TO DAYTONA WITH THE FURY

SCI GOES RACING

By BILL CARROLL

Plymouth digs away from the starting line, marked by pylon standing at water's edge, on first day's run. Smaller NASCAR pylons were spaced one mile apart for entire length of beach course. Fury's gear ratios and rear suspension were ideal in providing maximum "dig" in packed sand. Some overpowered cars buried their wheels in ruts.

"YOU'VE a mile to roll, another through the traps, plus two miles to slow down," said the steward as he slapped the door panel in a friendly o.k. I zeroed the window closed. The starter stepped away, flipped his flag and I was off. Southbound on Daytona's famous racing beach.

Wheel-spin of previous cars had chopped the sand and my Fury did its share of digging deeper ruts. When chassis vibration died, the speedometer flipped past 40 and I stabbed the automatic transmission's "2" button. Full bore now. Both carburetors wide open, throatily gulping cool sea air to feed flying pistons. The engine peaked at 80 as the transmission shifted to direct. The whole car leaped forward as peak torque was thrown at the tires. At 100, it was quieter. Only a faint blur of sound left the engine to match blurred course markers spreading apart to let us scoot through.

A pylon on the left came closer, to sail out of view rearward as the car snapped over a black rubber snake opening the measured mile. The speedometer needle had lost itself behind the number panel. Who cared what it said. The course curved duneward to miss a dip. I didn't turn much, only enough to miss the marker by paint. A dip. I floated. Dipped. Floated. Dipped again. But still heading straight between the blurs. Where did the new pylon come from so quickly? "Snap". I had flipped the snake again. Out of the mile now. Wonder how fast I was going? "Ease off slowly". So I did.

Bumping along the safety road a visitor shouted, "It sounded like you did over a hundred". Then I relaxed and took a couple of deep breaths. This WAS Daytona.

Only ten days before, I had arrived in Detroit to take delivery of a new Fury. Out of Plymouth, by Chrysler. Even 18 degree weather couldn't cool my excitement as the snow covered car was brought in from open storage with electric wipers skittering over the windshield in a futile effort. Ten minutes later, hot water had melted the white blanket revealing the Fury's clean lines. My bags fitted the trunk space, signatures were attached to paperwork, pictures taken at the plant, then we headed for Daytona. It snowed and rained, while foggy mountain roads hampered every attempt at high speed driving. At that it was a quick, comfortable thousand miles with the Fury 318 dual quad engine providing 14.4 miles to each gallon of Pure premium gas.

Our arrival at Daytona was something less than earth shaking. Finding our way about town was a simple process of getting lost—then asking directions. Soon we located a heated swimming pool, with bedroom attached. Orientation completed, we began digging for information to ease the way of Sports Cars Illustrated readers who will visit Daytona next year.

All the speed shops and garages we poked the editorial nose into revealed two things. One; everyone was busier than a new groom and, two; there were loads of horses hidden under those factory "stock" hoods. Smokey Yunick, famed racing tuner, was shattering the concrete floor of his garage with full power dyno tests of a fuel injection Chevrolet. Ronnie Householder, Plymouth racing engineer, found time to make valuable suggestions for preparing our Fury — plus showing us through his garage of competition goodies. The Ford group was hidden, concentration camp style, behind wire fencing and armed guards; leaving us no choice but to move on to Chevrolet. They had established a service center with space for some 20 cars. Carburetor specialists, ignition experts and service mechanics were on hand to advise and assist Chevrolet owners without charge or obligation. Even Chevrolet parts were available at a substantial discount. No matter where we went, there was a car or cars in various stages of tuning activity.

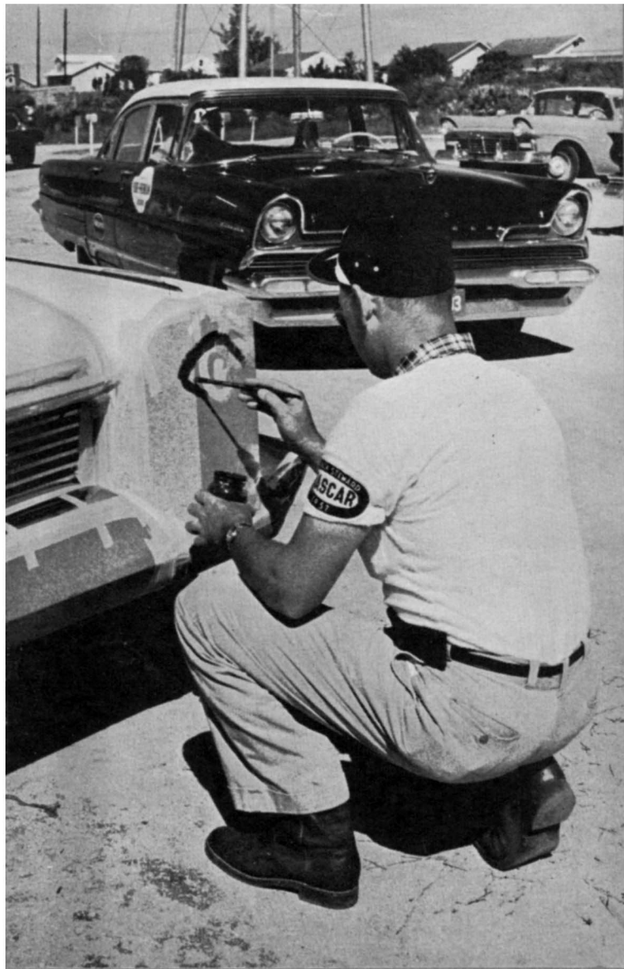
ABOVE: Author-driver and car shortly before leaving Detroit for Daytona. A few days later, Bill pushed the Fury to a record 124 plus mph. BELOW: Cardboard was taped over headlights and fenders to improve aerodynamics. A ten mph gain was added this way. NASCAR safety official paints eyeballs in place of lights to aid car's vision. After all, a car can't make a run blindfolded.

One owner, a Nebraska farmer, stole the rear end from his wife's new Ford, for use under his own blown convertible. Way back in another garage, the representative of a Lutheran ministerial publication was having his new Chrysler tuned for still another run at the measured mile.

Our Fury had performed well from Detroit to Daytona, but was definitely in need of an engine tune up. Bill Brumback, Auto-Lite ignition specialist, offered his services. Plugs were pulled, compression checked, and new plugs installed. No charge! We decided to set the Fury 10 degrees BTDC, while running on 99 octane Pure gasoline. Finally Pandora's electronic chest was hooked up and we took turns watching the oscilloscope's green pips count off the sparks. Later, Don Whitney, a Plymouth "service rep" reset the progressive linkage dual quad carburetors and suggested we contact Goodyear at the beach for tire data. With slugs cheerily churning under the hood we cruised backwoods highways for several hours checking out our now well broken in and retuned Fury engine.

Bright and early the next morning, two cups of steaming coffee had the eyeballs propped in place so we could find the inspection station and registration office located in a drive-in-theatre. There we had to display our NASCAR license, then exhibit, and part with $2 worth of green stuff.

On the ramp, a safety inspector was wiggling the steering wheel, while another counted the tires. Our running number was painted on the windshield and we were off for the beach. Here, all was seeming confusion, with cars scuttling all over the sand. About a quarter mile from the drive we could see the entrance, so dig-



While at Daytona, SCI Correspondent Carroll checked up on a few other goodies too. This race car, a Thunderbird in name only, won many laurels for Ford. Soon Bill and SCI will show you just how it was done.

Smyrna Beach airport races were new addition to speedweeks, and highlight was entry of red-hot T-Bird, at left, which finished second in very able field. No. 16 *at right is Reventlow's Maser; see our test on page* 12.

ging spurs to the wheel spin department, we added more traffic. There we were directed to a roped enclosure where a couple of husky boys were sweatily pumping gasoline out of each contestant's tank. It took a long time—but soon the Fury was empty, leaving just enough in the tank for navigation to the tank truck.

"Fill it", we told the nozzle man.

"What?", he queried. "Why do you want it full? Everyone else only wants a gallon or two."

"We're different, and besides the extra weight will give slightly more traction."

With muttered misgivings, he filled the tank. All 20 gallons of it. Next a NASCAR official applied masking tape to the fender cover and rubber stamped all over the place to prevent tampering. At least, if we couldn't use any special fuels, no one else would either.

A couple of hundred yards further down the beach, we added ourself to the long triple line of trial cars. Hub caps came off and were tossed in the trunk. The Goodyear man passed, was hailed, checked the tires, and returned later to fill them to 45 pounds. "Best for the beach," he said.

Around us, hoods were airborne as last minute adjustments were made, or already locked solidly down with layers of eddy-eliminating masking tape. Suddenly everyone had to make an impromptu Le Mans start run for the cars, sail down the beach and fall into line again. We didn't do so well, for it seemed there were twice as many cars as before. All in front of us. Finally the runs began. Three from one line, three from the other, then we moved forward. Tension increased with every driver. Windshields were cleaned 'til the glass was thin; last minute tape was applied to door handles, bumpers, even radio antennas. We moved forward again. Windows were closed, ventipanes set to bleed a little air to the vacuum around windshield edge, while blood pressure rose a notch or two.

We moved again. Now in the front row. Three cars from the left. It was getting darker. Perhaps they would cancel before reaching our row. The seat belt was fastened. Then checked. A car left the right lane. The seat belt was too loose. It was retightened. Another car moved out, Perspiration was wiped from hands. Cleaned off the steering wheel, redried hands. A third car left the right lane. Went to start the engine—but it was already idling. Funny, didn't remember starting it. A slap on the fender, "Turn on your lights," we were then next. An inspector checked gasoline seals, said to guide right as there was a deadly dip near the middle of the trap. Then we idled to the starting line.

A steward said to keep our eyes open (Who in the devil planned to close them?) and there were two miles of deceleration beach beyond the exit trap. Then he smiled and said, "Good luck".

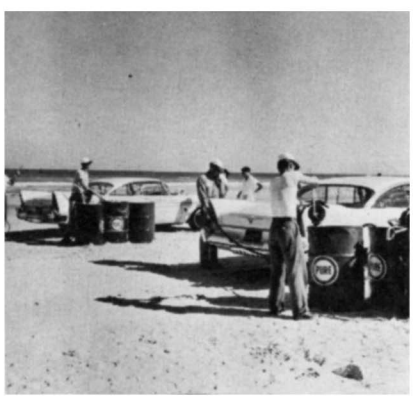
We felt better.

The control car's horn beeped twice, the starter queried for an OK, flipped his green flag—then the Fury and I were off for our first ride at Daytona. Wheels were churning the sand, markers becoming more blurred second by second, engine noise dropping rapidly behind as the beach flew by. Three poles on the left, buried in the ocean sand marked the entrance to the trap. I flew by. Speedometer at 110. Here comes the dip. We went light, wheels dropped, crested on the other side, the car elevatored our stomach for a moment. We were still true in the course. Speedometer 116. Timing snapped by on the right. Speedometer 118. We shut it off slowly, relaxing only when the far turn hove into view at 60 mph. Our time was a nominal 106.540. Not good enough!

Early the next day we cornered Ronnie Householder to promote the answers to better time. "Streamline it," he said. "Then go back and streamline the streamlining. Masking tape and cardboard can add 6 to 9 miles an hour when you are over the hundred mark."

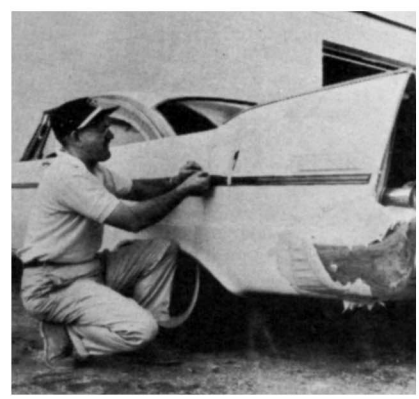
Ten minutes later we hit a local paint store for masking tape and sheets of cardboard. Back at the parking lot the shirt was shed and a suntan began accumulating as the Fury's graceful lines were altered to a more aerodynamic contour. Headlights were covered and faired to the bumpers, which were taped to the body

Everywhere in Daytona, garages were scenes of feverish activity as drivers and mechanics struggled to get extra miles from cars. Here Plymouths are inspected by NASCAR officials to certify their stock condition.



At the Beach, each competing car was drained of fuel, then refilled with Pure gas to make sure all contestants ran with same octane fuel.

Service trucks from various manufacturers roamed up and down the line giving assistance to competitors with air, plug cleaning, etc.



Ronnie Householder, famous driver on Plymouth engineering staff, suggested use of cardboard and tape. Our coupe just clocked 116 mph.

and splash pan. A strip of cardboard, plus much tape, eliminated eddy points above the windshield and behind both rear quarter windows. Rear bumper wings were faired to the body and the right hand door was tightly sealed all around. This took time. So much, that we could only grab a hamburger and rush for the inspection station. Though it was late, they gave us a fast checkout, yet took time to paint a pair of eyes (Chinese steamboat style) on headlight covers of the now lightless Fury. Once in line on the beach, the hood was taped and a miniscule pennant attached to the radio antenna. But all to no avail. We (plus a hundred other drivers and cars) waited 'til darkness—but a combination of poor beach conditions and other delays ate up the daylight, cancelling the runs.

Both the sun and Carroll were up early the following morning. "Today we would be among the first in line". But we weren't. Some fellows must have stayed up all night, for there were 68 cars lined up on the beach when we arrived. We were No. 69. As before — we waited. Regrouped from three lines into two. Then the runs began. This time six cars from one line, six from our line. We moved forward fast. Someone said the beach was good. Finally at 6:15 the flag dropped and we were off again. This run seemed easier, quieter, smoother and faster. It was, too. Cardboard streamlining added almost 10 mph to the Fury and we were clocked at 116.54 mph.

Still not good enough, so we asked Plymouth to loan us their stick shift Fury for flying mile competition scheduled the following week. Twelve hours before race time they delivered the car. Little work had been done on it, other than checking out basic ignition and carburetion. With luck, and a good beach, the stick should be faster than the automatic.

It was mighty cold Tuesday morning at the inspection station where hot coffee made waiting in line (with 200 other drivers) a bearable necessity. At that, being early paid off, with No. 40 assigned to our run. Safety inspection, draining, refilling, sealing the gas tank and finding a place in line were repeats of previous days. But today it would be good — and fast. The

(Continued on page 64)

Devin Panhard

(Continued from page 63)

there is no appreciable gain in weight, inasmuch as the Panhard is cast-iron-sleeved and the Norton all lightweight alloy.

Superimposed over the stock but overstressed bottom end, we find a big-ported head, straight-through porting, monster valves . . . 1-27/32 inch intake and 1¾-inch exhaust. A compression ratio of 9.5 to 1, effected through the use of Norton hi-dome pistons, is about the maximum desirable for gasoline fed through twin-choke Italian Weber carbs on Y inlet manifolds . . . one for each cylinder. The flywheel has been lightened through replacement! Not to overlook details, Devin whittled out a duplicate in aluminum and pressed on the steel starter ring gear . . . saved 8 pounds and gained much accelera tion.

With cams designed for cycle racing, a normal opening and closing sequence reads something like this: Intake valve opens 57½ degrees BTC and closes 60 degrees ABC, Exhaust opens 85 degrees BBC and closes 42½ degrees ATC. With 42 degrees spark advance this can be considered a bit radical but the best is yet to come: The cams are assembled, and lobes can be fitted onto the shaft at any degree relationship. Want to try opening the intake a couple of degrees sooner? Fine. Disassemble the cam, move the lobe a notch and put it back together! Endless possibilities.

What actual timing he will run on a different "New" engine, Devin keeps to himself. Data on the improved model is also confidential but, as one who has been permitted to view some of the actual construction, we can say that the latest cross-breed will employ FOUR overhead cams, twin ignition and fuel injection.

"What kind of a small car can a fellow buy today that can be driven to the track and stand a chance of winning," Bill asks, "and what do you have to pay for one? Almost as much as for a much bigger car. Anything in the 750cc class you have to build yourself. I've spent $75,000 developing this thing and if I had another hundred thousand I'd build a hundred push-rod Devin Panhards. I've made arrangements with the factory for components and the bugs have been worked out of my new body. I could make and sell such a car, complete, for $2,250 or $2,450 with a hard-top. You could drive it on the street every day and yet go to the track and run with the best of them. I think I've proved that."

The story is familiar but the ending is yet untold. The difference in the plot as it looks from here is in the one word, "ability". Here is a man with ability. A man with a dream, true, but backed by enough persistence and know-how to go far beyond the conventional for a solution to his problems. Perhaps a financial solution will be found as well and we will be thrilled by the pants-ripping snarl of a flock of Devin-Norton-Panhards in future races.

Ocee Ritch

Daytona

(Continued from page 31)

beach was no longer unknown, but still dangerous, as witnessed by a flipping T'bird that hospitalized its driver. In no time at all the line of cars began to move and we warmed up the Fury engine while getting familiar with the seldom-used clutch and cog box. Only three cars from the start line. The windshield was cleaned, windows checked, ventipanes set—then we had to move forward. Only two cars now. We tied the seat belt and latched the unused belt so there would be something to hold onto in case of a flip. Move again. Nothing more to do with the Fury, but watch how the preceeding driver takes off. Not so good. He was caught in deep ruts.

My turn now.

I pulled left, straightened out into the trap over clean uncut sand. A dirty look from the steward. He had to move, but we got a good start. I checked the shift—it was already in low. Somebody yelled, "Stand on it." The idiot, what did he want me to do; plant an anchor? The window was up, the starter checked me out, flipped the green. We were off again.

The wheels spun a little, but the Fury really moved. At 50 I slammed through the gate to second. The car fishtailed under full power, but it made little difference. We were accelerating too fast to lose much from wheel spin. At 85 we tied to high, the first mile behind us, foot in it all the way. The beach was smooth, fast—then quiet. Markers seemed only inches away from each fender, spreading slightly apart to let us pass. The first timing cable came into view — the speedometer read 130. "Snap" the cable was underwheel, then behind. I was talking to myself, "Hold it steady, let power steering do the work, keep a light grip, where are all the people? Don't worry about the speedometer, it's not accurate anyhow. Don't get sleepy—this is no time for a nap. What odd things to think about. Whoops, here's the other end".

"Slap," and out of the measured mile with the huge grandstand only a black blur to the right. Now I sneaked a glance at the needle. It read 142. Slowly my number twelve backed off the "go" button and we slowed to 100. Then 80, finally 60 before brakes brought our flying Fury to a sedate pedestrian pace. The south turn flagman waved us to a line of cars ready for the northbound run, where we idled the engine for a few cooling minutes before shutting off.

Time was a thumping 124.181 mph, placing our Fury in the upper third of speed iron, the fastest of which hit 139.969. Not bad for a truly stock Fury, tuned by a dealer's mechanic, driven by a writer. This made it the fastest stick-shift stock Fury on the beach, and ours was the fastest run it made.

Next year, wind, waves, weather and NASCAR permitting, we'll be on the beach again, for an even faster run through the famous measured mile of Daytona Beach.

Bill Carroll