

Bill Ford Revives a Classic:

THE CONTINENTAL

WHAT SHOULD YOU GET when you plunk down \$10,000 for an automobile? After all, it can have only four wheels and one engine just like any other car!

But the new Continental, designated the Mark II in a somewhat British accent, is unlike other cars, say its builders. For \$10,000, the Continental buyer is said to get finer quality than has ever been built into an assembly-line product before, plus an outward appearance so striking that there can be no doubt he is driving an automobile that costs \$10,000.

Let's look at these two claims for the Continental. Do they stand up?

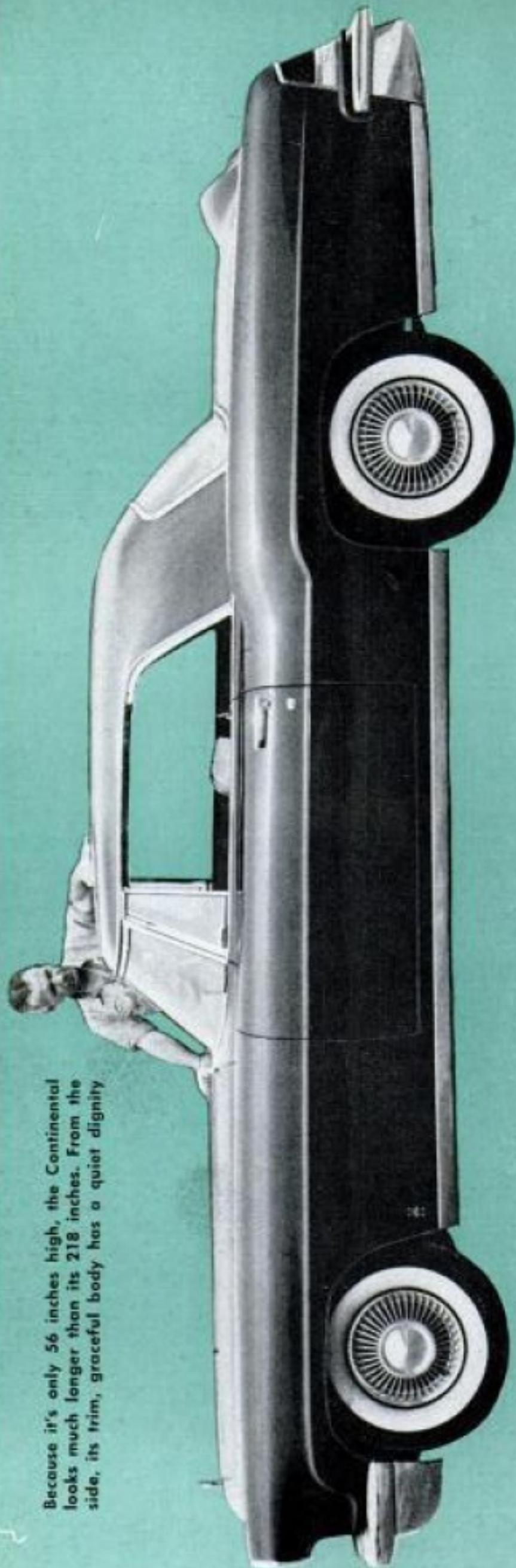
First, what about striking appearance? Judge for yourself. The car is certainly

By Arthur R. Railton



There's just enough of the original Continental (photo top of page) in the new to continue the breed. Spare tire of new model is inside trunk, not outside as before





Because it's only 56 inches high, the Continental looks much longer than its 218 inches. From the side, its trim, graceful body has a quiet dignity

different without being freakish. There can be no doubt that it is a descendant of the original Continental. Its proportions emphasize what many persons still believe is the epitome of automotive design—the long, long hood that signifies power and the small, compact passenger compartment that denotes elegant intimacy.

It has, for this writer at least, a flashy dignity. If that sounds like a contradiction, it is! But, strangely enough, it is true. There's enough dignity to satisfy the most retiring of retired millionaires, yet with it there's enough flash to elicit wolf-calls from street urchins. Driving the new Continental, you look impressive, but you certainly won't be called a grandstander!

What about the claim of fine quality? Can any assembly-line operation live up to that promise?

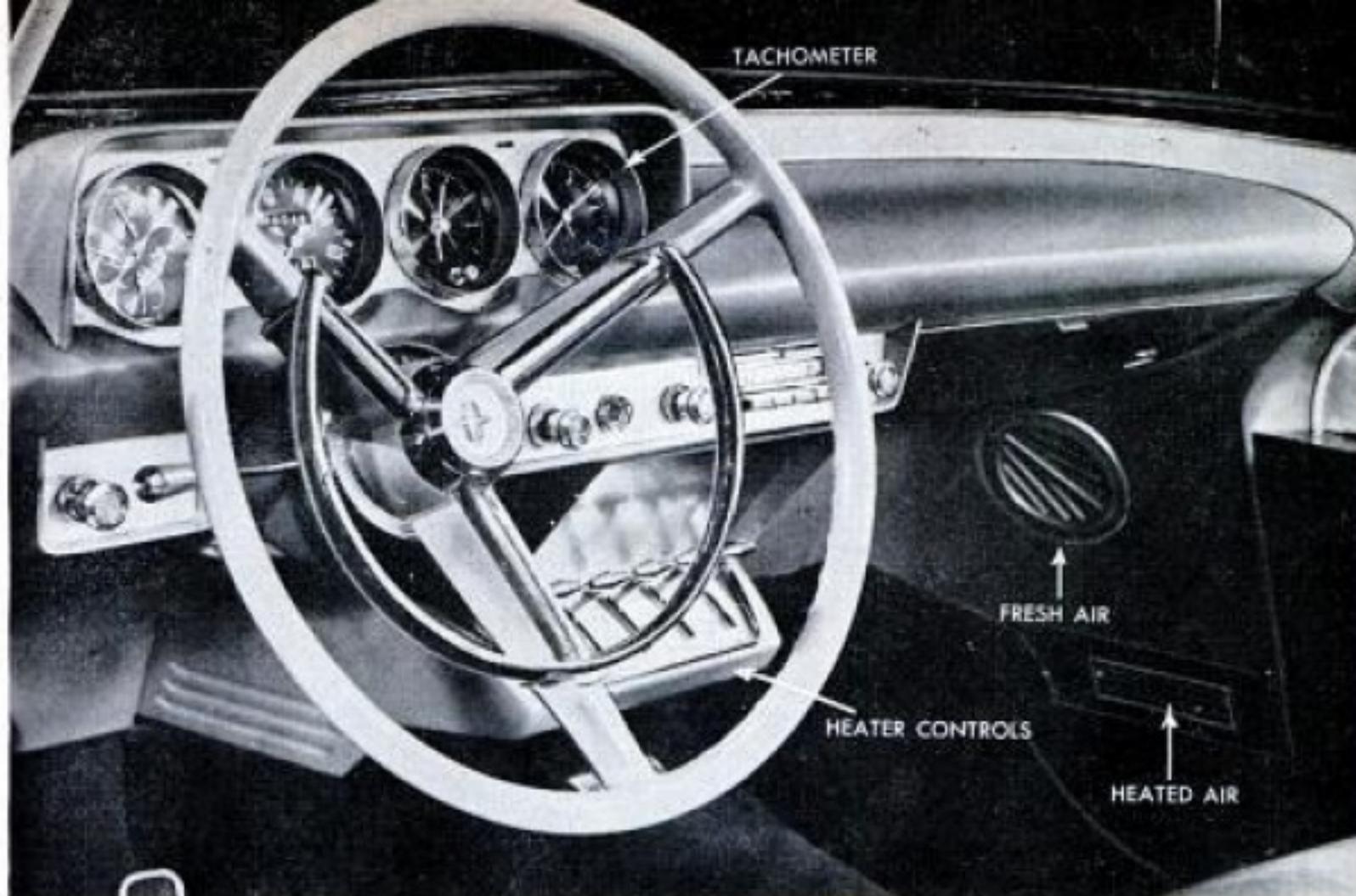
Months ago when production of the new Continental was just getting under way, an inspector spotted burrs on an incoming shipment of washers. The burrs were small; the washers not of major importance. The fault would not affect by as much as a whit the operation or looks of the car.

Yet the whole shipment of washers went back. Not because the faults were critical, but because they violated the basic concept of the car—it must be as perfect as possible.

And it should be. After all, it does have a price tag that reads \$10,000 or so and when a man spends that kind of money he should get perfection.

That is Bill Ford's philosophy and the Continental Mark II is Bill Ford's baby. He has been the driving force behind the car since its conception. Months back, when the division was just starting to produce cars, this writer was startled to spot Bill Ford test-driving cars on the plant's own track. He wanted to satisfy himself that each car was right. He no longer can do that, production being what it is today, but he still spot checks Continentals as they come off the line.

To make certain each car is right, Continental established a new job classification in the



Inside or outside, the Continental is in good taste without cheesecake. The panel is simply four round dials

assembly operation — the road-test mechanic. Each Continental gets two test drives around the small but adequate test track by one of these experts. This mechanic takes the car over the railroad-tie "rattle course" and brings it in for corrections. He must do the correcting himself. There is no passing the buck. If the car has a rattle, he's got to get rid of it. If it skips a beat on acceleration, he must make it right.

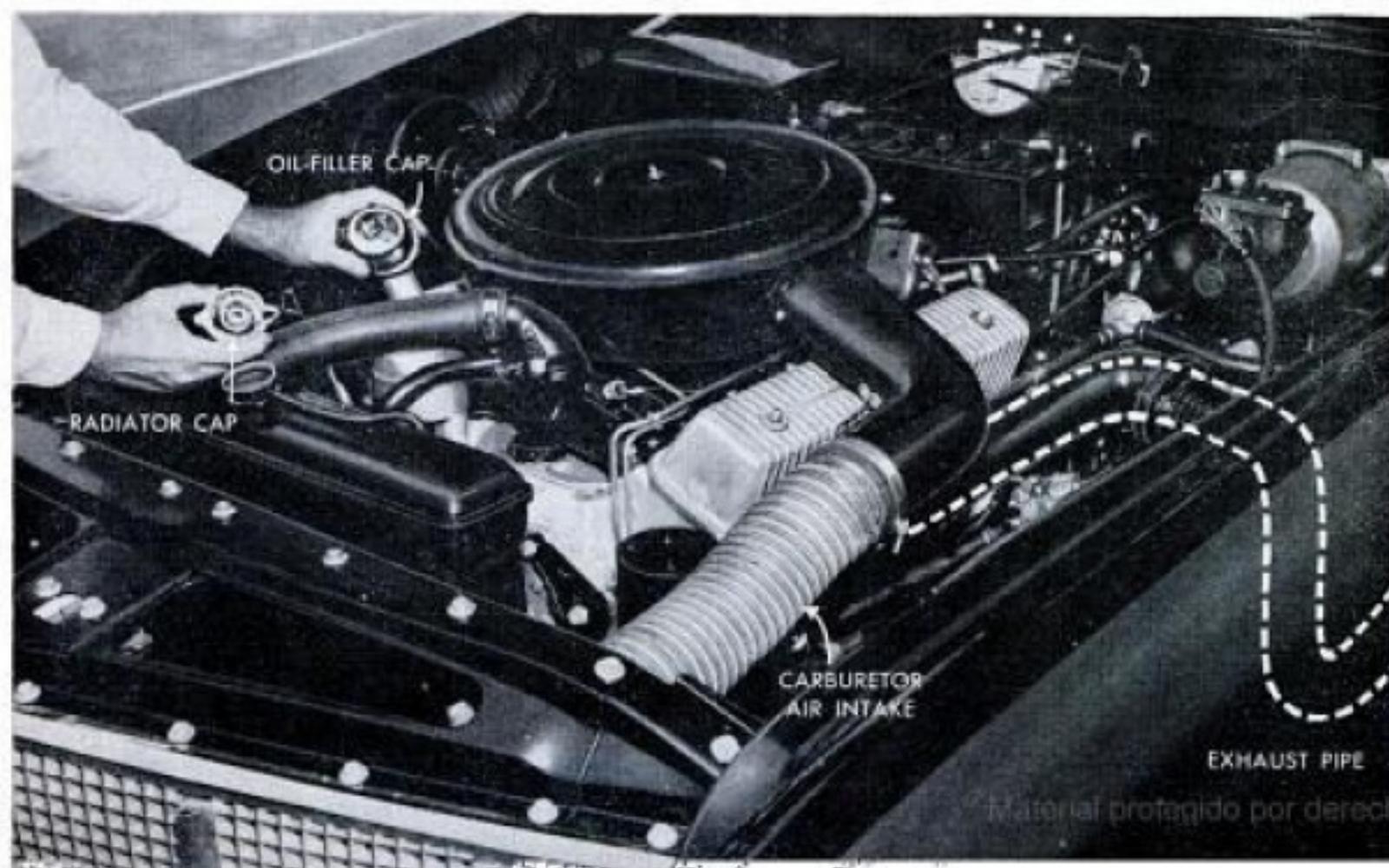
Two examples will illustrate the careful planning that went into details. When the time came to select a horn, Ford and others sat for hours listening to the sounds of various horns as the car was driven past,

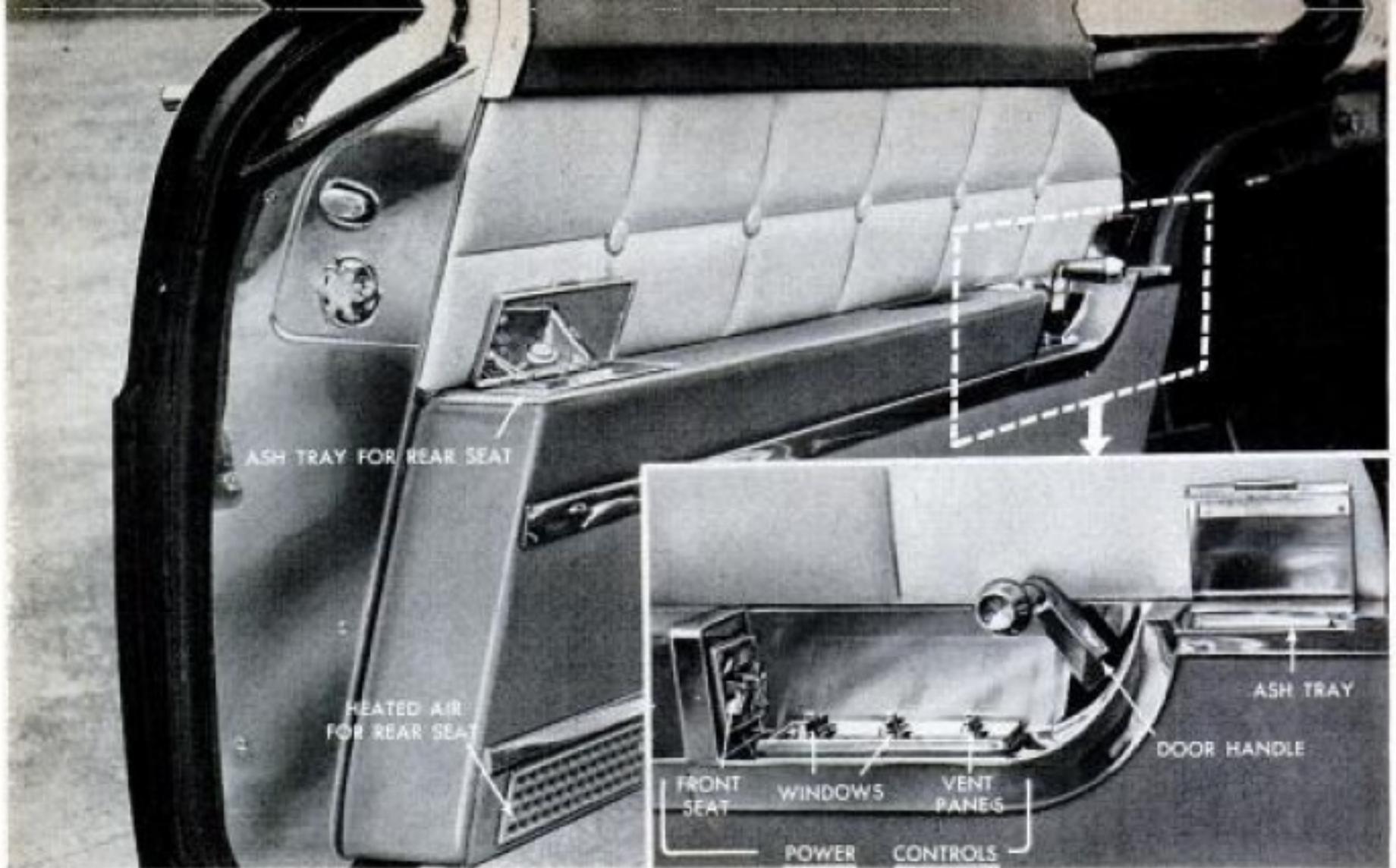
driven into a driveway, under the window. After hundreds of samplings, a horn was selected with just a touch of "sass" blended into its authoritative tone.

A similar amount of care was taken in the exhaust-pipe design. First, there were simply two straightback pipes, but that sounded like two four-cylinder engines, hardly impressive enough for a Continental. Finally, a rear crossover pipe was added just above the differential so the engine would sound right. There are still the two separate exhaust systems, but the crossover pipe blends the two sounds into one.

Here are some added reasons why the new Continental is a \$10,000 automobile:

Under the hood is a modified Lincoln V8 of unspecified horsepower. Dotted lines show path of exhaust pipe



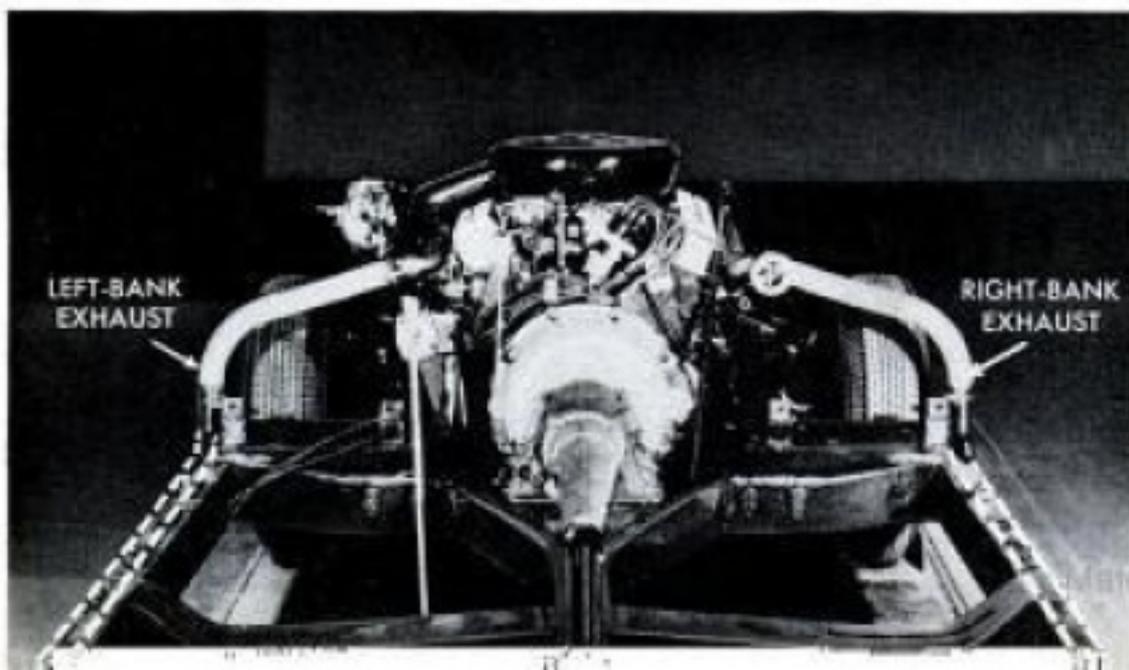


Edges of the big doors are chrome plated. Inset is the control panel. Even the vent panes are power operated



Spare-tire bulge in trunk lid is in keeping with the former Continental tradition. However, the tire location makes loading trunk very awkward

Chassis shot on the Continental assembly line. Between the tail pipes at rear is a crossover pipe (not visible here) to improve sound of exhaust



- Painting a Continental is said to take longer than the entire assembly operation of other cars. There are eight double coats altogether: 1. Two double coats of primer followed by a water-and-sand rubdown; 2. two double coats of surfacer followed by water-and-sand rubdown; 3. two double coats of color followed by oil-and-sand rubdown; 4. two added coats of color and another oil-and-sand rubdown; 5. final polishing. There are 14 single colors and five conservative two-tone combinations available.

- Chrome parts get successive layers of copper, nickel and chromium. They pass salt-spray resistance tests three times as severe as the usual S.A.E. standard. Chrome, used sparingly outside, appears in unexpected places: the radiator cap, oil-filler cap, dipstick, door edges.

(Continued to page 252)

PLYMOUTH



Plymouth's four-door hardtop comes in the Belvedere series. Two-toning is slightly different from 1955

Chrysler Family Makes 1956 Debut

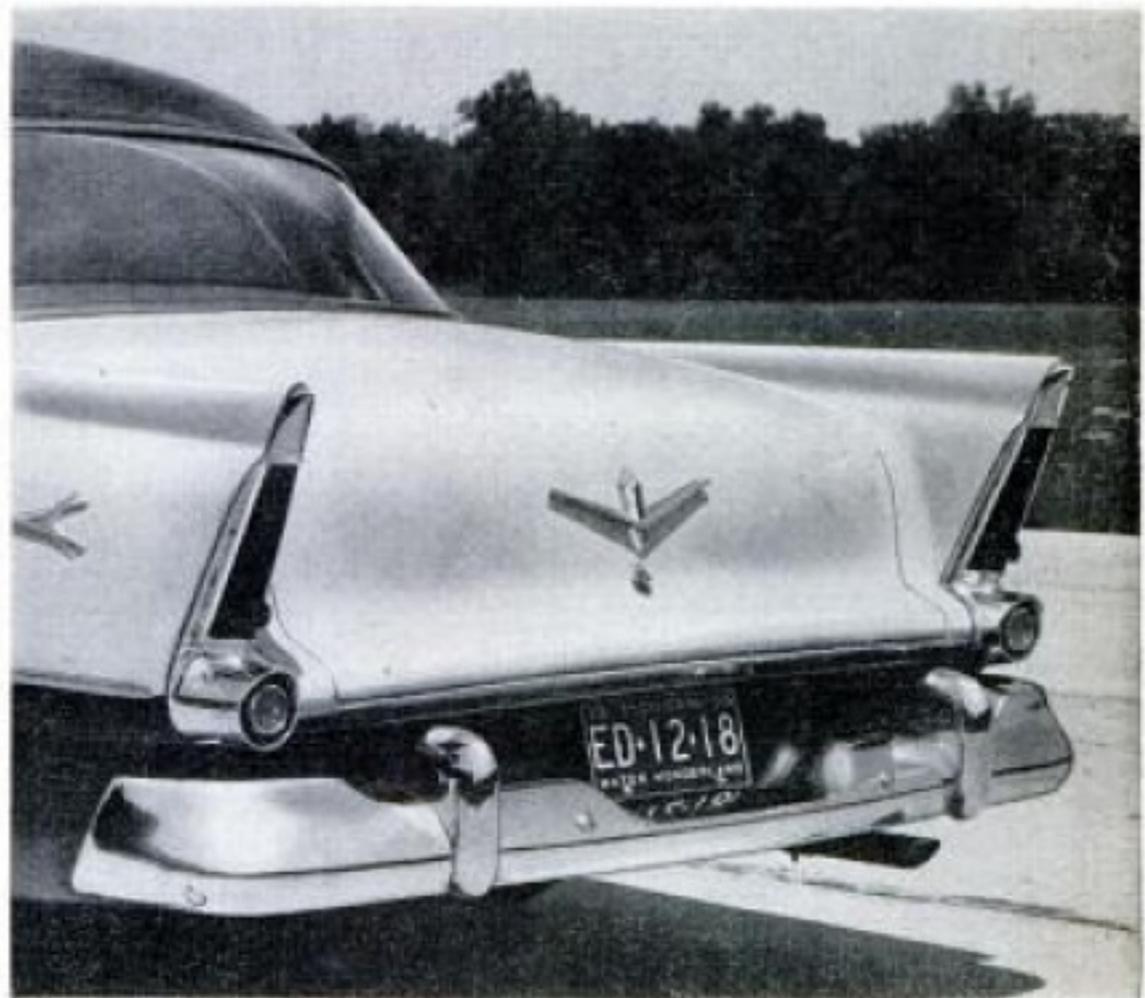
CHRYSLER CORPORATION spent a whopping \$175,000,000 on retooling for its 1956 models—and 1956 was supposed to be an “off year” involving only facelifts.

Chrysler spent that much money, right on the heels of the big change of 1955, because it is determined never again to be “engineering-rich, styling-poor.”

Everything from the rear window back is new for 1956. Fenders flare back with what is called the Flight-Sweep motif—a step in the direction of jet-plane styling. Bigger and more emphatic than ever before, the rear fenders are eye catchers, making the roof line look lower by optical illusion. Each of the five cars in the Chrysler family has these big tail fins and easily recognized taillight designs.

But Chrysler is not ignoring engineering. There are important changes here, too. Most talked of are push-button transmission and the long-playing phonograph.

All PowerFlite-equipped cars are controlled by push buttons. A control panel, not unlike the keyboard of an adding machine, is mounted on the dashboard just to the left of the steering wheel, out of reach of children. Only four buttons are needed: One for Neutral, one for Drive, one for Low and one for Reverse. There is no Park position with PowerFlite as Chrysler still provides the separate propeller-shaft parking-brake system. Instead of moving a shift lever, the driver merely presses a button. Safety devices prevent the engagement of more than one at once or going into Reverse while traveling forward faster than 10 miles per hour.



Above, cleanly sculptured are the airfoil tailfins of the '56 Plymouth. Tall, vertical taillights quickly identify the car. Below, center section of the front grille has been restyled



DODGE



Dodge Custom Royal Lancer two-door hardtop. Also available in this series is the four-door hardtop

Long-Playing Phonograph

Also available through the entire corporation line is a long-playing phonograph that is mounted just below the radio on the dashboard. It plays through the radio and consists only of a turntable and pickup arm, designed so it is virtually impossible to make it jump a groove even on the roughest roads. Records are seven inches in diameter and spin at about 16 revolutions per minute. One record will play for about 45 minutes. Because of the ultra-long-playing design, no automatic changer is needed. Once every 45 minutes or so, you flip the record over or change it for a new one, an operation that Chrysler says can be accomplished without taking your eyes off the road.

Four-door hardtops are available through the whole line with Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto, Chrysler and Imperial all offering them.

The entire line now has the 12-volt electrical system and new safety door latches. Seat belts are available as dealer-installed options, as they were last year.

Here, in summary, are additional high-points of each division's 1956 cars:

Plymouth

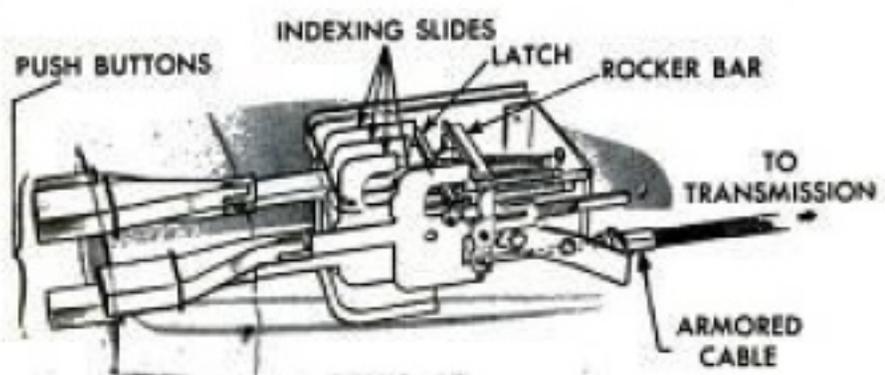
Large, cleanly chiseled rear fenders are definitely of airfoil shape. Grille and other front-end chrome have been simplified, although basic styling is unchanged.

Plymouth's new V8 engine is bigger,

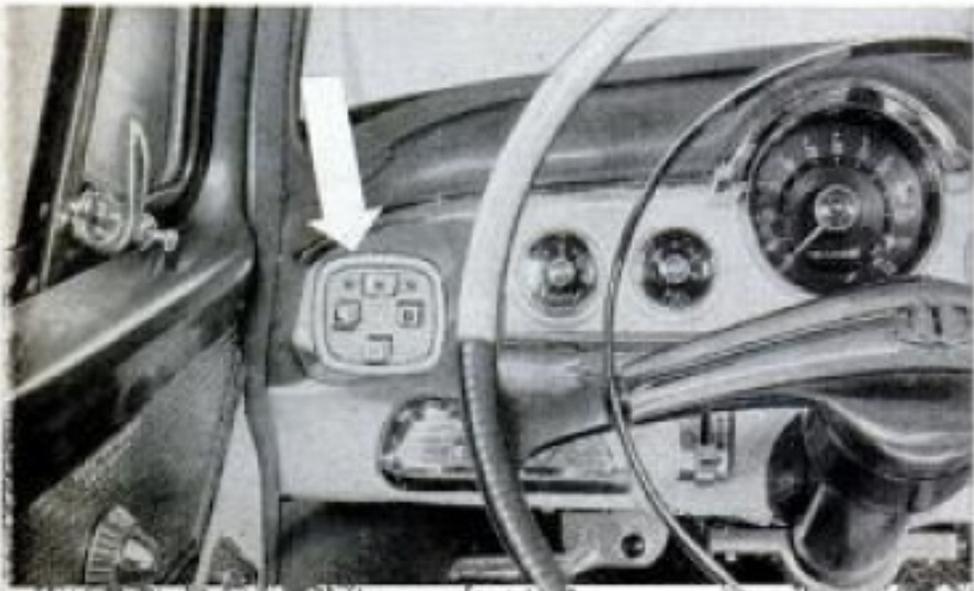
From the rear, you'll recognize the Dodge by the bold diagonal lines. Note the dual radio antennas



Above, you can get a long-playing phonograph on any Chrysler Corporation car. It mounts under dash



Below, arrow points to push buttons for transmission. Sketch, above, shows how it operates with one cable



DE SOTO



For the first time in years, the De Soto grille has no vertical bars or teeth. Instead, it uses this mesh. Parking lights are inside the bumper guards

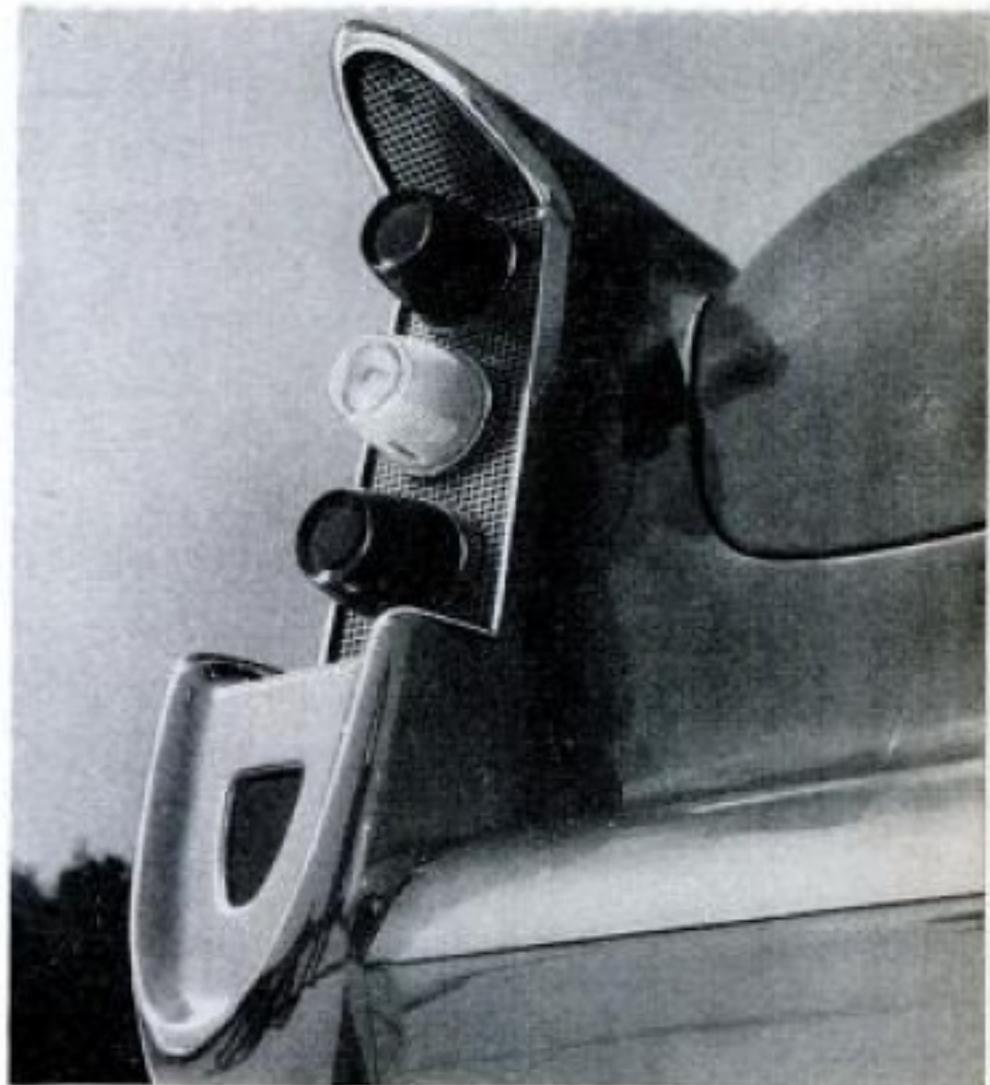
having a 277-cubic-inch displacement and an 8.0:1 compression ratio. Dual-throat carburetor is standard. The bore is 3.75 inches (up from last year's 3.56) and the stroke is 3.13 (down from last year's 3.25) to make the engine well over-square.

Optional is a power pack with a four-barrel carburetor and dual exhausts. Horsepowers are not available at this writing, although on power-pack engines it is expected to be around 200.

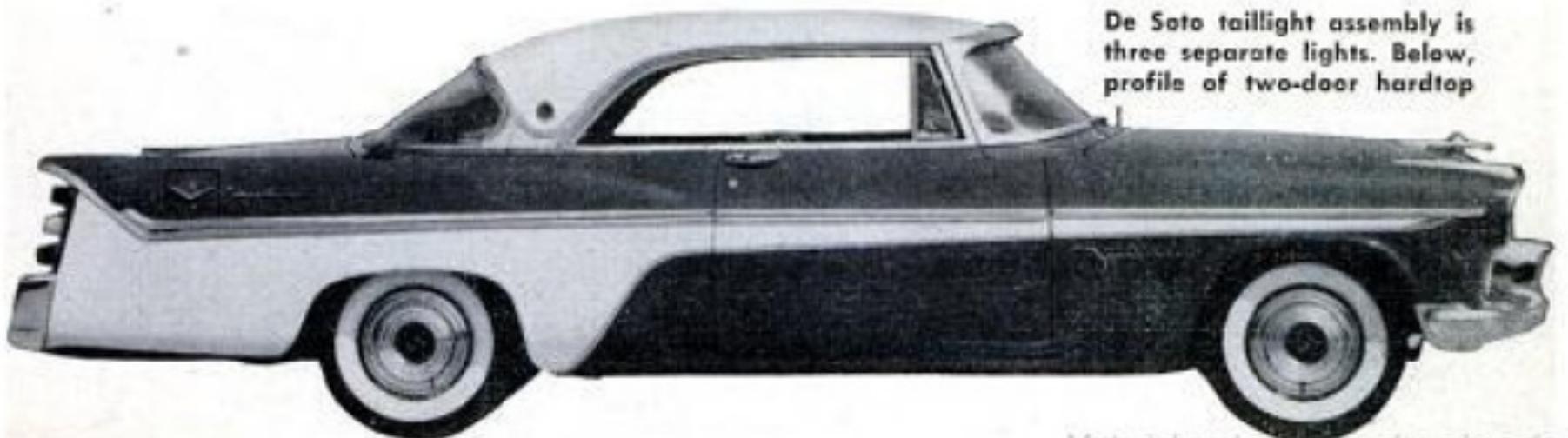
The six-cylinder is unchanged except for a slight increase in compression ratio (7.6:1).

Combustion chambers in the V8 have been reshaped. Valves are larger and intake ports improved for better breathing. Turbulence caused by valve action has been reduced. Fuel mixture burns more evenly and gasoline economy is said to be improved noticeably. New mechanical valve tappets improve the lightweight valve train. As previously, the Plymouth V8 uses regular gasoline.

The four-door hardtop is available only in the Belvedere series. All station wagons for 1956 are in a separate series, known as the Suburban. There are three basic



De Soto taillight assembly is three separate lights. Below, profile of two-door hardtop



CHRYSLER



New Yorker uses two-toning to emphasize its finlike rear fenders. Exhaust pipes are invisible in rear view

models: the two-door with two bench seats; the four-door with two bench seats; and the four-door with three bench seats. The most luxurious of the wagons, the Sport Suburban, has a permanent luggage rack built into the roof.

Dashboard layout has been changed. The oil and ammeter dials have been replaced with flashing lights. All engine instruments are now directly in front of the driver.

Plymouth has gone back to the pull-type door handles, dropping the push-button type used in 1955.

Dodge

Two-toning on the Dodge Lancer series has been changed to put the emphasis on the finlike rear fenders. The sharp dip of the chrome strip comes just a few inches forward of the taillights. The four-door hardtop is in the Lancer series.

The new Super-Powered Super Red Ram V8, as it is called, develops 230 horsepower with its optional power pack, consisting of a four-barrel carburetor, dual exhausts,

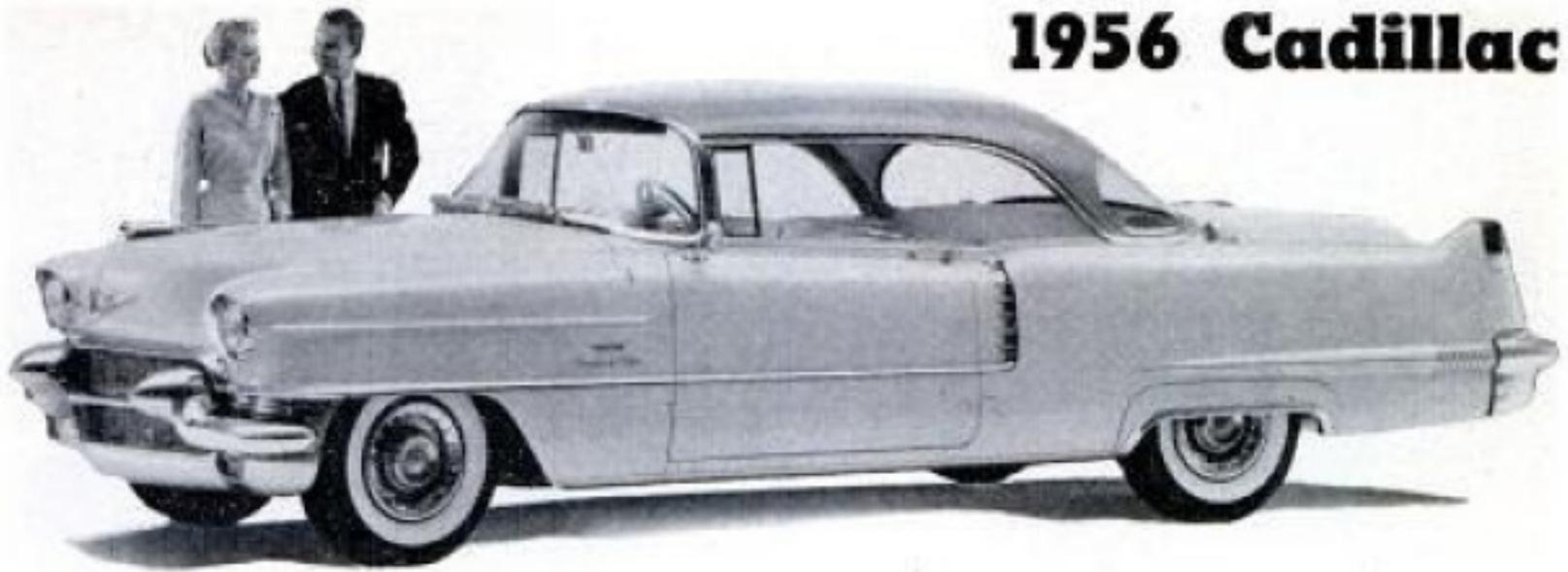
(Continued to page 254)

Longer this year by 5½ inches, the Imperial has bigger rear fenders, larger and jauntier gunsight taillights

IMPERIAL



1956 Cadillac

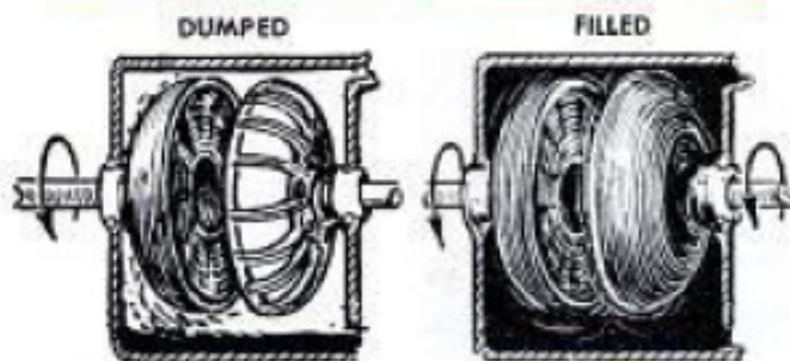
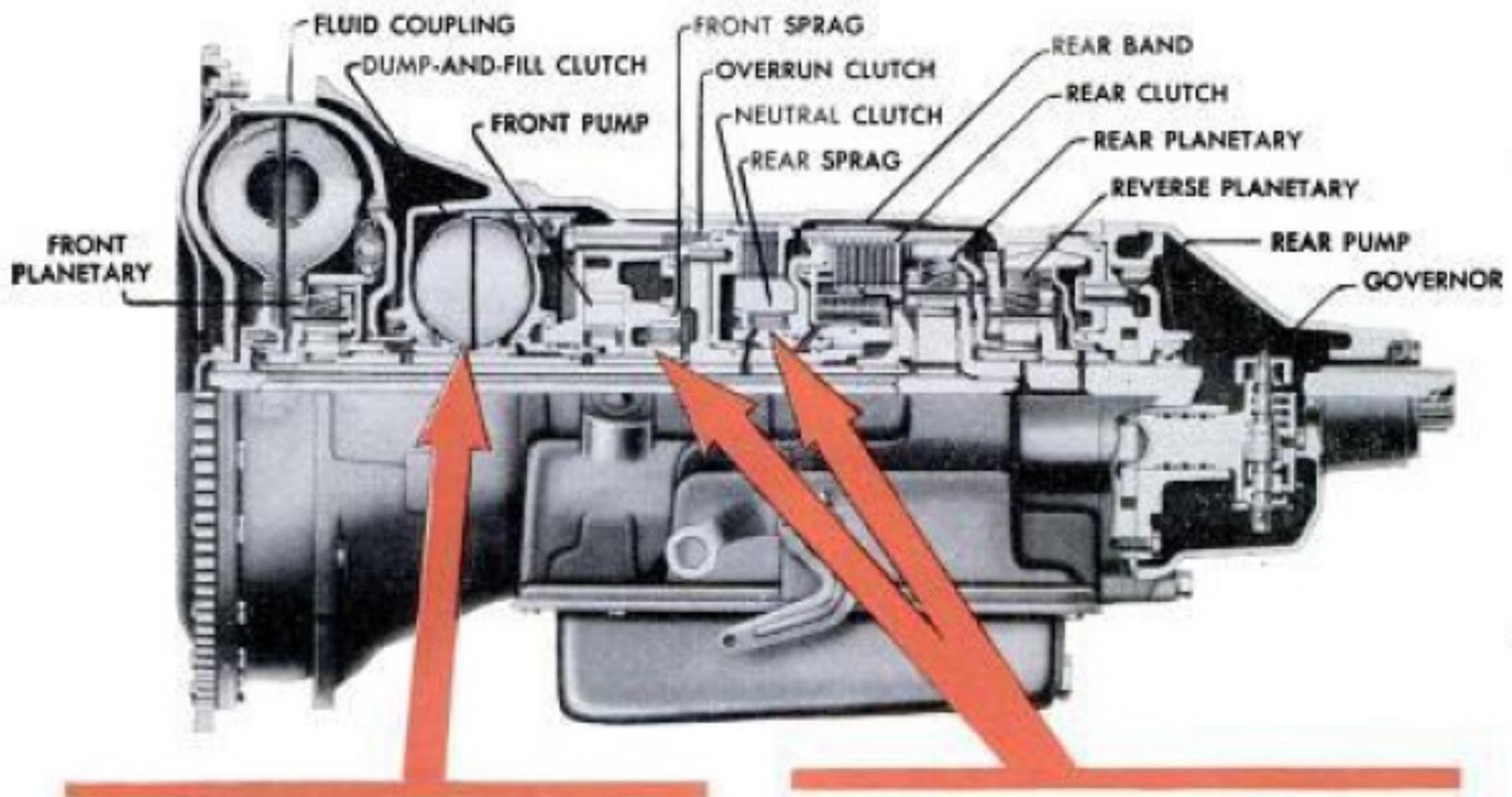


BIG NEWS at Cadillac is mechanical: A new engine and a Hydra-Matic that uses a dump-and-fill clutch and two sprag clutches to shift gears without jerking (see below). The new V8 engine has a 365-cubic-inch displacement (last year: 331). Horsepower is 285 on the Cadillac, 305 on the Eldorado. Both develop 400 pound feet of torque. Over-all ratio of power steering is 19.5:1, faster than last year's 21.3:1.

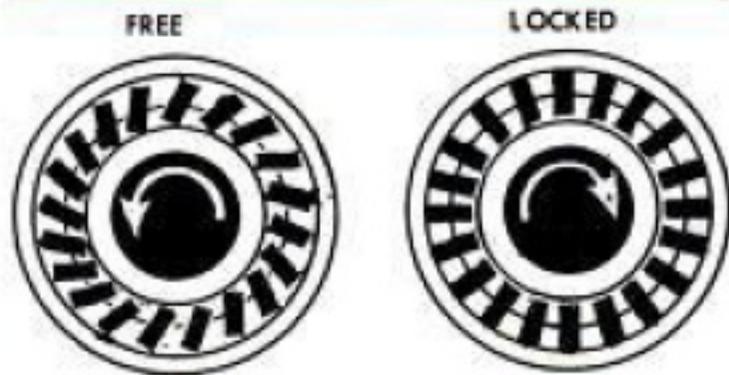
Styling maintains the Cadillac look. New are wider headlight hoods, parking lights in bumpers, an aluminum grille which you

can get in yellow-gold color if you wish. Rear bumper is restyled to make the rear end appear lower. More chrome trim is apparent. There is even a delicate chrome line running along upper portion of the rear fender, right up to the famed fishtail.

Also new: Center-mounted glove compartment; two ash trays and lighters on dash; antenna drops completely out of sight into small well in front fender; power seat tilts as well as moves back and forth, up and down; hump in front floor is lower; air conditioning available on convertibles.



Dump-and-fill clutch is a fluid coupling that transmits torque when full of oil (right), disengages without jerk when oil is dumped



Sprag clutch turns freely one way (left) but as planetary reaction tries to go the other way, the tiny pawls jam so it cannot rotate



Packard Patrician

1956 Packard, Clipper



Clipper Custom



Caribbean Convertible



Four-door hardtops are available in all three Pontiac lines. Shown here is the top-price Star Chief version

FIRST OF THE General Motors cars to offer 1956 models, Pontiac features a four-door hardtop and the new Hydra-Matic.

The hardtop or pillarless four-door sedan (shown above) is 1½ inches lower than a standard four-door sedan. Yet rear-seat legroom is 40.7 inches (standard four-door's is 42.0 inches). Rear-seat hiproom is 62.8 inches (standard's is 63.1 inches).

The redesigned Hydra-Matic retains its previous high-performance, high-economy four-speeds-forward advantages, but eliminates jerky shifts by eliminating the bands that caused them. These bands, which formerly put the planetary units in

and out of reduction, required frequent adjustment to prevent jerkiness. This year, bands are not used (except for one that functions only during down-hill braking in Low). A second, smaller fluid coupling acts as a dump-and-fill clutch to smooth out gear changes. For an explanation of the sprag clutch and the dump-and-fill clutch which provide jerk-free shifts, see page 93.

Displacement of the V8 engine has been increased to 316.6 cubic inches by boring out the cylinders to 3.94 inches. Stroke remains unchanged at 3.25 inches. Horsepower is 227 on Star Chief models, 205 and 192 on the others.

Some of the styling changes you will note are new grille, bumper, two-toning, chrome bands recessed in hood

