

MOTOR TREND

JUNE 1955 25c

BUYERS GUIDE TO IMPORTED CARS

3 ROAD TESTS:

Packard Clipper

"What a fantastic ride!"

Hudson V8

"You could live in this one!"

Cadillac

"A blue chip investment!"

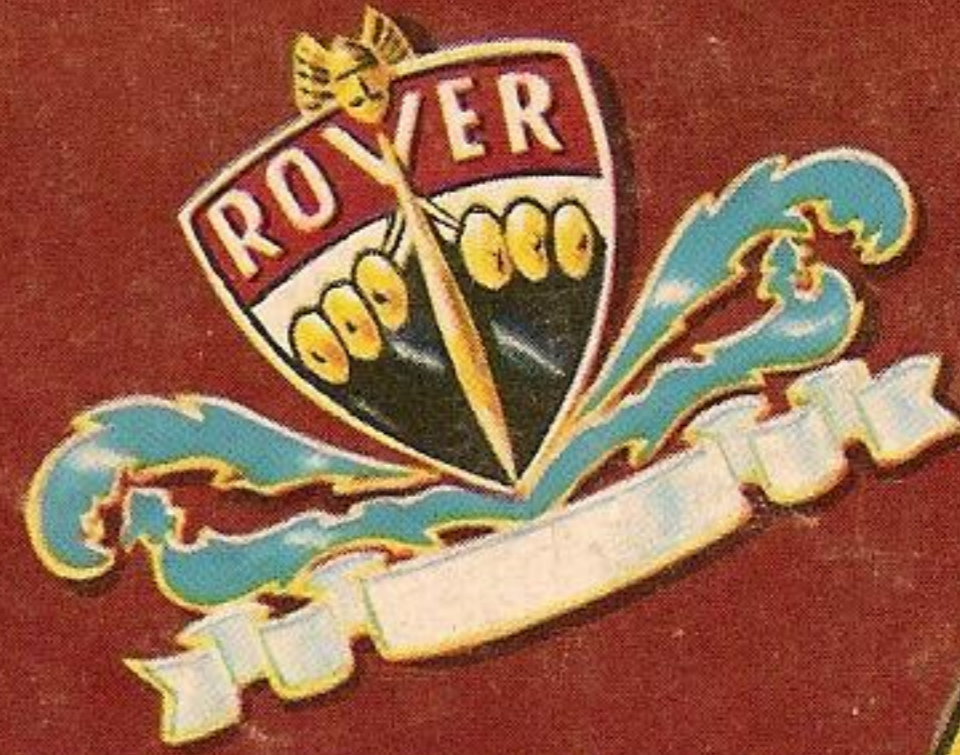
STEAM: More Whistle than Worth?

INDIANAPOLIS FORECAST

Who Will Win, In What — —

And Why see page 21

**Easy Ways to
PERSONALIZE YOUR CAR**
Customizing on a Budget



FELL

'55

Packard Custom Clipper

The first step in Packard's comeback is a superb, torsion-bar ride

MT RESEARCH road test

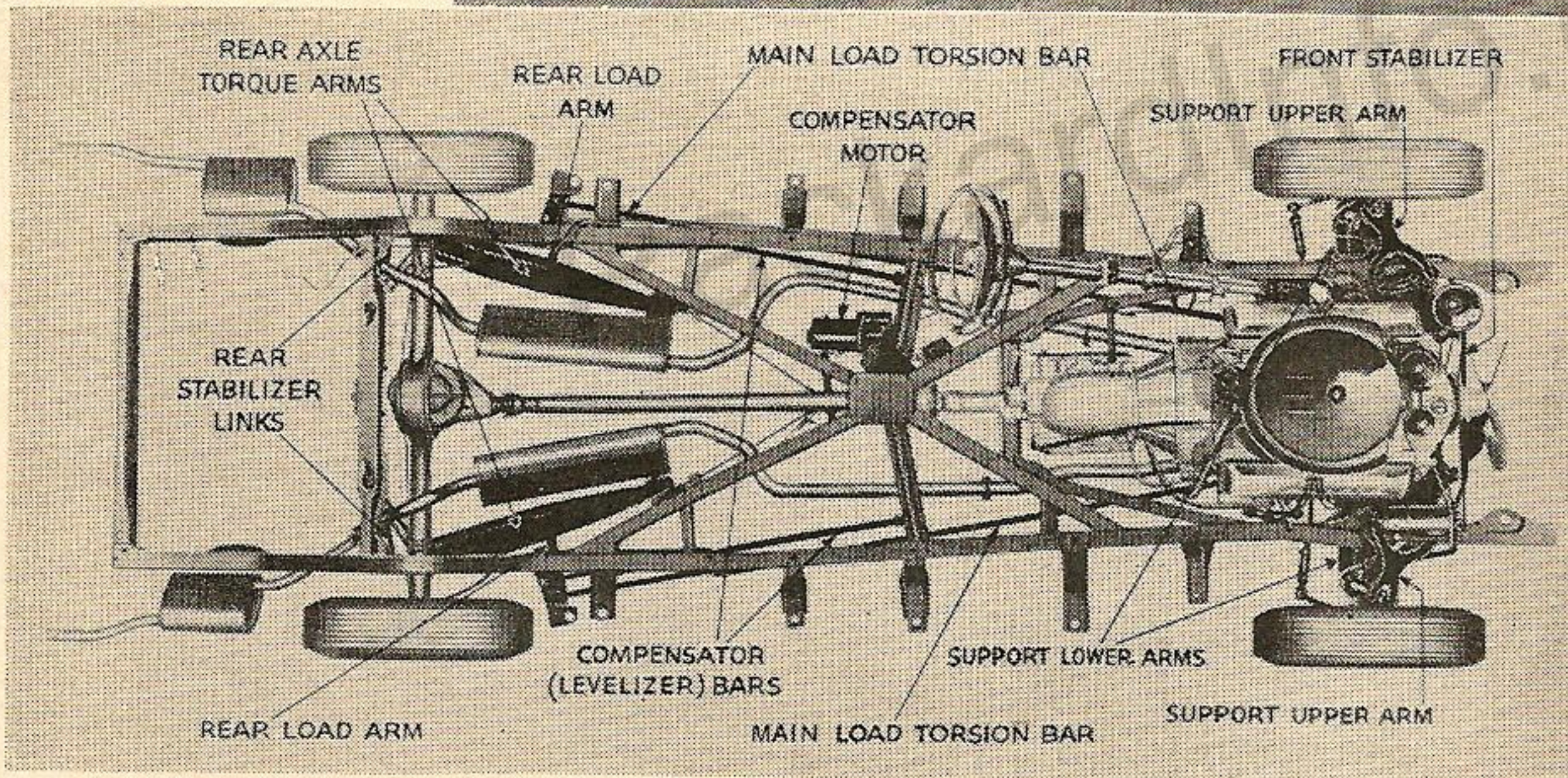


Diagram shows 2 sets of torsion bars (1 for general use, 1 for electric-motored leveling of car with varying loads). First of all-new systems, it gives 1955's No. 1 ride

Unretouched photo shot on choppy edge of MT's acceleration test strip shows Clipper's even keel on roughest roads

by Pete Molson

PACKARD MAKES NO SECRET that it has missed the turn a couple of times in the recent past, is now frankly traveling the road back. An important part of its future plans is the Clipper, a car gradually assuming its identity as a separate make from the big Packards (however, this aspect can be regarded as still in transit; the '55 Clipper, tho with a fresh look, is an obvious relative of both the new Packards and the older ones). Studebaker-Packard Corp. obviously intends its Clippers to appeal, and sell, to buyers who want an automobile quite different from the rakish, lower-priced Studebaker President (road test, MT, Dec. '54). The Clipper appeals, as never before (and, indeed, as no other car can, except

its larger cousins) to the solid-comfort crowd. Its prospects are the people who buy very carefully, who rarely drive flat-out, and who keep their cars a little longer than the average. They have a likely choice in the new Clipper.

Test car: Clipper Custom 4-door sedan with standard 245-horsepower V8 engine, torsion bars, electric levelizer. Optional equipment included new-type Ultramatic, power steering, power brakes, radio and heater, no lesser gadgets.

Engine: Packard clung to the straight 8 for as long as anyone, and to the practical limit of increase in compression ratio. They saw it drop in public favor from No. 1

to a poor 3rd, due to rising demand for the livelier, more compact and efficient V-type powerplant. Last year Packard had largest displacement (359 cubic inches) of any production engine; this year, tho completely changed, it claims the same distinction with only 352. In Clipper Custom version, the overhead-valve, short-stroke engine puts out 245 hp for best weight/power ratio of any U.S. production car except Corvette and Thunderbird; its brawny torque of 355 pounds-feet has no equal at all, except in larger Packards. Yet acceleration and top speed are de-emphasized by factory, which prefers to remind public that a pre-production version of this engine averaged 104.7 miles per hour, including stops, in a 25,000-mile run under AAA supervision.

Unobstructed breathing was one of Packard engineers' prime goals; they have achieved it with a 4-barrel carburetor, remarkably clean intake manifold, valves 25 per cent bigger than last year's, and high-lift camshaft. Conventional crossover exhaust system ends in dual tail pipes on Clipper Custom. The wedge-

type combustion chambers (ellipses in plan view) have, says Chief Engine Engineer W. E. Schwieder, "remarkable insensitivity" to carbon deposits; for owners, this means less power loss, lower octane requirement increase. Ignition stepped up to 12 volts for best use of engine's potential and to allow more sparkplug gap growth before servicing. Compression ratio, now 8.5 to 1, can even go higher than 12 to 1 in succeeding models. Which brings up other future plans: with no major alterations in the basic engine design, future Clippers can claim 355 hp and 408 pounds-feet of torque.

Other options: Available with standard 3-speed transmission (with or without overdrive) for what should be much more economical operation; also can be

Photos by Bob D'Olivo

had without power brakes or power steering (standard steering requires $4\frac{3}{4}$ turns lock to lock, so is not stiff). Power seat, power windows, air conditioning optional. Clipper Deluxe and Super use 225-hp version of same engine, with smaller bore (3.81 inches), lower compression ratio (8.0 to 1), and have conventional springing with coils in front, leaves in rear. Torsion-bar suspension may be available on lower-priced Clippers before model year ends, or next year.

WHAT THE CAR IS LIKE TO DRIVE

Exit and entry: Very simple except that handbrake lever extends far across left door opening. High and wide door openings, seats higher than most. Drip molding on wrap-around prevents drenching.

Driving position: Unusually high, very comfortable. Manual seat control on test car flimsy, hard to adjust. As much headroom and shoulder room as in any car, thanks to retention of straight-sided body. Legroom sufficient but not unusual. Wheel low, easy to reach. Instruments in compact cluster but with over-elaborate dials that obscure function of oil-pressure and generator warning lights. Medium-size glove compartment in dash center.

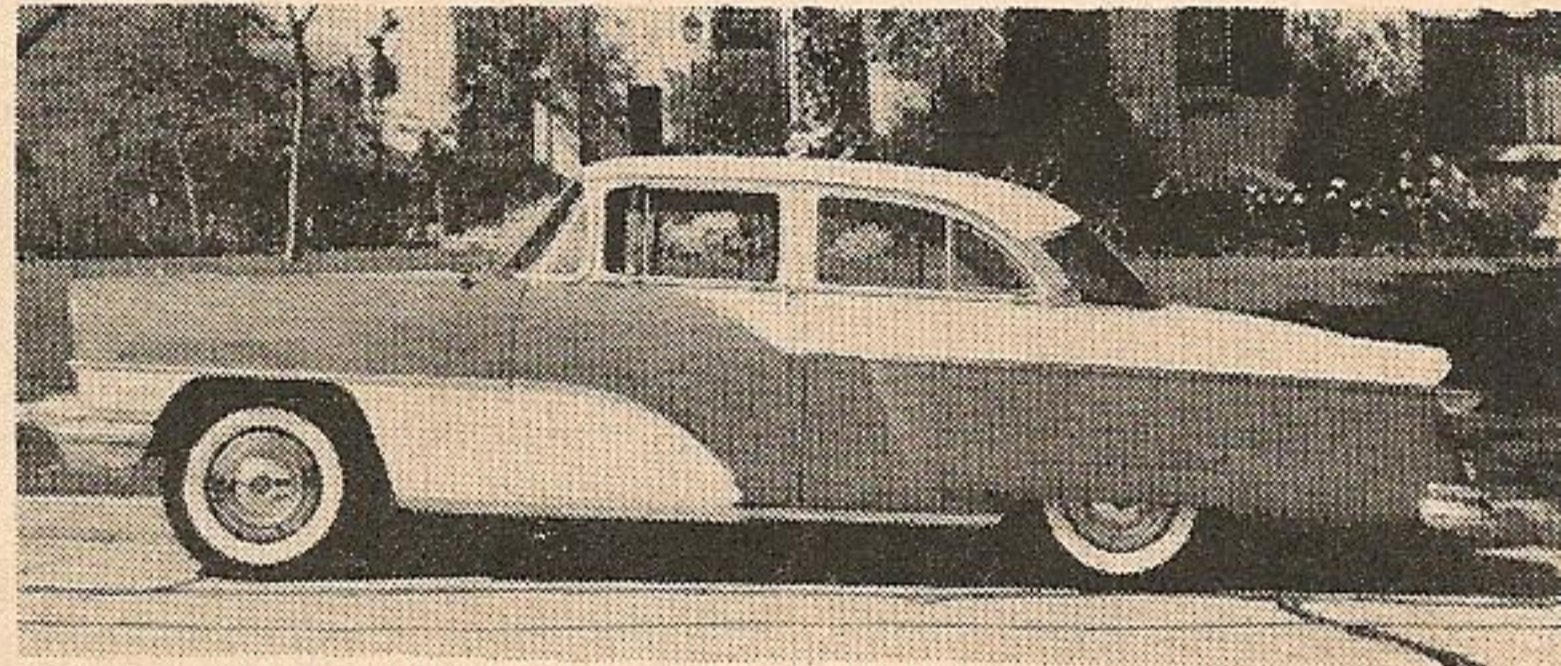
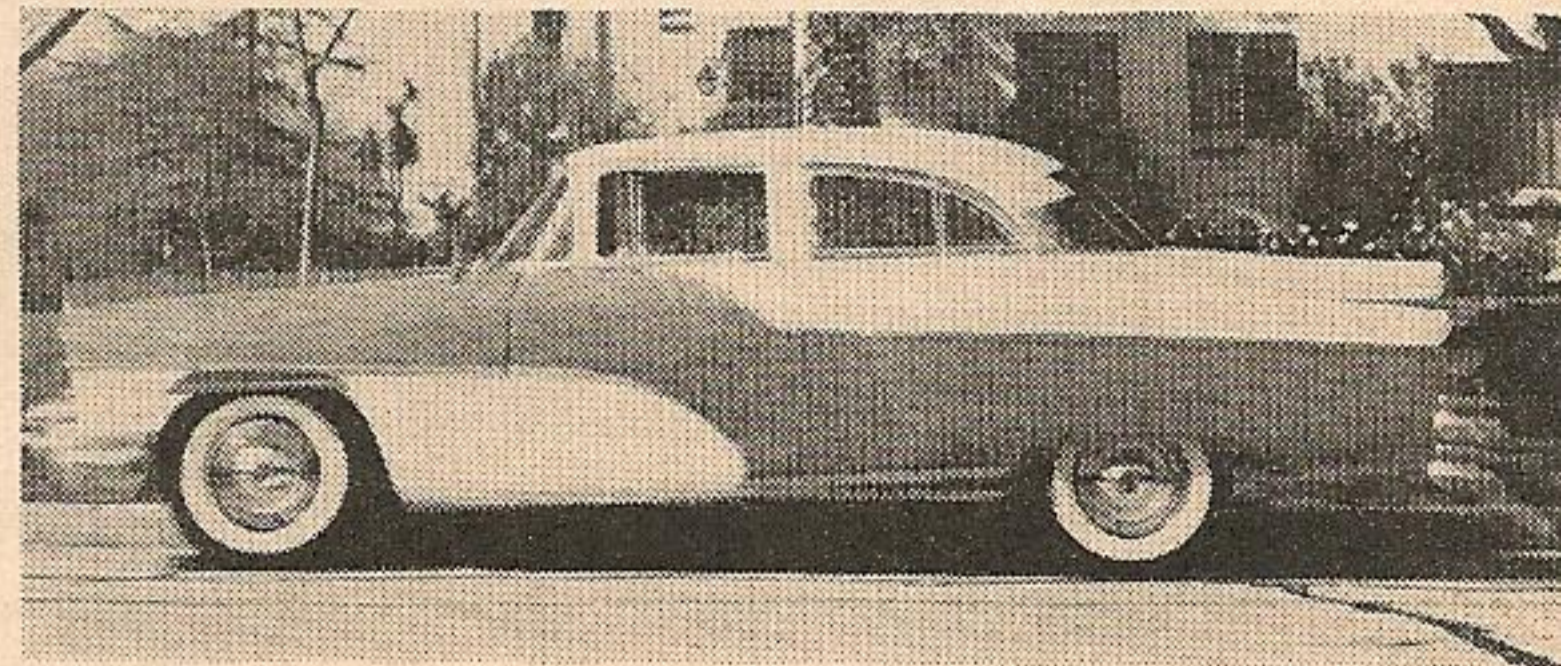
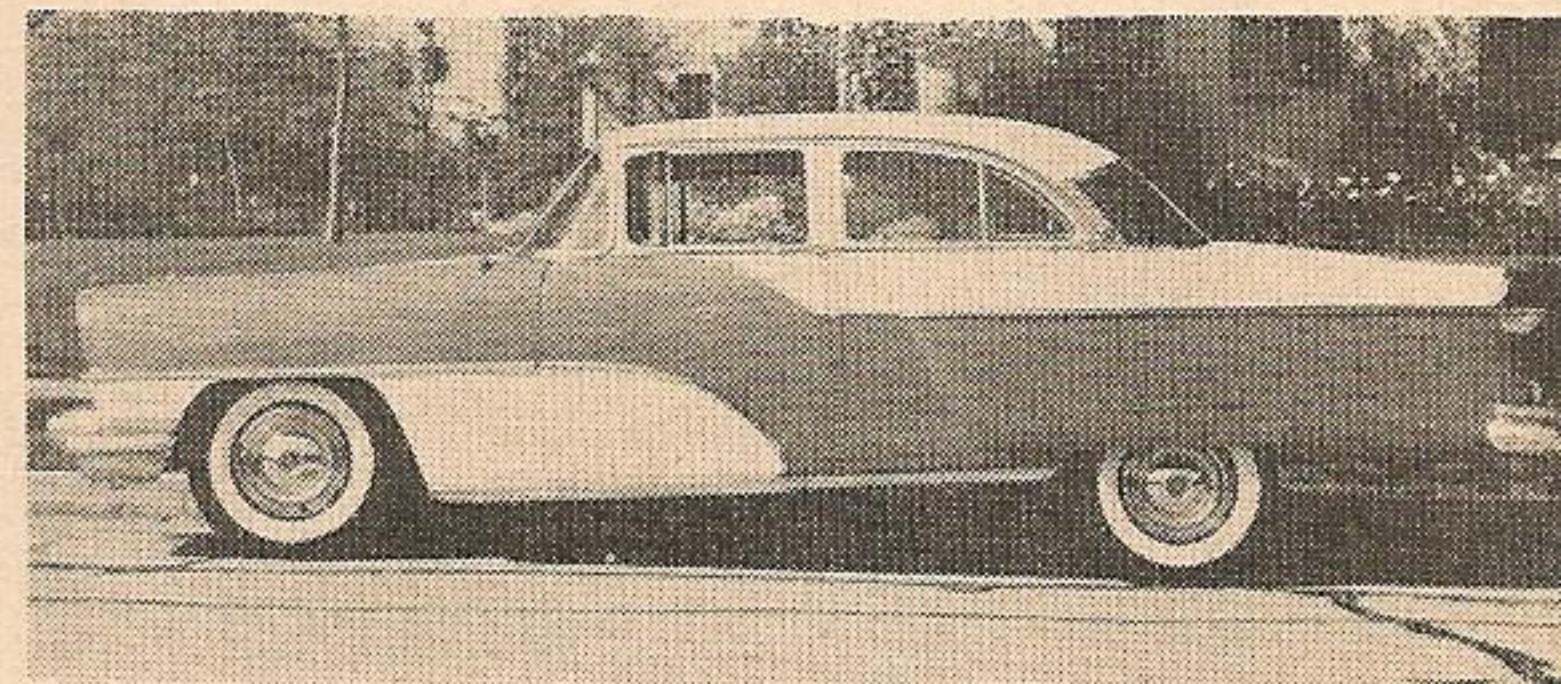
Vision: High seat and low hood, plus Packard-pioneered high fenders, put driver in a sort of pilot house. Vision undistorted thru windshield; some refraction at top and sides of rear window. No blind spot from cornerpost or mirror. Some glare off shiny dash top (leather pad is \$15 extra), no reflections from instruments at night. Tail lights visible from

driver's seat are a practical parking aid.

Operation of accessories: "Cam-O-Matic" wipers give adequate wrap-around coverage at lower of 2 speeds, leave broad unswept areas when moving fast. Heat and vent controls lighted, easy to use. Adequate heat and ventilation provided, with under-hood air ducts, dash-mounted blowers, large air space under front seat for good circulation.

Ease of handling: Easy to drive under all conditions. Power steering system gives good road feel; transition very smooth from initial push to power-assisted operation. Just under 4 turns lock to lock. Parking made easier by "square-cornered" body design that lets driver know where car's edges are. Responsive in traffic, is entirely at driver's command. Odd angle of accelerator with floor—it's nearly vertical—can get uncomfortable. Crowned roads, streetcar tracks, slipping inadvertently onto a soft shoulder—none of these will faze the Clipper. If you *don't* fall in the "typical Packard owner" class, you'll agree with the MT Researcher who said "especially nice in tight corners. One of the best for deliberately sliding to head right into a turn."

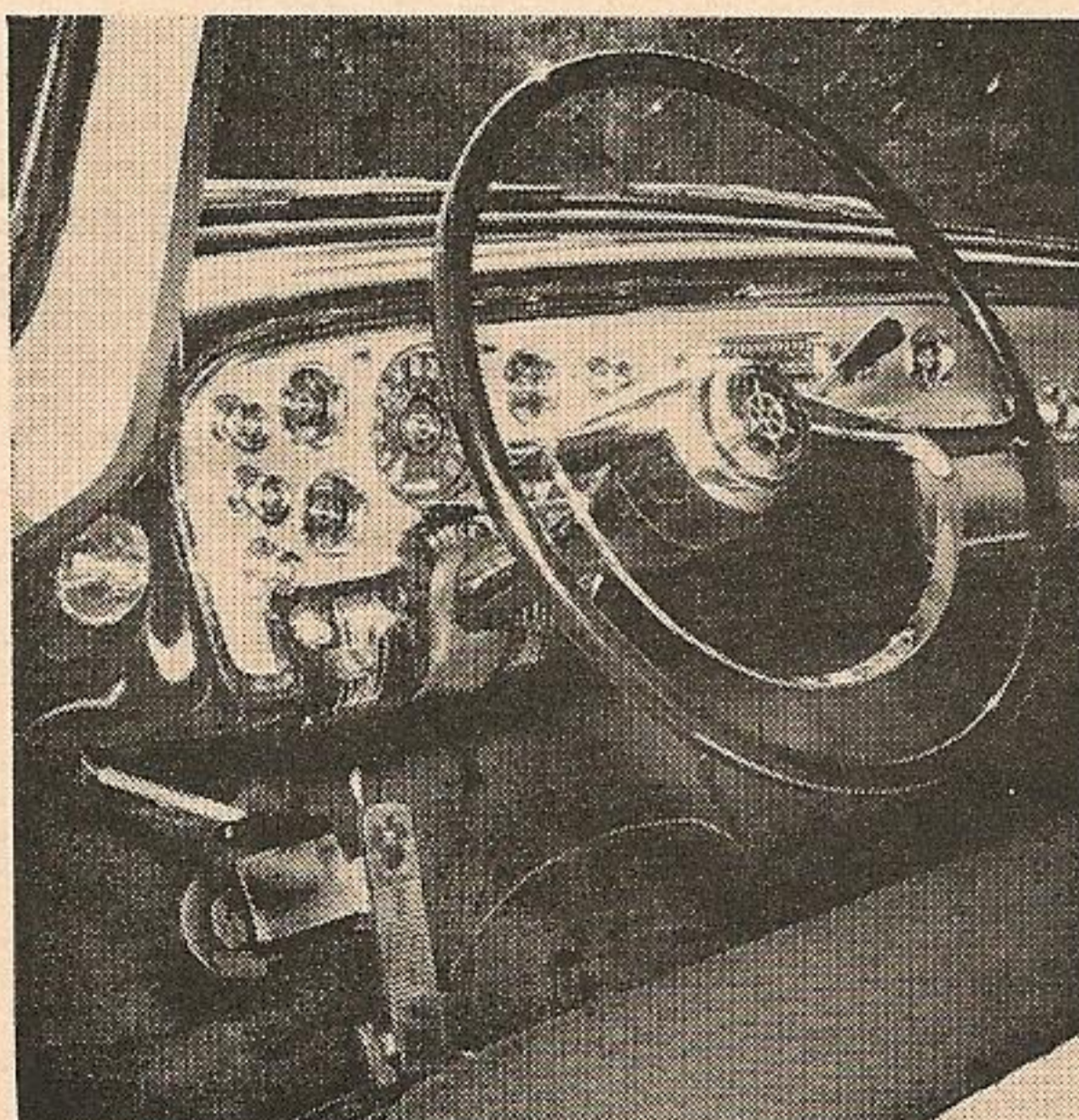
Acceleration: Surprisingly modest in most ranges for so large an engine and so impressive a recorded output, except from 10 to 30, where the new Ultramatic helped it to leave most cars standing at the post to run up a time of 2.9 seconds. Engine roars during acceleration bursts. Ultramatic retains smooth, torque-converter-only start in one DRIVE range, locking up into direct drive anywhere from 15 to 55 mph, depending on how heavy your foot is; in other range, all starts are made in low gear (same ratio as in LOW range on the dash-mounted quadrant) and the transmission automatically shifts from there to torque converter and then on to direct drive. In comparative acceleration tests the "smooth takeoff" range was



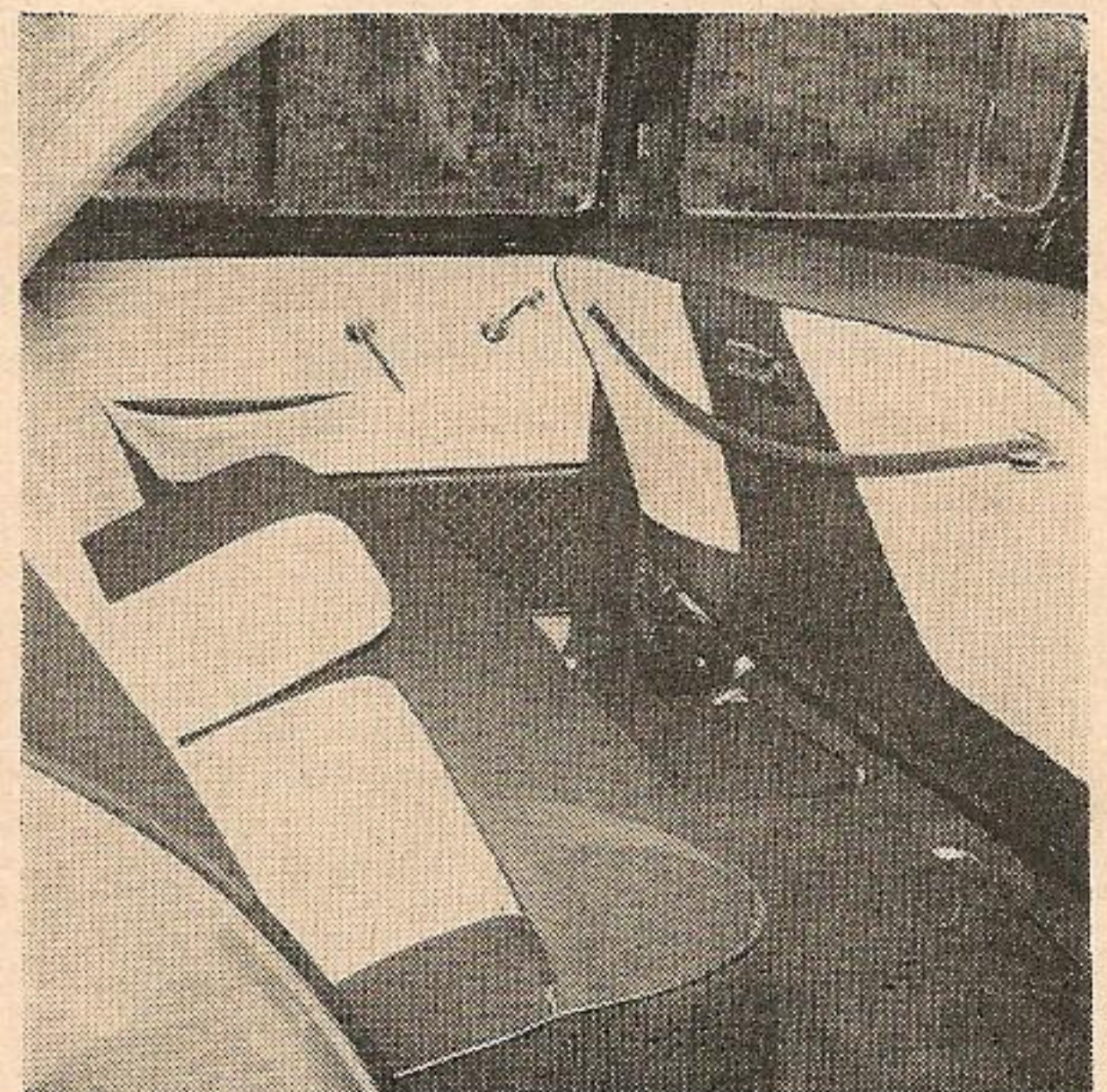
Closest approach to making tire-changing fun can be yours in Custom Clipper. Shut off dash toggle switch quickly after standing on rear bumper (top) or front one (bottom). Center photo shows range

slower (for example) by 1.3 seconds from 30 to 50 mph. If there were "gates" between NEUTRAL, 2 DRIVE ranges, and LOW, driver would not have to peer at quadrant for clarification. It's a pleasure to "play on" so versatile a transmission, and a shame to keep consulting the score.

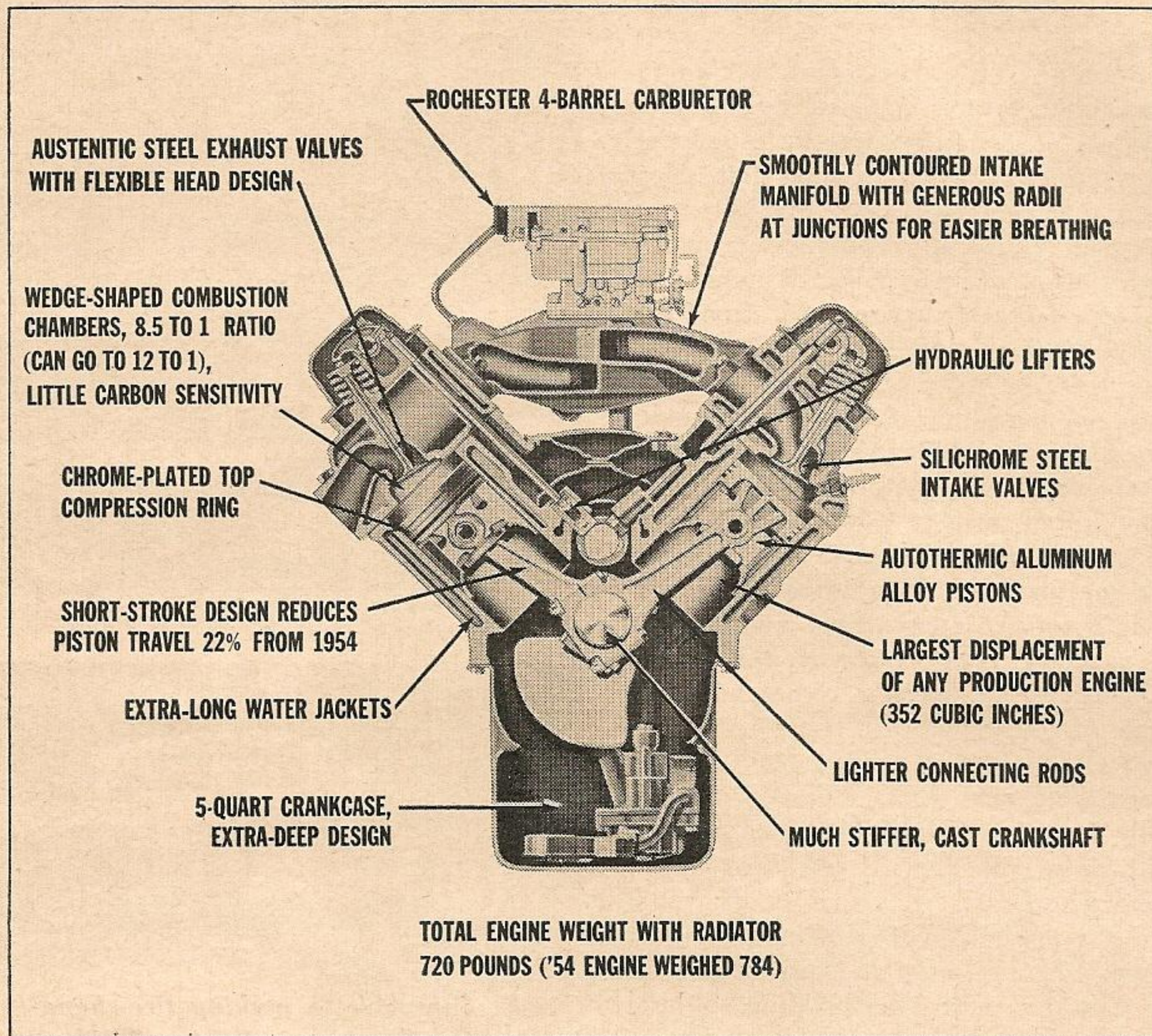
Braking: Last year's improvement in stopping distances, which applied to nearly every test car, has not continued this year on an industry-wide basis. Clipper gave MT Research pleasant surprise of bettering its '54 distances by 2 feet from 30 mph, 7 feet from 45, and 14 feet from



Unusual high seat, low instruments make you think you're in a classic-era Packard. Handbrake hampers left-door entrance



Tough black-and-white nylon with metallic accents and plastic panels at wear points lends dash to rear compartment



Like its suspension, Packard's new V8 engine was engineered with an eye to the future. Basic design can go to 12 to 1 compression, 355 horsepower in coming years

'55 PACKARD continued

60. Furthermore, it did it with no fuss, no muss—a nonchalance that some other cars could well copy. Handbrake was odd, taking hold with great ease but a loud, fingernail-on-a-blackboard noise, not at all suggestive of Packard quality.

Roadability: Some front-end float (it has a life of its own, and seems not quite synchronized with the steering action), but only at low speeds. Extremely road-worthy at higher speeds. Some lean on turns, but not enough to disturb passen-

gers and little threat to stability. Dips of the worst kind became, by the end of our road test, merely an invitation to go faster. Recovery after any severe road unevenness is nearly instantaneous.

Ride: Here, of course, is Clipper's most astonishing advancement. Single steel bar—with built-in twist—on each side of car replaces conventional coils in front and leaf springs at rear, with worthwhile results. Without watching, test crew couldn't tell when driver deliberately steered car over projecting manhole covers on road under repair. Driving along

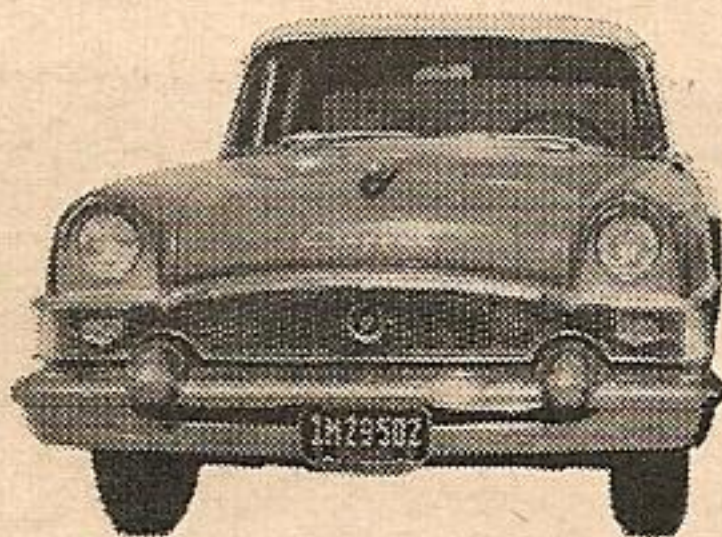
extreme edge of road with frequent deep, uneven gutters produced no discomfort. Says Studebaker-Packard President J. J. Nance (and we agree): "Introduction of torsion bar suspension has returned Packard . . . to a role of innovation which was the company's traditional forte pre-war, when it dominated the fine car field." Electric motor operates 2 shorter torsion bars to keep car level under varying load conditions. Here's one car that won't need its headlights adjusted after loading it for a vacation trip; it will wait 7 seconds, then level out as flat as you please, regardless of weight of your load. Other uses for levelizer: If you have to change a back tire, stand on back bumper until levelizer has raised rear end to compensate for your weight. When the electric motor shuts off, dash around and flick off switch under panel before it has time to react to your *not* being on the bumper any longer. Still with us? You'll now have your back fenders lifted conveniently high above back wheels. You can do same with front. A good idea to shut off levelizer when your car is unattended. Our neighbor's children thought it was absolutely the greatest.

WHAT THE CAR IS LIKE TO LIVE WITH

Riding in the front seat: Seat comfortable, roomy, except for low-hanging dash; smooth, non-lurch acceleration, but engine noisy. Ashtrays awkwardly placed under curve of dash. Radio's innards exposed under right side of dash. Everything else dims by comparison with ride.

Note: if you drive a Clipper with intent to buy, you'll need some bad bumps to prove its mettle. Also try letting someone else do the driving: smoothness is much more apparent when you're not watching road surface.)

Riding in the rear seat: Even more dramatic than the front, with more feel of room. Center (Continued on page 54)



TEST CAR AT A GLANCE

Packard Clipper Custom with Ultramatic

(General specifications on page 54)

REAR-WHEEL HORSEPOWER

(Determined on Clayton chassis dynamometer. All tests are made under full load, which is similar to climbing a hill at full throttle. Observed hp figures not corrected to standard atmospheric conditions.) The usual dynamometer was not available during this test. The same car will later be tested on it and the results given in next month's issue.

TOP SPEED

(In miles per hour over surveyed 1/4-mile.)
Fastest 1-way run 104.4
Slowest 1-way run 102.9
Average of 4 runs 103.3

ACCELERATION

(In seconds, checked with 5th wheel and electric speedometer.)
Standing start 1/4-mile (74 mph) 18.7
0-30 mph 4.0
0-60 mph 11.9
10-30 mph 2.9
30-50 mph 4.6
50-80 mph 13.9

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

(Checked with 5th wheel and electric speedometer.)
Car speedometer read 33 @ true 30 mph
49 @ true 45 mph
67 @ true 60 mph
83 @ true 75 mph
109 @ true 100 mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION

(In miles per gallon; checked with fuel flowmeter, 5th wheel, and electric speedometer. Mobilgas Special used.)
Steady 30 mph 19.1
Steady 45 mph 18.7
Steady 60 mph 15.8
Steady 75 mph 12.9
Stop-and-go driving over measured course 11.9
Tank average for 938 miles 13.2

STOPPING DISTANCE

(To the nearest foot; checked with electrically actuated detonator.)
30 mph 44
45 mph 89
60 mph 151

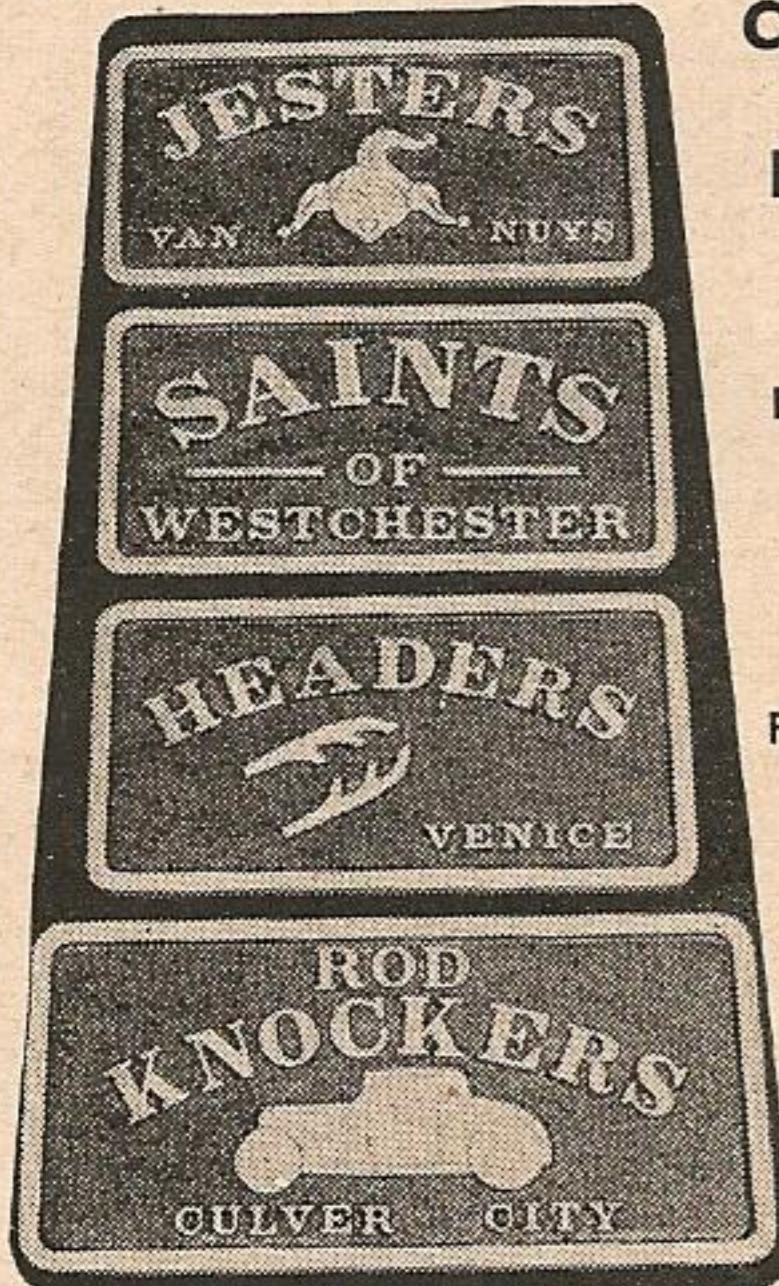
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continued from page 20

'55 Packard Custom Clipper

armrest hard to lower or raise. Level ride even more apparent here. No special luxury features. Interior bright and durable.

ECONOMY AND EASE OF MAINTENANCE

Fuel economy: Not up with best, the car's new-found power undoubtedly pulled down our tank average by tempting us to accelerate faster than an owner might. Gas mileage more to be expected from very big car, but note that engine is bigger than in any except other Packards. Newly developed Mobilgas Special used.

Is the car well put together? Yes, with only usual minor new-car complaints. In test car they took form of a sticking glove compartment door, ashtrays that refused to stick but eagerly came out altogether, a very stiff rear door lock.

How did it hold up? Ultramatic reluctant to shift after severe acceleration tests; this did not last. Car felt solid at end of test, after being subjected to barrage of bumps and dips that no car without an advanced suspension system would have been called on to face.

Servicing: Not as much of a hood-full as many a modern V8, Packard's new engine has an easy-to-reach dipstick for the

owner who likes to keep an eye on things himself; he can also remove his spark-plugs with comparative ease. Biggest advantage is that noted in description of new engine: minimization of need for service thru design engineers' attention to carbon buildup and ignition problems.

—Pete Molson

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 4.0 in. Stroke 3.5 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.875:1. Compression ratio 8.5:1. Displacement 352 cu. in. Advertised bhp 245 @ 4600 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.70. Piston travel @ max. bhp 2683 ft. per min. Max. bmep 152.1 psi. Max. torque 355 lbs.-ft. @ 2400-2800 rpm.

DRIVE SYSTEM: STANDARD transmission is 3-speed synchromesh using helical gears. RATIOS: 1st 2.49, 2nd 1.59, 3rd 1.00, reverse 3.15. AUTOMATIC transmission is Ultramatic, 4-element torque converter with planetary gears and direct drive above 15-55 mph, depending on throttle position. RATIOS: Drive, torque converter only and 1.00 (direct drive) or, at separate quadrant position, 1.82 x converter ratio, torque converter only and 1.00. Low, 1.82 x converter ratio. Reverse, 1.63 x converter ratio. Maximum converter ratio at stall 2.9. OVERDRIVE transmission is standard shift with planetary gears. RATIO: 0.7.

REAR-AXLE RATIOS: Standard 3.9; Ultramatic 3.23; Overdrive 3.9.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 122 in. Tread 60 in. front and rear. Wheelbase/tread ratio 2.03:1. Overall width 78 in. Overall length 214.8 in. Overall height 62 in. Turning diameter 43 ft. (41 with power steering). Turns lock to lock 4¾ (3¾ with power steering). Test car weight, weight/bhp ratio, and weight distribution will appear next month. Tire size 7.60 x 15 (tubeless).

PRICES: (Including suggested retail price at main factory, federal tax, and delivery and handling charges, but not freight.) CLIPPER DELUXE 4-door sedan \$2586. CLIPPER SUPER 4-door sedan \$2686, hardtop \$2776. CLIPPER CUSTOM 4-door sedan \$2926, hardtop \$3076.

ACCESSORIES: Ultramatic \$199, overdrive \$110, radio \$102, heater \$80, power steering \$115, power brakes \$40, power seat \$70, power windows \$108, air conditioning \$647.

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continued from page 26

'55 Hudson Hornet

go about checking usual items, even though, more often than not, this was first '55 Hudson they had encountered. Major overhaul would definitely require engine removal, but that shouldn't be a problem for many years to come with this engine's excellent durability potential. Then too, of course, most new-car prospects in this day and age don't plan to keep a car very many years.

SUMMING UP

The '55 Hudson Hornet is a transition piece, and, as such, a very interesting hunk of machinery. We talked to a number of loyal Hudsonites who traded in their "step-down" cars on the new one. They seem pretty well satisfied as a whole, pointing out that they now have a great increase in "liveability" without sacrificing much roadability. Too early to predict depreciation problems, but there is no real reason to expect a drastic change in relatively high 1st-year cost of owning a Hudson. This should be balanced against pleasures of owning a cleverly engineered car whose duplicate you won't meet going around every corner.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 3.81 in. Stroke 3.50 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.913:1. Compression ratio 7.8 to 1 (current engines 8.25 to 1). Displacement 320 cu. in. Advertised bhp 208 @ 4200 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.65. Piston travel @ max. bhp 2450 ft. per min. Max. bmep 141.4 psi. Max. torque 300 lbs.-ft. @ 2000-2600 rpm.

DRIVE SYSTEM: STANDARD transmission is Ultramatic, 4-element torque converter with planetary gears and direct drive above 15-55 mph, depending on throttle position. RATIOS: Drive, torque converter only and 1.00 (direct drive) or, at separate quadrant position, 1.82 x converter ratio, torque converter only and 1.00. Low, 1.82 x converter ratio. Reverse, 1.63 x converter ratio. Maximum converter ratio at stall 2.9 @ 1650 rpm.

REAR-AXLE RATIO: 3.54.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 121.25 in. Tread 59.5 in. front, 60.5 in. rear. Wheelbase/tread ratio 2.02:1. Overall width 78 in. Overall length 209.25 in. Overall height (empty) 62.25 in. Turning diameter 42 ft. 8 in. Turns lock to lock 4.6 (4.3 power steering). Test car weight 3925 lbs. Test car weight/bhp ratio 18.9:1. Weight distribution 58% front, 42% rear. Tire size 7.10 x 15 (tubeless).

PRICES: (Including suggested retail price at main factory, federal tax, and delivery and handling charges, but not freight.) SUPER 4-door sedan \$2825. CUSTOM 4-door sedan \$3015, hardtop \$3145. (6-cylinder models \$160 less.)

ACCESSORIES: Ultramatic standard, radio \$98, heater \$77, power steering \$140, power brakes \$39, power windows \$128, air conditioning (with heater) \$395.