

DATELINE: DETROIT



How the new torsion bar system will work in stock car competition should be revealed soon. Bill Holland, shown here, is due to hit the road this summer.

HOLLAND TO DRIVE PACKARD

BILL HOLLAND, well-known race driver and winner at Indy in 1949, is hitting the stock car race trail in a Packard. The interesting thing is that he apparently has at least the semi-official blessing of the factory, something like the deal Marshall Teague had with Hudson for so long. This is something of a switch for this company, which has been regarded in the past as one of the more conservative in the industry. At any rate, the combination of Holland and the torsion bar-equipped, V-8 powered Packard should be an interesting one to watch.

HORSEPOWER UP IN '56?

AS REPORTED in this column earlier, the trend to more powerful engines will continue with the 1956 models. Indications are that this will be true pretty generally in the industry—from the low priced cars to the big luxury jobs.

At least one of the "big three" cars will have an engine displacing very nearly 300 cubic inches; presumably this will put its horsepower rating at close to 200. If this is true for one, you can be sure the competition won't be far behind.

(Perhaps you've noticed the trend in recent years in several companies to pass engines on down from big models to the medium-sized jobs and from the mediums to the lowest-priced models. Look for this to hold true again in '56. This is a factor which will help bring hp ratings up to almost 200 in the low-priced field.)

As reported here last month, at least one luxury model will sport more than 380 cubic inches; several others will be

near, equal or over this figure. This means some of our stock sedans—not limited production models, understand — will probably have in the neighborhood of 300 horses under the hood.

NEW RAMBLER TO BE NICE!

THE DOUGHTY RAMBLER, rapidly becoming the bread-and-butter car of the American Motors line, will be even more attractive to buyers in '56, reports indicate. Those who have seen the next version of this car are unanimous in their approval of the changes the coming year will bring for the Rambler.

As most automobile fanciers know, the famous Italian designer, Pinin Farina, has acted as a consultant on this car for several years. How much he had to do with the '56 model isn't certain but, whoever worked on it, it promises to be something pretty nice.

Incidentally, reports to the contrary, it looks like the Rambler will be marketed under both the Nash and Hudson label again next year. There have been rumors that it was slated to go strictly under the Rambler tag in 1956 but no less an authority than George Romney says that won't be the case.

FUEL INJECTION NEXT

FUEL INJECTION, pioneered by hot rodders and now used universally by Indianapolis race cars, may be one of the next major engine innovations out of Detroit. All major companies are working with various types of injection systems and several reliable sources report that fuel injection may show up on passenger

cars in two to three years. Anticipated benefits of fuel injection are improved performance and better economy. Biggest problems to be overcome are cost and perfecting them so they will operate equally well in all speed ranges.

1955 CARIBBEAN BOWS

SPECULATION as to whether or not Packard would continue its sporty Caribbean was answered by the appearance of the 1955 version not long ago. Packard reports it will be a "limited edition," with less than 1,000 to be built. No more than five will be sold in any one city, so owners won't be seeing mates to their car every time they turn a corner.

Incidentally, this car is a good one to watch for hints of Packard's to come. The company calls it a "style-pilot series for future design plans" and uses it to check reaction to features they may be considering for up-coming models.

Power-plant is Packard's high torque, 275 hp V-8 (352 inches) and the Caribbean has the now-famous torsion bar suspension. It's on a 127-inch wheelbase and has a three-color paint treatment. Among the many power features are Twin-Ultramatic transmission, power brakes, steering and front seat. Advertised delivered price is just under \$6,000.

NEW "SKIDLESS" TIRE

A NEW TIRE which is claimed to give 30 per cent more skid protection than standard tires has been announced by the Gillette division of U.S. Rubber. A tubeless nylon tire, it has a special groove pattern which the company says helps minimize both forward and lateral skids. It's designed so that the tread opens slightly during braking and acceleration and the extra traction edges reduce wheel slippage.

GM PATENTS AUTOMATIC CHOKE

IN APRIL, after 23 years of legal maneuvering, GM was granted a patent on the automatic choke. Its patent is good for the next 17 years; although it may not claim infringement prior to April, it can from now on. The implications are, of course, many. This may serve to hasten introduction of fuel injection, now scheduled to appear on limited-production models in 1956, and see widespread use by 1957.

COMING UP

WATCH FOR a new electronic picture-tube device for mounting to the front of a car. Its purpose is to allow motorists to "see" ahead when visibility is nil. The gadget, apparently ready for installation, causes unseen objects to be reflected on a screen inside the car.

One of the low-priced big-production models in 1956 will be equipped with torsion bars *a la* Packard, but will not carry the load-levelizer, according to Detroit reports. And 14-inch wheels, a good bet for 1957, will appear in the low-priced field on some '56 cars.

AMERICAN MOTORS ANNIVERSARY

AMERICAN MOTORS celebrated the first anniversary of the merger between Nash-Kelvinator and Hudson by announcing a \$60,000,000 product development and by taking a group of newsmen and writers on a tour of its Wisconsin plants. This visit demonstrated forcibly the excellent job of integration the new company has done.

The \$60,000,000 will be spent within the next 18 months on new engine and production facilities in Kenosha as well as on tooling for '56 models. Though the company made no statement to this effect, announcement of the expansion program aroused speculation that American Motors may be about ready to start building their own V-8 engine. (They now buy V-8s from Packard, but it's known that Nash and Hudson have done extensive development work on such a power plant.) A good share of the money will go into increasing Rambler production capacity to 1200 per day. The peak now is about 800. This model now accounts for about half of American Motors' auto pro-

duction and sales, figures heavily in the company's plans for the future.

AM President George Romney is convinced there is a vast potential for this type of "personal and individual" car. He points to the growing number of two-car families for proof. In fact, the company's dealers recently launched a door-to-door campaign designed to sell the idea that "every woman should have a car of her own."

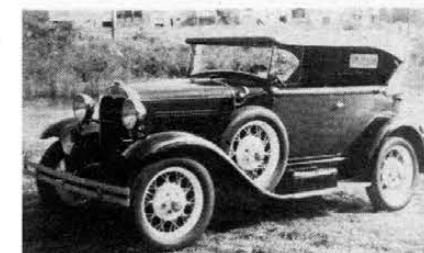
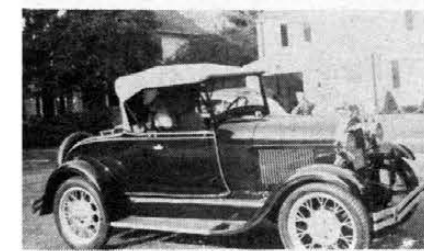
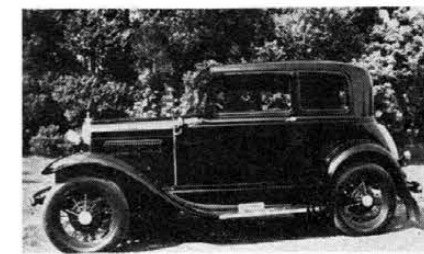
The highlight of the Wisconsin tour, incidentally, was the amazing Kenosha plant where Ramblers, Hudson Hornets and Wasps and Nash Ambassadors and Statesmen all roll off the end of the same assembly line. This is something unique in these days of highly specialized plants. It's astonishing that AM was able to accomplish this in less than a year; especially when you consider that, in addition to the variety of models, things were further complicated by the fact that several different engines and a variety of transmissions are used in the various makes of automobiles.

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MOTOR Life, August, 1955



Model A's like this will soon meet in Dearborn. From top, a 1931 Victoria, a 1929 roadster and a 1930 phaeton. Club has approximately 600 active members.

MODEL A STILL LIVES

ALTHOUGH it's been nearly 25 years since the last Model "A" was built by Ford, the doughty little car is far from dead. Many still remember the Model "A" fondly and one group, the Model "A" Restorers Club, is devoted to seeing that the car continues to live. Although organized only two years ago, the club now has some 600 members and will culminate its activities with a pilgrimage to Dearborn this summer. The club has its headquarters in Connecticut, but has chapters all over the country. President and founder of the club, William Hall, reports that the group now publishes a monthly bulletin for members. Anyone interested in the organization can contact Hall at 71 Lexington Road, West Hartford, Conn. The Model "A" is undoubtedly the lowest-priced "marque" to have a club organized in its honor, by the way. This mark of distinction has been reserved for such cars as Bentley, MG, Cord, etc.

NEW BOSS OF FORD STYLING

THE increasing importance of styling in the automobile field was emphasized recently when Ford Motor Company established the new position of vice president and director of styling and picked

George W. Walker, nationally known industrial designer, to fill it.

This is the first time Ford has had a styling director and is the first time a representative of this field has been named a vice president of the company. The new emphasis on styling shows how things have changed from the days when the customer "could have any color he wants—as long as it's black!"

Walker is firmly convinced of the value and importance of styling, bracketing it in importance in human affairs today with "steam, electricity, engineering or economics." He feels this is especially true in the automotive field. "Styling can make or break a car or a company," he says.

In an exclusive interview with *MOTOR Life* only a few days after taking over his new job, Walker expressed a few of his views on styling in general and what



George Walker, the new boss of Ford styling. He will shape future Ford cars.

direction it will take in the future. He feels cars will tend to become lower, but that length and width won't change significantly.

"A low silhouette makes a car look good on the road and I think we will see a decrease in car heights. We have reached maximum width, however. The size of garages is a limiting factor here. As for length, engineers have done such an excellent job of improving automobile riding qualities, it's not necessary to make them longer to insure a good ride. Proper styling techniques will make cars look longer, however."

He mentioned another phase of styling that is being heard more and more—"sculpturing in sheet metal."

"We feel that the highlights, a very important factor, are very good in today's cars and that they will be accentuated more in the future by fine sculpturing of the sheet metal."

What does it take to be a good stylist? "He has to be a combination business

man, engineer, artist and, above all, a man of good taste. An automobile stylist must visualize trends from the consumer's point of view and work in strict collaboration with engineering, manufacturing, sales and advertising departments."

Walker is no stranger either to automobile styling or Ford. His first association with the company was in 1946 when he received a contract to style the 1949 Ford—which won several awards for styling excellence. Retained as a styling consultant since that time, he has contributed a great deal to styling of later models.

He entered the industrial design field in 1928 and established his offices in Detroit in 1929. He has since styled more than 3,000 products for a wide range of national concerns.

VARIETY PLAGUES DEALERS

VARIETY of models is the spice of life for automobile buyers but it's a headache for dealers. Due to the varied series offered in most makes, many engine-transmission combinations, a rainbow of colors and dozens of optional equipment features, dealers have to stock more cars than ever before. Even at that it's practically impossible for them to keep enough cars on hand to fill customer demands.

Dealers report that most buyers want something unique. They check thru sales literature and come up with an order for a car that's "different." Then the dealer has to try and dig it up.

This "multiple-option-itis" has a lot of dealers wishing manufacturers would reduce the number of models instead of increasing them. So if your dealer can't supply you with just the car you want at just the moment you want it, realize he's got his problems too.

RUBBER HUB WHEELS

AN INTERESTING innovation being studied by at least one major auto maker is the rubber hub wheel. Although flexible wheels and mountings of many types have been studied and discarded thru the years, a rubber hub developed by a Cleveland firm for the army has aroused new interest in the subject.

Rand Development Corporation claims to have perfected the device and has a contract to develop and supply samples for an Army "mechanical mule." Basically, Rand's new wheel incorporates a ring of rubber under tension between rim and hub to absorb shocks from all angles, enabling the wheel to hug the road at all times and greatly reduce slipping or skidding along the road.

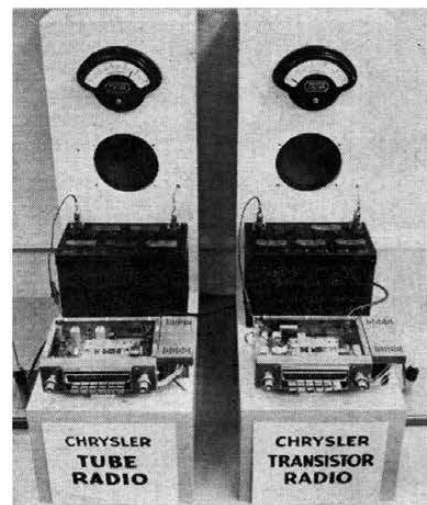
One auto maker is testing a 15-inch Rand wheel and others are reported to be

trying to get the rubber hubs for their own experimentation. In addition, one of the biggest wheel manufacturers in the country has been testing the Rand wheel with an eye toward furnishing it to car companies. Rand doesn't plan to manufacture the wheel itself but hopes to collect from licensees on a royalty basis.

"TRANSISTORIZED" CAR RADIO

A TINY GADGET no larger than a pencil eraser will be a big thing in car radios of the future. The little gismo, a transistor, will first show up in 1956 Chrysler and Imperial cars, which will have the first completely "transistorized" radios in the industry. Though physically minute, transistors are expected to have an important effect in automobile radios.

Why? First, transistorized radios cut power consumption more than 90 per cent. They will run continuously for 140



Comparison test between old and new. Transistor radio, at right, uses .2 amp-eres, against 3.65 amperes of tube type.

hours on a 12-volt battery without recharging—compared to about 10 hours for a conventional set. Second, transistorized radios will be less bulky than vacuum tube sets now in use. It is expected that transistor radios will be as much as 25 per cent smaller than today's, perhaps smaller. Transistors eliminate the need for electron tubes, vibrators, power transformers and rectifiers; the limiting factor in size reduction is the tuner apparatus.

A joint development of Philco and Chrysler—the two companies which teamed up to introduce the first optional equipment car radio 25 years ago—the transistor set is also expected to cut wear and maintenance in car radios. The tiny transistors operate without noticeable heat generation, and it's heat which accounts for much of the wear in conventional sets, say Philco engineers.