

# Teacher builds what his class has designed

by JIM HAYS  
of The Outlook staff

It's called a Viking 8, and you won't find this car in any auto dealer's showroom.

In fact, about the only place you will find the low-slung sports car, other than a chance encounter on the street, is in Bob Erickson's garage.

Erickson, who teaches engineering and drafting at Mt. Hood Community College and lives in Troutdale, built the Viking in his garage in eight months last year. It was the culmination of a project for his advanced design class at the college.

"I wanted to give them (his students) a chance to see the final result of a project," Erickson says. "I told them if they designed it, would build it."

When the class completed the drawings, which took three school terms, Erickson was ready to begin production. That was last spring.

He finished the car in September, after about 700 hours of work and a cost of \$2,700. What makes the final product even more remarkable is that Erickson started virtually from scratch and did all the work in his garage with ordinary everyday tools. His only concession to advanced technology was an automatic hacksaw.

"You can get disinterested pretty fast going back and forth with a hacksaw," he says.

The final result was a 41-inch-high, two-seat sports car resembling an English-made Lotus 7. Powered by a 1,600 cc Ford engine. The car features both rapid acceleration (0-60 mph in about six seconds) and high gas

mileage (40-45 miles per gallon).

The name was derived from the Lotus and the Viking Racing team, a local Formula Ford outfit Erickson used to work for.

"We just changed the name and the number," he says.

The Viking 8 began life as a 1972 Ford Pinto that Erickson bought at an auction for \$265. He removed the parts he needed and sold the remaining parts for what ended up to be a \$10 profit.

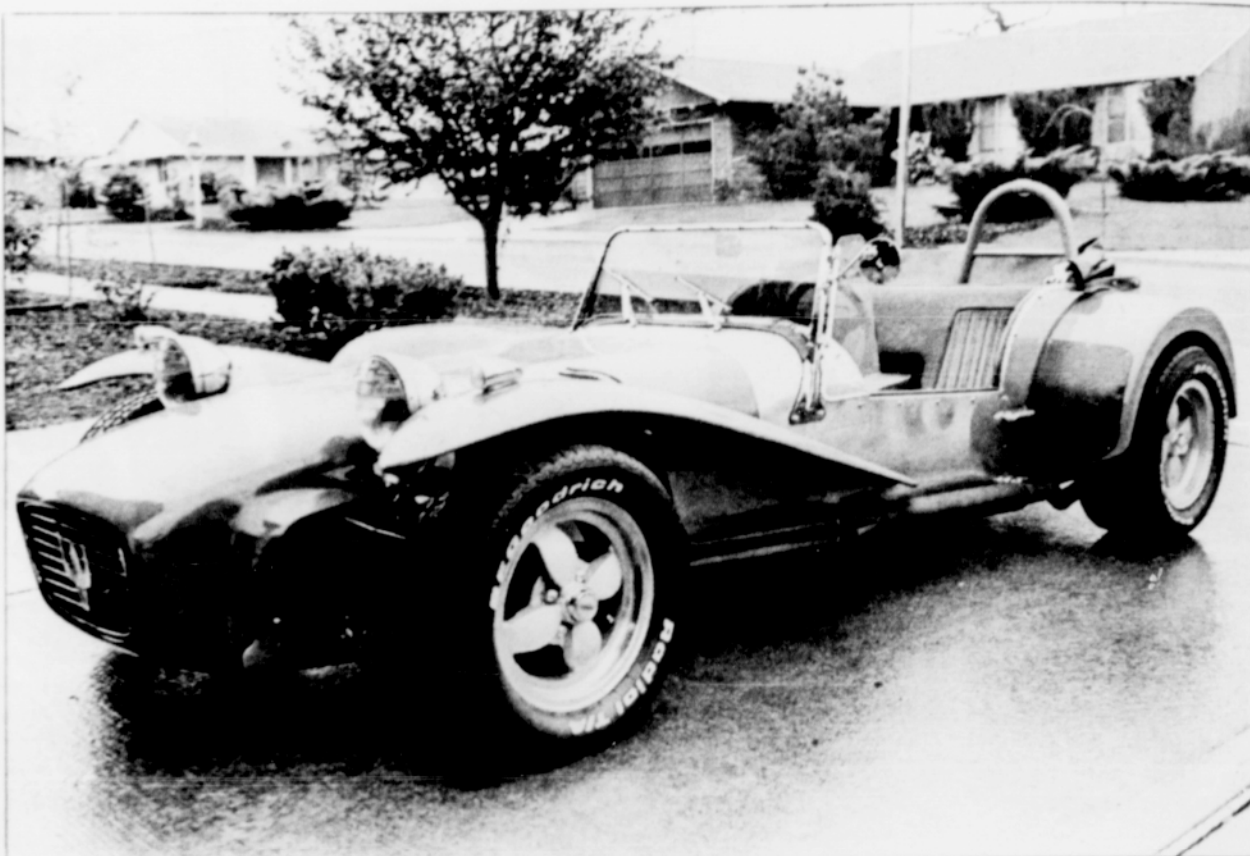
The chassis was constructed of steel tubing, both one-inch square and one-inch round. The body was made of fiberglass, for which Erickson built the molds. He also used polished aluminum in some areas.

"The only things we didn't make are the things you can buy in auto parts stores," Erickson says. "Everything else was built by me."

Erickson did some scrounging to find parts, too. The rubber lining underneath the windshield came from a garage-door seal. Leather pads near the wind wings originally were part of a pair of boots that once belonged to Erickson's father. The tail light turn signal assembly came from a Yamaha motorcycle and Erickson salvaged the radiator grill from an abandoned shopping cart he found in a vacant lot.

About the only drawback to the car, as Erickson sees it, is that its interior is too small for some people. But then again, he didn't build it for mass production.

As one might expect, Erickson can hardly back out of the garage without turning heads on the street. "I drove it over to Gresham



The Viking 8 was designed by a class at Mt. Hood Community College and built by teacher Bob Erickson

High School one day and people just came out of the woodwork to look at it," he says. "It really draws a crowd."

It drew disbelief when Erickson took it to the Department of Motor Vehicles to get a license and title. "I told the woman that I needed a license for a car I had built," Erickson recalls. "She asked me what kind of car I had built it off of. I told her I built it from scratch and she said, 'You can't build a car like that.'"

With its unique structure, custom features and high level of performance, Erickson has received feelers from people asking him to build more cars. He's toying with the idea, and already has the beginnings of a second model laid out in his garage.

"I figure I can only build maybe three of them a year and I'm probably only going to build one or two more of these," he says. "I don't want to do the same thing too many times."



## CARLSON CHEV. CAR CARE \$\$\$ AND SENSE . . .

Today's engines — when maintained properly — will benefit you in numerous ways.

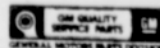
**EMISSION CONTROL SERVICE** as recommended by the manufacturer every 6,000 miles for trucks and every 7,500 miles for cars, provides a service which adjusts your engine on an infrared machine and an engine analyzer to insure you:

- 1. BEST FUEL ECONOMY.
- 2. LONGER SPARK PLUG & IGNITION PART LIFE
- 3. LONGER ENGINE LIFE.
- 4. GREATER VEHICLE RELIABILITY.

ONLY

**\$24<sup>00</sup>**

SERVICE FEE . . . . .



KEEP THAT GREAT GM FEELING WITH GENUINE GM PARTS.

Carlson Chevrolet  
Sandy, Oregon

**PETE  
CARLSON**  
SANDY

Service  
Dept.  
668-4101

## Watch emotions How to buy a sports car

Alluring, exciting, even mystifying. Sports cars can evoke tremendous emotional responses in first-time buyers. This often clouds the decision-making process, sometimes to the point of irrationality. It even makes the advice of friends who own sports cars suspect.

So how can a first-time buyer — or even a repeat buyer — see past those curving lines to make a rational decision about which sports car — if any — is right for him or her?

A new booklet, "How to Buy And Enjoy The Sports Car That's Right For You," published by Mazda and written by four widely respected automotive editors offers the novice sports car

shopper a good step-by-step primer.

Your personal likes and dislikes must play an important part in your search for the right sports car. Make sure you are clear about your needs and the options you want on your new car. After all, if you don't like the car, you won't like driving it — regardless of its virtues.

You should always plan on test-driving the several cars which interest you. Once you're behind the wheel, the Mazda booklet can help you evaluate a car's performance and handling with a nine-point driving test similar to that used by professional drivers.

1. Familiarize yourself

with the interior layout.

2. Check visibility. Front, rear and side.

3. Ventilation. Is it sufficient for your climate?

4. Noise level. Sports cars are usually noisier than sedans. Is the noise objectionable to you?

5. Ease of operation — steering, gearshift, clutch, brake and throttle. All of these controls should help you drive the car, not make it a difficult task.

6. Acceleration and performance. Drive the way you normally drive your car. Are you satisfied with its overall performance?

7. Braking. The car should stop easily, smoothly and in a straight line.