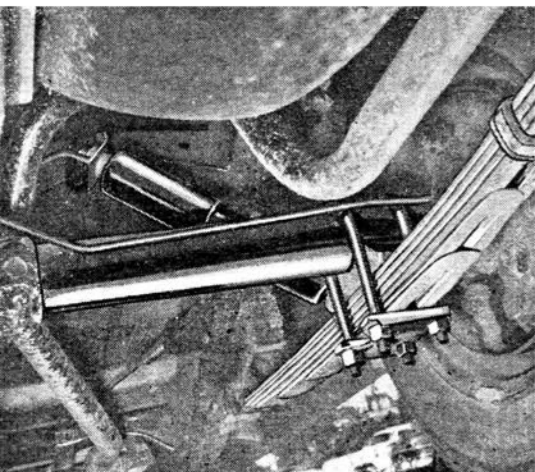


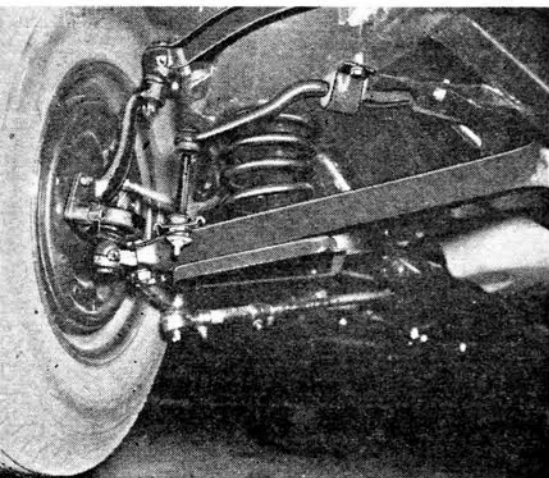


# '55 Mercury

You'll search a long time before you find a better-handling car than this one



Rear shock absorbers are mounted at more horizontal angle. This coupled with 3-inch wider tread affords smooth ride



Ball-joint front suspension replaces king-pin setup, permits better cornering

Roadability of the Mercury is excellent. Ball-joint front suspension and repositioned rear shocks make big difference

by Fred Bodley

**THE EVOLUTIONARY MERCURY.** If you remember MT's road test report of the '54 Mercury (May '54 MT), these words will ring a bell. Performance figures may have been a disappointment to some of our readers considering that last year was the introduction of the much publicized overhead-valve V8 engine. This change in engine design was comparable to the stubby appendages of nature which will later become legs, for performance and handling are the outstanding qualities of the '55 Mercury.

**Test car:** Custom series 4-door sedan equipped with Mercomatic transmission and 188-hp engine, without being loaded with optional power equipment. Dual exhausts were installed on our test car by the factory, but not the high compression head; usually duals are installed only on the 198-hp engine.

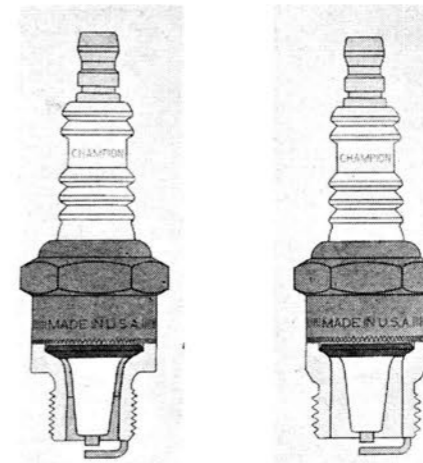
**Engine:** Design is basically same as short-stroke '54 engine, with mechanical valve gear, but with additional 36 cubic inches displacement (292 total). Torque upped 26 foot-pounds (274 at 2500 rpm).

Compression ratio increased to 7.6 to 1. Engine with new vibration damper and redesigned oil bath air cleaner with less restriction, runs considerably quieter at all speeds than in '54.

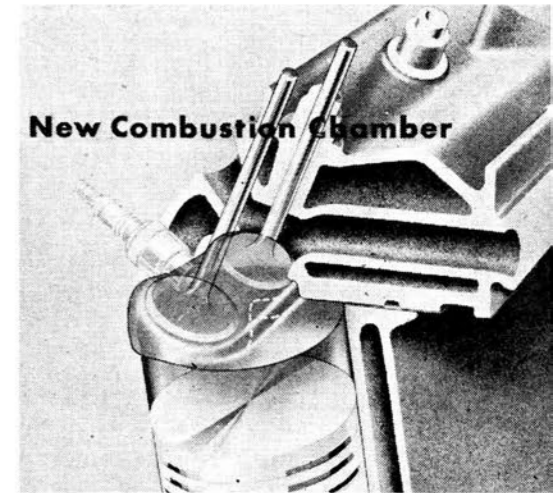
**Other options:** If you want still more power, you may buy the power package (\$43) for Custom and Mercury series, or select a car in the Montclair series, which has more powerful engine (198 hp, 286 foot-pounds torque) as standard equipment. Compression ratio on the engine upped to 8.5 to 1. Both equipped with new 4-barrel carburetor; dual exhausts on 198-hp version. You can obtain overdrive or add all the usual power equipment now found on today's cars, including power steering, power brakes, 4-way power seat, power windows, and air conditioning. How all this extra equipment affects performance will be subject of a "Driving Around" report of a Mercury so equipped (sans air conditioning) in future issue of MT.

**What the car is like to drive:** Entry and exit easy, with driver comfortable on

well-padded foam rubber seats. Steering wheel position, tho higher than some competitive makes, does have advantage that column does not restrict leg movement. Instruments, mounted high on dash in fan-shaped cluster, rate as most easily read of any '55 car by MT Research staff. You can take one glance at clearly marked, medium-green numerals, unobstructed by horn ring or anything else, and tell if pointers on generator, fuel, oil, and temperature gauges are in normal operating positions, a good safety factor with today's traffic conditions demanding constant attention to road ahead. Along with almost all other makes, Mercury has adopted new wrap-around windshield this year, with usual increase in forward vision. Needed, tho, is windshield wiper with wider sweep



New Turbo Action plug (right), with greater clearance between insulator and shell at firing end, gives wide heat range



New Combustion Chamber

High turbulence "open wedge" shaped combustion chambers allow efficient valve cooling, reduce fuel octane needs

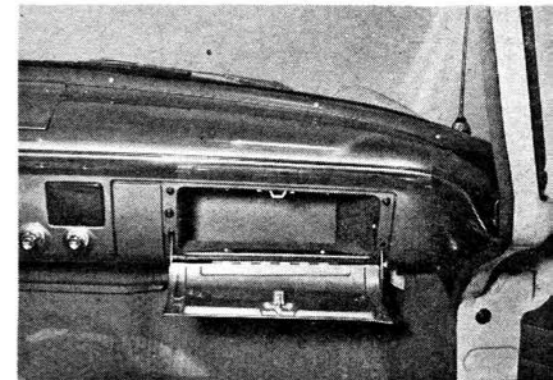
Photos by Tom Medley

to eliminate uncleared areas in rainstorms. Both front fenders easily seen. Deletion of dummy air scoop at front of hood gives close-down-in-front visibility. Rear vision good thru large wrap-around rear window; good, narrow window posts. Rising slightly in seat aids driver in seeing right rear fender, helps in parking. Distortion minimum thru both windshield and curved

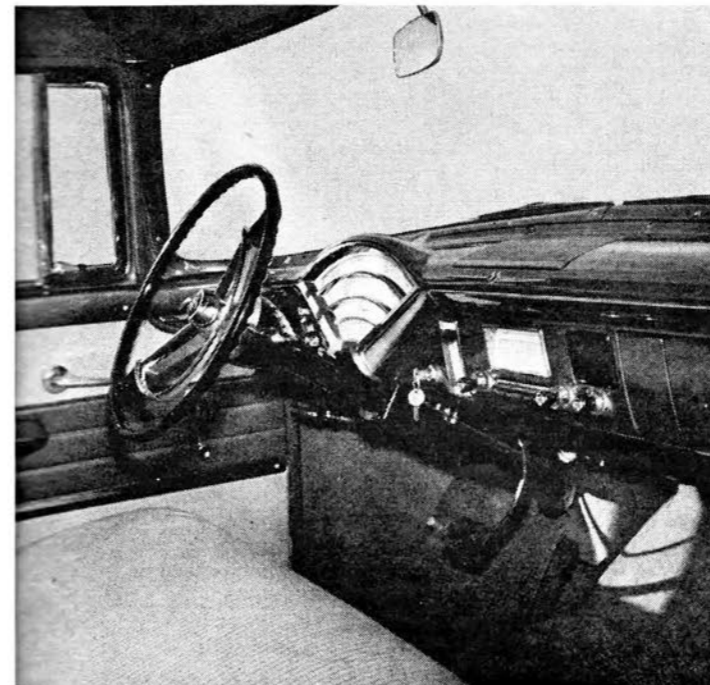
rear window. Heat and vent controls convenient to driver on either side of steering column, lighted adequately for night operation. They're simple, easily set. Both heating and cooling volume ample. Glove compartment, on small side, is too far right, not handy for driver.

**Ease of handling:** Our Mercury was one of few cars tested so far this year equipped only with manual steering and standard brakes; frankly, they felt good to all of our drivers—like old times, said one—so on Mercury you might think of saving yourself some money by ordering car without the extra equipment.

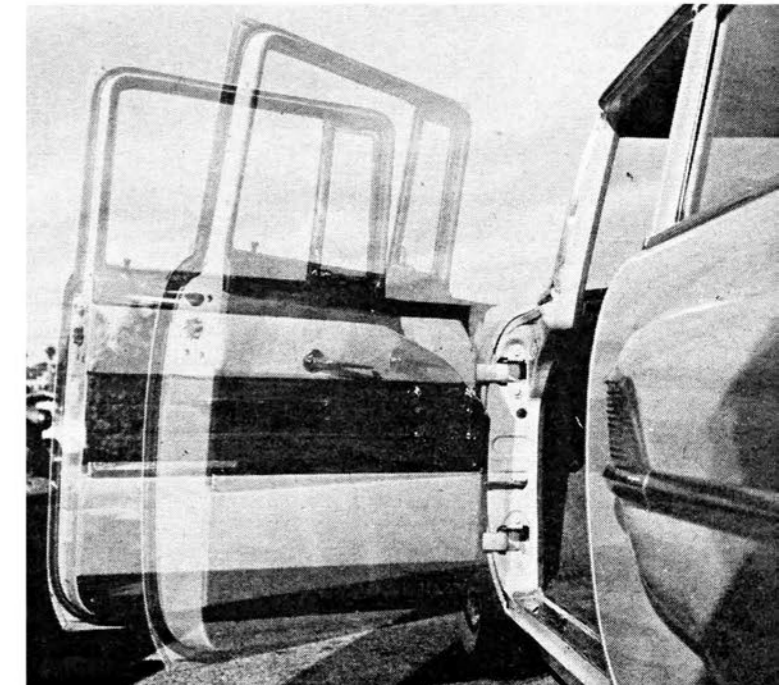
**Acceleration:** Increased displacement with healthy horsepower and torque rise, com-



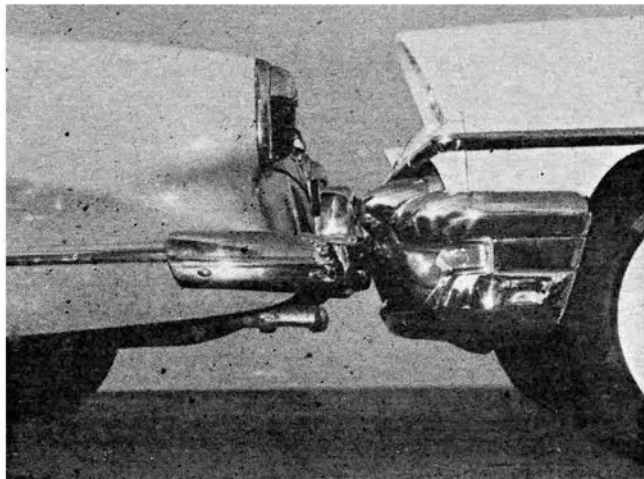
Mercury glove compartment is on smallish side and is located to the far right, making it difficult for driver to reach



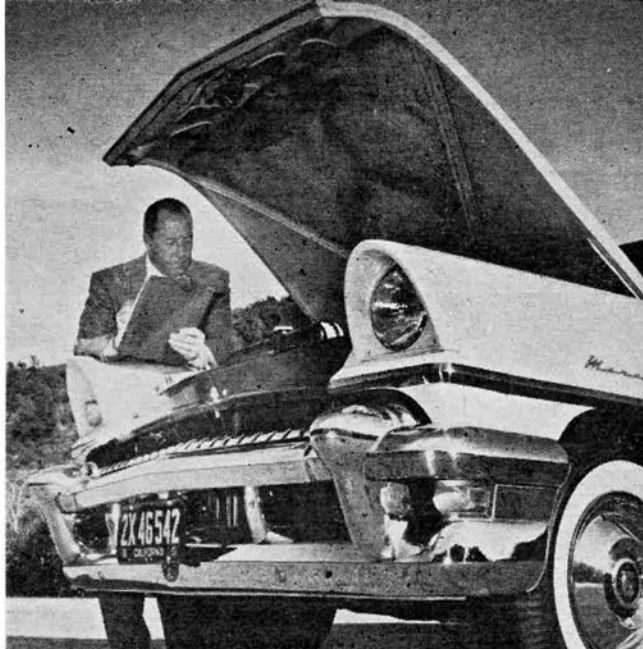
High-mounted steering column allows free leg movement. Fan-shaped panel clusters instruments into easy-to-read group



Front doors have handy 2-position stops (at 50 and 75 degree angles), remain open well at both positions for convenience



Mercury has large 2-piece bumper. As is shown in the above photo, it should afford ample protection in case of collision



188-horsepower V8 rests in a roomy compartment. Most components are accessible, but plugs are under exhaust manifold

combined with kickdown feature for engaging low gear when needed for fast standing start acceleration, has proved to be potent combination in '55 Mercury. New hydraulic control system, together with improved clutch and band engagement, provides better automatic shift feel in DRIVE range, smoother upshifts and downshifts between DRIVE and LOW range, and better kickdown feel at speeds above 45 mph. Kickdown into intermediate at any speed under 65 mph, or into LOW under 25 mph, is fast and smooth. There's no lurch; engagement is smooth and shift is tight now with no accompanying outburst of noise from the engine (over-revving, or slippage). Smoothness of acceleration is deceiving. Altho forward surge is there when throttle is opened, we were surprised to find that figures put Mercury into "hot car" class. For instance, 0 to 60 averaged 11.4 seconds, chopping 3.4 seconds off last year's Mercury; 50 to 80 tests resulted in 13.8 seconds, 5.7 seconds better than last year. Another big

surprise was top speed—105.3 as against 97.7 for '54 Mercury—7.6 mph increase.

**Braking:** Test results indicated that improvements (more braking area on drums, and better operation) were not in vain. From steady 30 and 45 mph car stopped 6 feet sooner; from 60 it stopped 14 feet better. All were straight-line, controlled stops. Mechanical leverage ratio of power brakes (not on test car) has been revised, which improves operation when power is off, allowing you to stop Mercury quickly without excessive foot pressure.

**Roadability:** Mercury has proven ball-joint suspension system; gives driver unexcelled roadability at high speeds and on curves. Rear shocks are nearer horizontal to reduce tramp and shake. Body lean is apparent only on sharpest curves. Straightaway driving is untiring, with practically no wheel correction necessary. Understeer characteristics give car drifting qualities around fast turns instead of

rear end breaking loose. Streetcar tracks don't have tendency to whip car aside. In relation to cars tested so far this year in Mercury's price class, every MT Research driver agreed on excellent roadability qualities of Mercury.

**Ride:** Definitely softer this year (firm on '54 models). Its level, well-controlled ride—no diving or excessive rear-end rebound on dips—gives driver confidence, definitely lessens fatigue on long trips.

**What the car is like to live with:** Riding in either front or back seat of Mercury, because of its firm suspension, does not give passengers a floating sensation; no discomfort is apparent either, even traveling at high speeds over severe dips. Quoting our rear-seat passengers, comfort is near tops, with plenty of room for heads, shoulders, legs—both front and back. Tho not on the luxury side, Custom series' interior is pleasing, durable. Monterey and Montclair (*Continued on page 44*)



## TEST CAR AT A GLANCE

### '55 Mercury with Mercomatic

(General specifications on page 44)

#### 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.)

56 road hp @ 1700 rpm and 27 mph  
70 road hp @ 2000 rpm and 43 mph  
95 road hp @ 2500 rpm and 64 mph  
Max. 100 road hp @ 3100 rpm and 82 mph

#### TOP SPEED

(In miles per hour over surveyed 1/4-mile.)  
Fastest 1-way run 107.9  
Slowest 1-way run 103.8  
Average of 4 runs 105.3

#### ACCELERATION

(In seconds, checked with 5th wheel and electric speedometer.)

Standing start 1/4-mile (78.0 mph) 18.0  
0-30 mph 4.2  
0-60 mph 11.4  
10-30 mph 3.3  
30-50 mph 5.3  
50-80 mph 13.8

#### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

(Checked with 5th wheel and electric speedometer.)

Car speedometer read 32 @ true 30 mph  
49 @ true 45 mph  
65 @ true 60 mph  
81 @ true 75 mph  
114 @ top speed

#### FUEL CONSUMPTION

(In miles per gallon; checked with fuel flow-meter, 5th wheel, and electric speedometer. Mobilgas Regular used.)

Steady 30 mph 20.6  
Steady 45 mph 19.9  
Steady 60 mph 16.2  
Steady 75 mph 13.4

Stop-and-go driving  
over measured course 12.7  
Tank average for 1090 miles 14.7

#### STOPPING DISTANCE

(To the nearest foot; checked with electrically actuated detonator.)

30 mph 43  
45 mph 93  
60 mph 153

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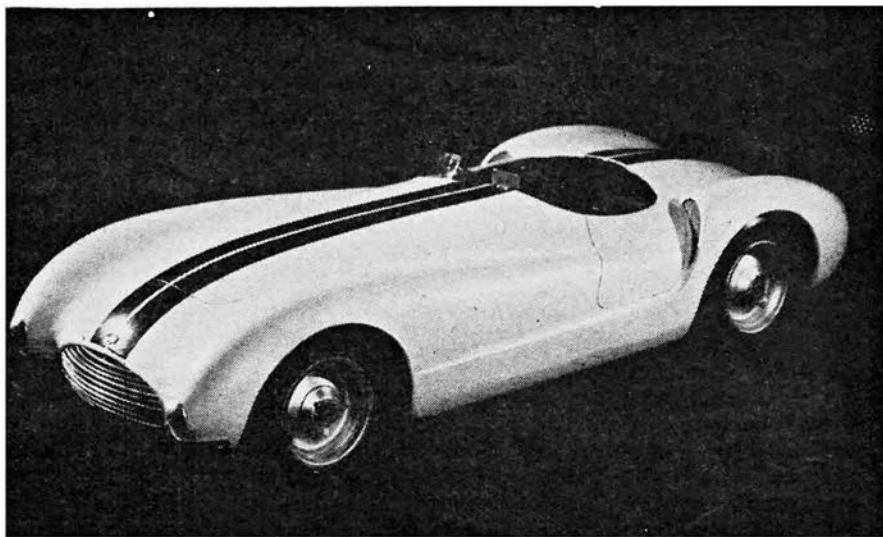
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# OFFY-POWERED CUNNINGHAM

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**E**UROPEAN PSYCHIATRISTS have profited little from the neuroses of their car builders who felt themselves threatened by U.S. invasion of international sports car competition. This new Cunningham may help the doctors out. Brief specifications: 4-cylinder, twin-over-

head camshaft, oversquare Offenhauser engine; 270 horsepower at 6000 rpm from 179 cubic inches displacement (just under the new 3-liter limit); magneto ignition; coil spring suspension all around, with ball joints at front and de Dion type at rear; welded steel tube frame.

Continued from page 32

## Mercury Road Test

models have colorful interior trim, definitely more eye-appealing and, of course, more expensive. Mercury's trunk is ample, holding all of test equipment easily. Tire changing is conventional. Exclusive with Mercury in its field is new Multi-Luber powered lubrication system. All chassis bearings are kept lubricated by merely pressing button on instrument panel (see page 52).

**Engine accessibility:** Mercury's new 18-millimeter conical seat sparkplugs are below exhaust manifold, making removal a slight problem. Other engine accessories are located with easy accessibility. Generator and fuel pump are low on block. Battery is forward, well-ventilated. Engine compartment, without usual extra power equipment, is quite roomy.

**Fuel economy:** Rear axle ratio was changed from 3.54 to 3.15, giving higher mileage potential than before. This change possible because of the new kickdown feature of Mercomatic transmission. Results: better fuel economy and, as added bonus, better acceleration and higher top speed—a combination difficult to obtain. Mercury engineers have done it, should be commended. We obtained better mile-

age at all steady speeds except at 30 mph, which brought our overall average back to 16.6 mpg (as against 16.4 last year).

—Fred Bodley

### GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

**ENGINE:** Ohv V8. Bore 3.75 in. Stroke 3.30 in. Stroke bore ratio 0.880:1. Compression ratio 7.6 to 1. Displacement 292 cu. in. Advertised bhp 188 @ 4400 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.644. Piston travel @ max. bhp 2420 ft. per min. Max. bmep 141.5 psi. Max. torque 274 ft.-lb. @ 2400 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 Mercomatic, 3-element torque converter with planetary gears. RATIOS: Drive 1.47 x converter ratio and torque converter only (2.40, 1.47 and converter only, at full throttle through downshift detent); Low, 2.40 x converter ratio; Reverse, 2.00 x converter ratio. Maximum converter ratio at stall 2.1. OVERDRIVE transmission is standard shift with planetary gears. RATIO: 0.7.

**REAR AXLE RATIOS:** Standard 3.73, 4.09 optional; Mercomatic 3.15, 3.54 optional; Overdrive 4.09, 3.73 optional.

**DIMENSIONS:** Wheelbase 119 in. Tread 58 front, 59 rear. Wheelbase/tread ratio 2.05:1. Overall width 76.4 in. Overall length 206.3 in. Overall height (empty) 63.1 in. Turning diameter 42.4 ft. Turns lock to lock 5.25. Test car weight 3790 lbs. Test car weight/bhp ratio 20.2:1. Weight distribution 56% front, 44% 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) CUSTOM 2-door sedan \$2218, 4-door sedan \$2277, hardtop \$2341, 4-door station wagon \$2686. MONTEREY 4-door sedan \$2400, hardtop \$2465, 4-door station wagon \$2844. MONTCLAIR hardtop \$2631 and \$2712 (plastic top), convertible \$2712.

**ACCESSORIES:** Mercomatic \$190, overdrive \$110, power package \$43, radio \$97, heater \$73, power steering \$108, power brakes \$41, power seat \$70, power windows \$103, air conditioning \$594.

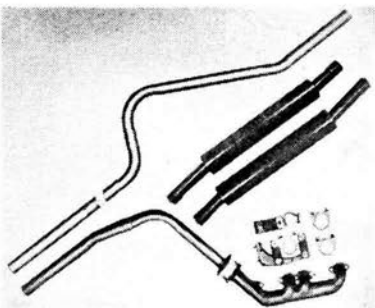
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