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# CARS OUTDOORS

BY BOB AMES

A FEW issues back MOTOR LIFE ran a story announcing McNamee's new camper, the Sky Rider. Since then I have wanted to try out this unit to find out if what sounded so good on paper was equally good in the field. One of the first production models was made available for a test. It was so new when I picked it up at the factory that the workmen were still finishing inside details.

The first impression I got was of size. The unit is several inches wider and the sky deck gives it an over ten-foot height. Bigness does not change driving characteristics, however, and after a few blocks of city driving I was unaware of the large camper. In traffic, and in outdoor driving, the Sky Rider handles as well as any pickup camper I have ever driven.

To test the camper in an outdoor area I took my family and headed toward Anza Borrego desert. At first everyone wanted to ride in the sky room and we stopped frequently to change positions.

Riding topside is an experience in itself. You are far removed from the road and well isolated from all sounds usually associated with driving. Only faint engine sounds and the distant slap of tires on the pavement are audible and in most instances you have to open a window to hear them. For sightseeing the Sky Rider is excellent. The extra height gives a different perspective of the countryside and generous window space lets everyone see.

Downstairs in the cab things are a little different. On the open highway or black-top the truck sails along smoothly and rides very little different than any pickup with a full load. But when tar dividers or uneven road conditions were encountered at high speeds, the pickup responded harshly

and if the dividers were equally spaced the front end "floated," making the truck slightly more difficult to control. Strangely this condition is felt mainly in the truck cab and little discomfort is ever transmitted to sky room passengers.

That night, while camping, another Sky Rider advancement became apparent. The sky room has a sliding door which closes it off from the rest of the camper and actually results in two private bedrooms. (The dinette area makes into a double bed). This is a big advantage when two couples are traveling together and is something not usually found in tents, trailers or other types of campers.

The rest of the unit was fairly conventional except that it was the most deluxe outfit made by the McNamee company and everything had an extra touch of luxury. There was a chemical toilet, butane refrigerator, stove with an oven, and 12-volt electric lights plus a butane light. Directly across from the toilet is a second sink and medicine cabinet. The only disadvantage of the bathroom area is the narrow width which makes a man of average size stand sideways to get close enough to the mirror when shaving.

The Sky Rider was mounted on a Ford 3/4-ton pickup with a wide box. Since the floor space is only four feet wide this left nearly twelve inches on either side of the pickup cargo box. The box was altered and four small doors (with locks) were cut into the sidewall. This gives a lot of extra space for gasoline, a portable generator, outboard motor or any of the thousand other things a camper might want to take along.

McNamee's Sky Rider is in itself an excellent camper that comes off well both in



OBSERVATION deck on the McNamee unit is one of the most novel features yet developed for a pickup camper. Four adults can sit high and wide with a real view of the country.

minor details and overall plan. Construction work, choice of materials, and overall design are carefully thought out and finish work is above average. Moreover, and probably most important, the Sky Rider represents something new in the pickup camper field and proves that campers can change—and for the better.

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Occasionally I run across a really good guidebook. Unfortunately it is all too seldom I find one which I would recommend as an addition to an outdoorsman's library.

"Lower California Guidebook" by Peter Gerhard and Howard E. Gulick, however, is a book that is worthy of comment and will be especially interesting to four-wheel drive enthusiasts.

The authors have tackled their subject in the manner in which all such books should be written—from the motorist's point of view. The first section of the book is devoted to several chapters describing the land, the people, history, hunting, fishing, plants and other facts that would interest any traveler. Unlike many travel writers, Gerhard and Gulick do not get carried away with an overabundance of interesting information that is fun to read but of little value to the traveler.

The second part of the book consists mainly of nine automobile routes. These trips are detailed by mileage charts and include mileage from the last major and minor landmark. Each route has several side trips with excellent landmarks and mileage charts so the traveler can orient himself.

"Lower California Guidebook" is not a new publication but has recently been revised and enlarged. You may find a copy in your local library. Hardbound copies

are available for \$6.00 at most bookstores or write the publisher. The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1264 South Central Avenue, Glendale 4, California.

### LETTERS FROM READERS

I am planning on buying a 1960 pickup truck and a camper, possibly a GMC V-6. Will you carry this in a future article?

William H. Emmert, Oklahoma City, Okla.

The May issue of MOTOR LIFE carried a detailed analysis of the V-6 engine by technical editor Barney Naxarro and a future issue will have a regular road test.

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I recently purchased a GMC V-6 pickup and now want to get a camper that will fit this truck. I have seen one that will telescope up or down and when it is down does not protrude above the cab and will go in an eight-foot garage door. Can you send me the address of the company that manufactures this camper.

Lester Larson Great Falls, Montana

The camper you refer to is the "Alcan" manufactured by the R. D. Hall Manufacturing Co., 13408 Satcoy St., North Hollywood, California. Write them for more detailed information.

\*\*\*

I would like to find a book on building trailers and trailer suppliers. I am interested in camping trailers not more than 17 feet.

W. D. Mowbray, Saint John, N.B., Canada

An interesting book on this subject is available from the Trail-R-Club of America, Box 1376, Beverly Hills, California. The title is "How to Build Trailers" and the price is \$3.00.

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BIG AS IT LOOKS THE SKY RIDER IS A CAMPER THAT RIDES WELL ON HIGHWAY OR BACK ROAD.