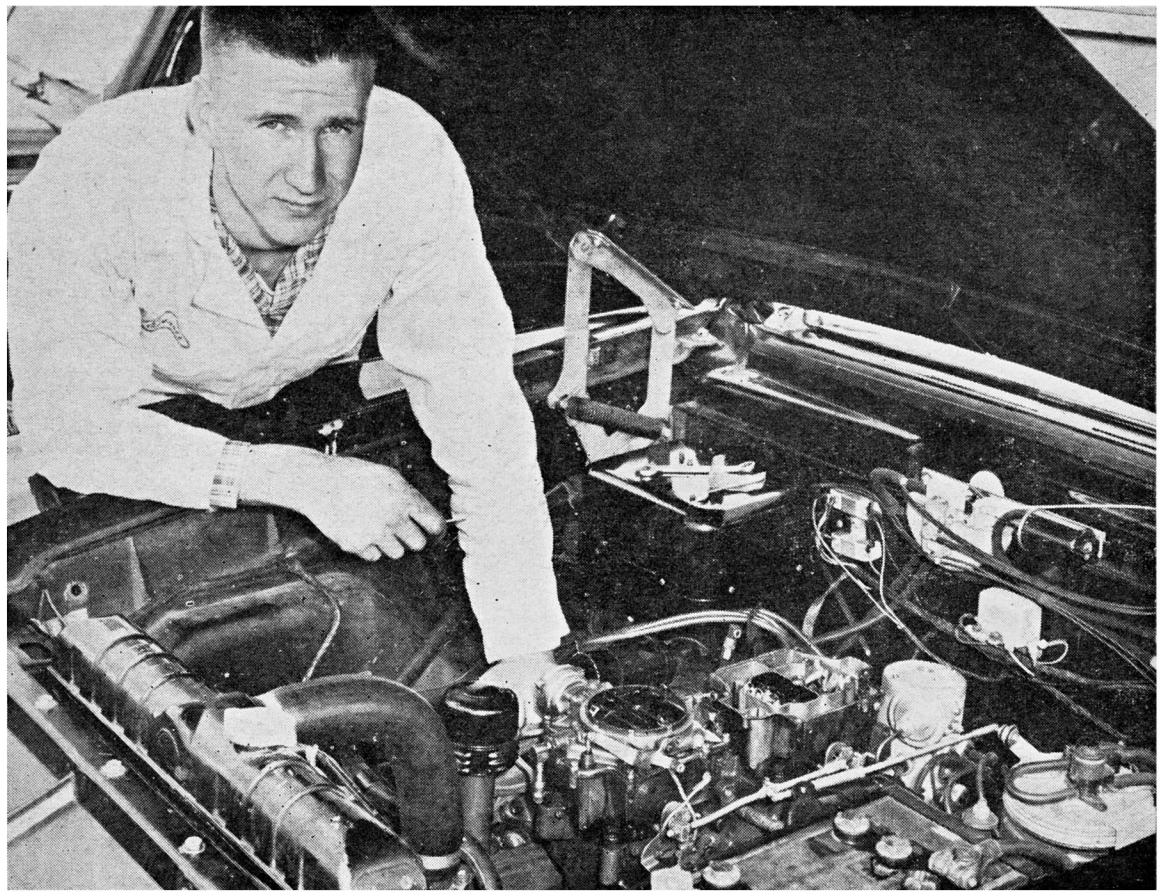
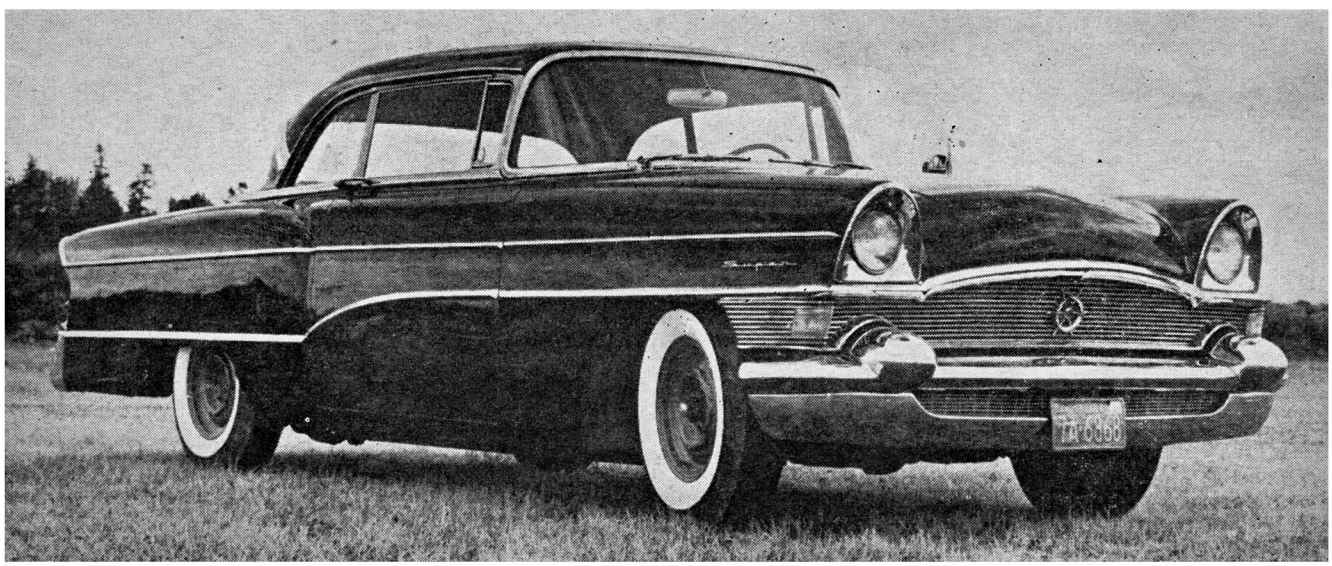


Text and Photos by Peter Sukalac

BEWARE THIS CLIPPER!

Big black Packard scuttles many a hot Super Stock on Oregon strips

On the street the car is smooth, quiet—yet a real bomb when the occasion arises.



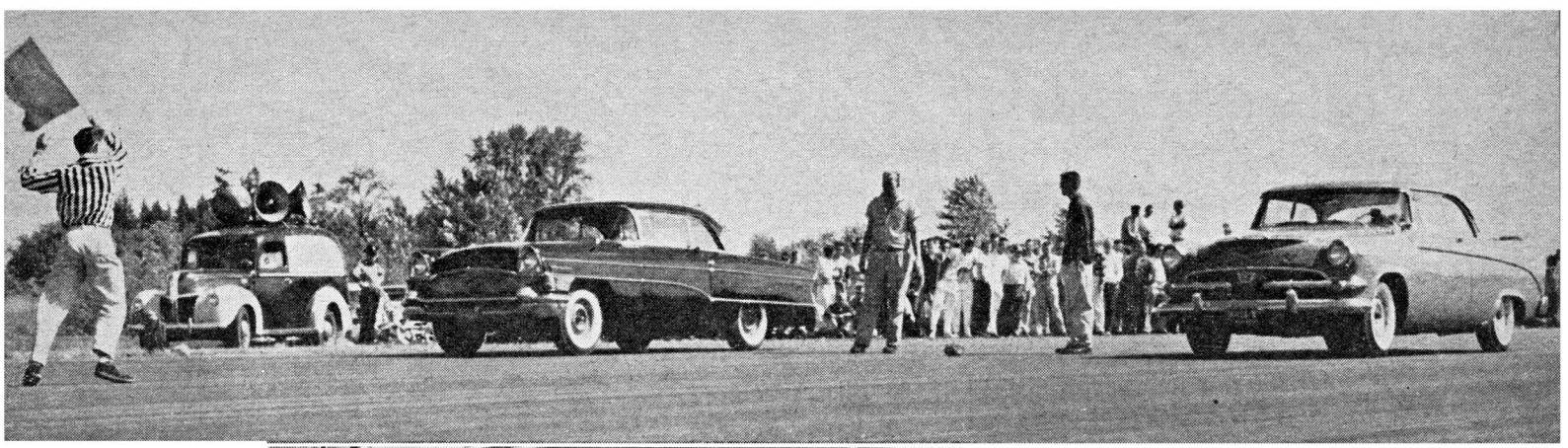
Weekend visitors at drag strips around the country are usually surprised when they see a heavy Packard line up at the starting chute. Up Salem, Oregon way even the hot Chevs have had to give ground to a certain '56 Clipper. Owned, maintained and driven by Everett Hatch of Aumsville, Oregon, the black brute will take everything in its class and not even get its water hot. During the '56 NHRA Championships at Aurora, the Packard dead-heated no less than five times with the hottest Chev in the Northwest. On the sixth run the heat of trying finally cooked the stove bolt to a crisp, whereas the heavy Clipper roared past the flag with the engine temperature at a pleasant 180°.

Everett bought the rig originally because it fitted his 6-foot-4 frame and gave good road performance. The automatic torsion bar ride gave reasonable road stability, too, and though acceleration wasn't up to some of the really hot stuff, the big bore mill looked good for much more.

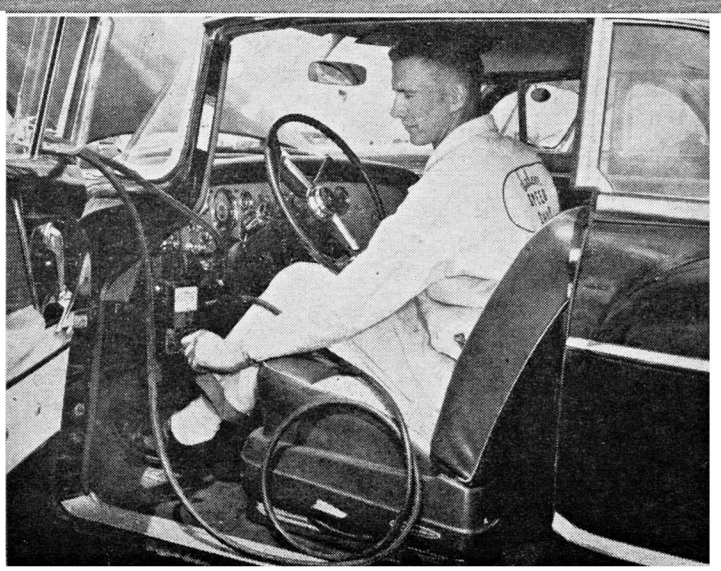
By experimenting with several major and minor modifications over a period of many months he was able to improve the car's just-over-80 quarter-mile speed to a hairy 97.75. The amazing thing about the car was the fact that it could still be driven at low speed on the street—no noise, no hard ride, and as smooth idling as stock. How? Well, to begin with, Everett pulled the whole car down and went completely through everything. The engine was a 352-incher with a 4-inch bore and 3½-inch stroke. The slipper pistons were fitted at the factory with .0005 clearance. The cylinders were honed .0025 to give the same pistons a total clearance of .003. The shaft was lightened by grinding to bring the weight down to 55 pounds. The shaft was then polished to relieve stress. To make sure the crank journals were free, .0005 of the bearing surfaces was removed by polishing. Next, the rods were lightened by grinding away the balance lugs at the big ends. The front pulley and vibration damper were also given the lightening treatment; a full 5 pounds being taken off them. The stock flywheel and clutch were given the "deep six" and a 25-pound Albro 11-inch outfit bolted on in its place. The crank assembly was then sent to Vic Edelbrock for balancing. While waiting for their return Hatch worked over the Packard heads. The ports and combustion chambers were cleaned out and polished. The intake valves were recut to 30° and reseated while the exhausts were left at 45°. Dual valve springs were installed during reassembly. .100 cut was taken off each head.

When the crank assembly was returned it was stuffed in the short block along with an Isky E-2 cam and chilled lifters. Isky adjustable tubular pushrods finished the job. A Packard Caribbean intake manifold mounting a pair of four-barrel Rochester pots was bolted on along with a Spalding Flame Thrower. The engine was then dropped back on its mounts and coupled to the stick-shift box.

Since the car weighed 4575 pounds Everett wanted to run with a lower ratio than the 4.09 which was the lowest ratio that Packard supplied. By checking spline sizes in the Spicer differential he discovered that '49-'57 Lincolns and '55 Willys pickups used the same spline pattern in their Spicers. A '49 Lincoln housing was purchased at a wrecking yard. The center housing of the Packard was cut out and the Lincoln unit welded in its place. A set of 4.88 Willys pickup gears were placed on a Power Lock differential and installed in the Lincoln housing. This was a good ratio for dragging, and in overdrive the final ratio would be 3.54—just right for highway use.



Super stocks such as this '56 Dodge D-500 are easy prey for Salem, Oregon Clipper.



LEFT. An exhaust analyzer is used to tune engine just before each race. Toggle switch to left of analyzer controls level ride motor which adjusts attitude of car.