

MOTOR CITY: MERCURY'S MUSTANG

MERCURY'S ANSWER to the Mustang is now shaping up. We did some snooping around to find out what the latest activity is and when you can expect this car on the market, and came up with this dope: Dubbed the S-77 (James Bond gets into the picture here, too?), the car will be an expanded version of the present Mustang. Wheelbase has been set at 111 in., three inches longer than the present Mustang, and length is 190 in. vs. 181.6 for the Mustang.

The only new area will be the body itself, which will be a hybrid Mustang-Thunderbird. The S-77 may get a new rear suspension, but all other mechanical components will be borrowed from other Ford Motor Co. cars—some from the Mustang, others from the Mercury and Comet. Present engine program for the S-77 calls for two V-8 powerplants—a 289-cu. in. 2V and 4V and a 390-cu. in. 4V. The 289 is the engine presently used in the Comet, and the 390 is the basic engine that Mercury has been using for about three years now and which recently was made an option on the Comet. By contrast the Mustang carries a 200-cu. in. Six and the 289 V-8. The basic Mustang-Comet-Fairlane transmission will go into the S-77, as will other presently available drive-line components, axles, brakes and so on. When can we expect to see the S-77? Target date is September or October, 1966. There will be only one model, a 2-door hardtop, and options now available on the Mustang will be extended to the S-77.

WELL, WHAT do you know, we're back to one-year warranties. Chrysler Corp. is notifying its dealers that its newly modified high-performance 426-cu. in. hemispherical-head engine, the one designed and intended for normal passenger car operation, will not carry the corporation's customary 5-year or 50,000-mile warranty. Chrysler feels certain customers may tend to abuse the engine so it's reducing the warranty period to 12 months or 12,000 miles.

The 426-cu. in. Hemi street version, offered in the Dodge Coronet and Plymouth Belvedere, is the closest thing to a racing engine now available. The basic differences between it and the drag engine are the mounting of carburetors (in-line, or one behind the other) and a modified camshaft, which is still a high performance grind, but not designed for racing; the street version also has a lower compression ratio (10.25:1).

According to plans, Chrysler is

scheduled to build 4000 of the street version—2000 for Plymouth and 2000 for Dodge. The Plymouth edition is to be known as the HP².

Even the 12/12 warranty could be voided under certain conditions. Here's the way it reads: "This warranty shall *not* apply if the engine or drive-train components of the vehicle shall have been altered from the manufacturer's specifications or modified in any manner; nor shall this warranty apply to any repairs or services required as a result of using parts not sold or approved by Chrysler Corporation. This warranty shall not apply if the vehicle shall have been subject to misuse, negligence or accident. Misuse of the vehicle includes, but is not limited to, all forms of extreme operations, such as racing or other sustained high speed use, acceleration trials or wide-open throttle operation or other high speed acceleration, or shifting transmission gears at high engine rpm."

The original, racing 426 Hemi never carried a warranty, was sold "as is."

WONDER WHY Buick never capitalized on its "Wide-Wide" track? Pontiac took advantage of its Wide-Track and it all helped create a new image. But it's interesting to note that Buick last year had a wider front tread than Pontiac, and still does in 1966 (63.4 in. compared with Pontiac's 63 in.). But now Toronado takes the honor, measuring 63.5 in. up front. Pontiac still beats others on rear tread—64 in. vs. 63 in. on Buick and Olds.

HERE'S SOMETHING which might prompt you to rush to the library to research and stir up some lively conversation: according to nationally-syndicated columnist Sydney Harris "very little of the automobile turns out to be American." Quoting Kaempfert's *History of American Invention*, Harris discloses that Isaac de Rivaz patented a gas-driven car in France in 1807; Lenoir built one in 1860; Siegmund Marcus drove a gas-driven car in Vienna in 1875, until the police stopped it because of noise; Daimler and Benz developed cars in Germany between 1883 and 1885; 4-wheel brakes were invented by the English in 1904; the Italian Lancia had "knee-action" as early as 1922; the straight-8-cyl. engine was introduced by Isotta-Fraschini in Italy, and the V type descends from de Dion and Bouton in 1905 in France.

YOU KNOW that the government is refusing to install rear seat belts on

its cars?" one of our compatriots asked us recently. Wow, we thought! Refusing to install rear seat belts, after all that commotion the General Services Administration raised about auto safety and the equipment it would like to see on all cars?

We quickly called some auto safety men around town to discover the truth. "You know, the trouble with some of you auto writers is that you don't bother to read the fine print sometimes," one admonished us. "The GSA never did specify seat belts!" Sure enough, we discovered, after digging up the "Summary of Federal Safety Standards 515" from our files. The first section of this Federal Registry reads: "Anchorages for Seat Belt Assemblies for Automotive Vehicles." And that's all it discusses—seat belt anchors; it does not cover seat belts.

Seems kind of silly to specify anchorages, but not seat belts, doesn't it? Well, there's a reason for this. The government buys its own belts from its own source.

Detroit so far has complied with most of the safety items originally requested by GSA. But there are a few "joker" items which the auto industry still is not in agreement with. The two main ones are a signal system which would warn the driver when either the front or rear brakes went out in the dual braking system and the controversial exhaust emission control system, based on California law.

NOW THE story can be told. Over the past few years, there has been much speculation about the safety of smaller cars, which recently have become bigger cars. Many studies have been made, but now come some official figures from the National Safety Council. They look rather grim.

The Council reports that the number of occupant deaths in small cars in accidents totaled about 25% of all motor-vehicle occupant deaths in 1964. That compares with less than 10% in 1960 and only about 3% in 1958, when the small car fad started. The Council also notes that between 1958 and 1964 the number of occupant deaths in standard-size passenger cars was about unchanged (23,400 in 1958 and 23,500 in 1964). But the number of occupant deaths in small cars increased from about 800 to 8000! Its conclusion: Although the *accident* rate for small passenger cars apparently is not different from the rate for larger passenger cars, the *fatality* rate in accidents is about twice as high for small cars. —Ed Janicki