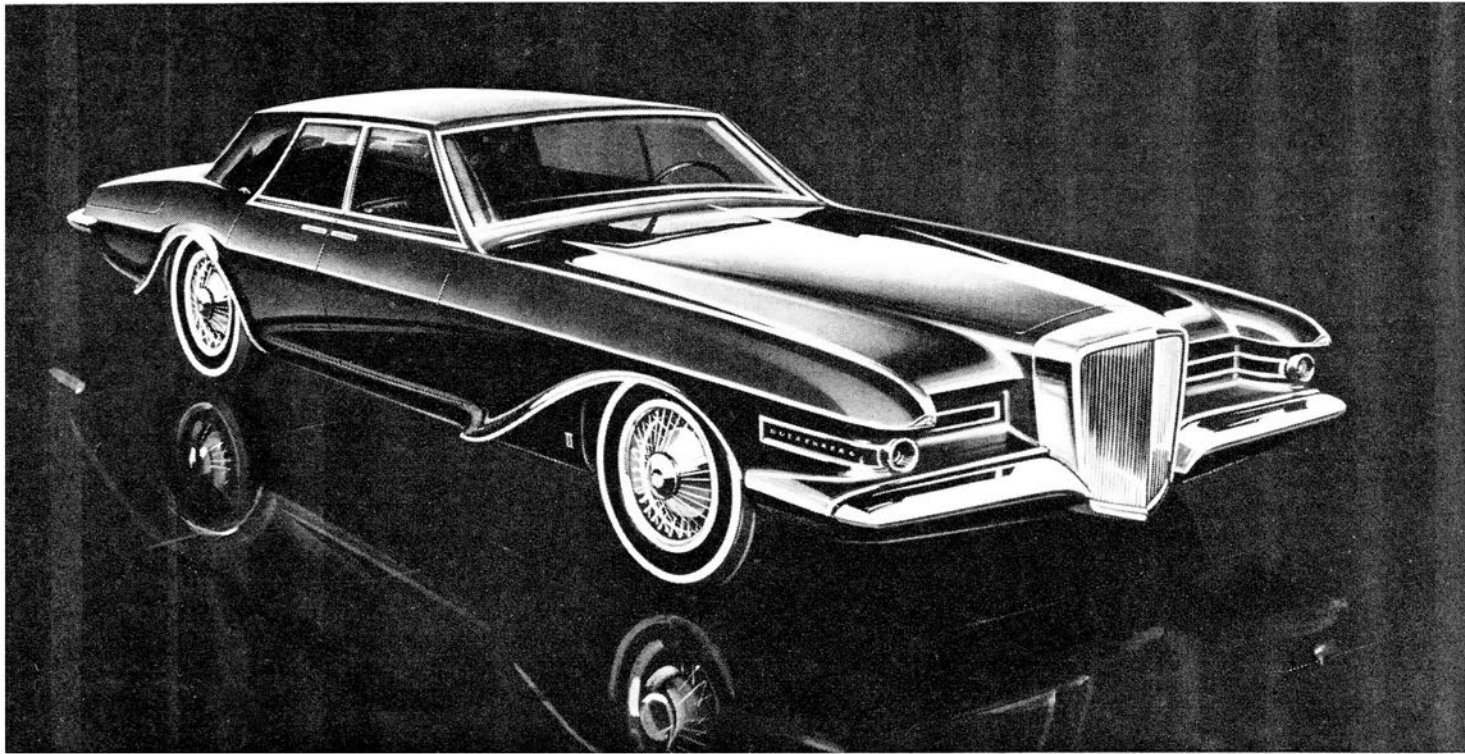


SON OF BIG D



The Duesenberg Returneth

BY GENE BOOTH

THERE ARE those in the younger generations who wonder what it was that made the Duesenberg a legend in its time. Mass advertising and manipulative opinion molding were still in a formative stage and not available to create an artificial "image." What made the Duesenberg legend was simple: The cars themselves were mighty, the most powerful car of their time, and were great thundering machines of larger than life-size—certainly larger than anything else on the road in this country. Seldom in history have such immense vehicles been produced to carry so few passengers. And their costliness approached that of a yacht, for which the Duesenberg was, after all, the land-bound equivalent.

Small wonder then that the majestic Duesenbergs made indelible impressions in the minds of those who saw them. Small wonder that tow-headed, knicker-clad young boys of that era vowed that someday, somehow, they, too, would one day own a mighty Duesenberg. The youngsters of that day

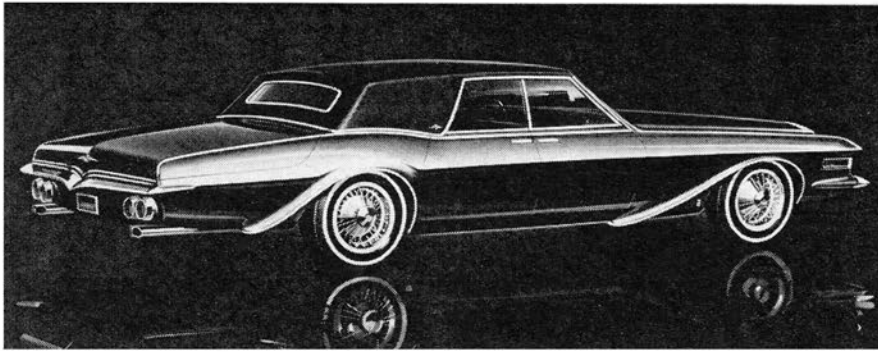
are now full-grown men in their 50s. Some of them have never forgotten that long-ago pledge and now the means of realization is once again at hand. The desire has burned deep within for more than a generation. Finally, a car wearing that legendary nameplate has been unveiled in the Hoosier heartland where the great classic once roamed.

Plans for the resurrection of a car bearing that name, not unexpectedly, created considerable stir among those with fond memories. After a year-long gestation, the first modern Duesenberg appeared in January and is now touring the country for special showings to potential customers as well as those who have already made bonafide orders. And it was the early customers, true to the memories they held dear, that changed the nature of the rebirth—from a proposed \$9000 super sports-type car in fiberglass to a modern-day version of the mammoth Model J with a base price of \$19,500.

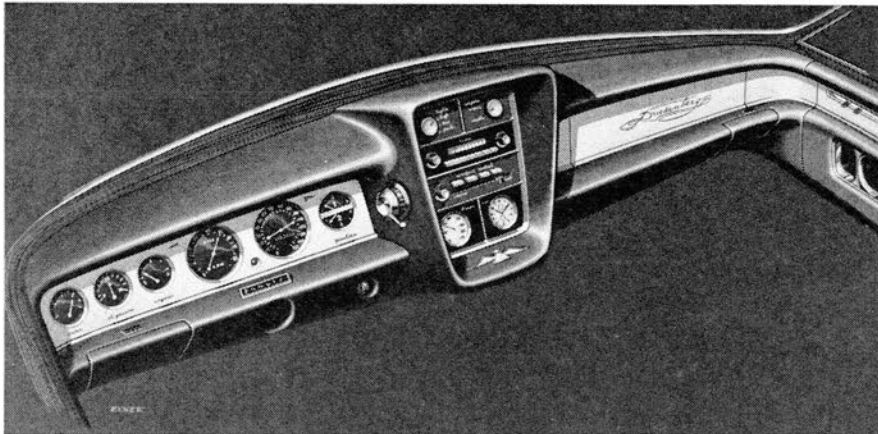
Only time will tell if the modern Duesenberg is to be as memorable a

car as was its predecessor, but many things have changed in the automotive world during the barren generation. Altered economic, technological and manufacturing considerations have in turn changed the means, if not the end, in achieving a modern motoring majesty. Unlike the original Duesenberg procedure, where the customer purchased a complete chassis and had an independent coachbuilder execute the bodywork, the revived Duesenberg is a complete custom body which (as of now) has had no specific chassis and engine selected. The initial vehicle is not necessarily powered by the engine ultimately to be used in series production. Much about suspension components remains unsettled, pending field experience with the first car. Further, a single 4-door town sedan body is the only style so far planned, although Duesenberg people quickly discovered that a 4-door convertible also would be a necessity.

All the bodies are being built by Carrozzeria Ghia in Turin, Italy, under the supervision of Paul Farago,



EARLY STYLING study illustrates where most detail work, such as bumpers and taillights, has been refined from bizarre to handsome.



FINAL DASHBOARD arrangement has mahogany edge, full padding and full complement of instruments including altimeter and speed control.

BIG D

Duesenberg Corporation's production vice president. His experience goes back to the Dodge-based Dual-Ghia projects of a few years ago and the more recent Chrysler Corp. turbine cars, where he served as production coordinator in the Ghia plant. Ghia will supply the separate frame (ladder type) and completely finished bodies, crated and delivered to an assembly plant yet to be built on Indianapolis' northwest side. Engines, drive-trains and suspension components are to be installed there and the vehicles tested for 300-500 miles before delivery. The prototype and subsequent first few, however, are to be completed in Italy pending the construction of the Indianapolis plant.

A lengthened Imperial frame and Chrysler suspension serve the first example of the modern Duesenberg. Power is supplied by the Chrysler 426-cu. in./425-bhp Street Hemi engine, through a Chrysler 3-speed automatic transmission to a Dana-supplied rear axle. Chrysler's 440-cu. in. engine with automatic transmission is proposed for

Car No. 2, although the producers have been wondering about fitting the Hemi heads to the 440 block in the future (it won't work). Chrysler builds its Street Hemis with particular care, running them down the same special assembly line at its Marysville, Mich., plant as their closely related racing engines.

Nothing about the car is technically unusual, a criterion dictated to avoid exorbitant tooling costs and potential trouble spots. Much of the car's equipment is almost off-the-shelf designs from respected suppliers, although upgraded somewhat to meet tougher Duesenberg standards. Dashboard instruments, for instance, are Stewart-Warner with special faces and cases. The tilt-and-telescope steering is standard equipment, supplied by Saginaw Division of GM. Wheel bearings, universal joints and other mechanical components are all standard-size, easily obtainable items. The most unusual feature, for an American car, is the 4-wheel disc brake system supplied by Airheart which incorporates 12-in. rotors and two caliper assemblies per wheel. Airheart, a builder of racing and aircraft brakes, took on the brake assignment after Duesenberg was ignored by larger and better-known disc brake suppliers.

Indeed, reports Executive Vice President Milo Record, one of the

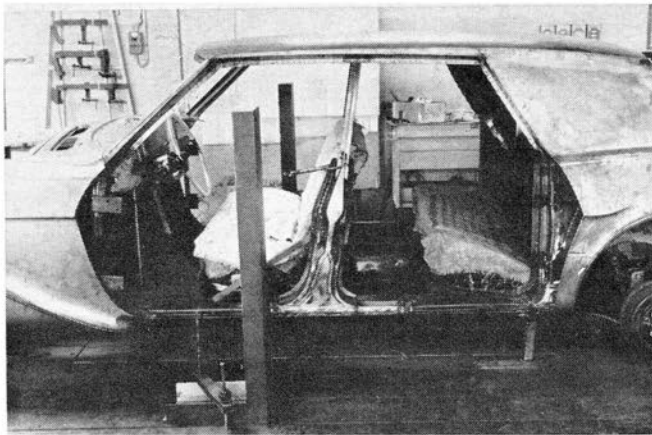
problems which developed in working with the usual Detroit suppliers was the question of volume. Many suppliers, he said, were interested in the project, but only in terms of multiple hundred thousands of units a year. Dayton, which supplies fine wire wheels for many special Detroit show cars, built up a special set for the prototype Duesenberg, however.

One of the more remarkable features of the Duesenberg, and one unlikely to appear on less costly cars, is the Firestone fuel cell gas tank in each rear fender. These explosion-proof tanks contain an infinitely baffled cellular material which was developed as a safety feature for racing cars. Their location permits an underfloor stowage for the spare tire, which then permits a huge flat trunk with 28 cu. ft. capacity. Firestone also is supplying a special tire for the car, an 8.90-15 in. size with special high-speed, high-load capacity. These have low-angle conventional cord construction, however, not radial plies. Still unapproved for series production, but nearly accepted, is an exhaust system of space-age titanium which would outlast the car.

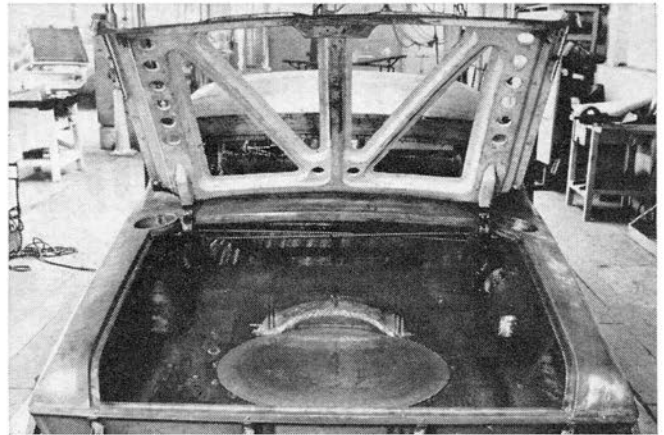
The final drive ratio has yet to be settled, Record said, but will lean toward the side of stop-light performance rather than top speed. The Chrysler Hotchkiss-type leaf springs at the rear are assisted by longitudinal traction bars for additional ride control. "This first one is still experimental," said Chief Engineer Dale Cosper, "a prototype which we may find needs many changes; wheels, shock absorbers, even the whole power train are indefinite."

A lengthy evolution was involved in the final styling of the car, created by ex-Chrysler, ex-Studebaker styling chief Virgil Exner. Though the original proposal was much like that featured some time ago by *Esquire* magazine, it gradually has been refined to something more conservative. Traditional clamshell fender outlines around the wheel openings and the massive vertical grillework are retained. Bumpers are simple horizontal bars. The headlights, positioned deep in the body between the fenders and grille, are covered with a slide-up panel incorporating turn signals/parking lights when the switch is off. The hood, at 80 in., is enormously long to recapture some of the classic proportions.

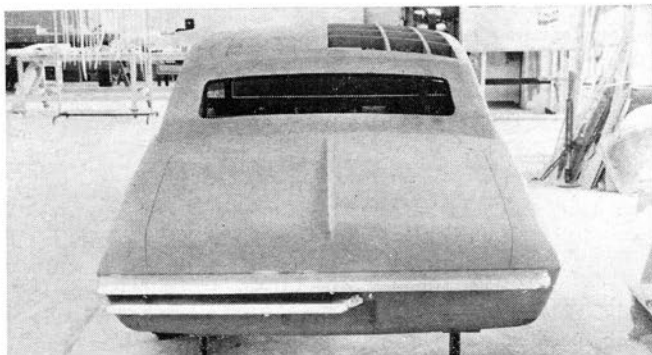
Inside, only the finest upholstery materials are to be used although the buyer has an almost infinite choice. German leather is used in the prototype for seats, along with deep-pile carpet throughout (including trunk). Mahogany trim is used around the padded dash. Full instrumentation is fitted: Speedometer, tachometer, water temperature, oil pressure, ammeter



BODY BEGINS to take shape in Ghia shop. Note huge door openings and complex creases in fenders which require skilled panel forming.



SPARE TIRE is housed beneath round plate on trunk floor and fuel cells will fit at each side. Resulting luggage space is huge 28 cu. ft.



WOOD AND CLAY mockup to pick off contours and dimensions shows final clean lines for the rear with dual parallel bumper bars.



MASSIVE FRONT surrounds Chrysler Street Hemi engine, awaits vertical grille. Headlight wells are to be completely finished around bulbs.

CARROZZERIA GHIA PHOTOS

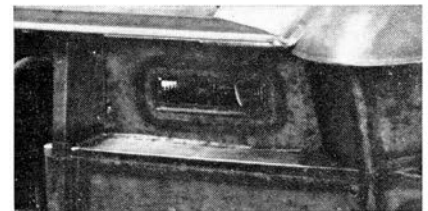
and dual fuel level gauges are arrayed in front of the driver while switches for lights, windshield wipers and washers, am/fm radio and heater/air conditioner, plus the altimeter and clock, are in the center section. A Perfect Circle speed control, mounted on the driver's side of the center panel section, also is standard equipment. Seats, windows and door locks are all electrically powered. A further equipment package, demanded in early orders, is now being designed for the rear seat. It will include a small television set, bar equipment, space for dictating machine or tape recorder and additional engine gauges for the owner wishing to keep tabs on his chauffeur.

Response to the revival of the Duesenberg has been almost overwhelming, according to Fred J. McManis Jr., corporation president. Enough firm orders and solid prospects—generated solely from press reports and a single *Wall Street Journal* ad—are in hand to take up the first full-year production schedule of 500, he reports. McManis, a Houston, Texas, real estate developer and race horse breeder, represents a group of Texas investors who have funded the company. Fred "Fritz" Duesenberg, son and nephew of August S. and Fred S. Duesenberg, is board chairman of the corporation. One other official, general sales manager Bryan A. Orr, completes the company per-

sonnel presently operating out of a converted doctor's suite in an eastside Indianapolis professional building.

The original Big J Duesenberg, the one that inspired such awe and desire, was produced between 1929 and 1936. A total of 448 were sold and 350 of those are still operating. The present company anticipates that the production schedule of 500 annually, still more than a year away from realization, will be unable to satisfy the market for the revived Duesenberg. "We figured we could count on a certain share of the Rolls-Royce and Grand Mercedes market," said Record. "What we couldn't figure on—had no way of assessing—is the number of those grown-up youngsters who want to buy that Duesenberg they promised themselves way back when." That is the reservoir which is supplying the reborn Duesenberg Corp. with its greatest volume of orders.

So, once again, the majestic Duesenberg rolls on America's highways. And while it doesn't quite match the specifications of a modern-day superprestige car (CL, July 1964), the prototype is worth attention both for the attempt to fill that void and for the fact of its appearance. In a mass consumption society, there is still a place for "The Car of the Stars" and the dedicated few who will try to produce it.



PANELS WITH parking lights slide up over headlights when switched off.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	137.5
Length, overall, in.....	244.7
Width.....	80.32
Height.....	57.0
Tread, front.....	61.8
rear.....	62.36
Overhang, front.....	43.2
rear.....	64.0
Tire size.....	8.90-15
Curb weight, lb.....	5800
Headroom, front.....	39.5
rear.....	39.0
Legroom, front.....	42.5
rear.....	44.0
Hiproom, front.....	63.0
rear.....	62.0
Luggage cap., cu. ft.....	28.0
Engine, make and type.....	Chrysler ohv V-8
Bore x stroke.....	4.25 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	426
Bhp @ rpm, rated.....	425 @ 5000
Torque @ rpm.....	490 @ 4000
Valve dia., intake.....	2.25
exhaust.....	1.94
Valve duration.....	276°
Valve lift, in.....	0.46
Lifters.....	Mechanical
Pistons.....	Domed forged aluminum
Carburetion.....	2x4, AFB
Transmission, make.....	Chrysler TorqueFlite
type, Torque converter w/3-speed planetary gearset ratios.....	2.45-1; 1.45-2; 1.00:1-3
axle ratio.....	n.a.