PERFORMANCE TESTING:

THE HOTTEST

FORD'S HOTTEST OPTION EVER, THE 150 MPH INTERCEPTOR ENGINE, WAS TESTED BY MOTOR LIFE IN A NEW STARLINER HARDTOP COUPE.

Ford's Interceptor offers every buyer the option of 150-mph power

STOCK CAR FOR 1960

By DON STEWART

EARLY last summer during the height of the new car preview season, I visited the Ford Motor company test area in Dearborn, Michigan to see, drive and evaluate the 1960 Ford products.

After the routine looking and driving was completed, I was led aside by a young Ford engineer named Dave Evans and asked if I'd like to drive "a little something special." Needless to say I did, and 10 minutes later I was touring the high-speed track quite briskly in a 1960 Fairlane two-door.

To admit being impressed with the performance of said Fairlane was easy. It "turned on" like few automobiles I have ever driven including a good share of vehicles that originate in Northern Italy. The car in question was powered by a big, hairy 352-cubic-inch Ford engine with a Holley four-barrel on top of a special aluminum manifold and a pair of cobbled headers that made it sound like a full competition car.

Obviously it would go! But, I couldn't help thinking it performed almost too well to ever be offered for sale, a thought that my seatmate, Evans, insisted wasn't true. "Not only will we offer the option," continued Evans, "but it will be available to *anybody* who wants to buy it!"

"For how much," I asked?

"Under $150," he answered, "and what's more, before it's released for sale next December ('59) it will deliver an honest 150 mph!"

"Lots of luck," was about the only thing I could add.

Months passed and no word came from Evans. Then, late last fall, I got a telephone call from Dearborn. It was the intrepid speed merchant himself on the other end.

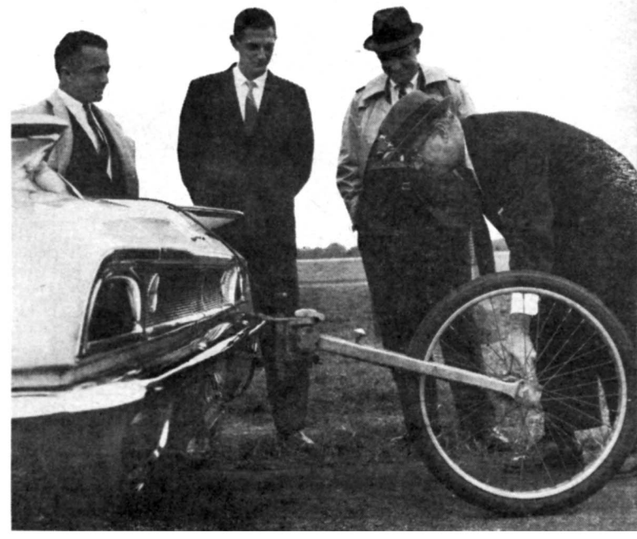
"Just got back from Daytona with the Special," he offered, "and we made five continuous laps at an average of 145.4!"

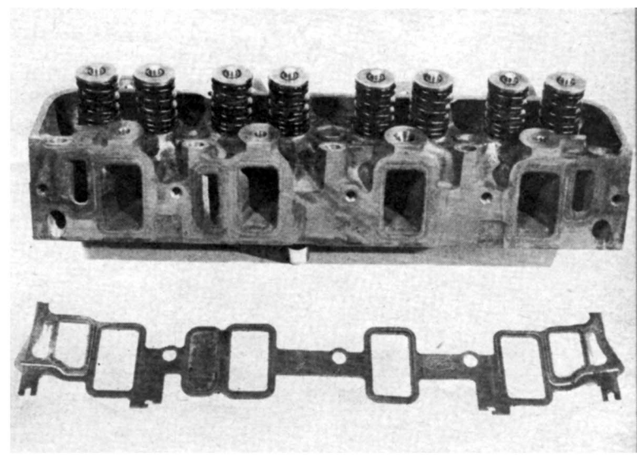
"Are you still going into production on the option?"

"Yep, and right now we're on our way to Romeo (Ford's testing area for high speed) to crack that 150 I mentioned last spring!"

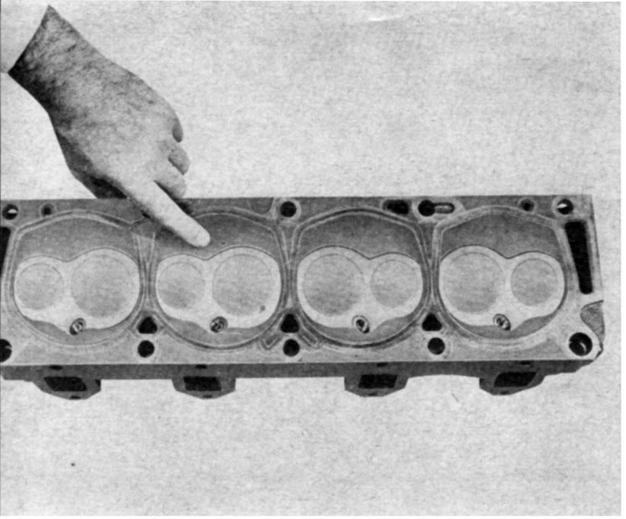
At this point I realized that they were serious. It seemed hard to believe but apparently Ford was out to regain their "performance image" that was long ago copped by Chevrolet. Evans said he'd get back to me with the results of the speed runs and also that, as soon as he could, he'd turn over the car to me for a driver's report.

On a Wednesday morning several weeks ago, I motored out to Dearborn and picked up the Special. By three o'clock that afternoon I'd completed the acceleration tests and was on the phone to MOTOR LIFE's offices on the West Coast. A fifth wheel and an electric speedometer don't lie, and the times that this engine turned up (now ensconced in a 1960 Starliner) could only lead me to believe that here, hands down, was the High

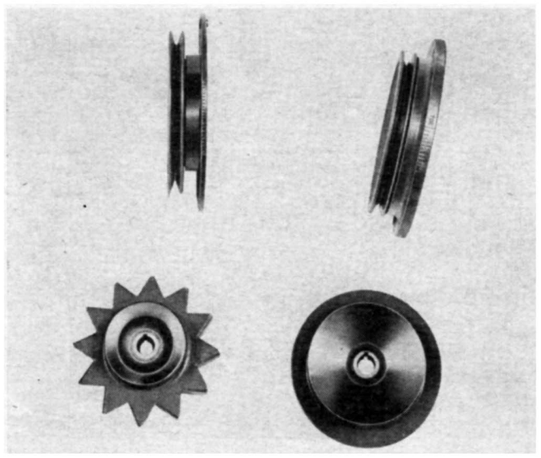




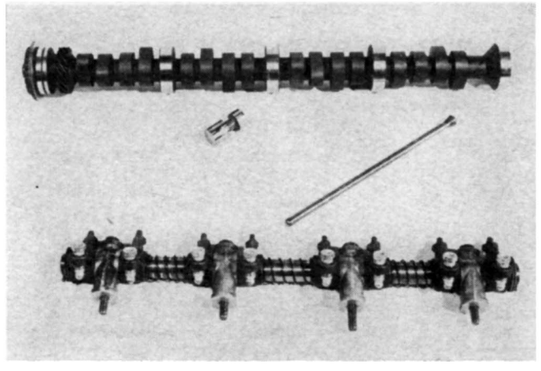
PROUD FATHERS of the Interceptor package are, from left, Dave Evans, Project Engineer; John Cowley, Chassis Engineer; and, far right, Don Sullivan, Engine Engineer. Second from right is author Stewart. In bottom picture note valve springs with steel damper beefed up for use with special cam. Intake gasket is below.



COMBUSTION CHAMBER of the Interceptor engine has been modified by volume reduction to increase the compression ratio from the regular 9.6 of the standard 352-cubic-inch engine to 10.6-to-1.



COMPARISON shows thoroughness of design. Front crankshaft dampener of Interceptor (at right) is heavier and its generator pulley is larger than those comparable parts of stock car (left).



SPECIAL PARTS of the high performance engine come from many sources. The camshaft is special, rockers and lifters are from '58 Ford while the pushrods are from the new Falcon engine.

HOTTEST CAR *Continued*

Performance Car of this or any other year!

What kind of acceleration figures convinced me? Well, 0 to 30 in 3.1 seconds, 0 to 45 in 4.9 and 0 to 60 in 7.1 (*right*—seven-point-one). These are performance figures that deserve the title any day. And, that's the kind of performance that this big, heavy (4161 lbs. at the curb) Starliner delivered.

Then just to be sure that the clocks and the like were correct, I called Gil Kohn, owner of Detroit Dragways, the site of the 1959 NHRA Championships, and asked for permission to run the Ford through his Chrondek timers. He agreed and two nights later I was on the line. With 8.00 x 15 nylon tires and a *full* load of fuel, the Ford turned the standing quarter mile in 92.87 mph with an E.T. of 15.32. With the right tires, the right tuning (and the right driver) this car should easily break 15 seconds with more than 98 mph at the quarter-mile drags. So here's a Ford that can turn 0 to 60 in 7.1—a standing quarter in 15.32 *and* a car that can run over 150 mph. (Oh yes, I forgot to mention, the car *did* turn that "one-fifty." In fact, it turned 152.2 on Romeo's high banked five-mile oval four days after it returned from the Daytona run.)

And, that's quite a package for "under $150," isn't it? But, just what's included and how it gets its go is just as amazing.

First off, the manifold for the Holley carburetor is new. So are the cast iron headers and the cam. And so, too, are the fuel pump, three/eighths gasoline line and clearances for rods and other moving parts. But the unusual thing is that, aside from the bolt-ons and very few changes inside the block, the engine is basically just plain 352.

The compression's up to 10.6-to-1 from the normal 9.6 and the dual point distributor hasn't got a vacuum unit. New, also, is pushrod assembly (borrowed from the Falcon Six) but the solid lifters came off the shelf from 1958 and the pistons, rods and crank *and* valves remain basically the same as introduced two years back. The only exception is that now the exhaust valves are drop-forged instead of being cast.

All of which brings us around to the fact that the 352 *was* a screamer after all, or at least could have been if someone would have taken the time to really find out.

But, we can't stop there. An engine that turns out 360 hp at 6,000 rpm and develops 380 lbs. of torque at 3400 rpm has to have a chassis and a driveline to go with it. And, the new Ford has!

Beefed-up suspension, commonly known at Ford as "Interceptor" springs and shocks, was fitted to our test car. In the power transmission department (not to be confused with automatic transmission department) there's something new as well. The Starliner that turned in the above time was fitted with a 4.86 rear end. Coupled with a stock overdrive unit this broke down to 3.49 as a road axle.

Such gearing, with the added advantage of having a "passing gear" in effect when locked out of overdrive in third, delivers some real mileage. On a test run of over 200 miles the Starliner averaged 15.1 mpg which, considering the weight and engine, is exceptionally good.

Stopping power is also quite good because of the three-inch-wide linings that are included in the Interceptor packages. Roll on tight corners at speed is kept down with stabilizers.

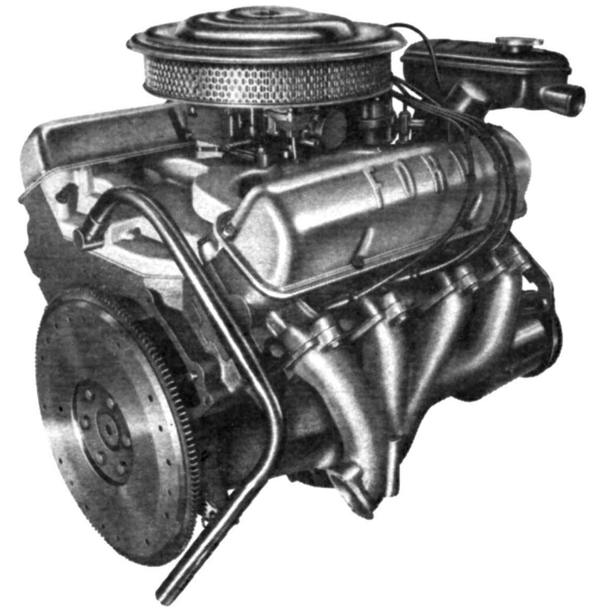
In addition to the above chassis options, a complete list of "service" items are offered. These are items that won't be available from the factory when you order your car. Meaning, except for the heavier suspension mentioned, a three/eighths-inch gas line and the 352 performance engine, you'll have to buy such goodies as heavy-duty rear axles, super-stiff spring rates and tougher spindles from your dealer's parts department and have them installed. All of which brings us around to an interesting point in the development of this Special.

Obviously, Ford knows that people race (and will continue to race) their products. Now, "race" is a dirty word in Detroit when a factory is mentioned in the same breath. No one in command of a domestic auto works will admit to being a part to anything competitive in auto activities.

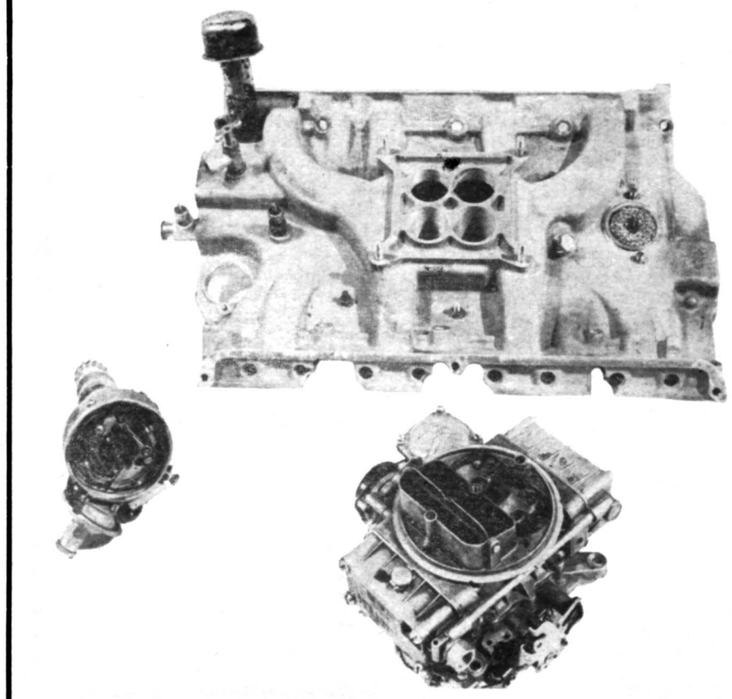
But, Ford has taken the bull by the horns and stated in a letter of intent to the Automobile Manufacturers Association that they are building and offering for sale the HPS with heavy-duty extras. If they're going to race – Ford Motor company will make it safer for them to compete. There is no question but what Ford's approach to this problem is the most honest, straightforward one that's been expressed by anyone in the Motor City. They should be congratulated for their farsighted thinking regarding safety and their open admission of helping to make stock car activity a safer area of sport.

And what's more, Evans and his crew should be congratulated on convincing the Ford brass that the "performance image" was worth going after—*and then going after it in such a convincing fashion.*

If you're a loyal Ford fan who's been eating dust from the "hot ones" for so long, weep no more my laddie! There's a new bomb being readied that will make believers out of several skeptics in your circle. •



OVERALL VIEW of Ford's 352-cubic-inch V-8 equipped with the Interceptor option is almost too tame to give the impression that this is the home of 360 horsepower. Note how the cast-iron manifolds (top) resemble tubing headers in their shape. Latter were used in development of this engine.



ALUMINUM INTAKE MANIFOLD (top) is responsible for reducing engine weight by some 40 lbs. Ignition (left) reportedly has no vacuum advance and is equipped with dual points. Holley four-barrel handles carburetion chores on the 360-hp engine.