

The Editor's Basket

FEW TRIBUTES are ever perfect. Most words of praise, where truly deserved seem inadequate. In a sense this is the way we feel about MOTOR LIFE's "Racing's Men of the Year" Awards.

It is not our intent merely to pay lip service to champions — this is already part of the spoils of their fame. Rather we are seeking to express the unspoken appreciation of thousands of motor racing fans to the men to have added color, drama and prestige to the sport.

In this issue (pages 40-43) MOTOR LIFE presents its first annual awards to these deserving individuals whose vision, personal courage and tireless efforts have contributed so much to motoring competition. To them, our heartiest congratulations — and sincerest thanks.

THE YEAR 1960 closed its books as the second largest automotive year in U.S. history, with passenger car sales by domestic plants totaling 6.74 million.

With this impressive figure the Automobile Manufacturers Association began its year-end review of 1960. Their sheaf of releases presented a full accounting of U.S. life on wheels during the past year. However, since statistics have a

notorious reputation for being dull, we will pass on only a few of the more interesting — and significant — figures.

Passenger car registrations rose by two million to 61.6 million, with some seven million families owning two or more vehicles. All these vehicles, while clogging the highways, covered 720 billion miles and used 56 billion gallons of gas. For these privileges, U.S. motor vehicle users paid a record \$10.5 billion in special automotive taxes during '60.

An indication of the utilitarian use to which Americans put their cars can be found in the fact that last year more than 14 percent of all motor vehicles produced were station wagons—955,453 to be exact. This body style's popularity helps explain why many of the compacts introduced a wagon as one of their first two models.

In relation to the global scene, the American people, representing less than seven percent of the world's population, have nearly 66 percent of the world's automobiles. Included in this figure are the imported cars, which showed an average sales decrease in the U.S. of 26.6 percent during the first 10 months of 1960 — to 403,038 from 548,884 in

1959. Within the same period, export of U.S.-built passenger cars increased 17 percent (to 11,095 units). In this important phase of world-market change, however, the trend is more important than the figures.

There is one final note of consolation for the car purchaser who may be confused by the wide choice of 30 different makes of U.S. automobiles currently being offered — in 1908 there were more than 250!

INCREASING POPULARITY of power accessories can be seen in the growing demand for comfort, safety and convenience options during the past five or six years. Pontiac, for example, reports the following percentage increases in optional equipment on its '61 models as opposed to '55 models: power seats, up 67.2 percent; windshield washers, 73.6; power brakes, 168; power steering, 290; power windows, 336; and air conditioning, up 1018 percent. All of which indicates that yesterday's luxuries seem to have a way of becoming today's necessities.

BRIGHTER HIGHWAYS are promised by a new road painting method that increases the reflectivity of a car's headlights up to three and a half times. The technique, developed by the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory for a New York State safety study, employs a battery of high-pressure spray guns that dispense a fine paint mist on one side of the tiny "hills" of the road surface — the side facing oncoming traffic. In addition to the greater safety margin that a brighter roadway offers, there is a cost-saving advantage, too — a five-foot-wide strip can be sprayed for the approximate cost of painting a typical four-inch center stripe in the conventional manner. Continuing research will test the effectiveness of the paint in specific traffic

hazard areas, such as intersections, merging lanes and curves. Future use might employ colors to designate route numbers (green), or to indicate danger (red) or advise caution (yellow).

PROGRESS in automotive design and engineering is often paced by developments in materials — metals, plastics, glass, rubber, etc. One of the metals that has been used primarily for trim purposes — stainless steel — is now also being employed in a functional part. The mufflers on the '61 Thunderbird's dual exhaust system use a special formula stainless steel for the inner shell, one baffle and the muffler heads. It is estimated that the new MF-1 steel (from Allegheny Ludlum) is from five to six times more corrosion resistant than aluminized steel, and from 15 to 18 times more resistant than conventional mild steel used in most of today's mufflers.

CHEVROLET has announced a new Impala model, the Super Sport, emphasizing peak performance and sports car features. The SS package, available in either Impala sedans or convertibles, includes a choice of the 305-hp engine with four-speed manual transmission or heavy-duty Powerglide, or the 340 or 350-hp Super Turbo Thrust Special with four-speed gearbox, plus heavy-duty springs and shocks, power steering and brakes, sintered iron linings, and a 7000-rpm electric tachometer mounted on the steering column.

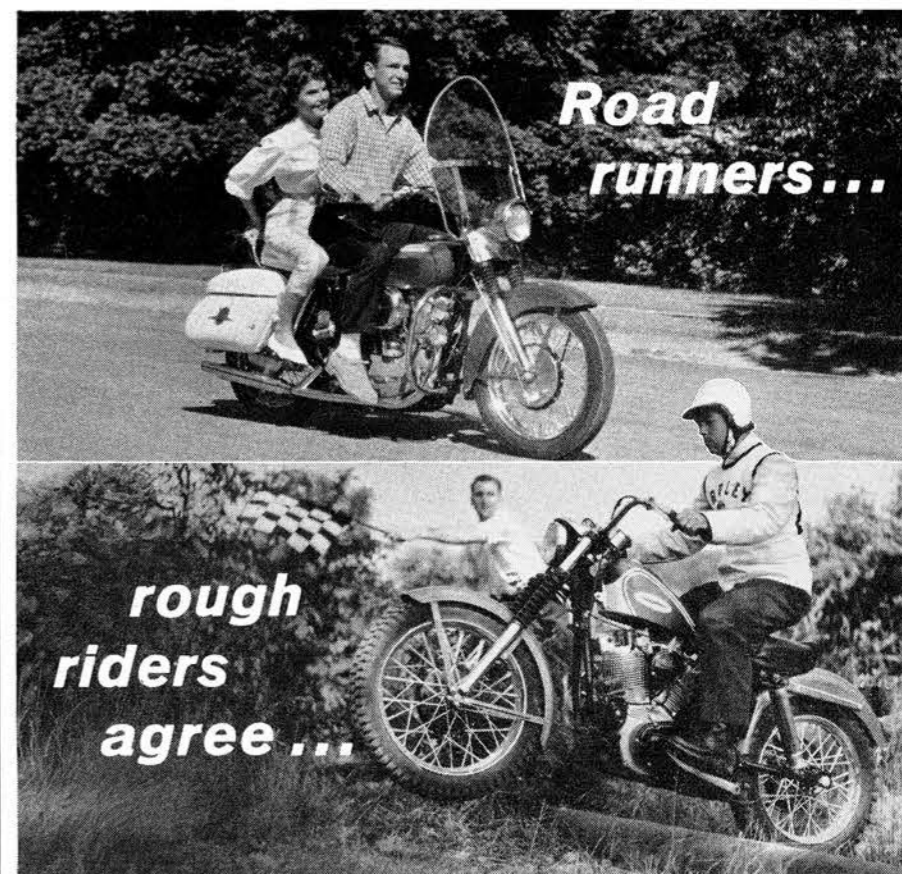
We may have given readers a wrong idea about the 4.56:1 rear axle ratio in our hot Impala road test (Feb. '61 issue). It is not available as a factory option for Impala models, but is a Corvette ratio that can be installed at extra cost by the dealer.

IN A FEW WEEKS the annual Plymouth Trouble Shooting Contests will start in 25 or more cities across the country. Top auto mechanic students, selected by their schools, compete against teams from other local schools to see which can first diagnose and remedy malfunctions deliberately placed in cars. It is estimated that more than 1200 students will compete in the 1961 contests.

Aim of the program is to encourage talented young men to enter the auto industry as service technicians. It has been estimated that there is a need for a quarter of a million of such trained personnel in factories, dealer service departments, specialist repair shops, etc.

All such efforts to bring added recognition to the field of automotive mechanics are to be commended — and supported. With 100 million vehicles on the road forecast by 1970, and one-sixth of our total economy now auto-related, this is a matter of concern to all.

— Erv Rosen



NEW HARLEY-DAVIDSON SPORTSTERS

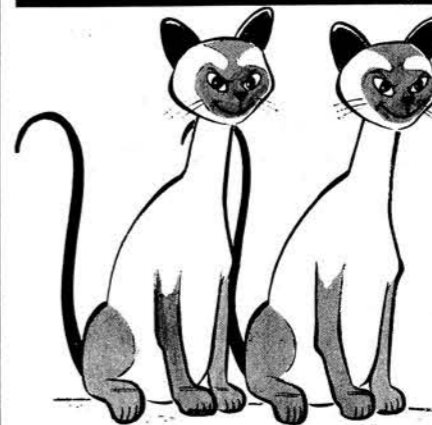
pack power to spare to meet any challenge

Hop on a Harley-Davidson Sportster, hop up to a new high in motorcycle performance. Both Sportster models pack all the power you need to get out in front—and stay there! The Model "H" is hot for the road, the Model "CH" burns up the course in drags, scrambles, trials, enduros. Harley-Davidson Sportsters give you top mechanical efficiency from

the word go: custom cams... hide-dome pistons... lightweight tappets... ported heads... jumbo valves are just a few of their features.

Jet-silhouette styling gives the Model "H" and Model "CH" plenty of eye appeal. See your Harley-Davidson dealer for complete details, or write for illustrated literature.

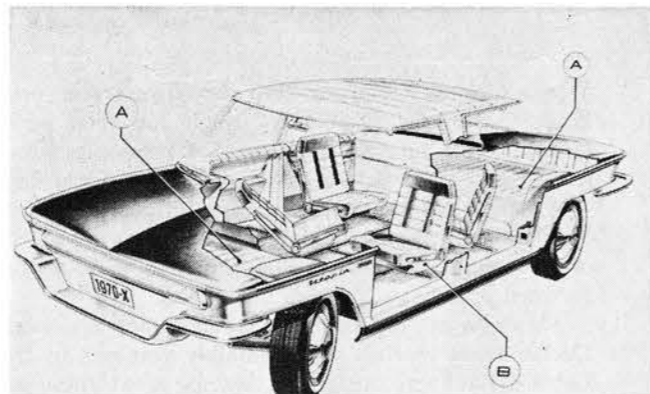
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The Hurst-Dual Pattern floor shift is ultimately installed in the highest performance automobiles. Another unconditionally guaranteed product of Hurst-Campbell, Inc., Glenside, Pa.



Industrial designer Brooks Stevens, peering into his crystal ball, foresees this "People's Car of Tomorrow" (sometime in the 1970's). Appropriately named "Utopia," the car is powered by a fuel cell—"a cartridge-like replacement for today's motor." A station wagon version features a telescoping roof for fresh air driving or easier loading. The four-door sedan model has luggage compartments



(A) fore and aft, and fully adjustable, movable bucket seats (B) — removable if desired. Seats contain high-viscosity silicon fluid, self-shaping to each passenger. Several more practical design concepts: full-width, horizontal-bar headlights and tail lights; symmetrically interchangeable doors, deck panels, windshields, bumpers and fenders. (Sounds like "Utopia" might just be worth waiting for.)