so close to someday living out its own theme. And few realized (or

appreciated) just how many future wagons and SUVs would incorporate Plainsman's advanced features.

I had always considered Plainsman to be one of the world's most feature-rich, groundbreaking, production-ready concepts ever. Unlike many 1950s-60s concepts that were merely "pushmobile" mock-ups, the Plainsman actually ran. And it had clever, very advanced, yet practical features that actually worked.

I firmly believe that history has indeed verified Plainsman's importance in starting trends, design layout and features that we continue to see even to this day. When you use third-row seating, power folding seats, power tailgate, flow-through ventilation, and spare tire tucked into the rear quarter, you can thank the Plainsman.

VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A SPECIAL BOOK FOR THIS CAR...

The history of most concept cars has often been an obscure one in many cases. And few have ever led such an exciting life as that of the Plainsman. But on top of an obscure history, people (including those who ought to know better) often have short memories. And with the huge rise in classic car sales of recent years, sometimes there is more sizzle being sold than steak.

In recent years something rather amazing has taken place in vintage cars. Classic car auction companies have essentially commandeered automotive history. Today, these companies are ironically being quoted more and more as "sources." But as this transition has taken hold, the histories of many concepts have merely been further obscured rather than clarified. The upshot of all this has done little or nothing to sharpen or preserve details and the life of a concept car. The myths get reinforced and the facts sometimes take a back seat to what dazzles the most and sounds the best for sales. So the preservation of the history of such an automobile is placed in the hands of whomever or whatever happens to be the latest owner or seller.

Up until recent years, if a concept car was somehow preserved or even rescued, the history of that vehicle was usually in the pages of a magazine or part of a non-dedicated book. Of course both of these venues-at best-are usually compromises. They include histories of several

other vehicles or focus on the history of the carmaker rather than the vehicle itself. In some rare and lucky cases there were company files or scrapbooks for a concept car. But these instances have often been rare and such records are usually in other locations or ownership completely separate from the vehicle itself. The records and interesting facts about the car are thus doomed to remain separated from the vehicle itself.

What we propose here is to go in a completely new direction. We envision a dedicated, in-depth history book devoted solely to the actual vehicle and offering a permanent, factual, comprehensive history. A kind of life scrapbook/history book/reference book/pictorial... all in one. All designed to offer a permanent, accurate history and life story of the vehicle. Such a book would be an invaluable record that could remain in perpetuity with the actual car-In this case, the Plainsman. But there is also the added benefit: a certain percentage of hardcore collectors and historians will also want an edition they can own.

Author, Leon Dixon is ready to begin working on a serious book in this vein. This book or series will reveal histories, facts and show photos never before published or seen by the hobby and the general public. *And no one else can do it.*

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK...

- An official companion book for the actual vehicle. A permanent and accurate combination of scrapbook, written and photographic historical record.

WHAT THIS BOOK WILL COVER...

- De-mystifying the history of the Plainsman.
- Factual and anecdotal history of the car itself. Its exciting and ironic life story.
- Information from and about the original brochures.
- Photos (many never before seen by the public), information and original artworks of the designer.

PROPOSED CHAPTER OUTLINE/TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

- II. Design ethic and origins of the Plainsman
- III. Clay model development and preparation to send to Ghia
- IV. Construction at Ghia
- V. Arrival from Italy back in the USA
- VI. The show circuit
- VII. Plainsman's contribution to the automotive world
- VIII. Life after show time was over
- IX. The Cuban episode
- X. Plainsman's life in Australia's outback
- XI. Photo Gallery
- XII. Listings of all known advertisements and printed matter
 - a.) Glossary
 - b.) Index
 - c.) Credits

MARKET ANALYSIS / UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE FOR THIS BOOK
AND A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE...

MARKET ANALYSIS / WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE?

(What other published books does this work compare to?)

- Aside from scrapbooks assembled by fans or restorers, *nothing like this has been done.*
- Of course, concept car books have been done in the past. However, their attempts to be all-inclusive have always prevented the kind of in-depth factual history, photos and related items specific to one vehicle. A devoted book would remedy this situation.
- Almost all books covering concept cars are abysmally limited in actual facts and photos about a specific vehicle because such books are usually compendiums of many cars all lumped together. Due to the sharing of space there can be no in-depth focus. As such, the best that can be hoped for is a photo or two and some short captions. In the end, the particular concept car has no life story, except for ones provided by auction companies and old magazines. By definition, this situation lacks information the hobby can really use and short-changes the history of the car. None of these blurred compromises are what many serious collectors and historians really want.
- While the basic intent is for an official companion book to the Plainsman, there is an audience and certain pent-up

demand for such a book. While the size of such an audience is unknown, certainly it exists, no matter how limited. At the minimum, automotive libraries, auction houses, hard-core collectors and historians would all be potential buyers. Probably the only restriction here is cost and availability. However, these audiences are mostly atypical and do not purchase based on cost.

- Fortunately, Leon Dixon's knowledge, archive and research can neither be copied nor imitated. Such a book will NOT compare with anything yet on the market and there is no one else who can do such a book, either with personal knowledge or with and archive of original information.

DETAILS

Author: Leon Dixon

Layout: Landscape (horizontal) format

Size: Minimum 8.5 x 12 (larger is possible and preferred).

Format: Hardbound

Length: 150 to 180 Pages (approximate)

Photos: 85% Black & White, balance part color and full color. Most large format, captions by author.

Text: Written by author

Copyright: Author

Paper: Coated stock

Production Cost: Estimated to be approximately \$4500, but TBD based on final agreed specs. Includes ISBN. Minimum number of books based on publisher's requirements and costs.

Publishing: Arranged by author and utilizing print-on-demand.

Projected Retail Price: \$100

Projected release date: October, 2015

Terms: • Author agrees to commence work upon paid initial Retainer of \$2500 with round-trip California airplane ticket. Payment is preferred via PayPal.com.

- Author agrees to review and use photos and information from existing records. These records would be sourced from the Plainsman owner, Chrysler Historical and the author's own records.

- Author agrees to complete book by September, 2015, at which time an additional \$2500 would be paid to the author along with extra books from the print run which can then be sold by the author.

- Progress reviews will be provided by the author at three-month intervals or at appropriate occasions when needed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Leon Dixon is an award-winning writer, collector and automotive historian. He has written just about everything you can imagine. From owner's manuals for cars, to training programs, to workshop and learning manuals, historical pieces, magazine articles, newspaper articles, brochures, advertisements, video and movie scripts, songs, and much more.

Dixon has had a varied career, beginning in the entertainment biz at the age of 9. He appeared with such major artists such as Frankie Lymon and Stevie Wonder and was contracted to major recording label during his teen years.

Beginning in his adult years Leon Dixon worked in the automotive industry in a variety of areas ranging from technical writing, product planner, R&D project management, lead engineer, to professional consultant. He has extensive experience with automotive R&D and has literally driven thousands of cars. He is one of few people to drive both the Chrysler Ghia Gas Turbine cars and the Chrysler DOE Gas Turbine Aspen. He is pleased to say that he participated in the development of several vehicles over the years—some which continue to roll the streets today including the *Mazda Miata*.

He has also served as executive editor for a publishing firm and in various editorial positions for automotive clubs and organizations. For many years he has been on the masthead of the Packard Club's fine glossy magazine, *The Packard Cormorant* www.PackardClub.org where his articles appeared numerous times over the years since the 1970s.

MEMBERSHIPS:

Leon Dixon has been a member of Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), Society of Automotive Historians (SAH), Society of Professional Automotive Industry Leaders, SEMA OEM Automotive Accessory Development Roundtable, The Packard Club, Lincoln Continental Owner's Club, Cadillac-LaSalle Club, and many others.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING OUTSIDE OF AUTOMOTIVE:

Leon Dixon also has performed professional voice-overs and commercials for many years. He studied for several years at Del Mar Media Arts in Southern California under famous actor, Gordon Jump (WKRP in Cincinnati, the Maytag Man)

Leon has several years training in live appearance, public speaking, on-camera appearance, voice-over, acting, improv and more. His voice is used at places like 6-Flags parks and San Diego Zoo, in addition to professional commercials and videos.

VISUAL MEDIA EXPERIENCE:

Leon Dixon has appeared on visual media: *ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, CBC, Outdoor Life Channel* and *HBO*. He has also been featured or appeared on numerous radio broadcasts (too many to mention) including *CBC (Canada)*.

COLLECTING AND CURATING:

In addition to collecting and restoring vintage cars, Dixon also collects old bicycles and the literature about them. He is an official volunteer for both the huge *LeMay Automotive Museum* in Spanaway, Washington and the prestigious *Museum of Flight* in Seattle.

PUBLICATIONS:

Leon Dixon has appeared in *Popular Mechanics* (English language and Spanish language editions), *L.A. Times*, *National Enquirer*, *Orange County Register* (front page twice), *Art & Antiques*, *Car Collector*, *Car Classics*, *Special-Interest Autos*, *The Packard Cormorant magazine*, *Cyclist magazine* (numerous articles-did a collector's series for them in the 1980s-first of its kind), *Old Cars Weekly*, *American Home*, *Classic Car Restorer magazine*, *Bicycling magazine*, *Forbes*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Newsweek*, *Men's Club (Japan)*, *Teknikens Varld (Sweden)*, and many more.

HAS LEON DIXON WRITTEN OTHER BOOKS?

Yes... countless manuals, training books, etc. Perhaps over 200 in all. Also wrote two chapters in a very large bicycle book, *The Bicycling Book* (Dial Press, New York, 1982). This book went to a second printing. He is presently writing a book on the history of a company that was known as *Creative Industries of Detroit*. It produced many concept cars during the 1950s through 1970s and was responsible for making wild "wing cars" (Dodge Daytona and Plymouth

Dixon / Plymouth Plainsman Concept Car

9

Superbird) for Chrysler Corporation.

9

THE
Plainsman

The Plainsman, the latest addition to Chrysler Corporation's family of "Idea Cars," is a unique two-door, eight passenger station wagon. It represents a new and vigorous type of automobile design: luxurious, versatile, able to cope successfully with the rapidly changing needs and demands of the American motorist. For its inspiration Chrysler Corporation stylists looked to the Great Western Plains of America--to their vivid, colorful, and casual way of life. Materials, colors, and finishes have been dramatically keyed to the Western motif, from the Palomino Beige exterior to the white and brown natural calf skin trimmed interior. Gold Texas Longhorn medallions on the tailgate and both sides of the roof add to this theme.

Measuring 208.0 inches from bumper to bumper, 60.2 inches in height, and 79.4 inches in width, the Plainsman exhibits clean sweeping lines that give it the appearance of being much longer and lower than it actually is. It is powered by a special Chrysler Corporation V-8 engine and is equipped with numerous automatic and power assisted accessories such as PowerFlite, power brakes, power steering, electric window lifts, and an electrically operated tailgate and rearward facing third seat.



From front to rear, top to bottom, the Plainsman embraces the true concept of the "Idea Cars"--the stylist's laboratory on wheels. Its graceful and eye-appealing proportions are enhanced by a cantilever type all-steel roof covered with a white synthetic fabric that gives the car a light, airy appearance. The low, sleek appearance is achieved by an unusual stepped-roof design that allows the use of a lower section over the front seat compartment. A fresh air intake is provided in this step; on the inside, louvers can be conveniently regulated by the passengers so that air is circulated freely but never directly on the passengers themselves.

Accenting the road hugging appearance of the Plainsman is a bomb-like projection which flows from the massive front bumper guards along the full length of the lower body and gives the feeling of mass concentrated close to the ground. On both sides of the car, hinged portions of this projection lift to provide access to the rear wheels. On the right side, behind the rear wheel is a completely new location for the spare tire. No lifting of the spare tire is required because of a built-in jack which raises and lowers it quickly and easily. By utilizing this ordinarily wasted space, it is possible to incorporate the flush folding third seat.

An exceptionally wide door provides extra entrance space for the convenience of rear seat passengers.

Highlighting the front-end of the Plainsman is a simple, functional divided grille flanked by large round bumper guards with integral parking lights. Added air flow and engine cooling is accomplished by the use of a slot in the underside of the front bumper. The hooded headlights are framed by the curved reverse angle of the fender and set against a background of thin horizontal chrome bars. As the fender and belt line flows back toward the taillight, it flairs up slightly just behind the door, creating a fin-like rear fender--a further expression of Chrysler Corporation's well known Flight Sweep theme.

At the rear the Plainsman displays several completely new design innovations. One of these is the concealed gas filler tube located behind the



left taillight lens. When the lens is pushed in, the filler cap automatically opens. Pushing the lens slightly further releases the lens and it returns to its normal position, simultaneously closing the filler cap.

Another outstanding feature of this advanced vehicle is the location and operation of the third seat. The tailgate window and tailgate are both lowered electrically, actuated by switches located at the instrument panel and in the rear compartment. Another button causes the rearward facing third seat to unfold from its completely concealed position in the floor. Entry to this seat is by way of the tailgate, made convenient by steps which automatically project from the bumper after the tailgate is lowered, and by a neatly designed grab handle forming the trailing edge of the roof.

The interior of the Plainsman harmonizes perfectly with the Western theme embodied by the exterior of the car. Pleated natural calf skin upholstery is used on the seats, the door panels, and the rear wheel housings.

Natural cowhide trim, luxurious tan carpeting, and the novel cowhide and fabric headlining complete the interior appointments. Retractable arm rests, built into the seat backs, are another of the luxury features of the Plainsman. For extra comfort, front seat backs are individually adjustable to tilt through an angle of about fifteen degrees. Sliding inside door handles are another of the many design innovations found on

the Plainman. For the added comfort of rear seat passengers, hot air from the heater is ducted through the door directly into the rear compartment. Full cargo area is available simply by folding the rear seat back forward on top of the seat cushion. A folding panel attached to the seat back is then firmly fixed to the floor by chrome support rods, and provides a completely flush, carpeted loading area 86.7 inches long with the tailgate raised.

Function and convenience are especially noteworthy in the aircraft type instrument panel. All of the engine gauges and instruments, including a clock, are clustered directly in front of the driver in one large, hooded console. Six levers located on a flat projection of the instrument panel operate the PowerFlite controls, windshield washer control, windshield wiper, and lights. Below this projection are located the controls for the heater, defroster, and cigar lighter. The entire top surface and leading edge of the panel is padded and covered with natural cowhide.

SPECIFICATIONS

Over-all length	208.0 inches
Over-all width	79.4 inches
Over-all height (unloaded)	60.2 inches
Wheelbase	115 inches
Tread, front	58.4 inches
Tread, rear	58.5 inches
Engine	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8 engine
Transmission	PowerFlite
Tires	7.10 x 15
Steering	Chrysler Corporation Coaxial Power Steering
Brakes	Chrysler Corporation Safety Power Brakes
Max. cargo deck length, tailgate open	106.5 inches
Max. cargo deck width	63.5 inches

CHRYSLER CORPORATION - ENGINEERING DIVISION
Product Planning & Programming Section

2-1-56

THE PLAINSMAN

An "Idea Station Wagon" Designed by Chrysler Corporation

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- * Rearward-facing "observation car" rear seat for two adult passengers. Safety access steps, used to enter rear seat, disappear into ends of bumper when tailgate is closed. Rear seat unfolds, tailgate opens and closes electrically.
- * Interior trim of natural calf hide, with leather bolsters.
- * Aircraft-type instrument panel controls.
- * Seats eight passengers in "sedan comfort".
- * Spare tire carried in right rear fender panel.
- * All-steel cantilever top, two-thirds covered by padded white fabric.
- * "Automatic" gasoline filler pipe, located in left taillight opens in one motion as taillight is lifted forward.
- * Parking lights integrated in massive front bumper guards.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Over-all length ----	208 inches
Over-all width ----	79.4 inches
Over-all height ----	60.2 inches
Wheelbase ----	115 inches
Tread, front ----	58.4 inches
Tread, rear ----	58.5 inches

(more)

(Specs. cont'd.)

Engine ----	Special Chrysler Corporation V-8
Transmission ----	PowerFlite
Tires ----	7.10 x 15
Maximum cargo deck length (Tailgate open)	106.5 inches
Cargo deck length with tailgate closed ----	86.7 inches
Maximum cargo deck width ----	63.5 inches
Coaxial Power Steering	
Safety Pedal Power Brakes	

(122755)

Henry Shane

From: pete@petevicari.com <pgvicari@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, August 08, 2014 11:09 AM
To: Brandt Rosenbusch; Bill Warner; Pete Vicari
Cc: Donnie Gould; Mark Becker; Henry Shane
Subject: Re: Plymouth Plainsman

Brandt, thank you so much ,if there is any cost for the info,please let me know. thanks again. see ya

Peter G. Vicari

Pete Vicari General Contractor, LLC
Vicari Auction Company, LLC
1900 Destrehan Ave./ Harvey, LA 70058
Office: (504) 347-1196 ext.3564 / Cell:(504) 329-6098
Fax: (504) 347-1522 / email: pete@petevicari.com

On Friday, August 8, 2014 6:37 AM, Brandt Rosenbusch <bjr@chrysler.com> wrote:

Pete,

We do have an extensive file on the Plainsman. We are currently scanning it and will send you a flash drive with the photos and information early next week.

Regards,

Brandt

From: Bill Warner [<mailto:bwarner@ameliaconcours.org>]
Sent: Thursday, August 07, 2014 4:55 PM
To: Pete Vicari
Cc: Donnie Gould; Brandt Rosenbusch; Mark Becker
Subject: Plymouth Plainsman

Dear Pete:

I enjoyed our conversation today and congratulations on buying the Plymouth Plainsman. That is probably the most traveled concept car in the world (Cuba, Australia, US, etc.). By copy of this note, I am advising Mr. Brandt Rosenbusch at Chrysler that you have the car and intend to restore it. We would certainly like to have it for Amelia in March, but time is short for a full restoration. That will be your call, but when it is done, we'd be honored if you would debut it with us on Amelia.

The glass company I was referring to is Fox Fire Glass LLC, 3071 W. Thompson Road, Fenton, Michigan 48430, PH 248-332-2442. They are on the internet...google "Fox Fire Glass". They do a lot of prototype work for the manufacturers.

Brandt: If you have any material on the Plainsman, Pete would be much appreciative of images to assist him in the restoration:

Pete Vicari
1900 Destreham Ave.
Harvey, LA 70058
(PH: 504-329-6098)

Pete: If you have not heard, the Dodge Granada show car will be auctioned off on the 20th. Not a pretty car, but built about the same time as the Plainsman, in case you are looking for another project. Google "Dodge Granada" and it will pop up.

Attached is a shot of the Buick Landau I once owned. Nice car, but just not my style.

Please keep in touch and let me know how the restoration progresses.

Brandt: As always, thanks for the help.

Bill

Bill Warner
Founder and Chairman
The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance Foundation
3016 Mercury Road South
Jacksonville, Florida 32207
Ph: 904-636-0027

About The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

Winner of Octane Magazine's 2013 International Historic Motoring Event of the year, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is among the top automotive events in the world. Always held the second full weekend in March, "The Amelia" draws over 250 rare vehicles from collections around the world to The Golf Club of Amelia Island and The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, for a celebration of the automobile like no other. Since 1996, the show's foundation has donated over \$2.5 million to Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, Inc. and other deserving charities on Florida's First Coast. The 20th annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance is scheduled for March 13-15, 2015. For more information, visit www.ameliaconcours.org or call 904-636-0027.



Historical Services

August 13, 2014

Mr. Pete Vicari
1900 Destreham Avenue
Harvey, LA 70058

Dear Mr. Vicari,

Enclosed you will find all of the information and photographs that we have in the archives regarding the Plainsman. I hope that the information is useful. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandt Rosenbusch", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brandt Rosenbusch
Manager - Historical Services
Chrysler Group LLC

Yesterday's Cars of The Future.

By: Leon Dixon



(Published in SIA #57 June 1980)

STORY ABOUT
PLAINSMAN IN
J.L. HUDSON
DEPARTMENT STORE
PG. 2

Exclusive! Introduction to the 1980 article by Mr. Dixon himself.

GAS TURBINE CARS...

By Leon Dixon

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When Mark Olson asked me to write this introduction, I was reminded of my initiation into the gas turbine automotive technology. In my case, it all began long before the story I wrote on the subject.

As a youngster growing up in the Motor City, I had become fascinated with what we used to call "dream cars"- cars of the future. We call them "concept cars" today. But in those days, some of these were merely super swoopo styling exercises with wild fins or bubble tops. Others went a bit further with real, working exotic engines and electronic gadgets no one could ever see on the street.

It was sometime in 1955 when I learned about Chrysler's experimentation with an incredible new engine that sounded like a jet and burned almost any kind of fuel one could imagine. My cousin had just gotten a brand new 1955 Plymouth (two-tone red & black) and we had been out for a ride on Detroit's Woodward Avenue. Suddenly a similar-looking '55 Plymouth suddenly whooshed by sounding like a jet aircraft. I shouted and pointed and begged my cousin to catch up to the other strange-sounding Plymouth, but no one else in the car paid much attention to me or the other car (to the adults in the car, I was just a kid in the back seat making noise). I later learned that the car I saw was an experimental gas turbine Plymouth (in fact, promo photos of the car- one of which is in SIA- were taken not far from where I saw it).

A short time later, I went on one of those outings where doting grandparents take their grandchildren. But this time, it was by my request. My grandmother (a very elegant and sophisticated woman who at least appreciated high style and fine automobiles) took me to J.L.Hudson's Department store (yes, the same family that made the Hudson car) in downtown Detroit. It was a huge place, very classy in those days, rumored once to have been the largest department store in the world- almost a city in its own right. Floor after floor was chock full of everything from perfumes and nail polishes to elegant clothing, from living room furniture to washing machines to toys and bicycles. For the most part, the main store took up an entire downtown city block. It was indeed, another world.

One could literally spend an entire day inside the huge store and never set foot outside since everything one could dream or ask for was all there in one magnificent place. But one of the most amazing parts of all was the eleventh floor showroom/auditorium. Here, the department store would hold gala productions, even small auto shows. In case you haven't already guessed, it was one of these shows that I had been begging to see.

The elevators in Hudson's had a wonderful aura about them. A white-gloved operator would usher you in with a smile. The heavy metal outer doors slid shut and the operator would close a sliding pair of brass-colored, cage-like doors. As the operator settled back on a collapsible circular wood seat, the elevator would whoosh upward with a silky smoothness- all the time under the control of the smiling operator.

When we reached the eleventh floor, the doors slide open we stepped off into a dream car heaven. The illustrated ad in the newspaper promised several unusual cars would be on view. Among these were an early Detroit-built horseless carriage, Chrysler's new Plainsman dream car glistening in Palomino Beige lacquer (I also wrote a story about this car for SIA), and one of the two GM Firebird II gas turbine cars! Sure enough, they were all there...and I walked around each car in wide-eyed wonder, babbling things to my grandmother which I am sure made no sense to her. But she was happy because I was happy.

The two experiences were ones I never forgot...in fact they led to a life-long fascination with the gas turbine powerplants and the cars that would carry them.

A few years later, I was riding in our new '63 Chevy Impala with my Dad on the John Lodge Expressway when a copper-colored dream on wheels whooshed by on our right and banked off on the Highland Park Expressway exit. It was probably the very first Chrysler Ghia Turbine car on the road. By now, I knew exactly what that sound was. My Dad was something of a car nut and he took note. "What was that?" "It's a gas turbine car, Dad" I said with confidence. My Dad had heard me babble about turbines before, so he knew the story. I had not heard much about this exact car, but I already knew it could only be Chrysler's new turbine. I promised myself right then and there...I WOULD be driving one of these cars someday.

As it turned out, my family was not one of those selected to drive the Chrysler Ghia Turbine during the survey program, but we did have neighbors who were luckier. I finally got my first chance behind the wheel when one of these neighbors was doing demo cruises in the area. I was in heaven again.

Fast forward to a few years later. I was now an automotive journalist and historian when I was asked by Special Interest-Autos magazine to write a piece on the Chrysler Gas Turbine program history. It was the first magazine history of the cars and it was the first to peel back the layers of the program and expose even the hidden cars and stories. For instance, in those days, car historians and collectors did not know the significance of the Jo-Han scale model and why it was painted white with blue racing stripes. After all, everyone KNEW CGT cars were only painted Turbine Bronze...right? It was also the first article to reveal the proposed "Turbine Charger" program, complete with pics. Other articles and histories and second looks followed, but I am proud to say the SIA article remained a kind of standard reference piece on the subject. To this day, most histories that have followed still make the mistake of claiming only 50 CGT cars were built, when in fact this article reveals there were in fact 55 cars actually built.

As it turns out, I not only got to drive the CGT car, but at least TWO CGT cars on different occasions- and...another completely different car. After the SIA article appeared, Chrysler Corporation was so appreciative that they invited me back to Highland Park headquarters and gave me a full day to drive both an original CGT car and what was then the latest (and last) effort: a turbine Aspen sedan done for DOT. An enlightening experience and one that makes me one of a handful of people in the world to ever drive both of these cars. In addition, the engineers in George Huebner's staff gave me a boxed 1/25th scale model of the CGT car which I still have as one of my most cherished possessions.

As for me, I went on to a career in the automotive industry, just as I had dreamed as a boy. I'm still a MoPar nut, too, with a Dodge Challenger convertible and a Charger R/T 440-Six-Pack in my stable!

For the time being, it seems turbines may never materialize the way they were originally envisioned for cars. However, they are not dead yet. We may yet see them someday in some fashion, perhaps as turbine/generator component of a hybrid powered vehicle. Who knows? Some of the CGT cars thankfully were saved. The GM Firebirds were also saved. J.L.Hudson's main store was not so lucky and it is rumored to be undergoing the wrecking ball. Technology marches on... so does time.

I hope you enjoy reading the article. By the way, if you're a real turbine aficionado, you might want to scour the used book stores for a hardbound goody entitled "Bill Carroll's Automotive Gas Turbines". A fascinating book originally published in 1963 covering Ford, GM, Chrysler, Volvo, Rover and other gas turbine cars. Enjoy.

Leon Dixon
Lead Engineer, Mazda Corporation

And now from the 1980 S.I.A. magazine -

Yesterday's Cars of The Future.

By: Leon Dixon

[Thanks to Mr. Dixon and [Special Interest Autos magazine \(now Hemmings Classic Cars\)](#) for letting me put this article here on the web.]

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CHRYSLER'S turbine program began with an orange-red 1954 Plymouth built in the fall of 1953. The engine in this car was nothing less than a smash breakthrough. It incorporated a regenerator which took advantage of the hot exhaust gases much like a turbocharger or afterburner, resulting in reduced exhaust temperature-a big problem up till that time-and dramatically reduced fuel consumption compared to non-regenerative turbines. No other automaker had anything like it. GM, Ford, FIAT and Rover all had turbines by this time, but none had regeneration capability and thus drank fuel in unacceptable volume besides producing high exhaust heat. Chrysler had taken a quantum leap in automotive turbine development, and from the moment George Huebner started and drove that first Turbine Plymouth around the Highland Park engineering facility, there would be no overtaking the leader.

The next big Chrysler turbine news came in March 1956 when a slightly Improved version of the '54 engine was installed in a '56 Plymouth and driven cross-country from New York to Los Angeles. According to Chrysler's report on the event, an intake casting and faulty bearing in the car were replaced, but the engine itself performed "without failures of any kind" while averaging about 13 miles per gallon. This test resulted in a second- generation turbine engine, which was installed in a 1959 Plymouth four-door hardtop. The car was dubbed "Turbine Special." as were its predecessors.

The outside appearance of the Turbine Specials was like standard production models with the exception of certain trim, hubcaps, special medallions and scripts. In December of 1958 this latest turbine car was driven from Detroit to New York, and Chrysler engineers claimed a marked improvement in fuel consumption. The second-generation turbine developed 200 horsepower- twice that of the first generation engines-and hp ratings on gas turbines actually reflect greater torque and power than similar number ratings of a piston engine.

During 1960-61 a third-generation Chrysler turbine engine was developed, and it became clear that the automaker was ready to pull out the stops all the way up to and including the production line. By early 1961 three vehicles were shown to the public with new third- generation engines installed. These were another four-door hardtop Plymouth (1960 model), an interesting 2 1/2-ton Dodge truck and the radically styled (some say bizarre) Turboflite idea car.



Of the three, the Turboflite grabbed the lion's share of press exposure and was shown at the major auto shows both In the United States and abroad. The Turboflite was a *Motor Trend* cover car for the August 1961 Issue and got dandy reviews from *MT* writers. Its radical features included a sleek wraparound windshield, which was incorporated into a transparent semi- bubble top with reverse slant rear window. Reverse slant backlights, as they are called In the industry, were popular at the time on '58-'60 Continentals and more so on later Mercurys. but were first seen on the Packard Balboa-X and Predictor show cars. The entire canopy rose automatically by hydraulics as doors were opened. and the interior was lit by a strangely pleasant greenish indirect lighting system a la early '70s Challenger/Barracuda dash. The taillight system incorporated amber caution lights, which glowed whenever the driver took his foot off the gas pedal. Front fenders left the wheels almost fully exposed, and this unusual design Incorporated "landing gear type retractable headlights. The very unusual tires on this car had two whitewalls-one on the sidewalls and one in the center of the tread!



Dodge Daytona and Plymouth Superbird (see SIA #45) fans will no doubt note the similarity of the familiar wing which surely Inspired wing design on these cars. However the Turboflite design went one better by incorporating an airbrake flap for high-speed slowdowns. Unfortunately the Turboflite was never actually set up to drive. It was what industry people sometimes call a "pushmobile" -a car whose main purpose is to test public reaction while on display-show cars are very seldom driven even if they aren't pushmobiles. When its successful show career ended, the Turboflite gave up its turbine engine and was fed into the shredder.

As in past practice, a 1962 production body - this time a Dodge - appeared on the scene with modified trim and turbine motif. Dubbed the Turbo Dart, the car was driven from New York city to Los Angeles In four days in December 1961.

Chrysler engineers claimed the turbine got consistently better mileage over a conventional piston engine car, which accompanied the T.D. in all sorts of weather. One of the big advances of the '62 Turbo Dart was its third generation turbine engine which incorporated a variable nozzle mechanism (think of the adjustable propeller blades on a turbo-prop - airplane-the ideas are similar in principle. The new engine-known to Chrysler folks as the CR2A - now had engine braking, better acceleration and improved fuel economy thanks to the nozzles.

The Turbo Dart was joined by a Plymouth called the Turbo Fury, similarly enveloped in a production body, and eventually the two were augmented by an additional Dodge and Plymouth. All four went on

an extensive tour of the United States. The cars played to audiences in all the major cities, and some lucky dealers were actually able to display one of the four on their showroom floors.

By this time there was no turning back on Chrysler's turbine development, and both industry and press could see that it would simply be a matter of time before the turbine was actually rolling off an assembly line. Chrysler had no intentions of disappointing anyone on this point, and in early 1962 the company announced plans to build 50 to 75 turbine-powered cars, which would be loaned for brief periods to "typical motorists" whose names were to be selected by an accounting firm.

For many enthusiasts the announcement came as a fulfillment. Uniquely styled limited production turbines had been rumored for nearly ten years. Several publications had dealt with the idea, but the October 1956 issue of *Car Life* had some interesting renderings, which depicted proposed Chrysler turbine cars. One car was a handsome bubble-topped two-place coupe with a '59 Continentalesque rear end treatment. The design still looks exciting although a bit dated. Another car (the Ventura) was a very radical mid-engine job which looked somewhat akin to Bucky Fuller's Dymaxion cars (see SIA-#39) with the greenhouse moved forward to the nose. The mid-engine concept played another act in a Ghia body, as we shall see later. It was no wonder that by late 1962 rumors had run the gamut from doubters who said, "they'll never make it" to claims that the car would be sold outright with optional piston engines for \$10,000 a pop!



During this time a fourth generation turbine engine was being readied for the mystery car, and George J. Huebner, Jr. Chrysler's Executive Engineer of Research received an award for his efforts in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. His was the first ASME award ever bestowed on an automotive engineer. As for the new engine, Huebner and crew did a remarkable job of redesigning and shaved 40 pounds off total engine weight to boot. The new power plant now sported twin regenerators and dual exhausts. Up to this point there had been some problems with delayed accelerator response (similar, but slightly more noticeable than in turbocharger lag), but this condition was brought under better control with the new design.

The engineering boys did a few more tricks in this first production turbine car. The power package was cradled in a cushioned quick-change unit, which also incorporated the transmission and front suspension. One pump served the engine. Transmission, power steering, etc. but no motor oil as such was used since transmission fluid performed all necessary lubrication functions. One very interesting point is that there was no torque converter in the three-speed gearbox. The function of the converter was taken over by the rotating blades of the engine itself. Remember that the gas turbine was not unlike one big torque converter in principle with hot compressed air (instead of fluid) turning the second set of vanes.

The much-discussed Corporate Turbine Car was introduced at a press showing in New York on May 14, 1963. Although the car was given several names by early rumors, Chrysler simply referred to it as "The Chrysler Corporation Turbine Car"-period. We'll call it the Chrysler Ghia Turbine Car (CGT) hereafter for simple clarity. The Ghia part comes from the fact that the body of this revolutionary car was built in Italy by that firm, a practice not unusual for Chrysler (see SIA #30, #50). The turbine car was not only reality. It was also in limited production (if not for sale), in the hands of the public and on the streets in numerous locales and climates. It was a gutsy move.

In all, 203 selected drivers (20 of them women) got a chance to try their hand with a Chrysler Ghia Turbine Car for periods of about three months each. Each agreed to maintain the car's appearance and keep records for Chrysler. All service was to be



performed by a special turbine service representative. At least two of the lucky families to get temporary custody of the turbine cars lived near this writer, so I simply asked for and got a dream ride in the dream car. The sensation, as I recall, was one not unlike a feeling of powered coasting with none of the customary engine vibrations. This all was enhanced by the jetlike sound of the exhaust. At the time it was said that Chrysler purposely left the exhaust wail a little louder than necessary to draw attention to the car, and auto show pamphlets alerted people to "...listen to it. The exciting new sound of the Chrysler Corporation Turbine Car."



The car's color was called "Turbine Bronze," but it had more of a metallic coppery tone and the black vinyl roof was the only major color contrast with the coppery color. Interior color was matched to the paint with very comfy thin-shell bucket seats upholstered in coppery leather and separated by a cylindrical turbine-motif console.

Three major gauge pods were clustered directly in front of the driver in no-nonsense fashion. These included: turbine inlet temp/amps/oil, speed/odo/fuel, tachometer/clock. The full-length floor console housed the light switch, wiper switch, heater controls, rear defroster switch, emergency brake lever and clever designed gearshift with modified quadrant (Park-start. Idle. Drive. Low. Reverse). The CGT cars were equipped with the usual goodies like power windows, steering and brakes. Aside from the gauges and trans quadrant, there was little clue of the unique power plant hiding under the hood.

Bodies were certainly up to Ghia's standards with fit and finish superior to what one normally finds in production multiples-there were Italian influences such as an interior release catch for the trunk with no outside key access. Giovanni Savanuti was Ghia's Chief Engineer and oversaw metalwork and body assembly and, though Elwood Engel styled the Ghia Turbine, there seems to be a general consensus among Chrysler people that perhaps Savanuti may have had at least some influence on the car.

Interestingly enough, a mid-engine concept surfaced in the original Ghia body program (remember that during the CGT development Phil Hill and his beautiful mid-engine Ferrari sharknose racers were burning up the Grand Prix circuits). One Ghia Turbine was planned as a two-place roadster (see SIA #17) and would have been very similar to the car, which was actually built. The "Typhoon," as it would have been called, was never built except as a full-sized mock-up, but nevertheless it would have been a sensational car. One can only guess how it might have performed.



Speaking of performance, Chrysler has never been known as a carmaker content to sit back and ignore the subject, and even as the first five Ghia bodies (see sidebar, p. 21) were assembled, one was selected for use in Hollywood. The only car *not* painted Turbine Bronze was white with a big #5 and blue racing stripes. It starred along with James Darren, Pamela Tiffen and Doug McClure in an auto racing movie entitled "The Lively Set." The movie is what some Hollywood folks call a "semi-stinker," but few car enthusiasts would agree with that assessment. The scene-stealer for us is that white Ghia Turbine car, and there are enough action scenes (including an actual loss of the hood at high speed) to make even Rex Reed

sit up and notice. The Ghia Chrysler Turbine heats the tires off a Ghia 6.4, and there are several shots of Mickey Thompson driving a Chevy. It's well worth checking your late-night TV schedules to see the Turbine in action (and yes, it actually did all those stunts and chases with real turbine power-no faking here).

The white Turbine race car was also built in a 1/25-scale promotional friction drive model along with a standard bronze promotional. Both were made by Jo-Han Models, Inc., who also turned out an amazing kit of the turbine. This kit was nearly as incredible as the real car, with such details as folding seats, opening doors, hood, deck lid, steerable front wheels and more. Back at Chrysler, production on the CGT car went along at a rate of one car - per week, and the 50th car was completed in October 1964. Chrysler was all set to fry even bigger fish at this point.

Hundreds of stories came out of the project. George Huebner once made the statement that Chrysler Turbines would run on anything which could flow through a pipe and burn with air. That statement was put to the test - several times and passed on each occasion. Turbines ran on unleaded gasoline, diesel, kerosene, JP-4, alcohol, Chanel ~5 and yes, Jimmy, peanut oil! However, one of the most interesting fuels ever to run the turbine was also the center of an episode of equal interest. George Huebner picks up the story: "The first car of the 50-car program was barely ready when it was - pressed into service on a world tour by Chrysler International. The car reached Mexico, and I got a call from one of the International people who said that the president of Mexico wanted to operate the turbine on tequila! I said that I thought it would work fine, but just the same. I went to the purchasing department the next morning and got two gallons of tequila. We drained the tank on engineering's car and dumped the two gallons in. The car ran all over Highland Park with no trouble. Meanwhile the president of Mexico ran the car there on tequila, but was later quite upset when reporters failed to mention that *he* was driving. The turbine and tequila stole the show, you might say."

The Chrysler turbines had reached a - point where the information available suggested one direction: production. - Armed with data gathered in the 50-car program, Chrysler engineers developed a fifth generation engine and set about - planning for a new and larger program. Bill Brownlie of Chrysler Product Development recalls just how close we came to actually being able to buy - turbines: "Lynn Townsend called Elwood Engel, myself and others into a meeting during the time of the 50-car program and we discussed actually offering a new turbine car on a limited basis to what would have been virtually hand-picked customers as a test of public acceptance. In that meeting it was decided to build a limited number of special-bodied turbines-that body became the '66 Charger fastback."



Tom Golec, supervisor of car development recalls that low-volume tooling was ordered and approximately 500 Turbine Chargers were planned for the initial run. Mr. Golec points out that - a special no-slip clutch unit was developed for the '66 Turbine Charger, but was never used due to very high cost. Supposedly two '66 Turbine Chargers with the special clutch were built, but they were never shown to the - public. The Charger became a sporty Dodge with a conventional engine and slightly different trim (the Turbine job had a grille opening much like the 1970 Challenger)...the project was stillborn.

What killed the project? The mid- - sixties produced a variety of rumblings out of Washington. Insurance - companies clamped down on supercars, safety laws were written and smog laws took effect. Once the Clean Air Act - became reality. it specified control of NOX emissions and. according to - George Huebner, it was not known at that time if the turbine would meet *future* NOX requirements. The first direct result was to shelve the '66 Turbine Charger. The government was now in the car-making business and Chrysler was out of the turbine car business-at least on any mass scale. Regulations on conventional engines took on very high priorities, and though a sixth-generation engine was developed to meet NOX standards. Little was done with it-engineers were largely occupied with the emissions problems of piston engines.

Turbine work slowed as a result a sixth-generation engine did make it into a '66 Coronet but the public never saw it. Finally, interest was sparked again in 1972 when Chrysler won an E.P.A. contract and developed the present smaller and lighter seventh- generation engine.

What now stands between the turbine and production seems to be refinement and government regulations. Chrysler people are currently working on ceramics and various improvements such as electronic controls. As for regulations, who can say what is in store? One thing is certain, an engine which operates efficiently on a multiplicity of fuels, is not a luxurious whimsy--it's nearly a necessity, especially in light of present developments in the Middle East

Our thanks to *George J. Huebner Jr., Ann Arbor, Mich.; Bill Brownlie, Diane Davis, Torn Golec, Tom Jakobowski, and Chuck Wagner of Chrysler Corp., Detroit, Mich.; Richard Langworth, Coontoocook, NH; and Sam Shields, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.*

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left taillight lens. When the lens is pushed in, the filler cap automatically opens. Pushing the lens slightly further releases the lens and it returns to its normal position, simultaneously closing the filler cap.

Another outstanding feature of this advanced vehicle is the location and operation of the third seat. The tailgate window and tailgate are both lowered electrically, actuated by switches located at the instrument panel and in the rear compartment. Another button causes the rearward facing third seat to unfold from its completely concealed position in the floor. Entry to this seat is by way of the tailgate, made convenient by steps which automatically project from the bumper after the tailgate is lowered, and by a neatly designed grab handle forming the trailing edge of the roof.

The interior of the Plainsman harmonizes perfectly with the Western theme embodied by the exterior of the car. Pleated natural calf skin upholstery is used on the seats, the door panels, and the rear wheel housings.

Natural cowhide trim, luxurious tan carpeting, and the novel cowhide and fabric headlining complete the interior appointments. Retractable arm rests, built into the seat backs, are another of the luxury features of the Plainsman. For extra comfort, front seat backs are individually adjustable to tilt through an angle of about fifteen degrees. Sliding inside door handles are another of the many design innovations found on

From front to rear, top to bottom, the Plainsman embraces the true concept of the "Idea Cars"--the stylist's laboratory on wheels. Its graceful and eye-appealing proportions are enhanced by a cantilever type all-steel roof covered with a white synthetic fabric that gives the car a light, airy appearance. The low, sleek appearance is achieved by an unusual stepped-roof design that allows the use of a lower section over the front seat compartment. A fresh air intake is provided in this step; on the inside, louvers can be conveniently regulated by the passengers so that air is circulated freely but never directly on the passengers themselves.

Accenting the road hugging appearance of the Plainsman is a bomb-like projection which flows from the massive front bumper guards along the full length of the lower body and gives the feeling of mass concentrated close to the ground. On both sides of the car, hinged portions of this projection lift to provide access to the rear wheels. On the right side, behind the rear wheel is a completely new location for the spare tire. No lifting of the spare tire is required because of a built-in jack which raises and lowers it quickly and easily. By utilizing this ordinarily wasted space, it is possible to incorporate the flush folding third seat.

An exceptionally wide door provides extra entrance space for the convenience of rear seat passengers.

Highlighting the front-end of the Plainsman is a simple, functional divided grille flanked by large round bumper guards with integral parking lights. Added air flow and engine cooling is accomplished by the use of a slot in the underside of the front bumper. The hooded headlights are framed by the curved reverse angle of the fender and set against a background of thin horizontal chrome bars. As the fender and belt line flows back toward the taillight, it flairs up slightly just behind the door, creating a fin-like rear fender--a further expression of Chrysler Corporation's well known Flight Sweep theme.

At the rear the Plainsman displays several completely new design innovations. One of these is the concealed gas filler tube located behind the