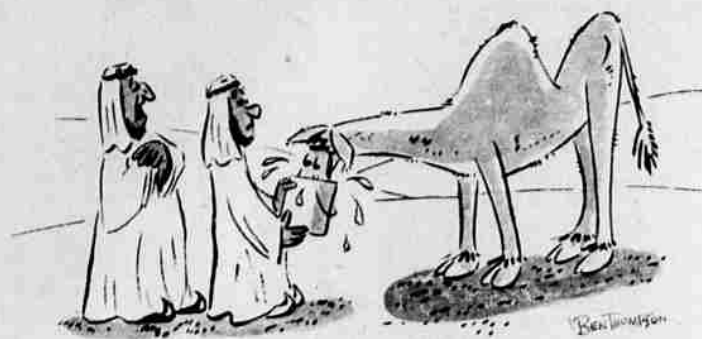




"How many miles do you get to a gallon?"

REVOLUTION IN THE AUTO INDUSTRY

by Donald MacDonald

Highlighting the 1960 models

HENRY FORD'S "tin lizzie" put the nation on wheels because it was a gutsy and reliable automobile that took its owner from here to anywhere at minimum expense.

As the industry grew, though, its product took on fat. It drifted slowly away from its functional purpose to become, partially at least, a symbol of status. Even the least expensive models swelled to such girth that status seekers and plain folk alike had to erect new, bigger garages to house their symbols.

Detroit, however, was only giving Americans what they wanted. Thorough market research showed that through 1957 a majority preferred what one writer called the "insolent chariot." Those few makers who ignored this suffered severely.

But when the public began feeling it was "time for a change," as it did in early 1958, this amazingly flexible industry wasted no time crying over spilled fins. Instead it rushed off its drawing boards various versions of cars that Studebaker president Harold Churchill calls "sensible." In doing so, it set off an automotive revolution.

Chevrolet's Corvair is one example of this revolution.

the new compact cars mark the most far-reaching change since the introduction of the Model "T"

lutionary thinking. It has several unusual mechanical features, notably the rear-mounted, air-cooled aluminum engine.

The six cylinders, which sit opposed to each other in sets of three, form a single unit with the transmission and differential. This is designed to transmit the engine's potential 85 horsepower to the driving wheels with less friction loss. The weight of the mechanism on these wheels gives the car good traction on icy surfaces, and, of course, the air-cooled engine doesn't need water or antifreeze. Mechanics will applaud the service accessibility; they simply open up the Corvair's rear deck lid and there are all of the works grinning at them.

The four-door, unitized body (one which has been strengthened in construction so that it no longer requires a chassis or frame for support) is the lowest in the industry, but it will still carry six normal-sized adults with a fair degree of comfort. The floors, front and rear, are flat because there is no hump for the transmission and drive shaft. Visibility, looking forward over your luggage, is excellent, as it is to the rear when backing the engine

end into a tight parking space. Controls are normal except for a revival of the floor-mounted gearshift lever; automatic transmission is optional. The sedan will be followed later in 1960 by a station wagon.

Like the other two new compact offerings, a bare Corvair will cost you with taxes and heater about \$1,900 or approximately 80 cents for each of its 2,375 pounds. There is little else to buy besides a radio, automatic transmission (\$135 on the Corvair), and maybe the deluxe trim option. Except for Chrysler's Valiant, which offers power steering, the usual array of mechanical assists are considered extraneous on compact cars.

These cars are designed to cruise happily on regular-grade gasoline at their maximum speed of 85 miles per hour, wherever such a pace is legal. They have enough power to stay up in the traffic-light sweepstakes and average nearly 20 miles per gallon in the city and more than 30 on the turnpike.

The Valiant stands on middle ground with respect to engineering and styling innovation. While all compact cars are dimensionally similar with their approximate 180-inch length and 70-inch width,

Chrysler's candidate features a water-cooled, cast-iron engine. To place it under the low, front hood, it has been angled about 30 degrees on its side. Using basically the same six-cylinder, overhead-valve power plant as standard-sized Plymouths and Dodges, the Valiant has a peppy performance.

Its standard model has a manual transmission operated by a stick in the floor; a three-speed automatic unit is optional. The latter, incidentally, offers the only push-button control in this field. Another feature borrowed from bigger Chrysler products is the torsion-bar front suspension on both the station wagon and four-door sedan models.

The Valiant's lines seem to come from nowhere in the Chrysler family. There is a definitely British look to the car's sharp angles and corners that may appeal to conservative buyers.

Ford's Falcon is best described as button-neat and orthodox in every respect. Its unitized body, available in two- and four-door sedans (a station wagon will follow shortly) has the smooth, flowing lines that characterize 1960 Fords and Edsels. Coil springs at each wheel give a soft ride and handling

(Continued)



DESO has dropped its short-wheelbase Firesweep model. Unitized body is immersed in rust preventives.



MERCURY body lines have been softened in line with great glass area. V-8 engines come in three sizes.



CHRYSLER makes most powerful car in America in 300 model. Features unitized body construction.



CHEVROLET has toned down last year's controversial gull-wing rear. Fuel injection offered optionally.



DODGE offers six more inches of hip room in rear and 87 lbs. of sound deadener to silence road noise.



PONTIAC has changed its front-end styling and reduced front floor hump. "Wide-stance" look kept.



EDSEL has been completely restyled. Offers two types of automatic transmission, plus overdrive.



DART is Dodge's entirely new line, priced model-for-model with Plymouth. Also in station wagons.



PLYMOUTH concentrates on much stranger body, and tests show greater resistance to wear than before.



BUICK has brought back portholes and now gives its product a heavier look, the result of a buyer survey.



FORD is longer, wider and lower. New razor-edge fenders permit easy access to engine compartment.



OLDSMOBILE features new economy engine for low-priced "88" model for use with regular gasoline.