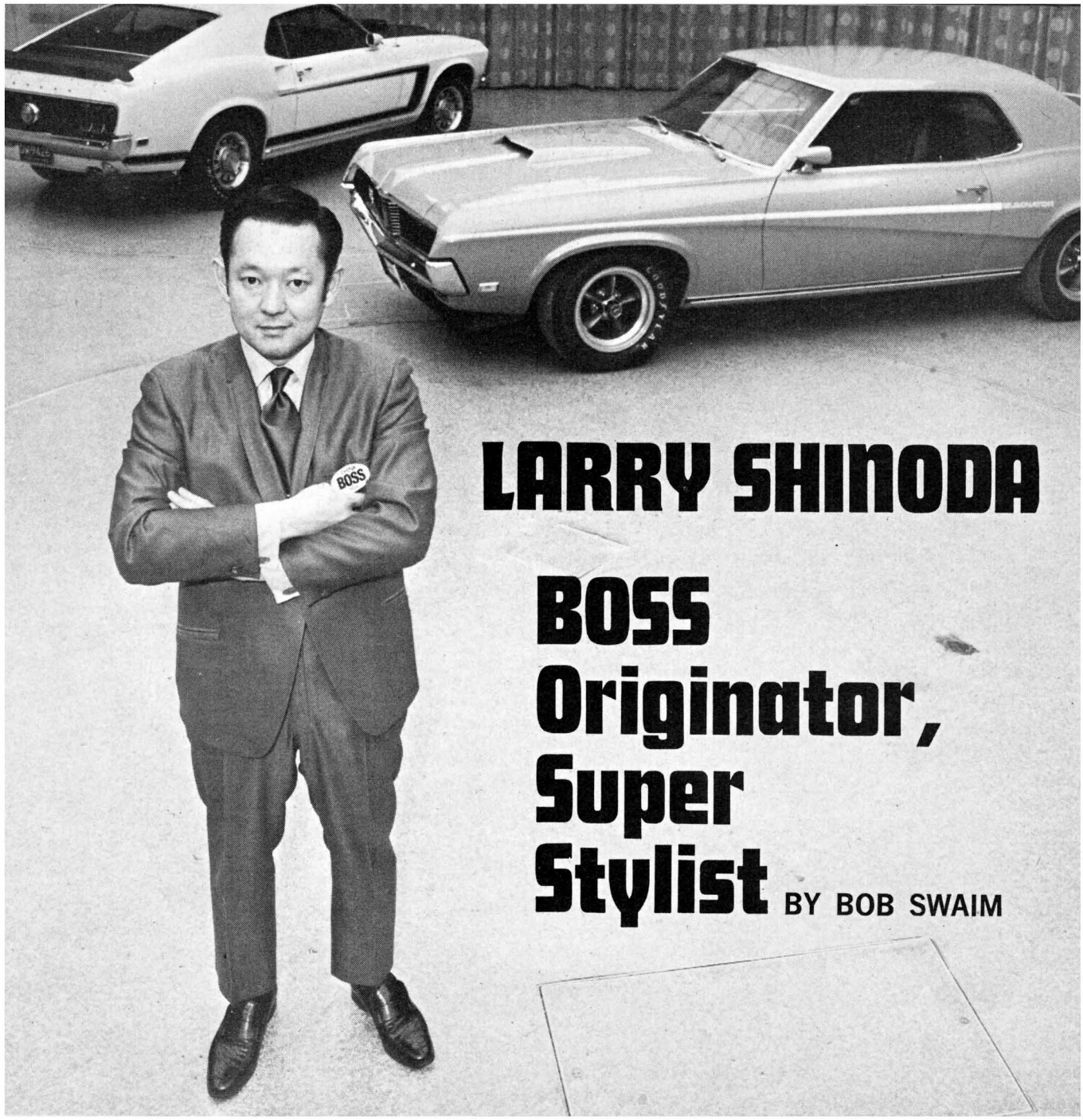


LARRY SHINODA

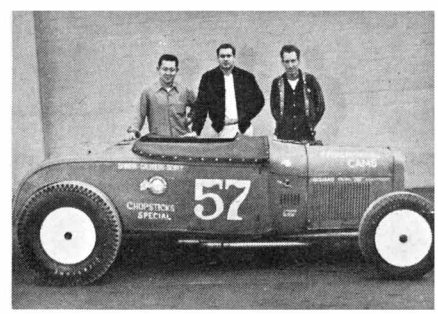
BOSS Originator, Super Stylist

BY BOB SWAIM

Next time someone gives you the old lecture about there not being any future in pursuing your automotive interests, tell them the story of ex-hot rodder Larry Shinoda, 38-year-old design executive at Ford Motor Co.

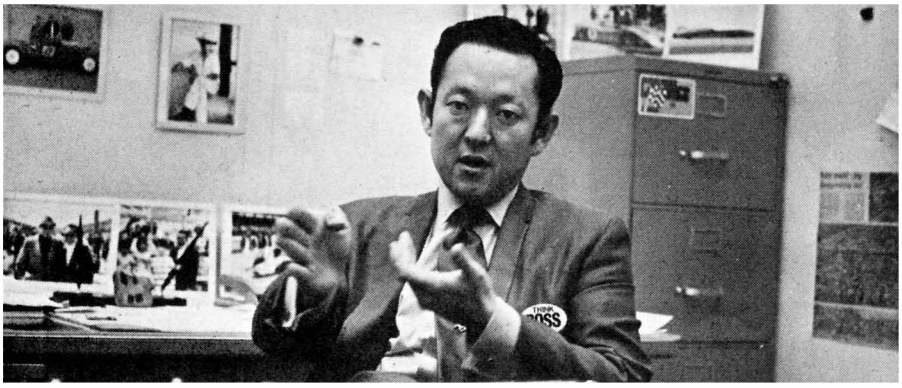
How does one go about explaining the elusive essence of a word that has been taken from its accepted place in English language usage and transposed by members of the "hip" generation into a slang descriptive adjective with an often vague and highly nebulous meaning? Such a word is *boss*, which Webster defines as "a person with authority over employees." Now you and I know that in our modern day lingo, the word has an entirely different meaning. When used in a descriptive manner, boss means, ... well, *you* know what it means, right? Sure, now I've got it. Boss means the same as "tough," "outasite," "groovy," "sano" or one of several other idioms today's youth uses to describe a condition that approaches the ultimate.

In the world of cars an example might be a Mach I Mustang with front and rear spoilers and powered by a 429 CID hemi-type engine. Now that's "boss," right? That's exactly what Larry Shinoda had on his mind when we dropped into his office at Ford Motor Company's Design Center for an interview. You see, Larry holds the position of Director of Special Projects for Ford, and his project at the time was to come up with a name for their new 429 Mustang. *(continued on following page)*



Shinoda, left, teamed with Harvey Goldberg, center, and Lloyd Scott to build this Olds-powered '55 NHRA Nationals winner.

'Stand on the gas and get the job done!'



By now you can probably appreciate the difficulty of trying to explain to top-level business executives – in this case several Vice-Presidents at Ford – the "in" meaning of a word such as "boss," and why it is applicable to a certain new car. Although it took much time and many discussions, in the end Larry was successful, hence the "Boss 429" and "Boss 302" Mustangs. But success is nothing new to Mr. Shinoda, who has continually piled one atop another during his fourteen years in Detroit.

It all began back in 1955, when Larry took a day off from wrenching his Olds-powered '29 Ford roadster to answer an ad he had seen in the *L.A. Times*. It seems that Ford Motor Company was holding interviews for positions in their styling department, and since Larry had completed a few years of study at the L.A. Art Center College of Design, he felt that he might qualify. So in he walked for an interview, dressed in pegged Levis and a Howard Cam T-shirt, in hopes of starting off on a new career. Despite Shinoda's raiment, the Ford people were impressed, more likely by his background than his dress, and hired him as a junior designer. That year marked a couple of other major successes for Larry, as he was a member of Bob Sweikert's pit crew, the winning team behind '55's "Indy 500" victor. Later that summer he managed to cop Top Roadster Eliminator honors at the first NHRA Nationals with his "A-bone." But, because of his new position at Ford and his subsequent move from L.A. to Detroit, Larry retired from active participation in drag racing at the end of the season.

His win at the Nationals in '55 had been the culmination of nine years of participation in hot rodding events – participation that found Shinoda, at the age of sixteen, turning up at the dry lakes of Southern California and racing with the likes of Paul Schiefer, Lou Baney, Vic Edelbrock, and many other pioneers of the hot rodding industry. With his Cragar-equipped flathead '29, Larry cranked out many 100-plus mph runs at the lakes. In 1949, an old airfield was opened up for drag racing in Santa Ana, so Larry built up a 296-cubic-inch Merc flathead, stuffed it into a '29 roadster pick-up, and ran 114 mph in the quarter. Two years later he acquired an old circle track car, removed the body, and ran a best of 11 seconds and 130 mph. Hankering for a taste of some "real speed," Larry stuffed a Chrysler into another '29 roadster and headed for Bonneville in '53. A 172 mph pass down the salt satisfied his appetite for speed, while a two-way average of 166 mph set the new class D record. It was at about that time that Larry teamed up with Lloyd Scott and Harvey Goldberg and put an Olds engine in his now well-seasoned '29 roadster. This car, the "Chopsticks Special," is the one that won the Nationals with a best time of 10.80 and 138.88 mph, almost quick enough to be competitive in modern-day Super Stock racing. After Larry moved to Detroit and retired from the partnership, the Olds engine out of the roadster became the front engine in Lloyd Scott's famous twin-engine "Bustlebomb."

Shinoda's first tenure with Ford lasted only a few months, until the early part of 1956, when he went to work for Studebaker-Packard. During this time he directed his racing interests towards the Indy 500, where that year he was again a member of the winner's pit crew. But Larry's interest in Indy cars was not limited to their mechanical aspects. During his off hours from Packard, he was constantly working up sketches of some of his own ideas on body configuration and chassis design. This was about the time that Packard started to skid, however; so, seeing the writing on the wall, Shinoda headed for GM. Harley Earl, V.P. of Styling at General Motors was so impressed with his Indy car sketches that he hired Larry. Thus, after a short, six-month stay with Packard, he began a career at GM that was to last twelve years.

Starting as a Senior Designer in September of 1956, his first big project was to come up with a new look for Pontiac. The results of his labors showed up in 1960 as the Wide Track "Indians."

After successful completion of his Pontiac project, Larry was assigned to work on some special design projects for Corvettes of the future. What resulted was a line of show vehicles, namely the Shark, the Mako Shark I, and the Stingray. The overwhelmingly favorable reaction of the public to these special show cars led to Chevrolet's decision in 1963 to build the Stingray Corvette, another car for which Larry deserves much of the credit for exterior design. He also participated in the design of various experimental Corvairs, such as the Sebring Spyder, Super Spyder, Monza GT and Monza SS. During the time that he was working on the Stingray Corvette, Larry had the opportunity to work very closely with Zora Arkus Duntov, the dean of Chevrolet performance activities and father of the Corvette. (Remember the power-pack "Duntov" cams of '56 and '57?) "Duntov is extremely personable and a very sharp engineer," explained Shinoda. "and if he had his way, there would definitely be some more-exciting cars from Chevrolet."

Although Larry was deeply involved in his design projects during those years, he still managed to find time to participate in various racing activities. For instance, it began to look as though it was necessary to have Larry Shinoda as a member of your crew if you really wanted to win the "Indy 500." In 1959 and again in 1962 he was a member of Roger Ward's pit crew, the winning team in both cases.

Perhaps Larry's most interesting assignment in those years involved his studies into the design of the "ultimate drag car" for Chevy, in 1963. Using a conventionally designed dragster as a base, he began by testing the effect of streamlining and air foils. Clay models incorporating various body configurations were built and tested at Convair's wind tunnel in San Diego, California. The data gained from these tests, plus information such as car weight, engine horsepower output, clutch slippage, coefficient of traction, and other variables, was fed into a computer. The results showed that a dragster built to the indicated specifications should, under ideal conditions, run a best of 5.80 sec. e.t. and 302 mph. Unfortunately, this project was dropped by Chevrolet after the initial research phase, but we wouldn't be surprised to see Shinoda get this one going again at Ford.

Other endeavors during those years included work on several Group Seven-type cars. At least partial credit is due Shinoda for the design of the racers of Bruce McLaren and Jim Hall.

With this wind tunnel testing and the work on the Group Seven cars behind him, Larry by this time had gained quite a reputation as an aerodynamicist. When asked how much of a consideration aerodynamics is in the design of a passenger car, Larry told us that, contrary to some designers' belief that the aerdoynamics of a passenger vehicle are not important enough to be considered in the design of the car, he has found that it plays a significant role at speeds over 40 mph. Bearing this out are the Shinoda-designed Corvette Stingrays and, more recently, the "spoilerized" Camaros and "Boss" Mustangs.

After dropping the dragster project in '64, Chevrolet assigned Larry to again redesign the Corvette. The Mako Shark II, one of

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the most exciting show cars ever, was the result.

In 1966, Larry was promoted to Chief Designer at GM. In this capacity, until his resignation to join Ford, he was involved in the design of some of GM's zippy little pony cars, including the Z-28 Camaros. This is quite ironic when you consider that the Camaro is the only car to ever seriously challenge the pony car superiority of the Mustang. Now, of course, Shinoda is at Ford, helping design cars that will hopefully stay ahead of the cars he helped create at GM.

When Semon E. Knudsen left his position as Executive Vice-President in 1968 to take over the Presidency at FoMoCo, Larry Shinoda was one of those individuals who followed him to Ford, in May, 1968, as Design Executive in charge of Special Projects. When asked why he made the switch, Larry explained that the primary reason was the challenge of helping Knudsen and Ford regain its youth market. The "new deal" born out of their working together is to offer more youth-oriented cars with competitive performance packages and "trick" styling. Backing this up is wider availability and more competitive pricing of performance parts. The point of all this, of course, is to take the number one sales position away from Chevrolet, an accomplishment which Larry predicts will take place within five years.

When asked to tell us a little about "Bunkie" Knudsen, Larry responded, "He's the greatest guy I know. While being very human, tolerant and sincere, he's most firm in his action. He might be best described as an iron fist with a velvet glove."

Knudsen's philosophy having probably the greatest effect on what Ford offers in the future is, "Build what we race and race what we build!" Evidence of this can already be seen in the new "Boss" Mustangs and the Talladega Torino. These new cars are just two of the projects that Larry has been involved in during his time at Ford.

Another of his more interesting jobs was that of designing a body for the world's fastest snowmobile. Rupp Manufacturing in Mansfield, Ohio, recently built a fuel dragster with skis and tracks instead of wheels. Powered by a Gurney-Westlake Ford engine, the vehicle has a full-length, streamlined body designed by Shinoda. (Watch for more on this snow-dragster in a future issue of CC.) Other projects included the design and wind tunnel testing of Mickey Thompson's Land Speed Record car, exterior design of the Eliminator Cougar, and numerous show vehicles,

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including the Super Cobra, the Saturn T-Bird, the LTD Regal and the Scrambler Ranchero.

We asked Larry for a little hint of what Ford may be up to in the near future and he really laid it on us. How about a rear engined two-seater for openers? As far as racing goes, more emphasis will be placed on Super Stock classes, and you will see a switch to the use of production powerplants, such as the 429 CID Hemi engine, in their factory-backed racers. Look for some super slick Trans-Am Mustangs this year, as Larry is working right now on their design with Kar Kraft Inc. and Smokey Yunick. And don't be surprised to see something new in fuel dragsters evolve in the near future. (Remember that ultimate dragster project back at Chevy in '63?)

For the benefit of you aspiring engineers and designers, we asked Larry what he felt were the factors that contributed most to his success. Probably most important is his attitude: "Stand on the gas and get the job done!" Also entering the picture is his interest and knowledge in such matters as profits, marketing, engineering, and performance, which all tie into designing; or, as Larry puts it, "designing in depth." Then there's the fact that he never loses touch with the younger generation. By listening to his own youngsters, dropping by the local hangouts on Woodward Avenue occasionally, and by hitting as many races as possible, Larry keeps tabs on the pulse beat of young America.

We performance enthusiasts owe a debt of gratitude to Larry Shinoda and men like him who have the foresight and enthusiasm to produce the exciting automobiles that are offered today. Of course, without them we would survive, using our own individual initiative to improvise, turning mundane passenger cars into more exotic and interesting machines, much like the early hot rodders. But as long as Shinoda and his cohorts are around, they'll be giving us a helping hand in turning out the kind of exciting cars that you and I want. At the rate they're going, it's going to be very interesting to sit back and watch the better ideas that evolve in the next few years. And if it is a zippy Ford, you can bet that Larry Shinoda had a hand in it.

"It's no "funny" car, but it gets a lot of laughs!"