

1. Customizing does not have to be an expensive proposition. Often the removal of a small piece of chrome or alteration of a hood ornament can give a car a new look. This is true of the '53 and '54 Mercury. At Burbank's Valley Custom Shop they have devised a small alteration which gives the air scoop a new, cleaner look. The elongated hood ornament is replaced with a small, flush plate. The job is simple and the cost is little . . . only \$5.95, but the change in appearance cannot be measured in dollars and cents. The first step is to remove the hood ornament. It is bolted to the hood from the underside. Loosen all bolts and lift the ornament off hood.

2. Then, remove the air scoop plate by unbolting it beneath the hood. Fill the holes used for two ornament bolts, but do not fill the forward holes which secure the air scoop. Holes can be filled with welding rod or bronze rod. Be careful not to over heat the surrounding area. Too much heat will cause hood to warp. Fill the holes with welding rod, bringing the welding metal above the surface of the hood. Check the underside of the hood to be certain the rod has penetrated through the holes to make a solid, long-lasting union. Heat the metal around the holes to a bright red to equalize contraction. Do this to avoid warpage.



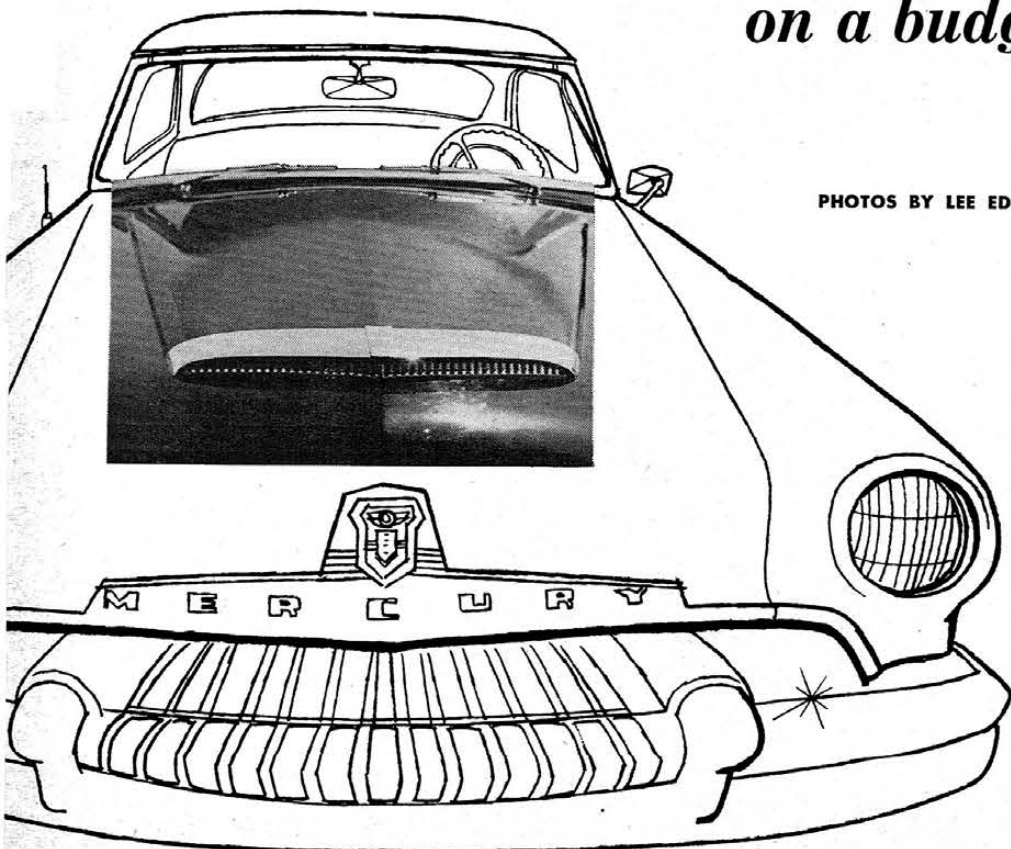
5. Even after filing, the hood will not be perfectly smooth. The heat of the welding torch plus grinding will cause an uneven contour to develop and it will be necessary to even it with a body hammer. Use a flat body hammer for the job. Run your hand over the hood. You can feel the high and low spots. Pound out the high spots from the top and bring up the low areas from the bottom. For small dents use a dolly and body hammer. Check your work frequently to be certain you are not overdoing the project and hammering low spots into metal where none had existed before. When working use light hammer blows on the metal.

## \$5.95 CUSTOM

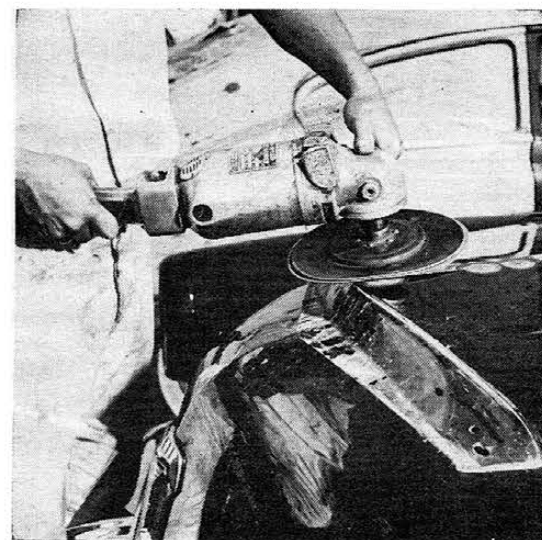
### A "different" Mercury

### on a budget

PHOTOS BY LEE EDWARDS

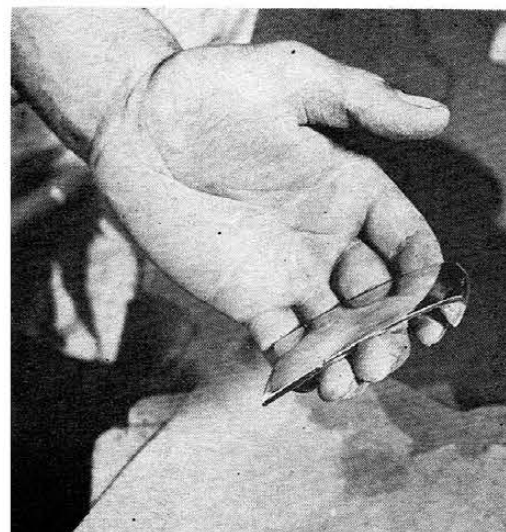
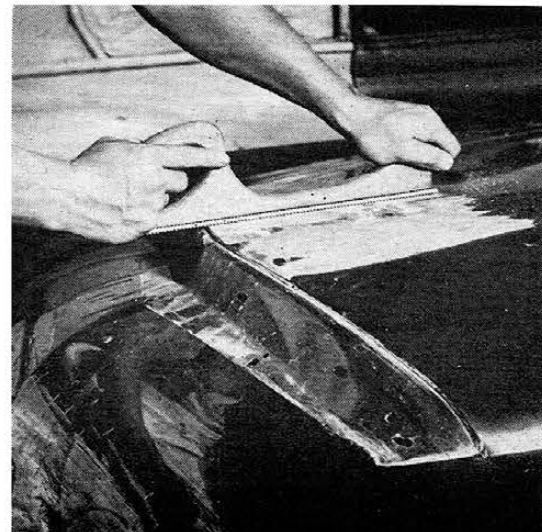


3. After the hood ornament bolt holes have been filled with welding rod the metal should be ground flush. It can be done by hand but the easiest method is with an electric grinder. Use a 16 grit open-coat disc first. This will scrape off surface paint, then change to a 24 closed-coat disc for the actual grinding. Do not try to use the 24 grit for knocking off paint for the pores will be clogged and will not work. Do not press heavily with the grinder. Excess pressure can dent the hood and necessitate extra body work. Dress off the metal around the filled holes at least six inches in all directions for easier working.



6. When the hood metal is perfectly contoured and restored to its original shape the hood is ready for painting. Sand the bright metal with wet paper and then use metal preparation. For the exact procedure to follow in the preparation of metal for painting see *MOTOR Life*, October, 1954. When sanding, use a fine water sand paper and feather the edges to avoid the possibility of an "edge" after painting. You can use an oscillating sander if you wish, for the preliminary sanding, but final smoothing must be done by hand. Wash the sanded area with water to remove all particles of paint and metal before painting.

4. Next, finish dressing the hood with a body file. There are several types available but a flat, medium-toothed file will work best. Dress off the metal following the contour of the hood. There is a slight peak in the center of the hood. Shape the weld metal to conform to this. Work the file in one direction only. Do not file in circular cuts. It will cause the file to dig gouges into the hood which can only be filled with lead. Work the entire area until the metal is shaped properly and is smooth. When filing, work with a light touch. Do not try to tear off deep layers of metal. A light file gives a smooth finish.



7. When the hood has been repainted (it is not necessary to paint entire hood, only the area which was sanded) you can replace the stock air scoop plate. Bolt this in position. Many owners of '53 Mercury cars prefer to replace '53 scoop plate with '54 plate because of the vertical design on face of the '54 scoop. The indentation at the top of the plate, which was made for the ornament, is filled with a special chromed center-plate manufactured by Valley Custom. The plate bolts to the air scoop through same hole used by the ornament. No new holes are required for the plate beyond the width of the air scoop.