



# VALIANT

## Signet 200



by Bob McVay, *Assistant Technical Editor*

**T**HE ALL-NEW 1963 VALIANT Signet 200 convertible falls right in the middle of the highly competitive luxury compact field. Our test car was indeed a luxury compact. Not only is the Signet 200 the top-line model, but this particular car had — except for power brakes — every extra in the book.

List price of our test car was \$3467.75, more than \$1000 over its basic price of \$2454 f.o.b. The V-200 convertible, a lower-priced line, starts at \$2340.

The Valiant features a complete restyling job this year. Gone are the sharp edges, quad headlights, and round tail lights. In their place, the accent is on smooth lines. Up front, only two headlights show the way when it's dark. They give enough light. What more can we say? The tail lights for 1963 are rectangular, and located right above the rear bumper.

Once inside the new Valiant, we noticed some changes right away. The well shaped bucket seats are roomy and comfortable. They can be quickly adjusted to fit any size person with a simple wrench. The whole instrument panel is new. The big, easy-to-read gauges are still there, but they're arranged in a different manner. We like the white-on-black-

face dials, but have one complaint here. At night, the lights from the transmission pushbuttons cause a glare in the side windows and in the rear-view mirror. When we turned the rheostat down to a point where the lights weren't too bright, the instruments became hard to read. But, this is a small point.

The speedometer was quite accurate — right on the button to 60 mph and only one mph off at 70 and 80. Only one warning light remains, this to tell when the oil pressure is low. The gasoline, alternator, and heat gauges are arranged in a triangular pattern rather than in a straight line as in last year's car.

All-one-color interiors are new for 1963 Chrysler products. Our Valiant's interior was all red, to match its exterior. The car had red carpeting throughout, with red rubber matting under the pedals, where the greatest wear occurs.

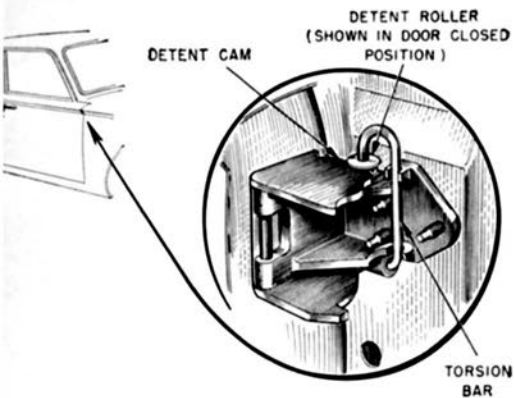
The bucket seat backs fold down to give easy entrance into the back seat. There's room for three people back there, though they may be a bit cramped if the front seats are pushed all the way to the rear.

The car starts with a turn of the key, but only when the transmission is in PARK or neutral. Although we had some pretty cold weather (it got down to around the freezing mark more than once



*Although we drove in rain and charged through puddles, the Valiant didn't leak.*





Valiant uses torsion bars to block doors wide open — a new feature on '63 models.



With tires at four pounds over factory recommendation, car handled well on dirt.

## VALIANT SIGNET *continued*

during our test), the Valiant started easily. Here's where we really appreciated the new heater and defroster. The heater has a 40 per cent higher fresh air capacity and, best of all, it gives heat almost instantly. Anyone who lives in a cold climate will greatly appreciate this.

The engine warms up quickly. Although we drove it in the mountains, at high speeds, and in congested traffic, it never overheated or stalled.

Our first driving impressions of the Valiant were enjoyable, and this impression stayed with us throughout the test. With torsion bars in front and five-leaf springs in the rear (cars with the 170-cubic-inch engine have four-leaf springs in the rear), the car gives a very smooth ride over all surfaces. Wheelbase has been shortened by a half-inch to 106 inches, but the Valiant's overall length has been increased by two inches.

With the normal 24 pounds' pressure in the thin-walled, two-ply tires, our test car showed pronounced understeer when turning sharply or when taking fast curves. After we added four pounds of pressure all around, the steering characteristics became more nearly neutral. We found the

car handled very well, taking everything from sharp dips to mountain curves in a well behaved and easily controllable manner. The suspension will bottom when sharp dips are taken at fairly fast speeds, but normal driving brought no complaints. As a matter of fact, if any one word can describe this car, that word would be *smooth*.

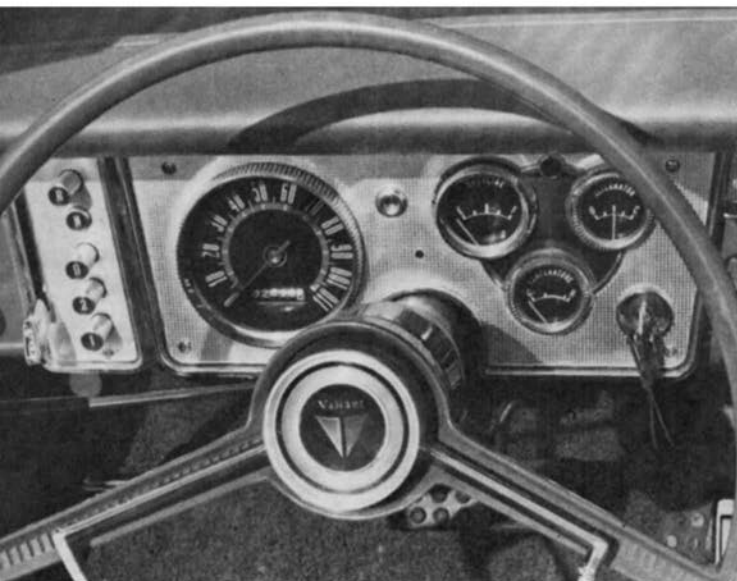
Unlike some power-steering units, Valiant's gives a good feel of the road, yet needs only light pressure for any change in direction. Once used to it, we wouldn't want anything else. Besides, it takes only 3.5 turns from lock to lock, which adds greatly to driving ease.

Valiant's quick steering and fine automatic transmission make it a good mountain car. The three-speed Torqueflite unit is controlled by five vertical pushbuttons located just to the left of the instrument panel. The buttons are marked P, N, D, 1, and 2. Number 2 button is handy for descending winding mountain roads. It'll hold the car at a pleasant 35-40 mph and save the driver from constantly using the brake pedal. The number 1 and 2 buttons will hold the transmission in gear until the driver pushes the next button. This is as close to a manual transmission as you can get and still have an automatic.

Left in D, the car is smooth and quiet. The Valiant was just as fast when left in D through the quarter-mile traps as when we shifted manually with the buttons. With our right foot planted firmly on the floorboard, the car zipped from 0-30, 0-45, and 0-60 in 4.7, 9.2, and 15.9 seconds respectively. The Torqueflite transmission shifted from first to second at 35 mph and 3700 rpm and into third at 68 mph and 4000 rpm. We hit a top speed of 85 mph down the back straight of Riverside Raceway, but with a longer run we feel the car should go close to 90. It was turning only 3700 rpm when we slowed down for a turn.

Our test car had the 225-cubic-inch Slant Six engine, which puts out an advertised 145 hp and 215 pounds-feet of torque at 2400 rpm. We found the engine smooth and silent in traffic and while cruising at highway speeds of 65-70 mph. Once we got above 70 mph, we could tell the engine was working hard, but 70 can be held for long periods without undue noise from the engine compartment. The Six is a willing worker and proved to be quite a miser with a gallon of gas. It has gobs of torque and will leap away from a standstill with the best of its contemporaries. With fewer power-robbing accessories, the car should be even faster.

Our test convertible tipped the scales at a hefty 3020 pounds with a full gas tank. This is about 400 pounds heavier than the hardtop model, so the hardtop with the same engine should be faster than the convertible — they



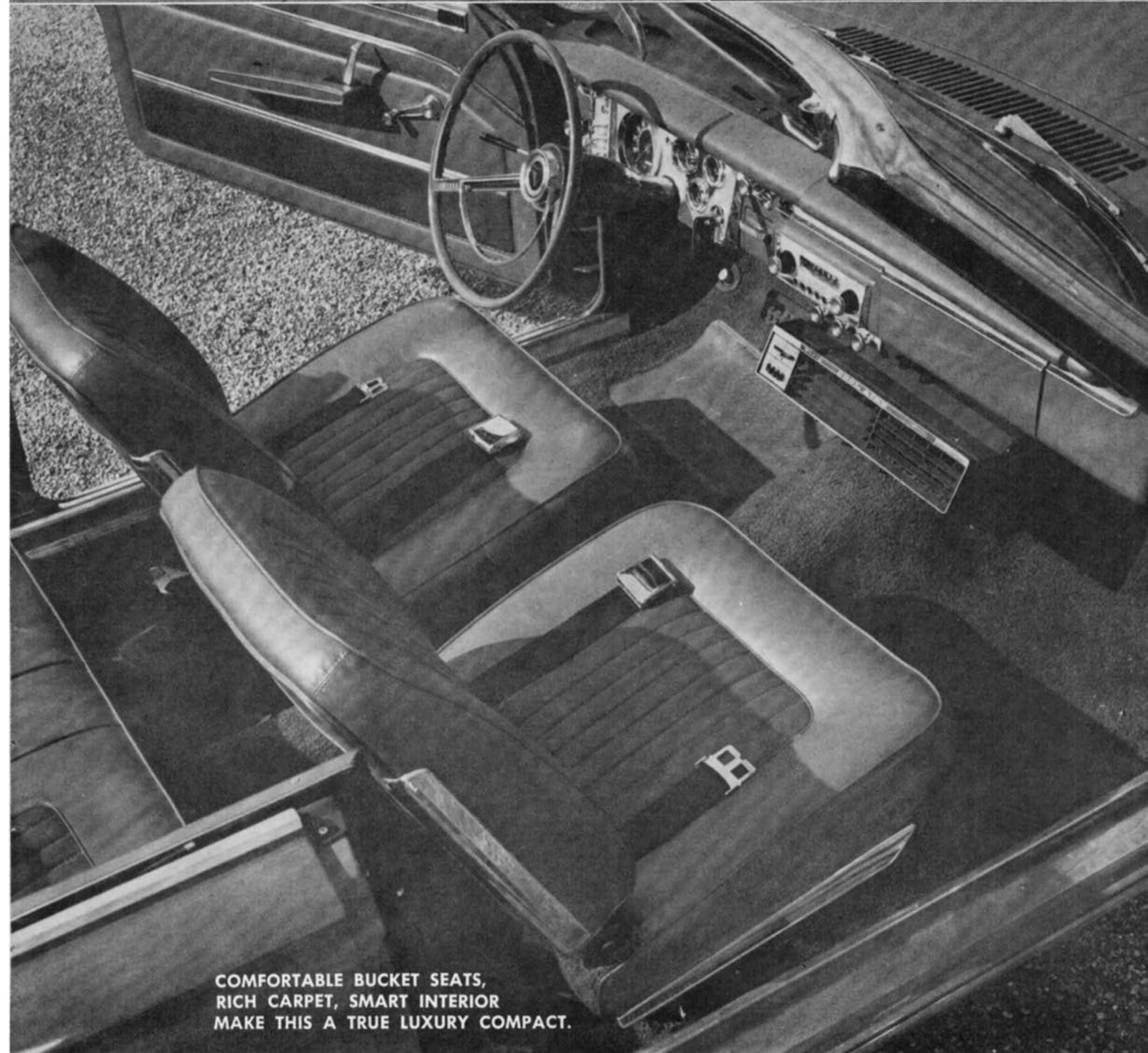
All controls are within easy reach of driver. Parking lever at left of transmission pushbuttons puts car in neutral when in PARK position. New parking brake handle is left of wheel.



VALIANT HANDLES WELL ON PAVED CURVES — NO EXCESS LEAN.



SPARE TIRE, PLACED UNDER TRUNK FLOOR, LEAVES PLENTY OF ROOM FOR LUGGAGE.



COMFORTABLE BUCKET SEATS, RICH CARPET, SMART INTERIOR MAKE THIS A TRUE LUXURY COMPACT.



both have the same 2.93 rear-end ratio with Torqueflite.

We found the Valiant's nine-inch drum brakes did their job well, bringing the car to a stop from 30 mph in 35 feet and from 60 mph in 150 feet. Due to weight transfer, we found it necessary to pump the pedal to avoid wheel lock-up on quick stops. The car stopped in a straight line and didn't swerve even though we'd just completed our high-speed runs and had used the brakes hard without giving them a chance to cool down. These stopping distances were shorter than on last year's Valiant.

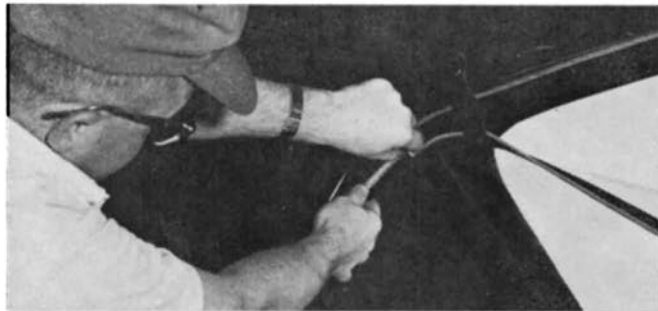
In our estimation, the Valiant gives good economy for our type of driving. Even with the larger, 225-cubic-inch engine, we recorded an overall average of 17.23 mpg during more than 1000 miles of all types of driving. Stop-and-go traffic and freeway travel netted 16.5 mpg, while open-road driving gave a high of 19.8 at speeds under 70 mph. With the 170-cubic-inch engine and standard transmission, the Valiant should give from 19 to 25 mpg. The gas tank has been enlarged from 14 to 18 gallons, thus increasing the cruising range of the car by about 25 per cent.

One thing we did notice about this new convertible was its tightness. With all windows rolled up, there wasn't a whisper of wind noise even at 65 mph on the freeway. During our high-speed runs at Riverside, we ran into some light rain and water puddles. The top didn't leak and neither did any of the doors or windows. This speaks well of the car's quality.

We found the Valiant's fit and finish very good, showing a high degree of quality control on the whole car. Doors and body components fit together well, and we didn't notice any large gaps or flaws. Valiant's unit-construction body was free from the rattles we normally find in convertibles.

The top on our test car had the optional electric motor,

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



Convertible's rear window seemed unduly hard to zip with top up. "Cloth Zippers" hold sides of the plastic window in place.



(ABOVE) Air conditioner's location interferes with leg room, could hinder driver's foot in emergency stop. Position changes are planned.

(LEFT) Fastening all the top cover snaps takes a firm hand. Cover proved tight and flap-free.

which put the top up and down by the twist of a dash-mounted knob. A new feature of the convertible is the use of a "cloth zipper" to hold the sides of the rear window in place. A normal zipper is used across the top of the rear window. This is one of our few complaints about this car. A four-inch section of the zipper hangs loose on each end of the plastic rear window. We feel the rear window should be unzipped if the top is going to be down. If it isn't unzipped, the window becomes wrinkled in a short time. With the top up, the rear window is hard to rezip. We found we had to jockey the top into just the right position with the electric motor before we could get the zipper all the way closed. The rear top cover snaps in place snugly and doesn't flap when the top's down. Another thing we liked was that the windshield is high enough that the front seat passenger and the driver don't get windblown at highway cruising speeds.

The new windshield wipers work well and have two speeds. They run parallel to each other, thus eliminating the triangular area in the center of the windshield that normal wipers don't reach.

With the increasing demand for luxury compacts, more buyers are ordering their cars with air conditioning. Our test car was equipped with Chrysler's Air-Temp unit. We enjoyed this excellent air conditioner on one hot and dusty day. While others stifled, we rolled up the windows and breathed clean, fresh, cool air. There's one drawback, though. The air conditioner's placed low on the transmission hump between the front seats and protrudes into the driver and passenger leg room area. Not only did we have to be careful to avoid bruised legs and torn clothes but, in an emergency situation, we feel the unit could restrict the driver's foot when fast brake action's necessary. We've been told the unit's position will be changed on later models. Luxury costs money. The Valiant's air conditioner sells for \$364 installed when bought with the car.

One other minor thing we feel could be improved is the location of the window cranks. The car has rather long arm rests, and we found ourselves constantly hitting our wrist on them when we wound the window up or down.

Standard equipment on all Valiants is a closed crankcase breather — which ensures a cleaner engine.

We saved one of the big Valiant features for last. All new Valiants offer Chrysler's 50,000-mile or five-year warranty for 1963. It covers major power train components, including engine block, head and internal parts, transmission, driveshaft, universal joints, rear axle and differential (excluding manual clutch). It also covers rear-wheel bearings. The warranty's good only if the car's been serviced at reasonable intervals according to Chrysler-Plymouth-Valiant certified car care schedules.

/MT



**NINE-INCH DRUM BRAKES GIVE QUICK, SURE STOPS UNDER ALL CONDITIONS. STOPPING DISTANCES, EVEN ON DAMP SURFACE, WERE SHORTER THAN THOSE OF 1962 VALIANT.**

### VALIANT SIGNET 200

2-door, 5-passenger convertible

**OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED:** Torqueflite automatic transmission, air conditioning, radio, heater/defroster, power steering, bucket seats, padded dash, seat belts, whitewalls

**BASIC PRICE:** \$2454

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$3467.75 (plus tax and license)

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 1698 miles

**RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE:** 4500 rpm

### PERFORMANCE

**ACCELERATION** (2 aboard)

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| 0-30 mph ..... | 4.7 secs. |
| 0-45 mph ..... | 9.2       |
| 0-60 mph ..... | 15.9      |

Standing start 1/4-mile 20.5 secs. and 67 mph

|                                |       |                   |                   |       |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Speeds in gears @ shift points | 2nd   | .....             | 68 mph @ 4000 rpm |       |                   |
| 1st                            | ..... | 35 mph @ 3700 rpm | 3rd               | ..... | 85 mph @ 3700 rpm |

**Speedometer Error on Test Car**

|                             |       |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------------------------|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Car's speedometer reading   | ..... | 30 | 45 | 50 | 60 | 69 | 79 |
| Weston electric speedometer | ..... | 30 | 45 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 |

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear ..... 23 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 35 ft.; from 60 mph, 150 ft.

### SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

#### Engine

Ohv in-line Slant 6  
Bore: 3.40 ins.  
Stroke: 4.125 ins.  
Displacement: 225 cu. ins.  
Compression ratio: 8.2:1  
Horsepower: 145 @ 4000 rpm  
Torque: 215 lbs.-ft. @ 2400 rpm  
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.64  
Ignition: 12-volt coil

#### Gearbox

3-speed automatic; pushbutton controls

#### Driveshaft

One-piece — open tube

#### Differential

Hypoid — semi-floating  
Standard ratio: 2.93:1

#### Steering

Worm and ball nut  
Turning diameter: 39.8 ft.  
Turns: 3.5 lock to lock

#### Wheels and Tires

5-lug, steel disc wheels  
6.50 x 13 2-ply rayon tires

#### Suspension

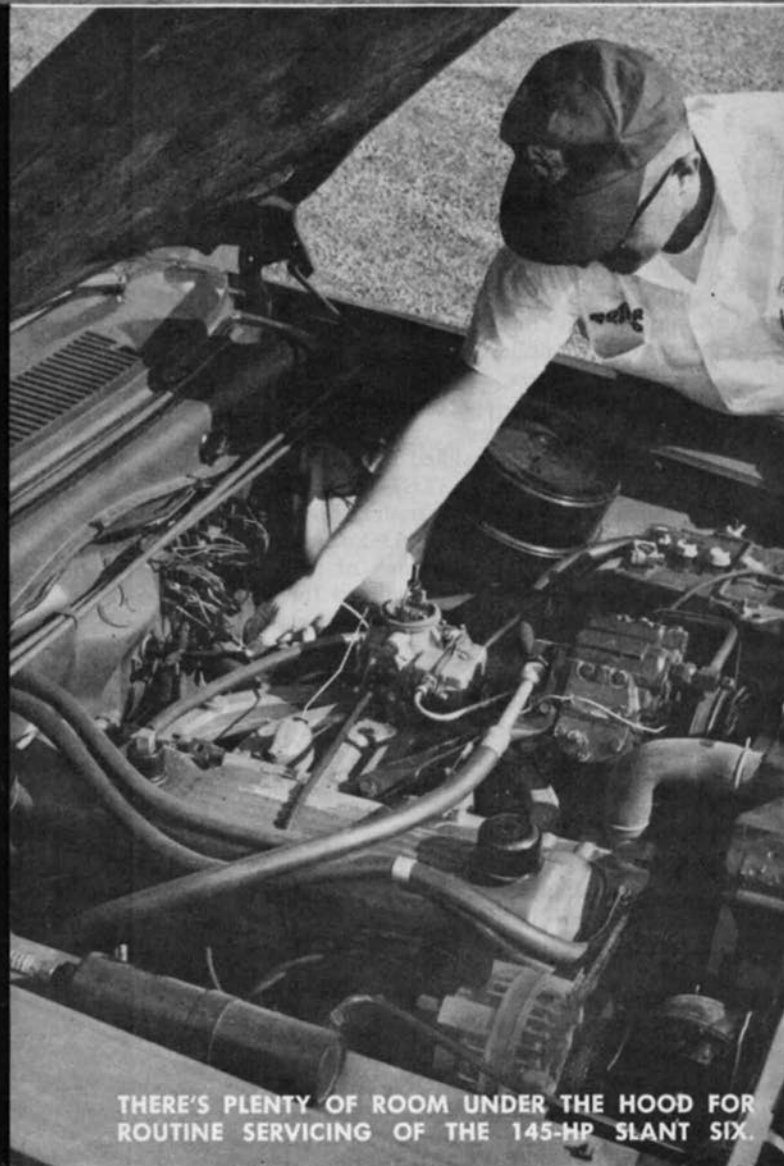
Front: Independent, lateral, non-parallel control arms with torsion bars; direct, double-acting shocks  
Rear: Rigid axle, with 5-leaf semi-elliptic springs

#### Brakes

Hydraulic, duo servo; cast-iron drums  
Front: 9-in. dia x 2.5 ins. wide  
Rear: 9-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide  
Effective lining area: 153.5 sq. ins.

#### Body and Frame

Unit construction  
Wheelbase: 106.0 ins.  
Track: front, 55.9 ins.  
rear, 55.6 ins.  
Overall length: 186.2 ins.  
Curb weight: 3020 lbs.



**THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM UNDER THE HOOD FOR ROUTINE SERVICING OF THE 145-HP SLANT SIX.**