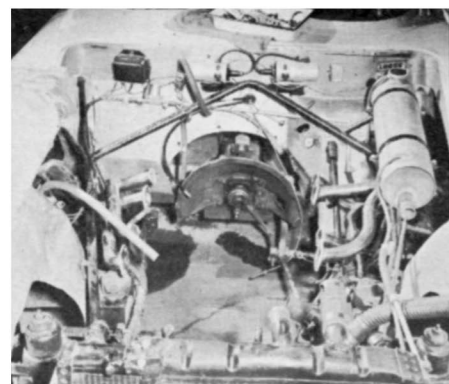


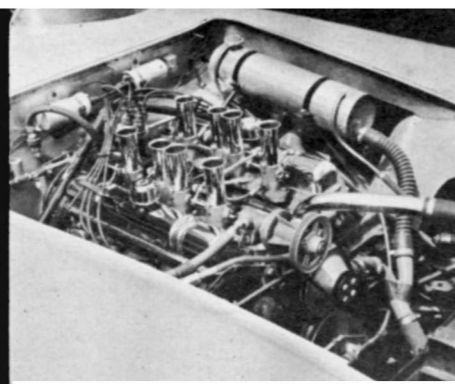
sequel II the porter special

INCHES FOR THE SCREAMER

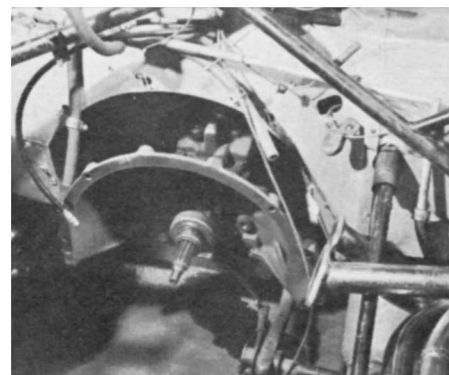
Proving once again that the only good substitute for lots of rectangular money is lots of cubic inches.



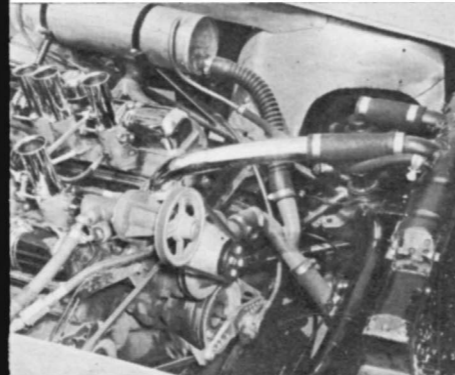
Big full-house Buick just about fits under hood. Tank is cooling water surge tank.



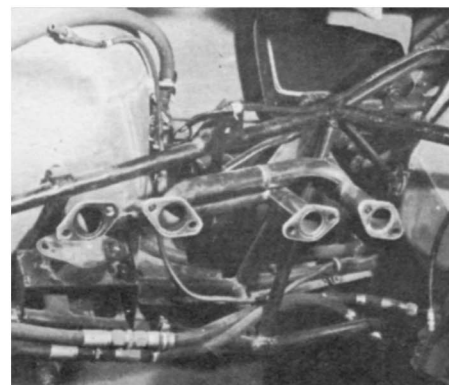
Firewall was moved back 10 in., and a Buick bellhousing was adapted to the Merc gearbox.



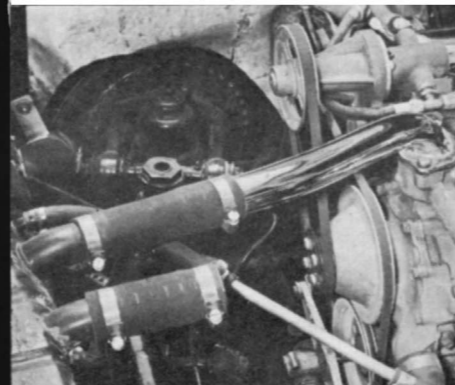
One outlet of Merc's radiator is blocked off. F.I. pump at left; tach off lower pulley.



An adapter was built from a stock Buick housing, routed to fit the shape of the box.



Mounts for Merc engine were moved 10 in. to rear to get better weight distribution.



New headers, tuned for competition, exit exhaust from air-vent openings at sides.



After that bad-day-at-Pomona, Chuck knew his blown 300SL couldn't take all comers—and that's what he wanted it to do.

by Bob Behme

CHUCK Porter built his Mercedes Special from a wrecked 300 SL. It not only represents his contribution to American road racing; but was also a very drastic change in Porter's personal approach to hot machinery.

The racing enthusiasts who knew Porter choked on their scotch and soda when they heard that the master of change and swap was actually tooling up on a piece of machinery that might even be called remotely conventional.

"My God," said one, "next thing he'll be running a stock engine."

For earlier in his racing career Porter did run in several races where he managed to keep the power plant virtually stock. All he added was a blower and a couple of hidden goodies (SCI—"Blower for a Screamer")—his only concession to the life of change and swap. Then came Pomona.

There, with Porter at the helm, arms wrapped in knots, foot stabbing the carburetor as he wheeled tight around a turn, a '57 Corvette came roaring from the pack and passed Porter going into the straight. Porter flattened the foot throttle. The response was immediate, but there wasn't enough of it. The Corvette kept the lead.

When the race was over, Porter stood beside the Mercedes special, hurtling a solid line of invectives at the beaten mill. It was at that point that the enthusiasts began smiling and began to have an easier time with their drinks. The stock honeymoon was over, as Porter vowed to replace the Mercedes mill with a bigger-muscled American powerplant.

Porter decided to transplant a Buick beneath the German hood. He took the car to Max Balshowsky, ace Los Angeles Buick specialist and top builder of hot hybrid specials. Balshowsky designed a red-hot (full horsepower at 8000 rpm) OHV mill. A '57 Buick block was bored and stroked to 3 x 4 1/2". Smaller '54 exhaust valves and '55 Buick heads were fitted. Special Jahns racing pistons, a hot,

300 degree Iskandarian #281 cam, and a 3 inch crank (which destroyed the engine approximately 1/5 inch) were installed. He then fitted a Hilborn fuel injection system and installed a TR2 generator (it was half as heavy as its stock American counterpart): the engine was ready to go.

Back at Porter's body-building emporium the mill was measured and checked for mating with the Mercedes frame. Prior to the swap, Porter had been mighty unhappy with the balance of the car. He claimed the front end was heavy because of too much engine weight forward, so he built new front motor mounts 10 inches aft of the stock ones. These were made of a combination of 1/8 inch plate and stock Buick mounts fitted to the tubular Mercedes frame. In the rear of the engine compartment two small diameter U-shaped tubes, designed as cross members, had to be changed. The bottom tube was removed. The upper tube, which looped above the engine, was bent aft and laid nearly against the firewall.

The firewall itself had to be dropped back 10 inches. Porter removed the stock unit and built himself a new firewall and floorboard sections of sheet aluminum. The steering column was moved 1 1/2 inches to the left to clear the Buick engine.

To tie the Buick power to the Mercedes gear box, Balshowsky had to build an adapter, which he made from a stock Buick housing. The big effort was to hog-out the rear center to fit around the rectangular box. He bolted two Buick housings together face to face to center the holes in the housing, as it was essential that the center of the housing be maintained. Balshowsky then routed the housing opening to fit the shape of the gear box.

With the housing bolted in position, pilot bearings and spline shafts were examined. Stock Buick pilot bearings fitted to the Mercedes shaft easily. The clutch, however, presented a problem. Using a 15 thousandths smaller spline

(Continued on page 60)

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Ford's Zephyr

(Continued from page 59)

During any road test experience certain words or phrases come to mind that tend to sum up the car's essence. In the case of the Zephyr these turned out to be "finely engineered" and "absolutely effortless to operate." It is one of the least-fatiguing cars we've driven. A car that obviously works hard, that has to be prodded into doing its job, tends to be a tiring one to drive. The Zephyr is opposite to all this. All that it does is without effort, noise, vibration or strain. It responds to all commands calmly, efficiently, and without fuss. It's a happy-feeling car, friendly to those it serves so willingly and well.

Even so, it has its imperfections. The pendant-type brake pedal cannot be reached by simple sidewise movement of the throttle foot and is therefore inconvenient to operate. The rear deck lid is not countersprung to reduce lifting effort on the convertibles. The spring-loaded choke control is located next to the key-operated starter switch to the right of the steering wheel. Until discovering that the choke control can be locked in place by rotating the knob, rather awkward contortions are required to engage the starter and to choke the engine at the same time. The Zephyr's fuel consumption, while not bad, is not particularly good. This can be explained in part by the fact that our test ended before the odometer had registered 1000 miles and the car still was not fully broken in; after a ten minute run, for example, the differential housing was hot to the touch. These cars have a reputation for not limbering up before the first few thousand miles and it's fair to state that gas mileage will improve with more miles on the clock.

The body work of the sedans we inspected was excellent and structurally firm, but the Zephyr convertible was less impressive. It lacks the natural structural strength of the hardtop and raises a question as to whether unit body-frame construction is compatible with open body styles. Isn't the greenhouse necessary to tie the whole structure together? While a power-operated top is optionally available our test car had the manual type. This was easy for one person to raise or lower, but its fit even when factory-fresh was far from being weather tight. On the other hand, this is one of the very few convertible tops we have encountered that is perfectly silent, that does not drum or flap even at top speed.

Certain sages in Detroit have predicted that the huge-car cycle is nearing the end of its course and that, within ten years, 50 per cent of the U. S. automobile market will belong to the compact car. If this is the case, Ford is well in front of its competition having, in its EnFo line, tomorrow's cars available today.

Griff Borgeson

Inches . . .

(Continued from page 41)

(from an American car) Balshowsky joined the American section to the Mercedes unit. The engine was then dropped into position and it aligned easily.

New headers were built for the mill. Before the engine change, the exhaust was carried low, under the car. The new headers, tuned for the competition uses of the engine, came out the air-vent openings on the sides of the car.

He kept the Mercedes radiator, but one of the water outlets was blocked. A three gallon surge tank was added beside the engine because Porter felt the Mercedes design did not provide sufficient frontal area for proper cooling. The stock oil cooler was also retained.

Incidentally, this cooling system has not proven satisfactory to Porter. He is now planning a special 4-inch thick radiator to be fitted in place of the Mercedes unit.

Instrument gauges were changed from metric to US standard readings. Using Stewart-Warner panels, Porter installed water and oil temperature gauges, oil pressure and gas gauges. He kept the stock Mercedes tachometer, but changed its 4 to 1 gearing to 2 to 1, and fitted the sending unit to the front of the Buick mill.

Next step was to replace the 6.50 tires of the Mercedes with 8.20's. He retained the Mercedes mag wheels, but cut out wheel openings front and rear to fit the over-size rubber. He kept the 3.89 rear-end gear combo that came stock with the machine, but provided 40% greater stopping ability by installing larger wheel and master cylinders. Heavy-duty Lockhead units did the job.

When the car was completed it weighed 120 pounds less than with the Mercedes mill installed. Some 35% less weight was up front: some 22% more horsepower bottled under the hood.

But to Porter, horsepower was not enough. He still remembered the humiliating experience of the Corvette. He took the car to Willow Springs, a torturous up and down hill road-racing course not far from Los Angeles, where the car (before the swap) had clocked a 1 minute 52 seconds lap time.

Porter revved up the Buick mill 'till it screamed. Dropping the clutch, he took a fast warm up lap and then signalled for time. His consistent lap time: 1.46. He had cut off seven seconds and was now roaring around the course at times comparable to the fastest machinery ever clocked there. Acceleration was up, too. He clocked 13.9 seconds for the quarter mile standing start.

"Come to the next race," Porter said chewing his cigar, "Those Corvettes are going to have troubles."

Robert Lee Behme