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April 2016 #55

RETROAUTOS

The FJ Holden Replacement We NEVER Saw!

Exclusive Photos



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1902 Thomas



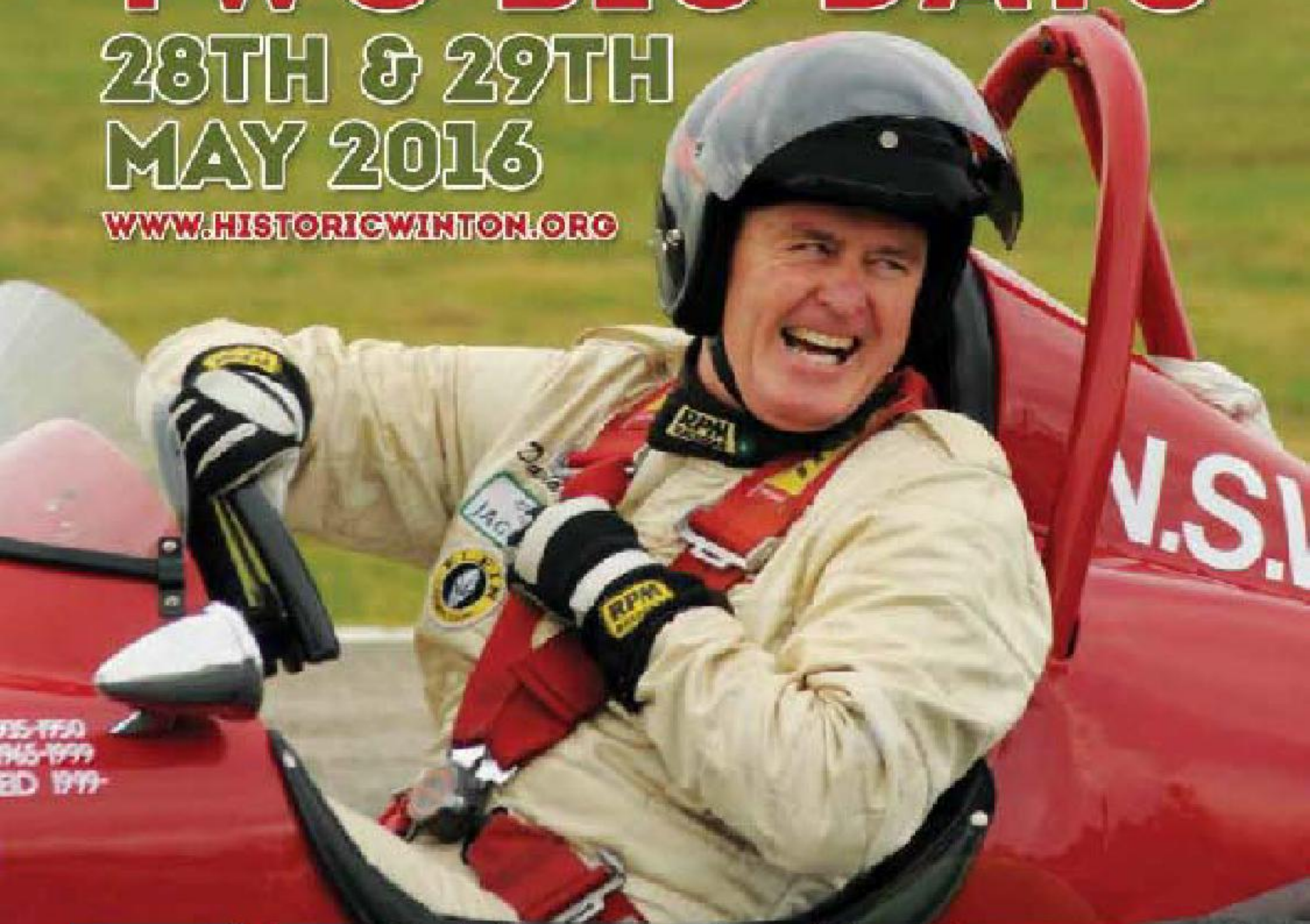
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In This Issue

About Us

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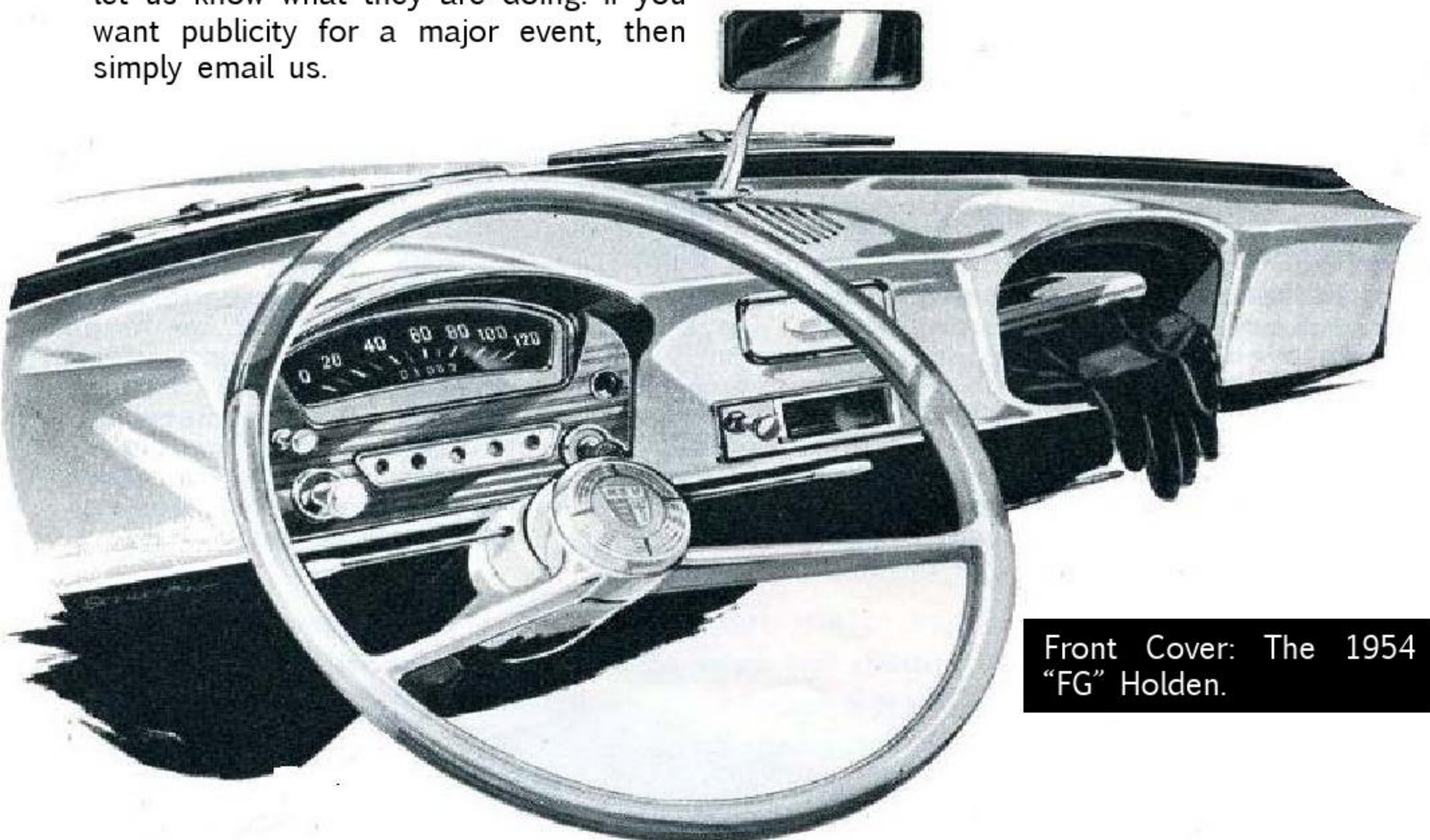
We encourage all classic car clubs to let us know what they are doing. If you want publicity for a major event, then simply email us.

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Front Cover: The 1954 "FG" Holden.

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For once the Federal Government has done something positive for classic car enthusiasts.

Lost in amongst all of the media releases about the plans to make changes to the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989 was some good news.

One of the lesser reported aspects of the new legislation are improvements to the existing arrangements for importing left hand drive classic and collectable vehicles.

The new rule will allow a left hand drive vehicle, which is at least 25 years old, to be imported and registered. Currently, you can only import and register a left hand drive car if it is manufactured before January 1 1989. Anything beyond that date requires an expensive conversion to right hand drive.

Keeping the fixed date would have steadily reduced the scope for importing and driving classic cars.

The “rolling” 25 year rule will open up significant opportunities for access to Italian and American classics of the 1990s, such as the Lamborghini Diablo, Ferrari Testarossa, Chevrolet Corvette and Camaro, Pontiac Firebird, Buick Roadmaster, Lincoln Town Car and Chrysler Le Baron convertible.

The change to the legislation is the result of much behind-the-scenes work by peak councils and companies such as Shannons. They deserve our many thanks.

And our favourite to import? That’s easy.

It just has to be the Lincoln Town Car, pictured above. It’s a full frame chassis throwback to what American cars of the 1950s were all about, but with much better brakes, a powerful V8, power everything, loads of safety features and a boot that’s as big as Texas.

The big Lincoln was always the Retroautos rental car of choice during many business and vacation trips to the west and east coast of the USA. It cruised the freeways with a quiet and effortless grace. The super soft suspension soaked up the bumps. Valet parking attendants always snapped to attention when it appeared. What could be better?

This month’s edition contains our exclusive photo feature which reveals, for the first time, the car Holden were planning would supersede the FJ. And it was not the FE.

Read all about the “FG” Holden, beginning on page 16. It is published with passion and with pride.

You're invited to the

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RetroNews

Market Going DOWN !!

The Hagerty Market Rating is down for the third month in a row. The drop from January 2016 is the largest monthly decline since 2009. It now stands at 69.82 points.

Informed opinion is that the market has slowed in the USA. And where the USA goes, so goes Australia.

But wait, there's more bad news.

Private sales activity fell to a 17 month low, with the average sale price decreasing by 2.5 percent from last month.

Kidston's, who track auction prices world wide, noted that hard facts now back up the previously difficult-to-prove impression that "it's not as easy as it was".

They say this underlines yet again the need for recalibrating the balance between vendors, and their expectations of guaranteed double-digit-plus percentage profit.

Quoted on the Kidston's website recently, Don Rose of RM/Sotheby's commented that "A value correction has set in firmly and rapidly. Call it 15-25% off the peaks of 2014 as a guide."

Mind you, with the stock market sliding by 15%- 20% in the last 12 months, a reduction in classic car prices is not unexpected.



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Win a Harley at Queensland Hot Rod Show

The 46th Queensland Hot Rod Show will be staged on the 21st and 22nd May 2016 at the iconic Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Bank.

Thanks to Morgan and Wacker the show will be giving away a learner friendly Harley Davidson motorcycle.

The Queensland Hot Rod Show serves as the State Titles Show which showcases the pinnacle of custom hot rod and street machine building.

The show has a rich heritage stretching back to the inaugural event in 1968 and has been staged at various locations across Brisbane and on the Gold Coast.

This year the charity of choice is Youngcare. For more information call Katrina on 0417631092.

ACT Wheels Charity Day

The Council of ACT Motor Clubs (CAMC) together with the BMW Car Club Canberra has announced that the Shannons Wheels 2016 vehicle display will be held on the lawns of Old Parliament House on Sunday 15th May 2016. "The location in front of Old Parliament House is an ideal place for a vehicle displays" Council Events Director, Graeme Rossiter said.

The event always attracts a wide variety of classics, including the Triumph Mayflower, pictured at bottom.



Brush Runabout Book

The Brush Runabout was the first automobile to make the crossing from Perth to Sydney. That was in 1912.

Bob Lamond (seen below in his Brush) is the historian of the Brush Owners of Australia and has been busy during the past after six months researching his new book, and contacting Brush owners around the world.

"I volunteered to prepare it on an honorary basis as an infinitesimal payback for 37 years enjoyment driving my 1910 D26 around and across Australia," Bob said.



The cost for one copy is \$A45.00. If you would like to order a copy, email Bob at lamond2@bigpond.com or call 0409712101. (Check with Bob about postage and handling)

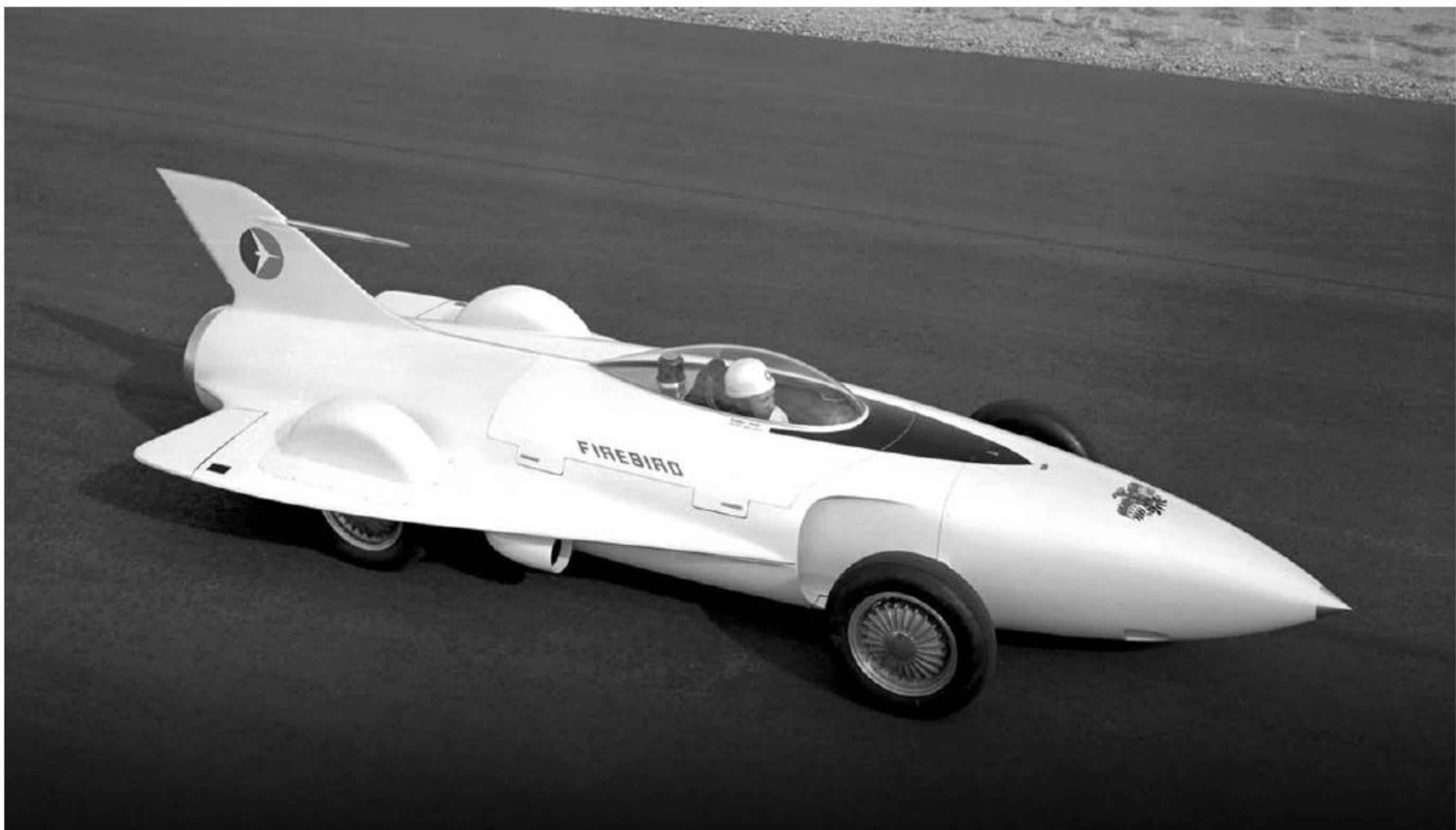
Brush was a self-taught engineer and was involved in the development of iconic marques. First employed by Cadillac and then helped start Oakland (which morphed into Pontiac) before establishing his own car company.

May 2016 in Retroautos

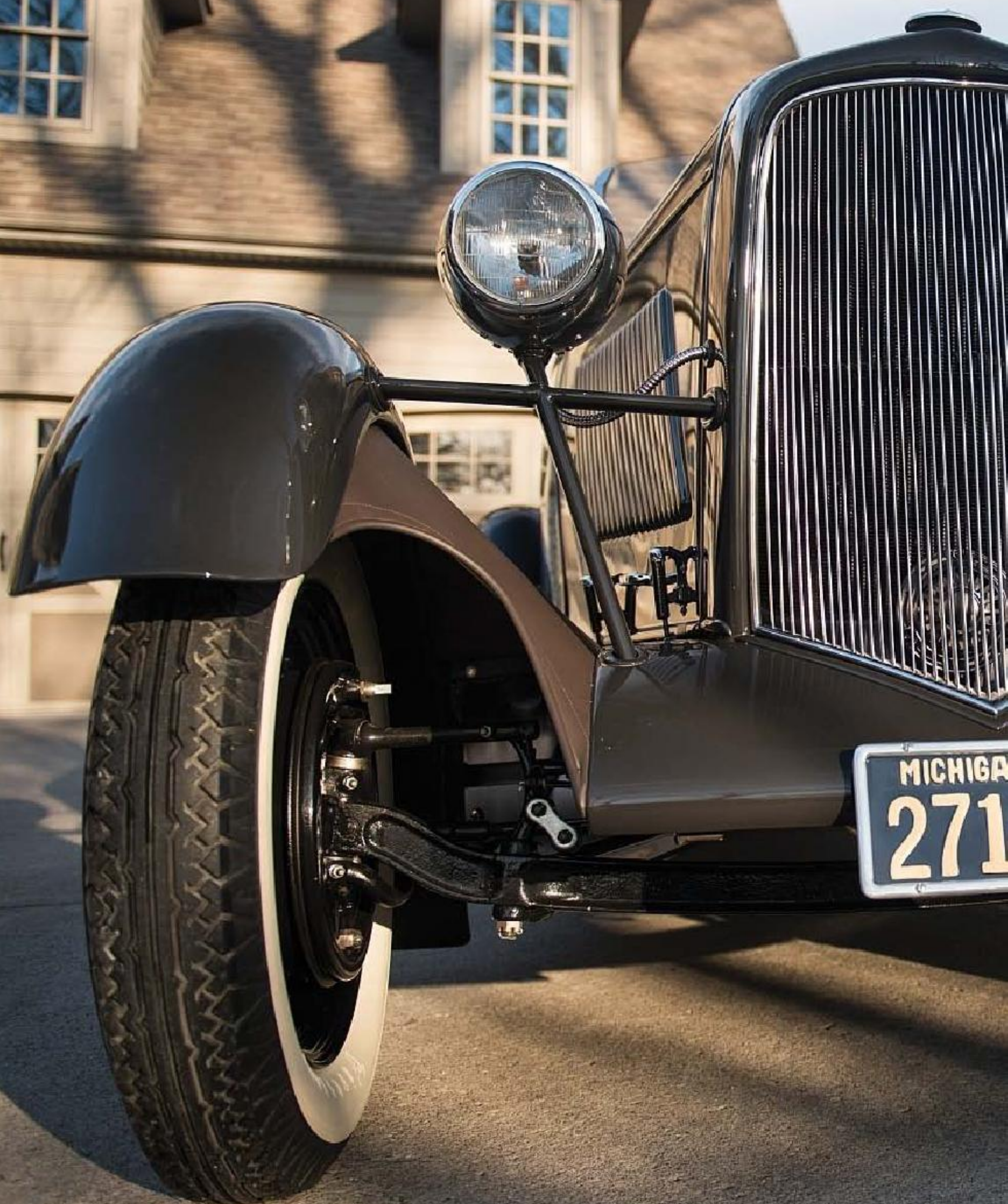
We talk to Tim Kollosche about his HQ Monaro GTS and visit the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, USA.

The Retroautos team has dug into Patent Office archives and found a number of automotive ideas that have been patented by famous car designers.

And we take a look at GM's 1953 Firebird 1 turbine car, pictured below.



RetroAuctions



1932 Ford Roadster photos by Darin Schnabel
©2016 Courtesy of RM Sothebys

RM Sothebys have this piece of automotive history up for auction at their Amelia Island hammering festival on 12th March 2016. It is Edsel Ford's 1932 Ford Speedster. It was custom built for Edsel and styled by Bob Gregorie, who was boss of the Ford/Mercury/Lincoln styling until 1946 (see Retroautos March 2016 edition for the in-depth story about Bob Gregorie). The car features an 85 bhp, 221 cu. in. Ford flathead V-8 engine and four-wheel mechanical drum brakes. Price guide: \$A2,000,000.

See more at: www.rmsothebys.com





Above left: Two more views of the Edsel Ford speedster. The car sat abandoned for almost 50 years until it was restored.

Above right: Meanwhile, over in Kansas on 11th March, Mecum are offering this 1953 Buick Roadmaster wagon. No price guide for this example of high class early 50s Americana.

Below: Back at Amelia Island, this time it is Goodings. They are expecting between \$A3.5 and \$A4.2 million for this 1931 Duesenberg "disappearing top" convertible. It is lot number 22 if you happen to want to phone in your bid. Auction date is March 11th 2016.





Above: From the Porsche collection of TV star and comedoan Jerry Seinfeld, here's a 1955 Porsche 550 Spyder. It has not been restored. It is at Goodings on March 11th. The price guide? Wait for it...somewhere between \$A7 million and \$A8.5 million. And someone will buy it! Right and below: Back in the realm of sanity it this 1953 Buick Skylark. Barrett Jackson are offering it at Palm Beach on 8th April, 2016. No price guide but the restoration cost \$A350,000.





Last Tucker Completed

Pictured above and on the next page is the last of Preston Tucker's ill-fated cars to be completed.

It is chassis number 1052 and has taken since 1950, and many owners, to become a completed automobile. It has been assembled and made from NOS parts and panels, the original chassis and drive train and hand fabricated panels.

The front end sheet metal came from car no. 1018; NOS bumpers, front

doors, quarter panels, and boot lid; and an original, correct engine and transmission.

Brian Joseph of Classic & Exotic Service of Troy, Michigan, hand fabricated the car's floor, roof, and rear doors, using patterns taken from the excellent original Tucker at the Gilmore Car Museum.

The car is going to Auctions America for their Fort Lauderdale event on 3rd April. A price guide of up to \$A1.7 million is given.

Photo Credit: Ryan Merrill Photography



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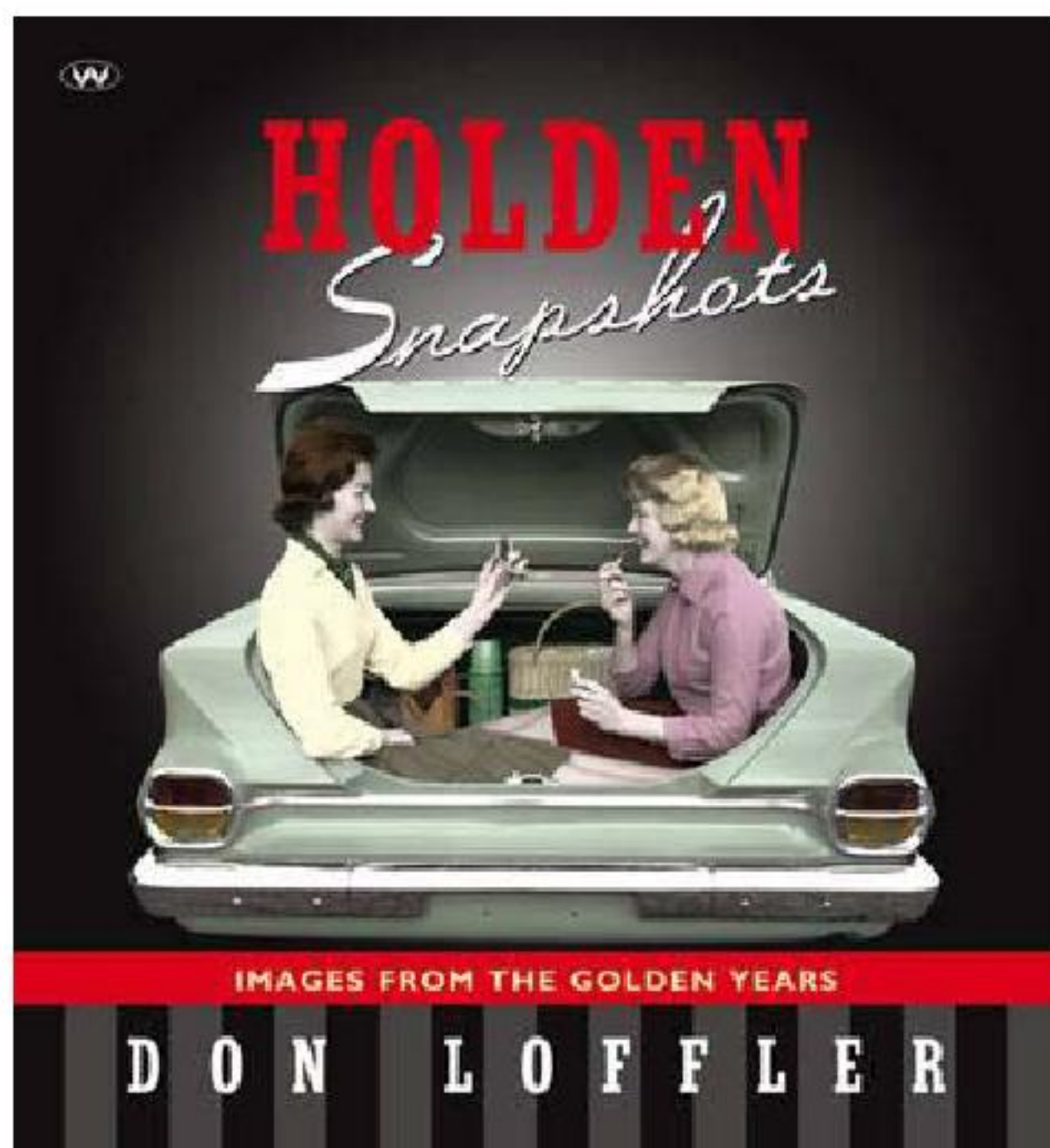
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The “FG” Holden. The FJ’s Replacement We Never Saw.



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73448.6



Above The never released "FG" Holden is compared to the FX. The photo was taken in Detroit in 1951, most likely at Fisher Body's experimental body development workshop in Detroit.

In 1951 GM in the USA developed a Holden that they planned would replace the FJ in 1954 and be a lead-in to the 1956 FE.

This car would have been known as the "FG", meaning "54". (As per Holden's model identification code. See explanation on page 31 for model code explanation).

The car was designed to bridge the considerable styling gap between the decidedly old fashioned 1940s shape of the FX*/FJ and the sleek, up-to-the-minute mid-fifties FE.

We can now show you photos of the FG which have never been published before. And as the picture above highlights, the FG (on the left) was an extensive styling re-make of the FX/FJ.

But the FG never got beyond the prototype stage, and we believe we know why.

In publishing these images we are eternally thankful for the research undertaken by John Kyros at GM Heritage in the USA and the considered and insightful contributions of Don Loffler, this country's well known early Holden historian and author.

The Beginning

To understand the development of the FG it is necessary also look at the development of the FJ.

When planning the FJ, Holden's executives gave it the code letters "FJ", meaning "52", reflecting its scheduled appearance in dealerships in 1952.

In his book, *The FJ Holden*, Don Loffler pinpoints September 1949 as the time when design work commenced on the FJ, less than a year after the debut of the FX.

Don found images in Holden's archives of an FJ styling proposal with a one piece windscreen and larger rear window. This was a 3/8th scale model and was constructed in Australia.

Don explains that work on the FJ was then undertaken both in Australia and in Detroit.

GM in the USA, with their extensive new-body engineering facilities and styling studios, had a number of FXs at their Milford Proving Grounds.

They fitted one of the FXs with a one piece windscreen to see what impact that change would have.

*We will use the more popular descriptor of FX in this story for the first Holden, rather than its official model code 48-215.



Retroautos has found photos of that car dated 8th May, 1950, taken on the roof of a GM building in Detroit.

One of the images (above) is quite stunning. Taken looking through the windscreen, from back seat of the car, and using a wide-angle lens, it reveals the panorama of downtown Detroit.

For whatever reasons, probably cost, the one piece windscreen idea was discarded.

According to Don, while the one-piece windscreen car was being evaluated, GM used two additional FXs, one black and one grey, to try out other styling ideas for the FJ. Don found and published photos of the black car in *The FJ Holden*.

Retroautos has been able to add to Don's research with more photos of the black and the grey cars. These images reveal that stylists were considering two chrome tail fin designs, two slightly different window sill chrome highlight strips and two styles of wheel trims.

The black car also boasted a luxuriously trimmed interior, which was considered too elaborate Australian car buyers and never went into production.

On the Grille

Design work on the FJ's distinctive grille was started in late 1949 in Detroit. Many ideas were drawn by stylists and fourteen were selected to



Photographed over the 12th and 13th January 1950, these front end proposals, on this and the next page indicate the wide variety of ideas that were considered for the FJ's front end.







Two FJ dashboard proposals from 8th January, 1950. Compared to what went into production, these ideas are very streamlined. Note the dashboard picture above is padded. The dials are enclosed in a much smaller binnacle than the final version. On balance we like these better.





Above: FX with one piece windscreen.
Inset: Front view.

be built full size and fitted to the grey car. These were photographed and evaluated in mid-January 1950.

Two designs emerged as contenders for final production. A run-off was conducted in March 1950 and a winner chosen. It was grafted onto the black and grey sedans.

Also in January 1950, two very stylish dashboard ideas were proposed. Neither made it into production.

What we do know is that by May 1950 the FJ styling was locked away by Holden management.

And yet, despite its planned release

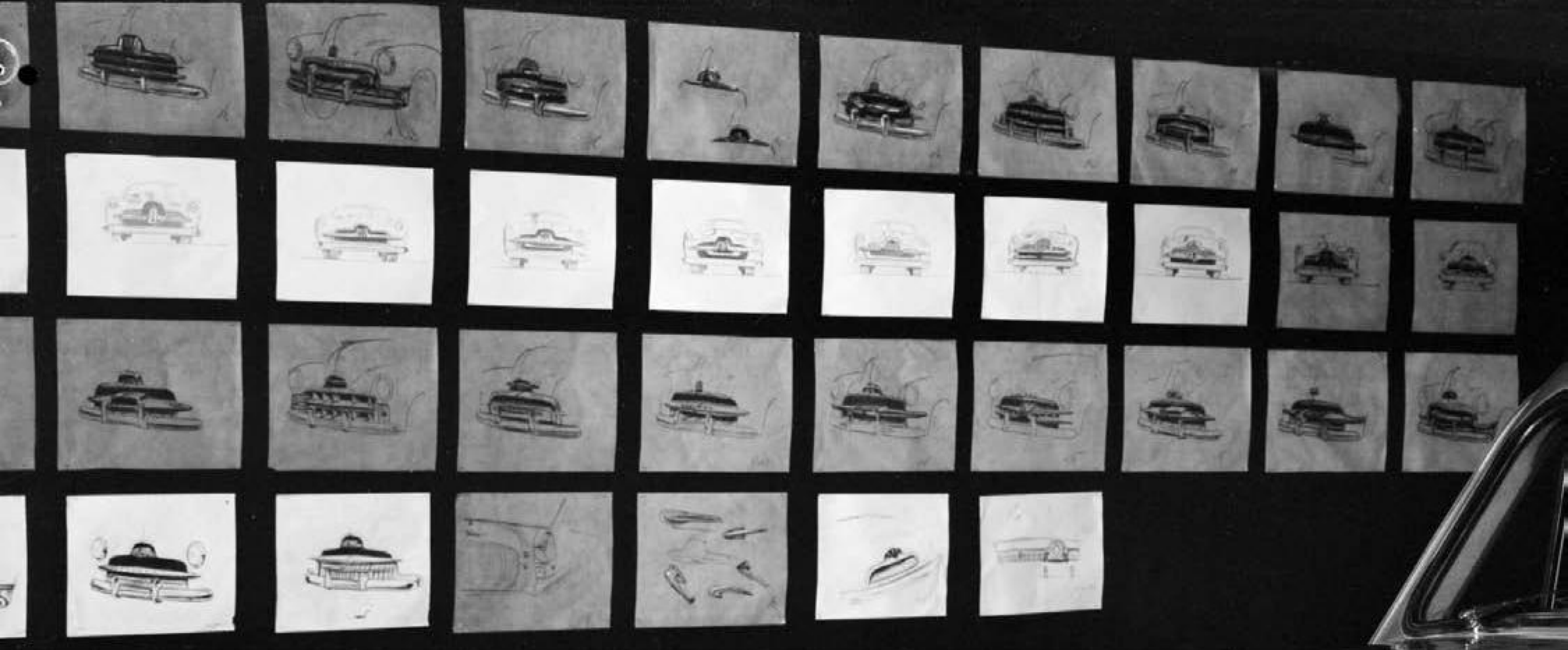
for 1952, Holden waited until October 28th, 1953 to show it to the public.

Styling Anti-Climax

When it did arrive the FJ was an anti-climax. Holden did little in the way of advertising and there was scant publicity. And let's not forget the underwhelming changes to the styling.

As Don Loffler says in *The FJ Holden* "Its minimal facelift left it looking decidedly old fashioned in comparison with its competitors."

Compare the FJ to the 1953 Vauxhall Velox and Ford Zephyr and you will see exactly what Don means.



Above: Just some of the sketches of grille and dashboard ideas for the FJ. Most likely these would have been done by newly hired GM stylists in Detroit as part of their initial training.

Below: One the two final grille designs. The photo dates from 8th March, 1950.



3-8-50
MUELLER
3926

So what happened? Why was the FJ's release delayed for so long?

Why was the FJ such a simple and cheap styling adjustment of the FX?

And what became of the FG?

That's easy to answer: Success and money.

It was different for Holden in 1950. Back then Holden had almost 50% market share. The FX had waiting lists of up to three months and the company was selling every car it could make at full price.

Even so, in the context of 1950 and 1951, neither GM nor Holden could be absolutely certain that sales of the FX would continue at such high levels. Hence the FJ was planned for a 1952 debut.

Furthermore, they could not be totally confident that the FJ would appeal to buyers.

What they needed was some insurance.

What they needed was a successor to the FJ that they could quickly get into showrooms.

That successor would be the FG.

Below: The winning FJ grille design. This design was then grafted onto the grey and black cars seen in previous photos. The decision about the FJ's final design was made by May 1950..





This page and the next page: Look closely at the April 1950 images of the FJ prototypes and you can see the small differences to wheel trims, window sill chrome highlights and tail fins.



And if it was to be released in 1954, work needed to start on it in early 1951.

And so it did.

What you see in our photo feature is no academic theory. Nor are the images just hand-drawn art work and "what-if" speculations on paper.

The FG prototypes (and there are at least two) which you see on the following pages represent a serious commitment and investment by GM management in time, creativity and money.

The FG Holden: A Car for 1954

The photos of the FG were taken in early 1951, and reveal that a number of different styling ideas were being considered.

Taking 1949 Australian 3/8ths model as a starting point the changes focused on a wrap around rear window, a longer roof line, longer rear doors, a squared off and longer rear end and different front mudguards.

The photos of the interior of the black FJ prototype show plush looking upholstery, carpet on the floor and armrests on all four doors.





FG Holden: This is one of two, and maybe even three, prototypes built in 1951.

We also suspect the wheelbase was increased by two or three centimetres, hence the longer rear doors.

It is obvious that GM's stylists were trying to align the replacement's design with the 1952 Vauxhall Velox.

However, the design DNA of the FX/FJ is still visible.

Not much could be done to hide the split windscreen, bulbous bonnet, and 1940s separated front mudguards.

So why did the FG never go beyond the prototype stage?

After careful consideration, here's what we think was the sequence of events and decisions in 1951 and 1952.

Success and Money

By mid-1951 it was becoming clear that Australian car buyers were still flocking to Holden dealerships.

At some point in late 1951 the FX's continued sales success and its future sales projection would have compelled senior executives at Holden and GM in Detroit to start thinking about re-evaluating their plans for the FJ and the FG. In fact the FJ/FG plans probably became a regular agenda item at Holden executive's monthly meetings.

There's no doubt that Holden management and GM were keenly aware of the need to spread the set-up costs of the FX over as long a production run as possible.



FG Holden: Note the front mudguard has a shape similar to the rear mudguard.

At these monthly meetings there would have been long discussions about whether there was a need for the FJ to appear in 1952, and the FG in 1954.

Holden's senior managers would have been conducting various "what if" scenarios and reporting back to Detroit.

The financial and sales figures would have revealed that it might actually be wise for Holden to continue selling the FX for as long as possible in order to recover the substantial start up costs which had been incurred.

As 1951 turned into 1952 and with FX sales and profits still high, the FJ release date was pushed further and further into the future. That meant that as each month passed there was less and less need for the FG.

Decision Time for the FG

At some point, probably in late 1952, the GM and Holden executives would have had to decide whether or not to go ahead with the FG.

It was a big decision. To press the "go button" would commit Holden to significant capital expenditure and other resources for a car with a limited life span, two years at most.

On top of that Holden would be also gearing up for the FE, which would also consume money and resources. Looking at the sales numbers, the profits and the costs they would have said: "Forget about that FG thing, it is a waste of time. Let's just keep selling the FX and only release the FJ when the FX waiting lists disappear. Then we will sell the FJ until the FE is ready".



Above: Wrap around rear window makes the car look bigger than the FX/FJ
 Below: Two of the FXs used to create the FG prototypes. Note that the car on the right has the Holden emblem at the bottom of the grille. The front mudguards and headlights on this car also sit higher than the standard FX, on the left. This was a stylist's visual sleight-of-hand to try to lower the bonnet line without actually doing so. We are not sure if this car, with a black roof, is the same car pictured above, or a different car.



And so it went. Holden delayed the release of the FJ until almost 1954 which in turn, negated the need for the FG. And the FE appeared in 1956.

In the end Holden got five years out of the FX and two and a half years from the FJ. By comparison, during the same time period, Chevrolet went through *three* complete model changes.

There are fourteen more pages of photos devoted to the FG prototypes. At Retroautos we take great pride in bringing the photos to you.

Below: the 1952 Vauxhall Velox, the design of which GM stylists were endeavouring to emulate on the "FG".



Small Chevrolet?

If you look closely at one of the FG styling proposals, it has a Chevrolet badge on the boot lid. Maybe it was an idea for a small Chevrolet using the FX as a base? At Retroautos we like to speculate on these things as much as anyone. Common sense says tells us that it is highly unlikely GM would use the aging FX/FJ design when they already had the more stylish 1952 Vauxhall Velox, which looked like a small 1949-51 Chevrolet anyway. (Right: 1949 Chevrolet)



Above and below: Another mystery. The car above is one of the FG prototypes. The photo below is the photo above except that the image has been re-touched in order to show a different grille (similar to the FJs) and flatter bonnet shape.



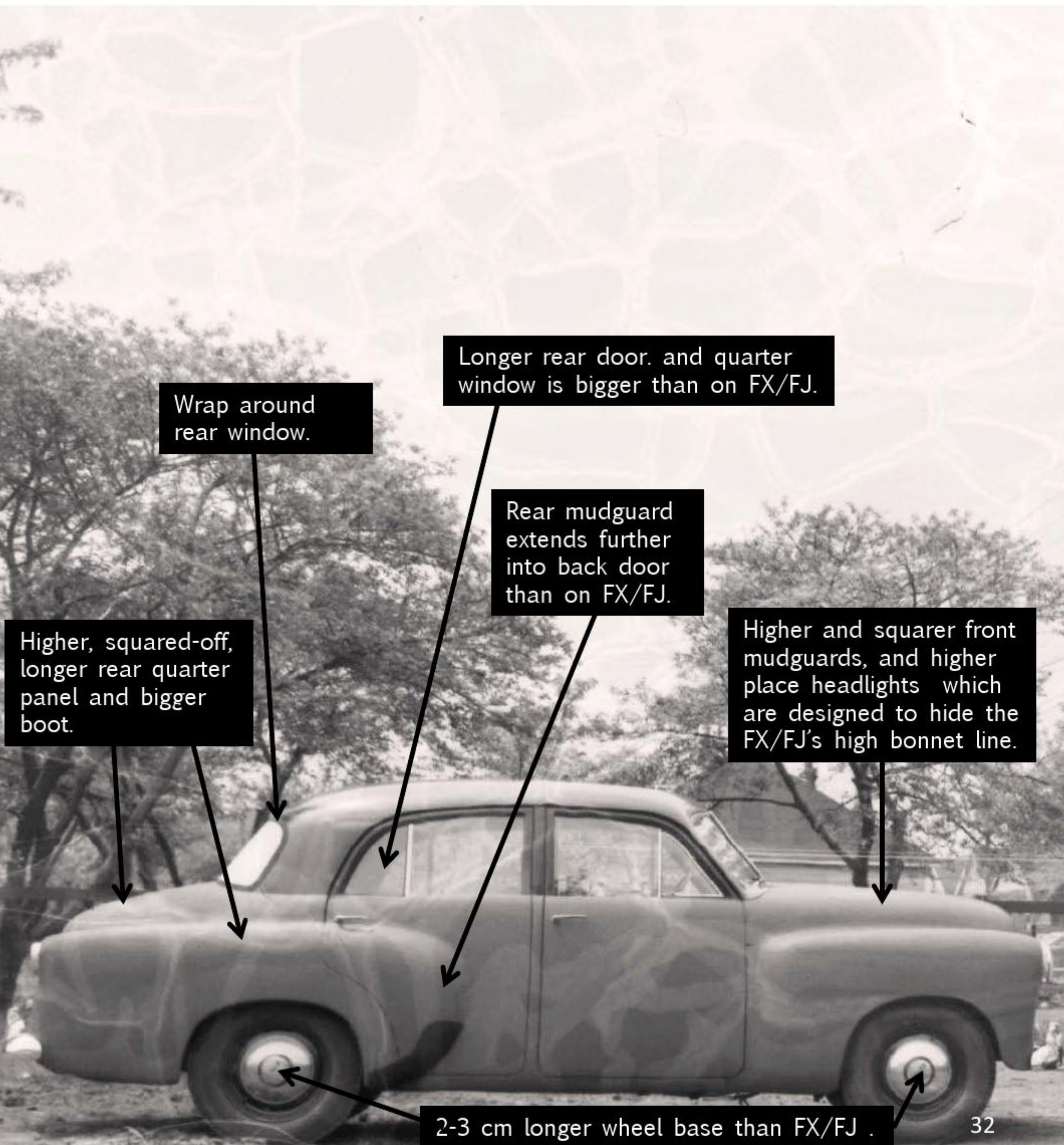
Holden Model Year Code Breaker

Holden used the table below to code each model. For example: FE = 56, FC = 58, EJ = 62 and EH = 63. What about FJ & FB ? Well, FJ = 52, however the FJ's release was delayed until October '53 and the same for FB = 59, the FB being released in January '60, once again slightly delayed.

0 = A, 9 = B, 8 = C, 7 = D, 6 = E, 5 = F, 4 = G, 3 = H, 2 = J
(I is not used) and 1 = K

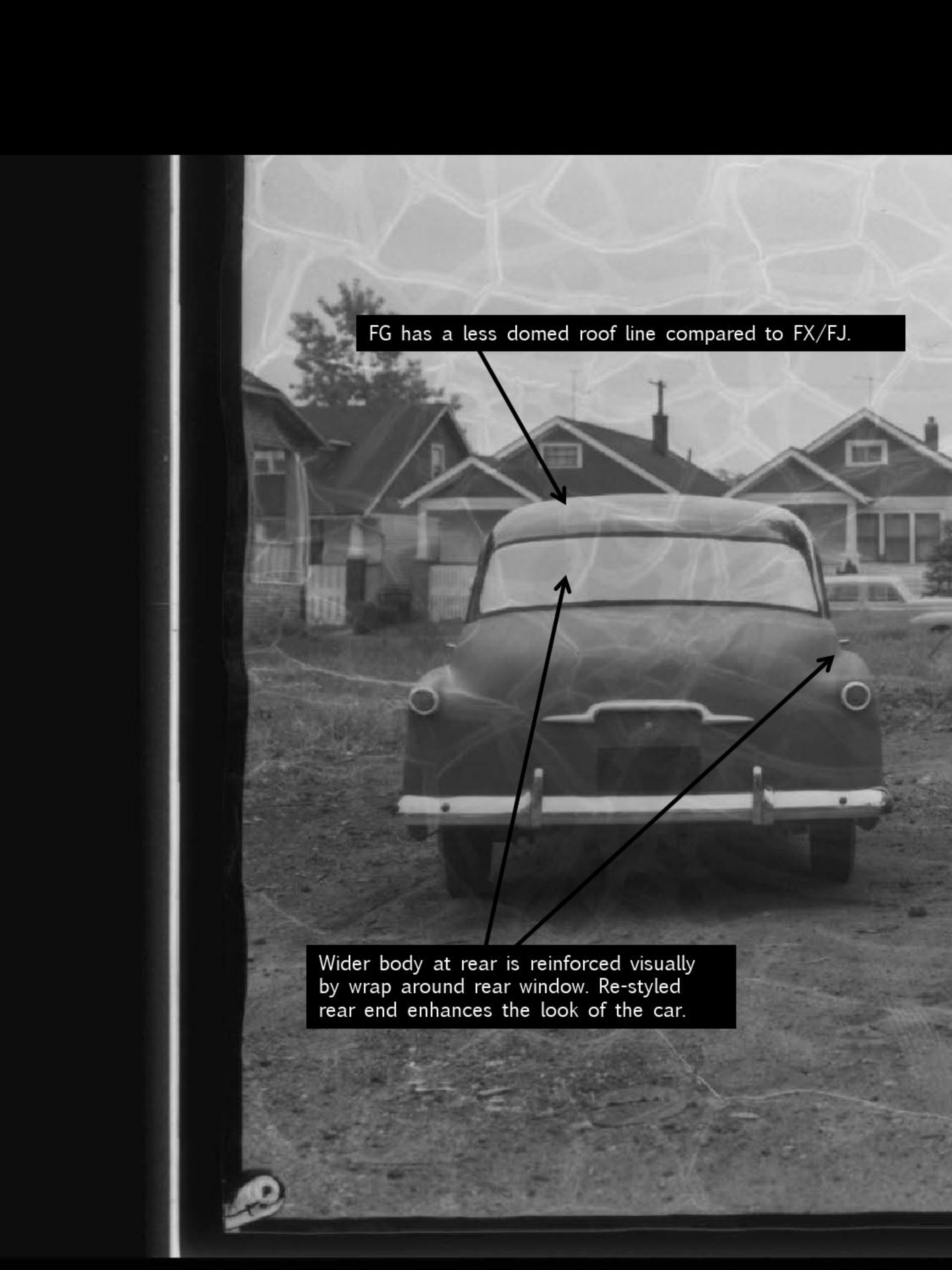


Spot the Differences.



FG compared to FX/FJ.





FG has a less domed roof line compared to FX/FJ.

Wider body at rear is reinforced visually by wrap around rear window. Re-styled rear end enhances the look of the car.



73448-10



FG Holden: Strange opening at the rear of the front mudguard. It matches the tail lights shape.



23448-12



FG Holden: The black roofed car has different shaped front mudguards on the left and right side.





FG Holden: The black roofed car again. It has been given a substantial redesign at the rear end and is now half black and half grey.





FG Holden: The chrome strip along the side really stands out. This prototype has smaller front and rear mudguards than the car on page 32





FG Holden: GM stylists have applied clay over the rear of an FX to reshape the car. The clay is so heavy it needs two wooden blocks to support its weight, otherwise it will break off when the clay dries. Note the FX rear window shape is visible through the fake wrap around window.





FG Holden: The modelling clay can be seen clearly in this photo. The car is not finished on the left side and has Chevrolet badge on the boot lid. The outline of the FX rear window can again be seen under the fake wrap around window.



raytookthis.com
Ray Green - Photographer





1902 Thomas

“Our car is the oldest
Thomas in existence.”

Story and photos by Russell Holden





The 1902 Thomas chassis

The story of our Thomas is a web of history and mystery.

We came upon it by accident if persistence and constantly looking can be called an accident.

My interest in the Thomas marque started many years ago as a kid with the Matchbox models. I would fight with my brothers as to who got the Thomas Flyer in "their set" on any given day and of course they wanted it as much as I did.

I was the only one of my family to pursue truly early vehicles and I'd always be hopeful of spotting Thomas for sale. Though, none ever came along.

Then about 15 years ago, I came across a mention of a Thomas for sale on the net and decided to follow it up.

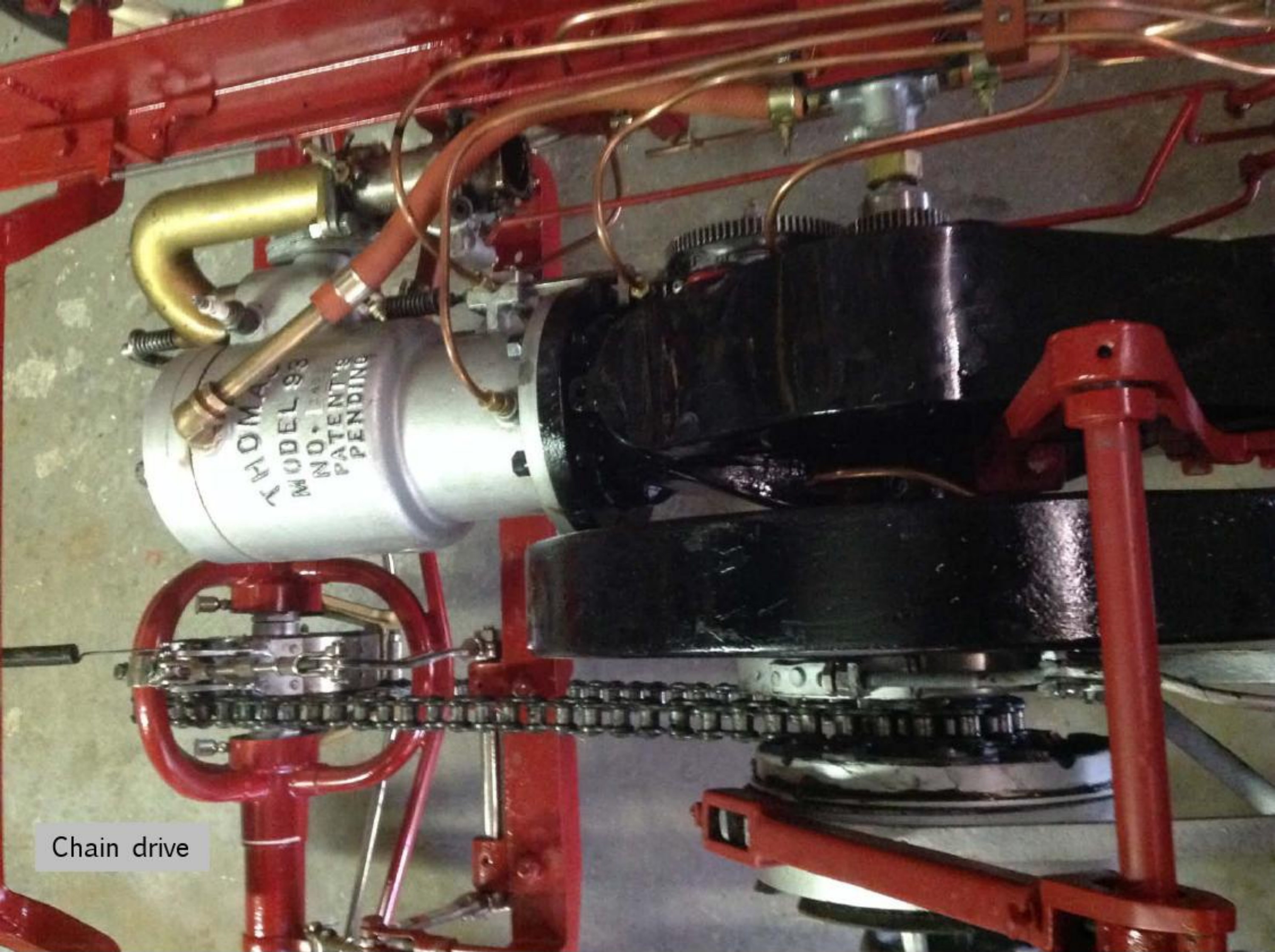
The lead was a real fizzer with only about six original Thomas parts and a whole lot of reproduction bits for a whole lot of US dollars.

A bit of time past and I was talking to a fellow car enthusiast one day and the subject of early cars led to the mention of my frustration with the Thomas leads.

To my surprise he said to me "I know where there is a Thomas!"

Having followed many an old car lead up the garden path I was dubious at best but this fellow assured me it was a Thomas and it was only three hours away from my home in Mudgee.

Naturally I jumped at the opportunity to look at the car.



Chain drive

To my surprise it only had one cylinder!

I had expected a 3 or 4 cylinder car and was not prepared for a single cylinder Thomas. I returned home and after a day or two's research agreed to purchase the car.

I have a very simple philosophy, if you don't look you will not find! That very fortuitous conversation again showed me that following a lead can quite often get you to a good end, not the end you may have thought, but a good one never the less!

My continued research began to really pay off with assistance from Horseless Carriage Club of America members Richard Anderson and the late Harold Coker, the Buffalo Transportation Museum, Antique Automobile Club of

America Library and the Horseless Carriage Foundation Library. I quickly found a detailed history of the car including evidence of the cars restoration and show history in the 60's.

Our car is one of only two known 1902 Thomas 17's to still remaining and as is the oldest Thomas in existence.

The only other model 17 is an original unrestored example formerly held at the Wells Auto museum in Wells Maine.

There are quite a few claims that at this time remain "un-substantiated" about our car. It was believed that the car was actually owned by E.R. Thomas, the man who owned the Thomas car company, and that he drove his bride to their honeymoon in the car!



Sepia photo of the Thomas

A wonderful as that story is, it has been dispelled. However E R Thomas Junior may have done so.

The car was said to have been sold after the 1903 NY Motor Show where it appeared in it red and green livery. The factory colour was quoted as "London Smoke".

It was sold to an elderly couple, and they drove the car south to a small town and after finishing using it, placed it in storage.

After their death a collector organised an Army Officer to purchase the car on his behalf. The collector passed away prior to completion of the deal and the Army Officer kept the car. The officer then shipped the car to California where it stayed until his death in the early 60's.

At this time a fellow named Chris Reimuller purchased the car from the officer's widow.



Chris was an elderly man who it is said was quite ill until his doctor recommended he take up a hobby.

That hobby was of course restoring the Thomas. He oversaw a fine restoration costing in excess of \$US17,000 which in the 60's was a great deal of money!

The story is a little foggy from there as the car next appeared in a museum in Pennsylvania.



I can only assume that Chris Reimuller passed away and the car was sold. The new owner was then the President of Rank Xerox. In the 1980s it was then offered for auction by Christies with a hefty reserve and was passed in. An Australian car dealer whose name was Thomas then purchased the car *"because it had his name on the hub caps"* and transported it to Australia.

Unfortunately to avoid import and duty taxes the car was disassembled and imported in sections which had the result of losing some of the intricate linkages and bits that operate the car.

It came out of the containers and was placed in a storage shed where it sat open to the weather and had deteriorated until I purchased it.





After collecting the car and gaining as much information as possible, it was faithfully re-restored with the assistance of the Wells museum and other collectors.

We have since enjoyed many National all veteran and 1 & 2 cylinder tours as well as many local tours in the car and covered many 1000's of miles in it.

The car is very reliable and fairly hoots along and once the motor settles into a rhythm it sits comfortably at 30mph occasionally over taking model T's which give everyone a surprise! Not bad for a single cylinder car.

It is still the "family favourite" and we look forward to doing many more tours in the car.

The History of Thomas



E R Thomas was a railway man in the height of the glory day of US and Canadian railroads. He had a mechanical interest and at the turn of the century decided to invest in motors and bicycles establishing the E R Thomas Motor Co to produce proprietary motors for bikes, cars and boats. E R Thomas is said to have tendered to build a motor for the Wright Brothers however it was deemed to be too heavy and the Wrights eventually built their own motor (the rest is history).

E R Thomas was the sole shareholder in the Buffalo Motor Car Company. Thomas supplied motors to Buffalo and from 1900 to 1902 they produced both the Buffalo automobile and the Thomas Auto Bi motor cycle.

The first cars were light 3-4hp single cylinder vehicles and by March 1902 a more substantial 6hp single, the "Buffalo Senior" was introduced at \$900 which was a expensive car in the day.

This car ran the Thomas model 90 motor.

Buffalo Sales were slow and in July 1902 E R Thomas announced to the automotive world he would absorb the Buffalo company and it would continue as the E R Thomas Motor Company. In September 1902 he announced a re-capitalisation of the company and an aim to have 750 of a new model the Model 17 with a model 93 motor producing 8hp ready built ready for the opening of the new season (1st January 1903).

This new model had a sturdier construction than the Buffalo models, was on a longer 78" wheel base and featured wheel steering a planetary transmission with cone clutch and rode on full elliptic springs. The first sale ads in trade journals commenced in December 1902.

The model 17 sold for the princely sum of \$1250 and when you consider a Curved Dash Oldsmobile sold for 56



\$650 and a 1903 Cadillac for \$750 this is a staggering amount and clearly demonstrate that Thomas were aiming at the upper end of the market from the very beginning.

Best estimates are that only about 50 model 17's were produced in late 1902 and in late January of 1903 a new Model 18 non detachable touring and Model 19 runabout joined the Thomas line.

Both these cars sold side by side until the model 17 sold out around April of 1903.

The model 18 and 19 continued thorough 1903. Thomas argued the merits of single cylinder cars over multi cylinder in a number of trade

publications throughout 1903. However despite his promotion of the single cylinder car, Thomas released a 3 cylinder car in 1903 that was the first to bear the famous "Thomas Flyer" name.

A 1907 Model 35 with 4 cylinders and 60 horsepower, called the *Thomas Flyer*, won the 1908 New York to Paris Race. The race began in Times Square, New York, on February 12th and covered some 22,000 miles (35,000 km), finishing in Paris on July 30, 1908.

Despite the race success poor sales led to financial problems in 1912 and by 1918 Thomas had disappeared from the US automotive landscape.

Life Saver



“This vehicle embodies one heroic and lofty ideal: protect and save lives.”



1957 Cornell Liberty Safety Car





Parked in an out-of-the-way corner of the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, is a large green car parked among many more well-known, historic and classic vehicles.

You could walk right past it and not give it a second glance. I almost did.

And yet, it is one of the most significant cars of the 20th century.

It is the 1957 Cornell-Liberty Safety Car.

The Cornell car is not a pretty automobile.

The ugly styling is an amalgam of every design cliché of the 1950s and the garish green paint scheme does nothing to improve its look.

But none of that matters, because this vehicle embodies one clear, heroic and lofty ideal. Its design promised to protect and save lives.

Although ridiculed by the major car makes at the time, the Cornell car's safety features were way ahead of its time. Today, all of them are standard equipment.

The genesis of the car arose from Cornell University, located at Ithaca, in the USA.

I've been to Ithaca and the university campus sits high on a hill overlooking the town. It is a university renowned for its thinking about the future, so it is natural that ideas about car safety would emanate from this place.



The Cornell Liberty car interior. Note web-style head restraints, wrap around seats and loads of crash padding. Driver sat in the middle of the car. Steering was by the two, white handled levers.





And so it was in the early 1950's that a research program was commissioned into car crashes studied accident survival, door security, rollover hazards, and bodily impact inside a car.

The findings were shocking.

The absence of seat belts caused at least 25% of occupants in collisions to be ejected their cars. The other 75% were being sliced up by all the bright shiny metal objects and hard edged surfaces inside the cars.

It was no different in Australia.

The University recommended to manufacturers and government the addition of seat belts, dashboard padding, crashworthy door locks, and recessed-hub steering wheels to production cars.

The manufacturers basically ignored the research results and so did the US government.

Then again, the car buyers were not safety minded either. In 1956 Ford tried hard to sell safety but the public was not buying. As Henry Ford II was heard to remark "we're selling safety, Chevrolet is selling cars."

In 1957 Cornell decided to change opinion about safety.

They built the safety car for a public tour funded and sponsored by the Liberty Insurance Company.

It featured seat belts, bucket seats, headrests and whiplash netting, crash padding, sliding doors, side impact protection, wrap around bumpers and steering levers.



A second Cornell safety car, which is also in the collection of the Henry Ford, was built on a modified 1960 Chevrolet sedan chassis.

It had body-hugging “capsule seats” with head restraints to prevent neck injuries in a rear impact; lap and shoulder belts; and a bumper-car-style rubber cushion around the entire perimeter of the car. Its mirrors were “hemispheric ally shaped” to reduce pedestrian injuries.

It was driven around America to demonstrate that safety features could easily be integrated into a family car.

Car companies remained unmoved.

However, like all good ideas, opinion began to slowly change.

Ralph Nader’s book, *Unsafe at any Speed*, and GM’s mishandling of the publicity surrounding his criticism of the Corvair’s handling, added to the growing calls from politicians and the public for change.

In 1966 the US government decreed seat belts, padded dashboards, and other safety features were mandatory equipment.

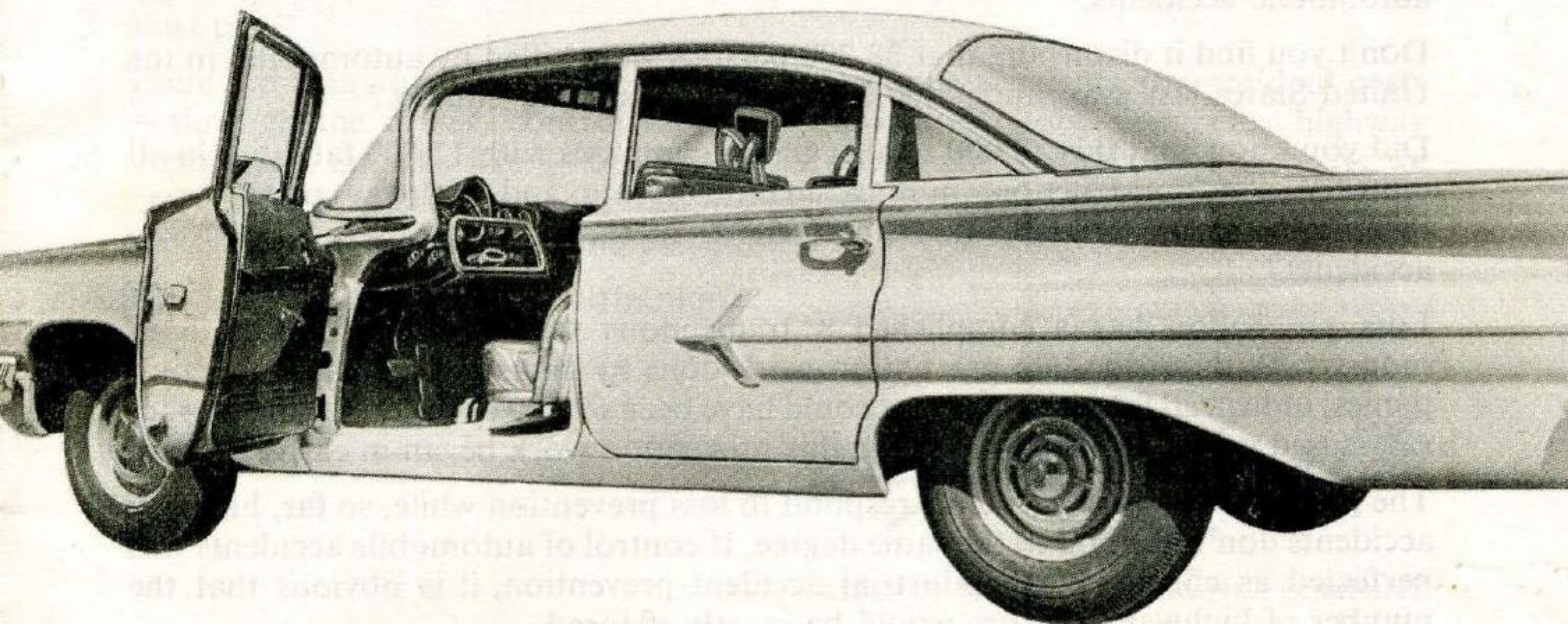
In 1970 the Australian authorities made the fitting of front seat belts compulsory.

And the rest of the safety story you know.

Such is its legacy, the Cornell car should be granted national treasure status in every country where cars are driven.



The LIBERTY MUTUAL SURVIVAL CAR II



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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS





RetroRacing



It's 1970, and the Datsun Skyline GT-Rs give the new Fuji circuit a work out. The GT-Rs won 50 events in a row from 1969 to 1971, cementing the GT-R's place in racing history.

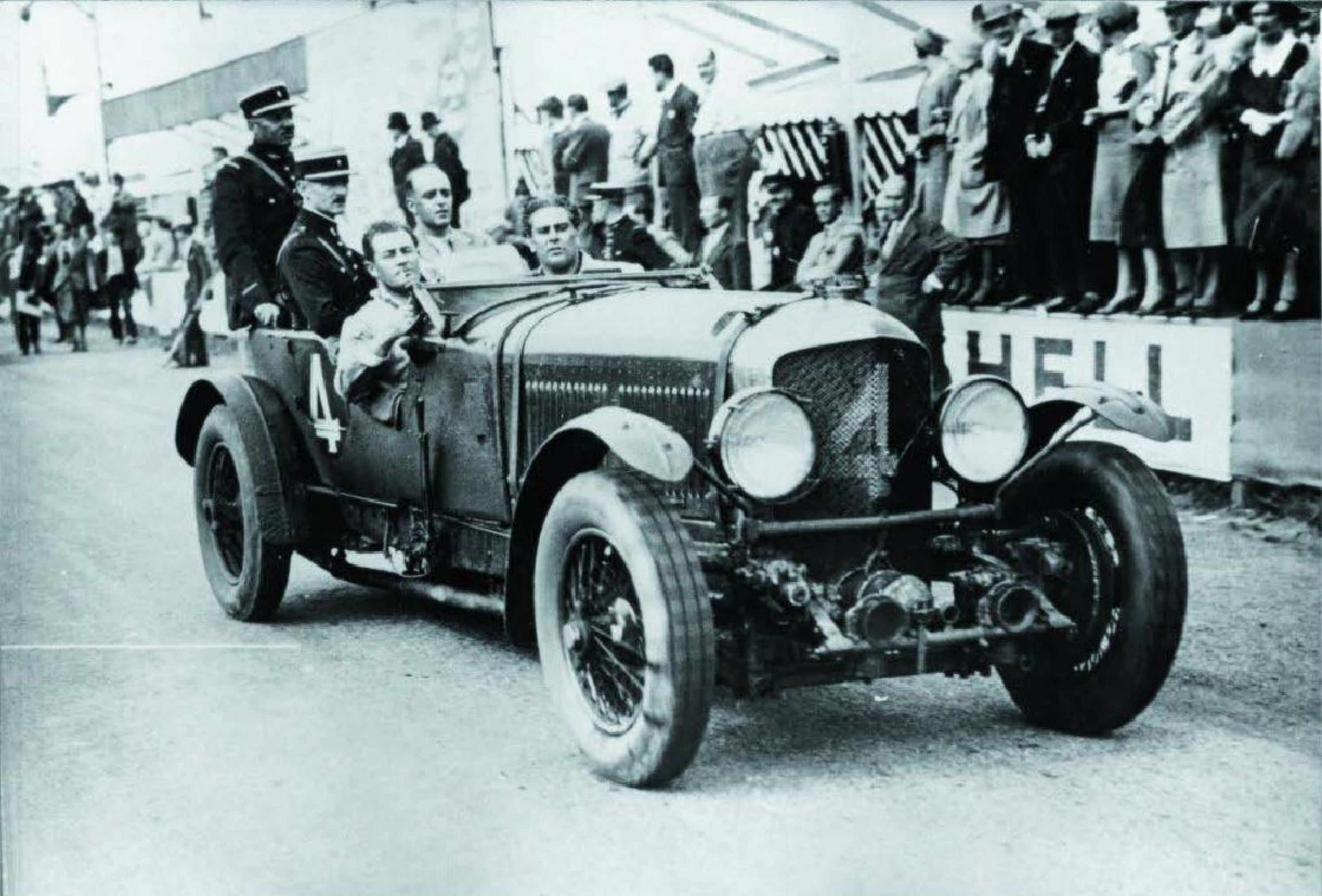


1962 East African Safari rally. Ewald van Bergen and Hennie Steenkamp drove their privately entered Datsun Bluebird to a class victory. An official Datsun team ran in 1963, in Cedrics (!). Datsun went on to win outright in 1970 in a 240Z.



Above: Frank Clements at Brooklands race track, in 1921 in his Bentley.
Below: Van Johnson hauls his sprint car through turn #2 at Williams Grove Speedway in 1957.





Above: It's Le Mans 1930 and Glen Kidson and Woolf Barnato parade their winning Bentley
 Below: At the LA Times Grand Prix of 1961 at Riverside, here's Jack Brabham and Sterling Moss talking about the next week's race in Las Vegas.





Above: Pace cars for the '61 LA Times GP were the Chevrolet Corvette Mako Shark show car (left) and the prototype Corvette Sting Ray.

Inset: GM design boss Bill Mitchell with the Corvettes at GM's proving grounds.

Below: Race winner Jack Brabham ahead of second placed Bruce McLaren. Both drove a Cooper Monaco Climax. Sterling Moss was 16th in his Lotus Monte Carlo, six laps behind Brabham.

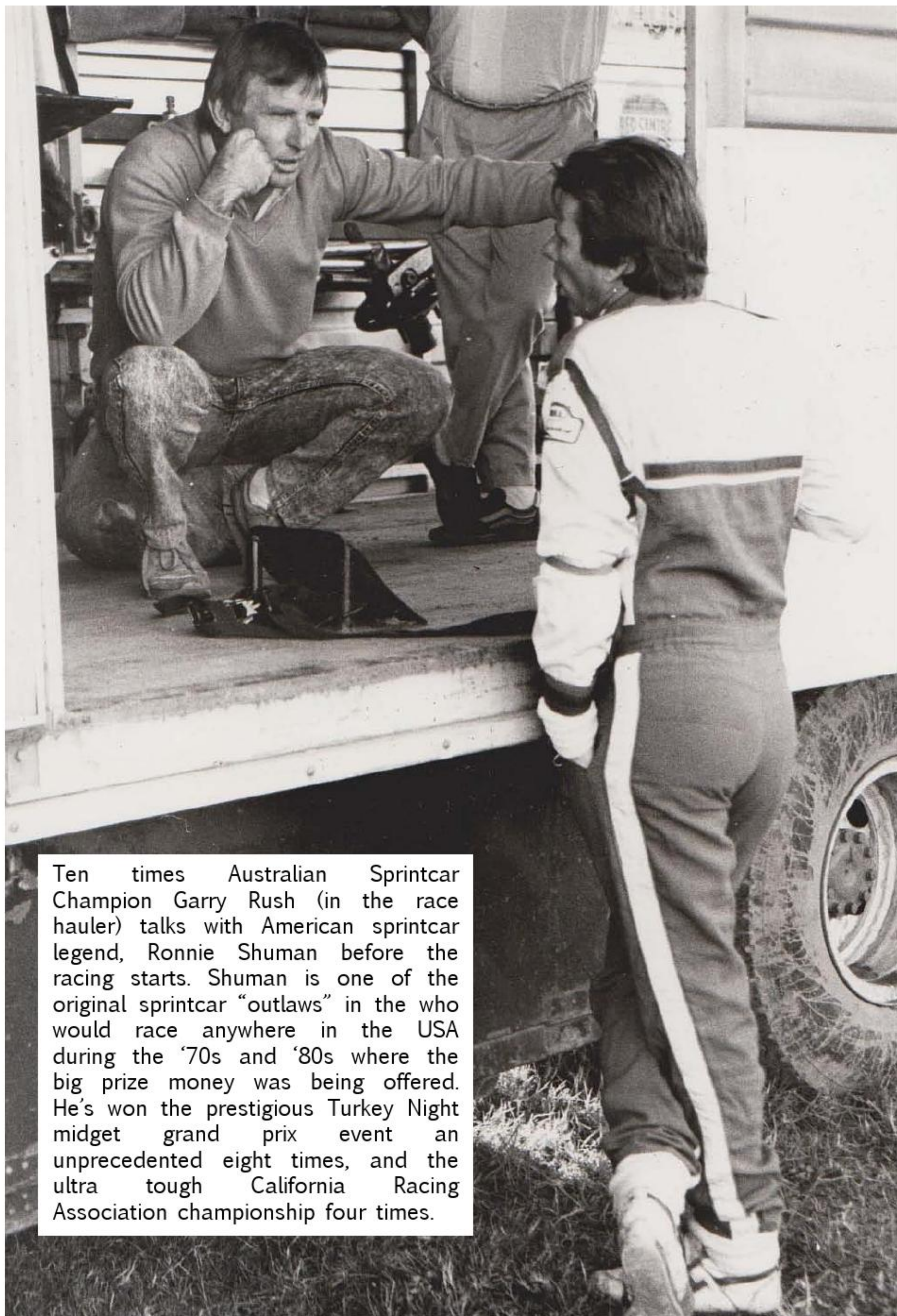




Above: Fabulous image of Sir Jack Brabham

Below: Sterling Moss ranges up behind Bob Harris, who lived on the beach at Malibu, as you do.





Ten times Australian Sprintcar Champion Garry Rush (in the race hauler) talks with American sprintcar legend, Ronnie Shuman before the racing starts. Shuman is one of the original sprintcar "outlaws" in the who would race anywhere in the USA during the '70s and '80s where the big prize money was being offered. He's won the prestigious Turkey Night midget grand prix event an unprecedented eight times, and the ultra tough California Racing Association championship four times.



You might wish and hope that someday someone will build a speedway as good as Liverpool City Raceway, but it will not happen. When the Frank Oliveri owned and Mike Raymond managed quarter miler was at its peak, in the seventies and eighties it had standing room only crowds almost every Saturday night. Pictured above is the driver introductions for one of the USA vs Australia sedan test matches. The Yanks are in the Coca Cola sponsored Corvettes. Below are Steve (#1) and Randy Kinser, an American sprintcar team, who dominated when ever they appeared in the 1980s in Australia. Just look at the size of the crowds at one of the their Liverpool appearances. No Australian speedway attracts this incredibly high level spectator support these days.

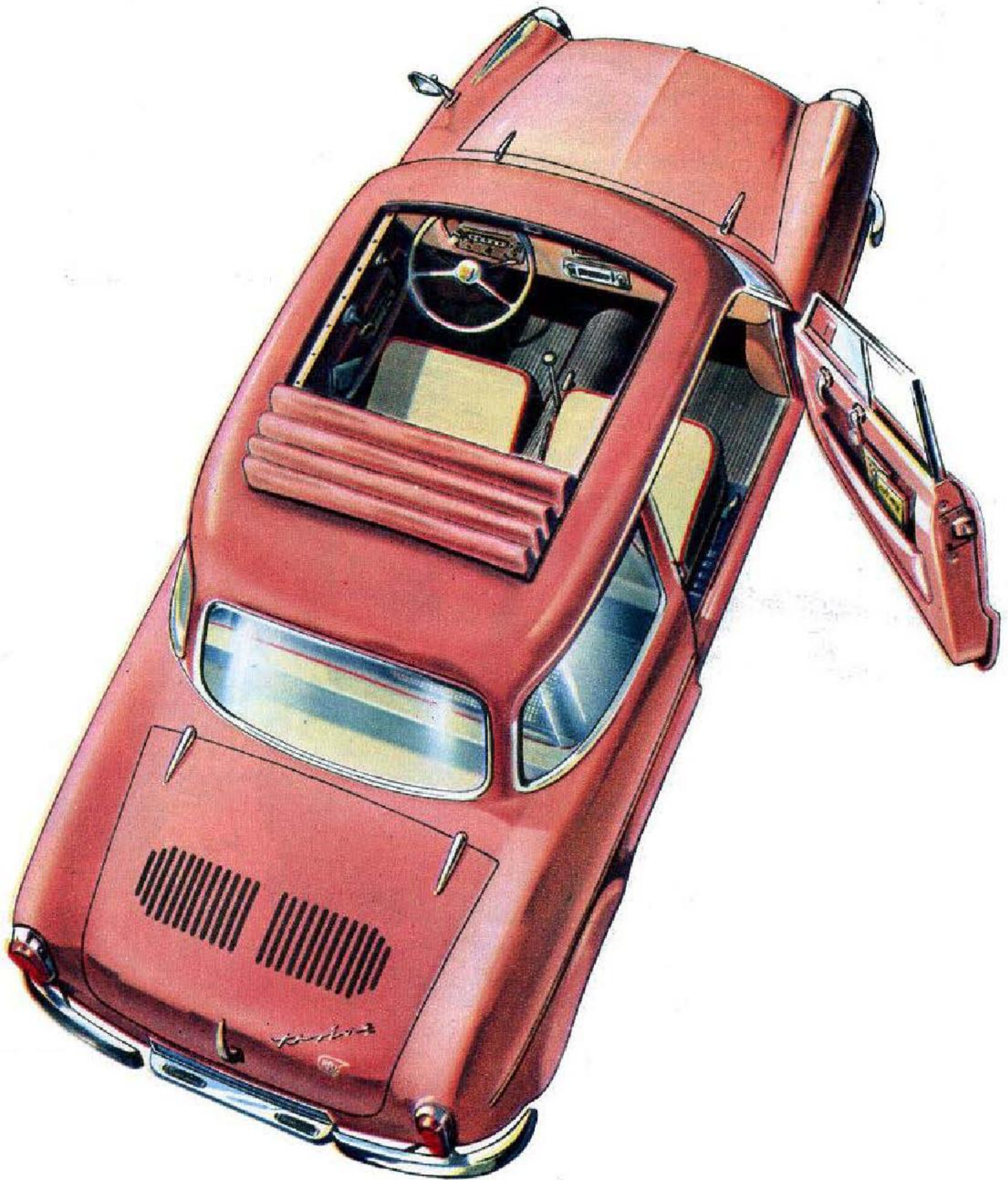




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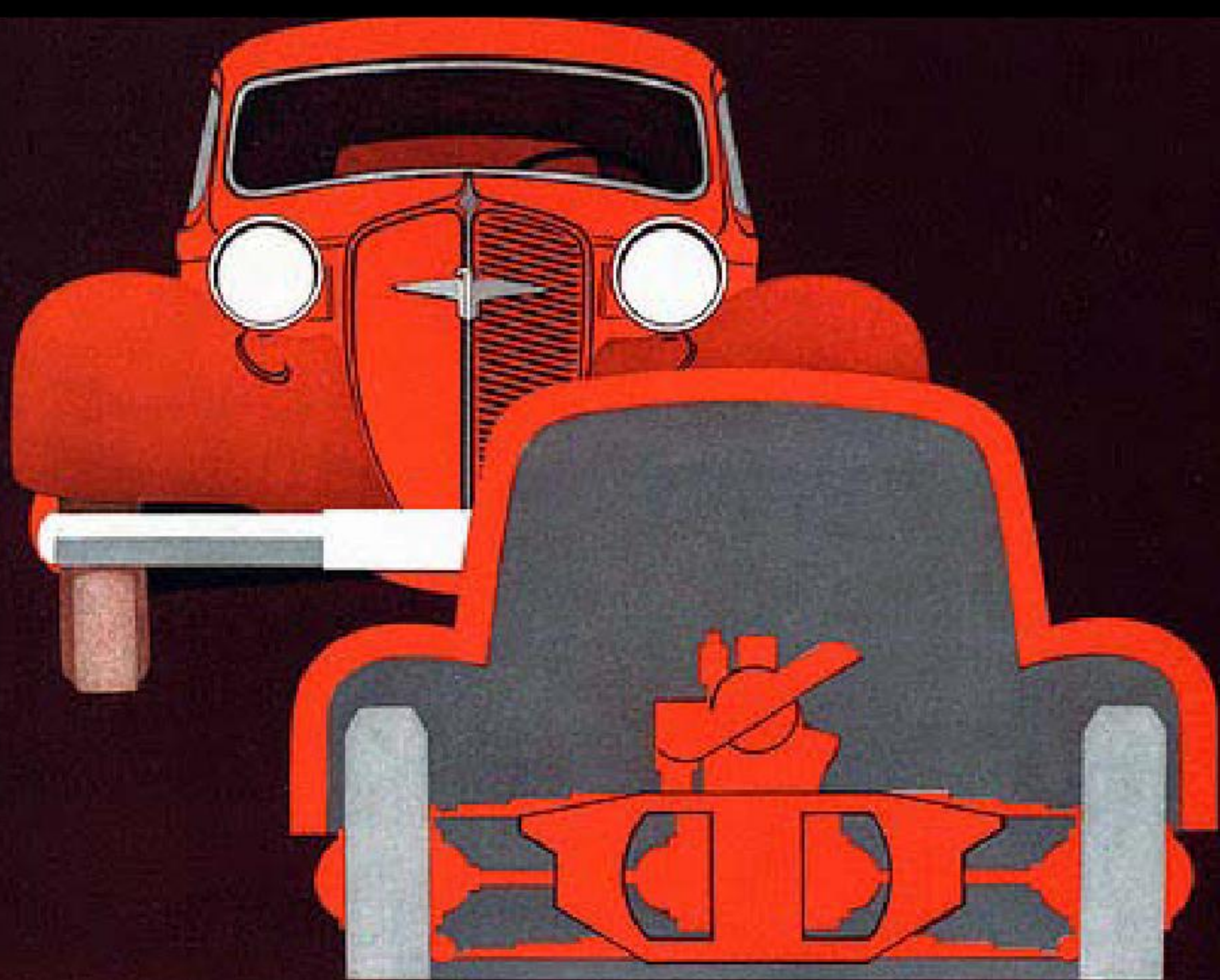
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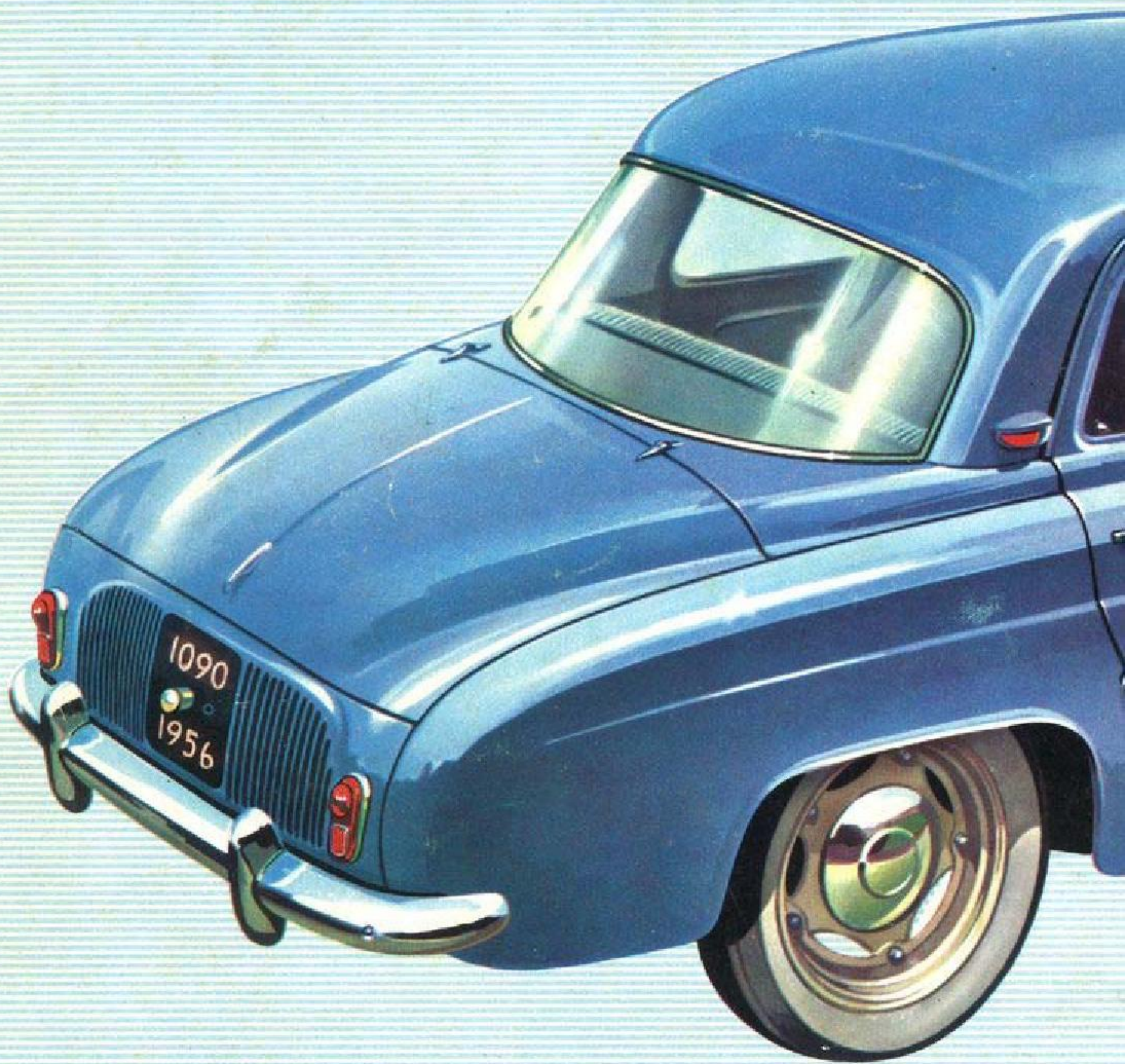
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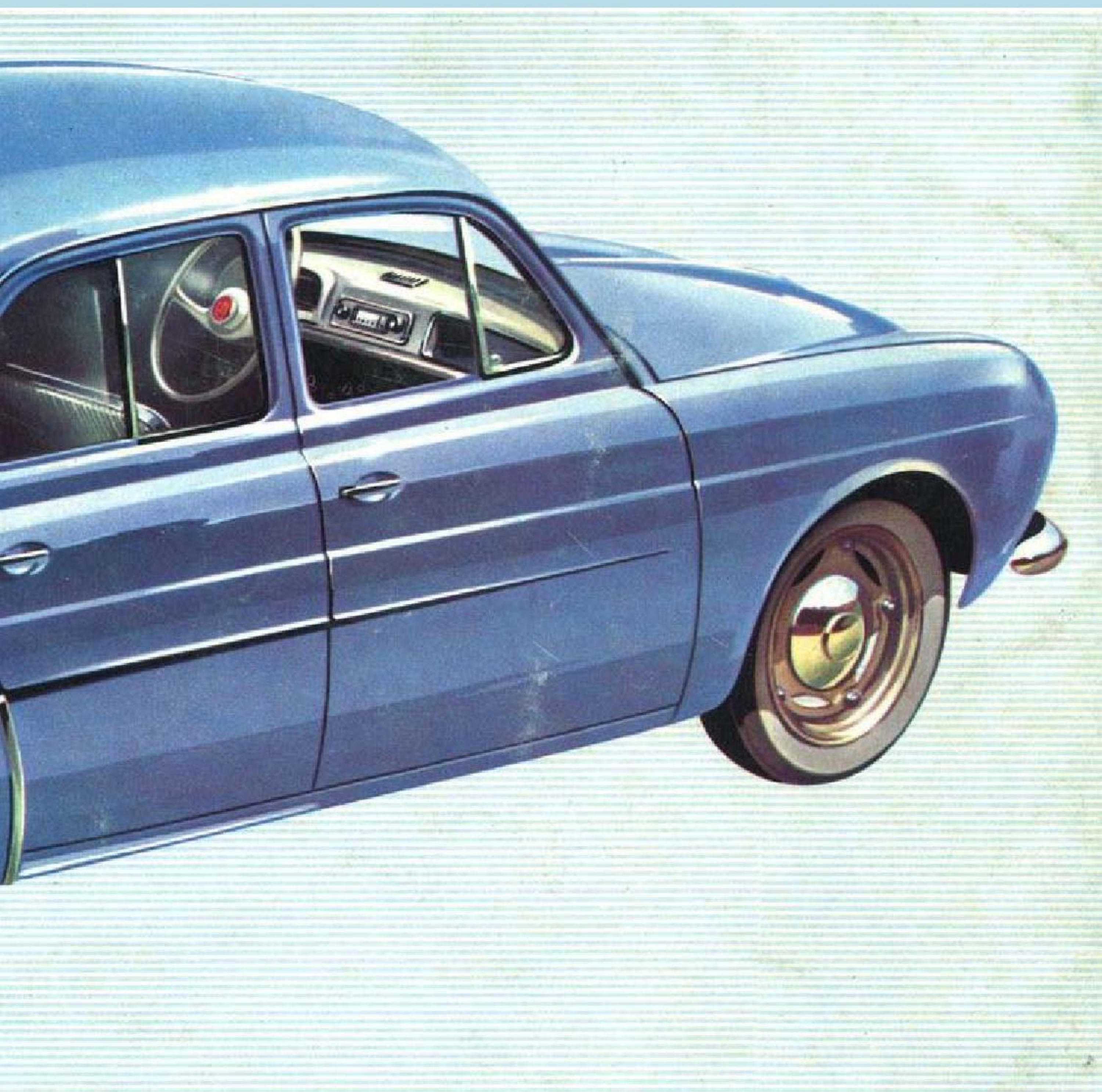
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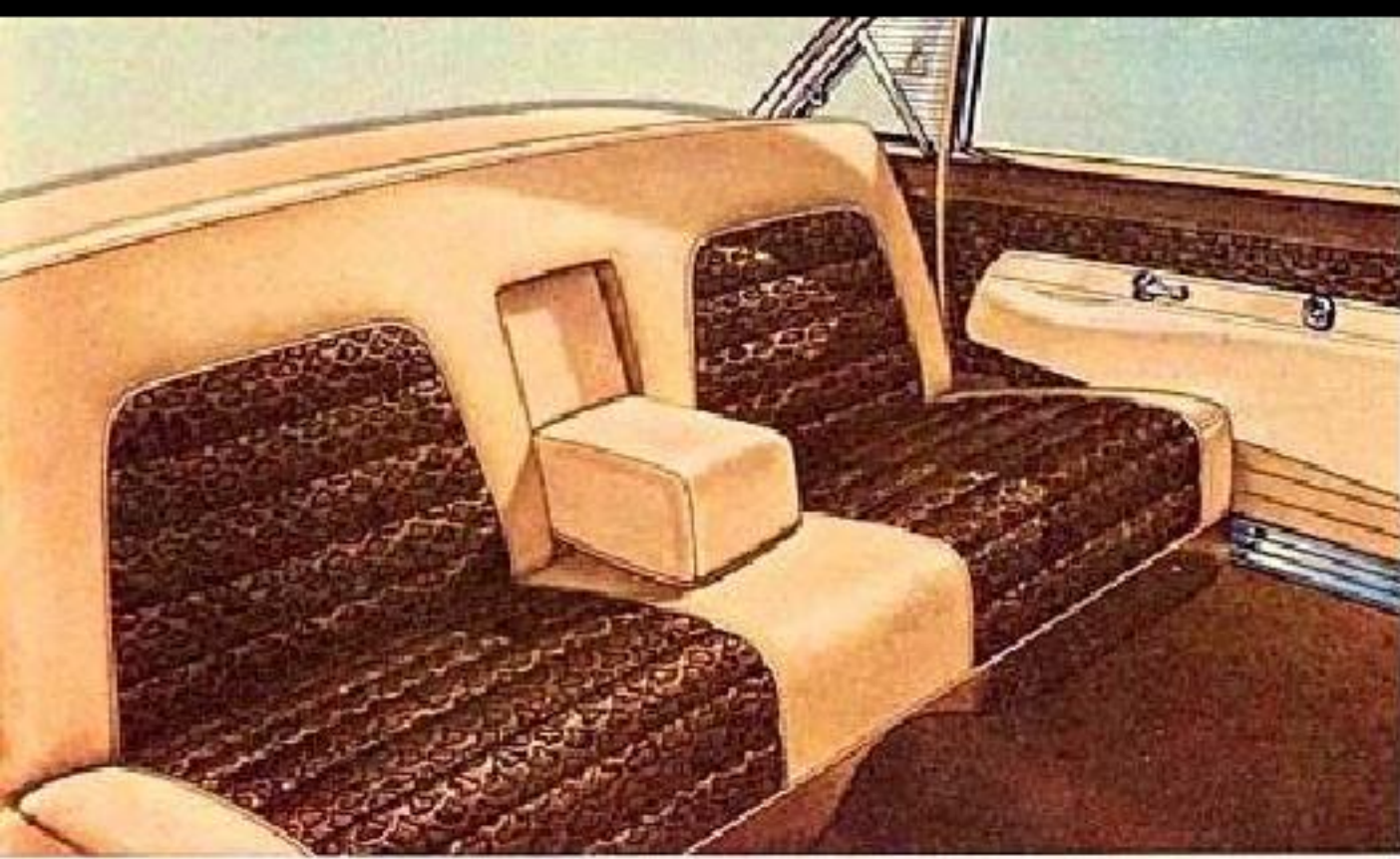
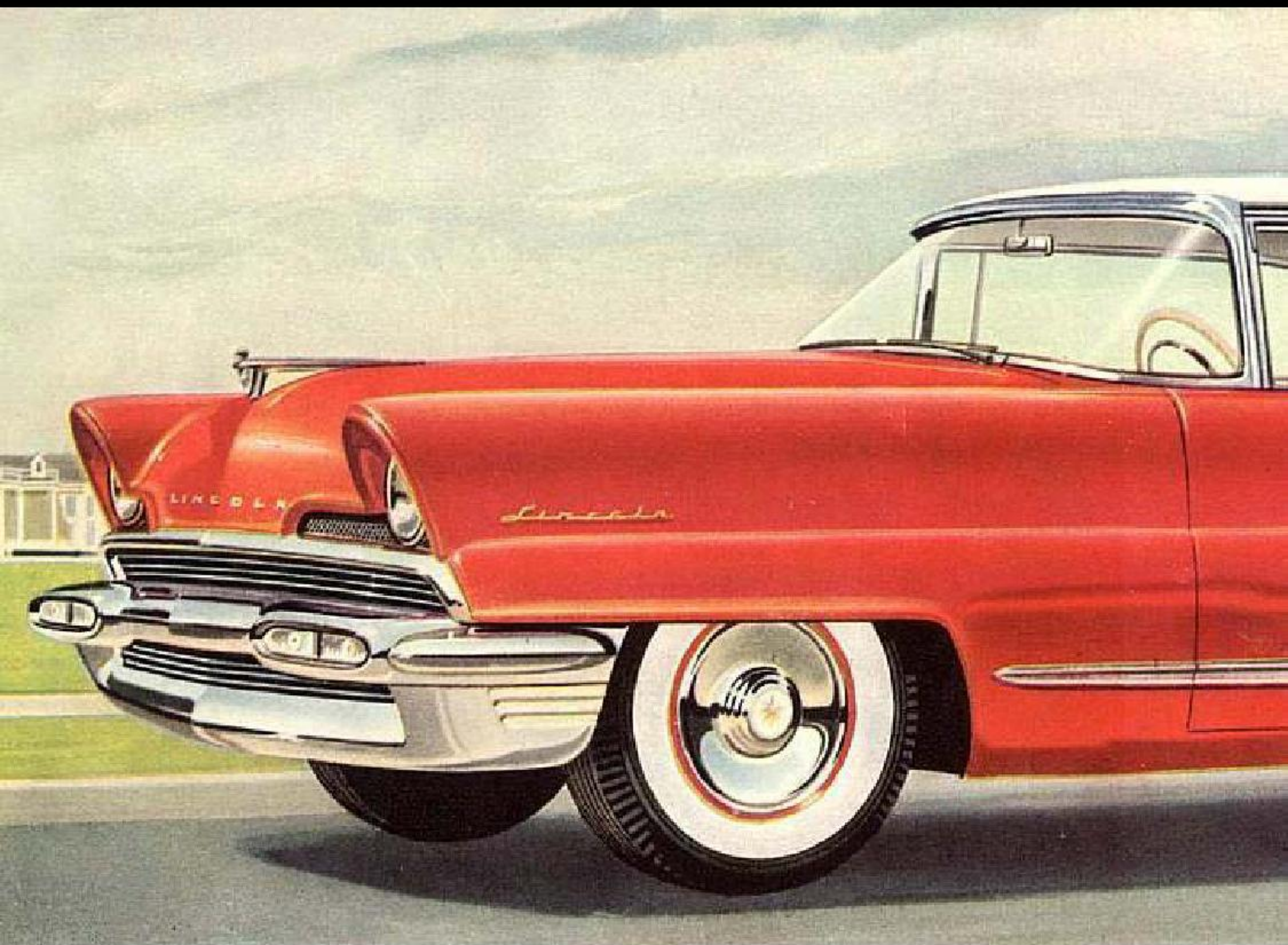
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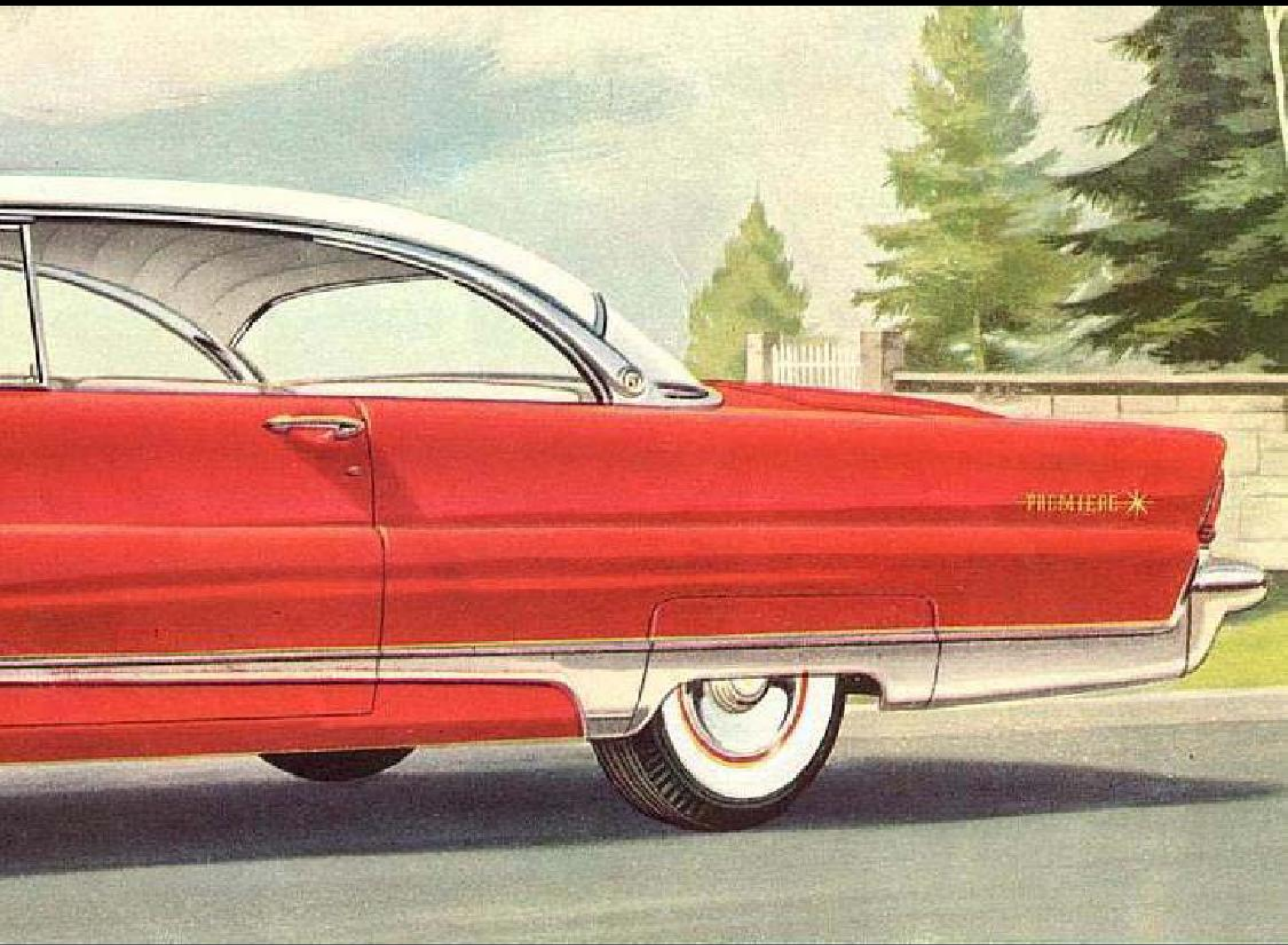


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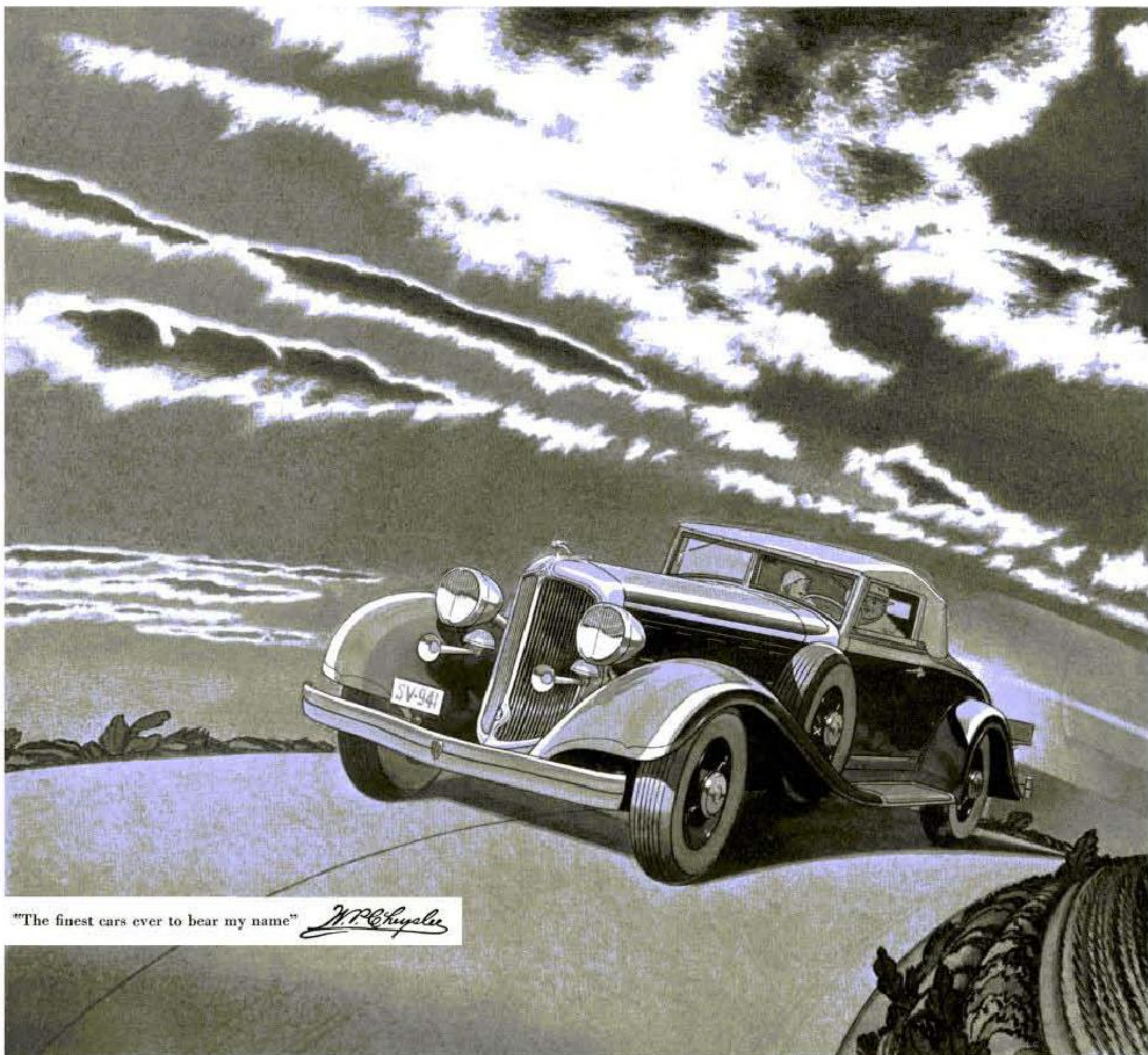
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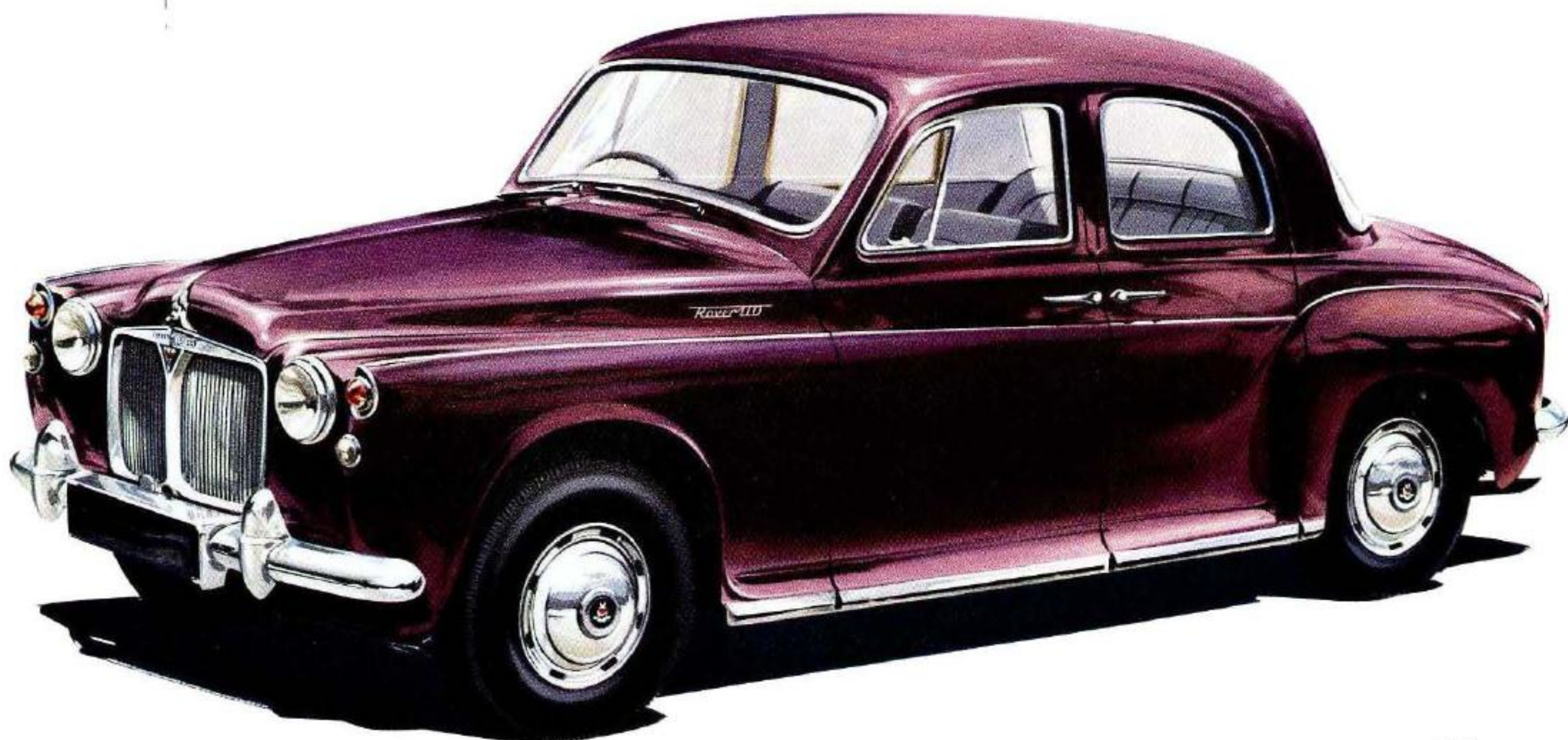
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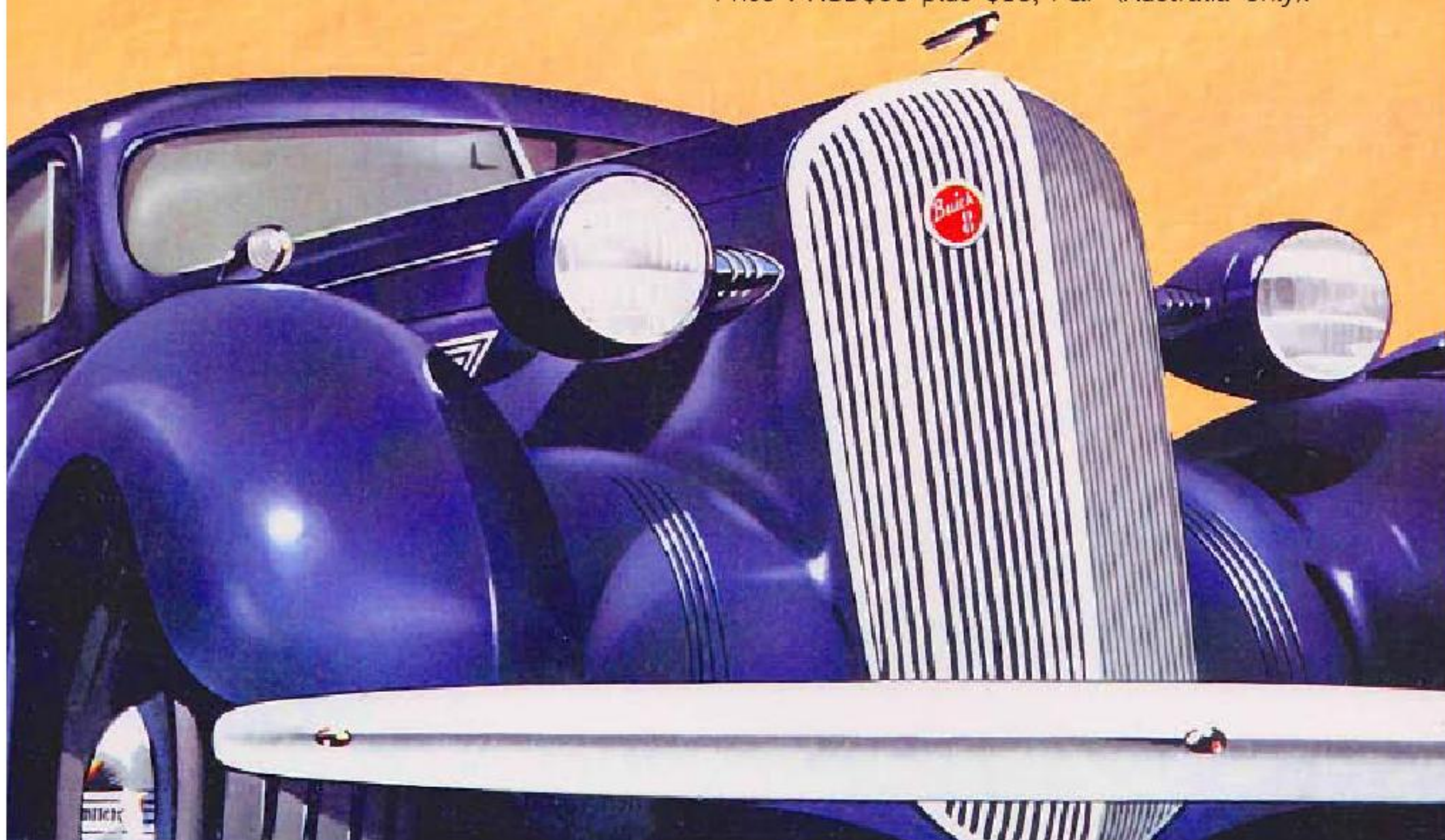
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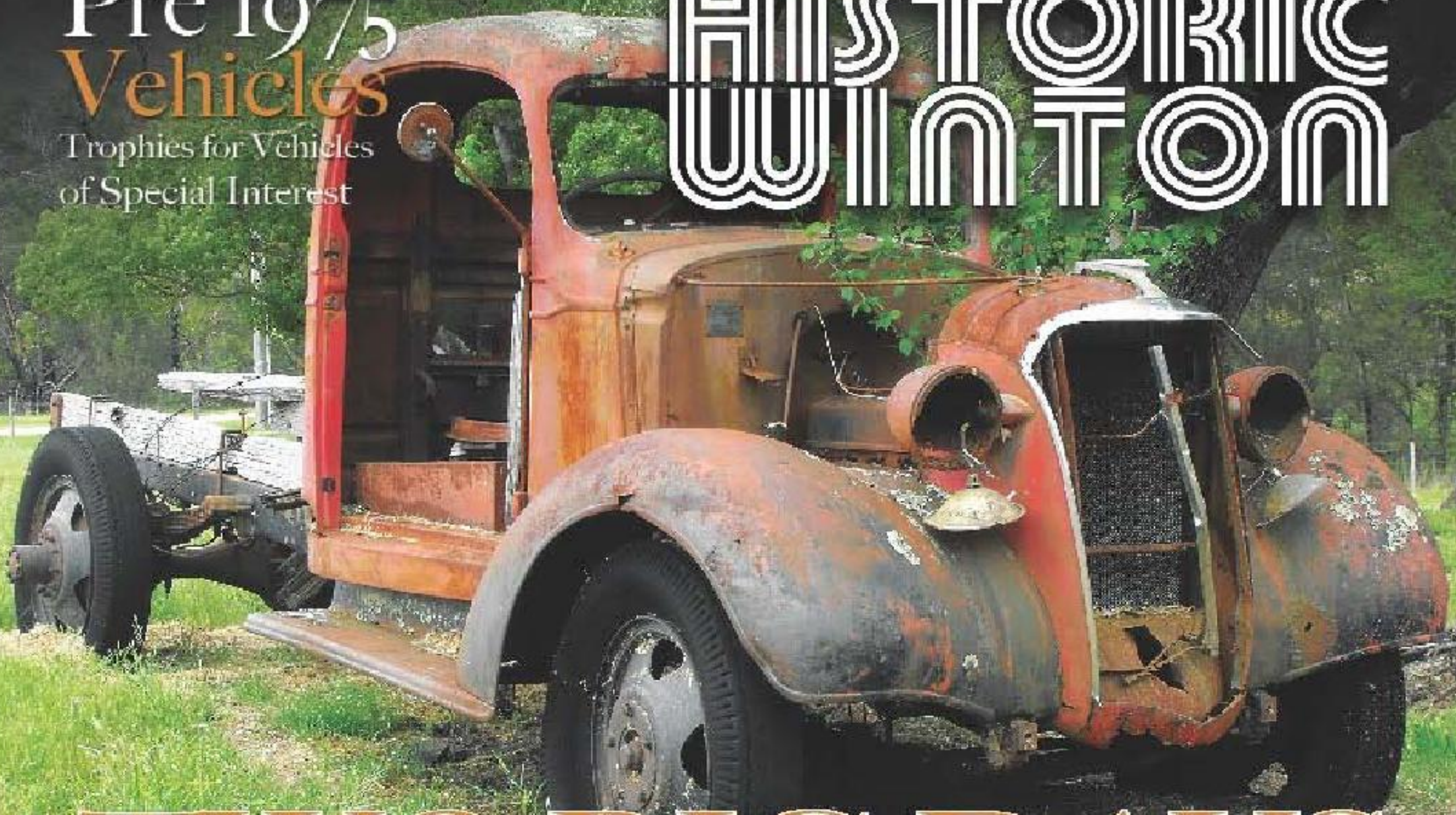
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