

# Remember The Good Old Days

By William G. Holder

The 1950's have been reincarnated by the current wave of nostalgia. This was a great 10 years for the automotive industry, the first complete decade following the war, and it saw many automotive advances. Some companies prospered during the period while others were forced into combining for survival and still others folded completely. Some great cars were built during the period—some are now considered classics and others in the coming years will assume the same status.

## Sports Cars

The 1950's saw in America the introduction of two "true" sports cars and one semi-sportster—the Thunderbird, the Corvette, and the Studebaker Hawk. These cars temporarily stopped the monopoly which had been enjoyed by the European sport models.

The two-seat Thunderbird, built between '55-'57, is considered a classic today. One of the main reasons for its value was its limited production since in 1958 the Thunderbird became a four-seater, and has remained that way ever since. The '56 which had portholes in its removable hard top and a rear mounted external spare wheel, or the larger '57 with its small fins are the most prized by the collectors.

There were 53,106 of the little two-seater T-birds built during the three years and 30-35,000 have been accounted for. There are about 30 T-Bird Clubs across the country, boasting total of over 2500 members. It has become quite a status symbol to own one of the little birds which, of course, is driving their asking price up to astronomical levels. T-birds in

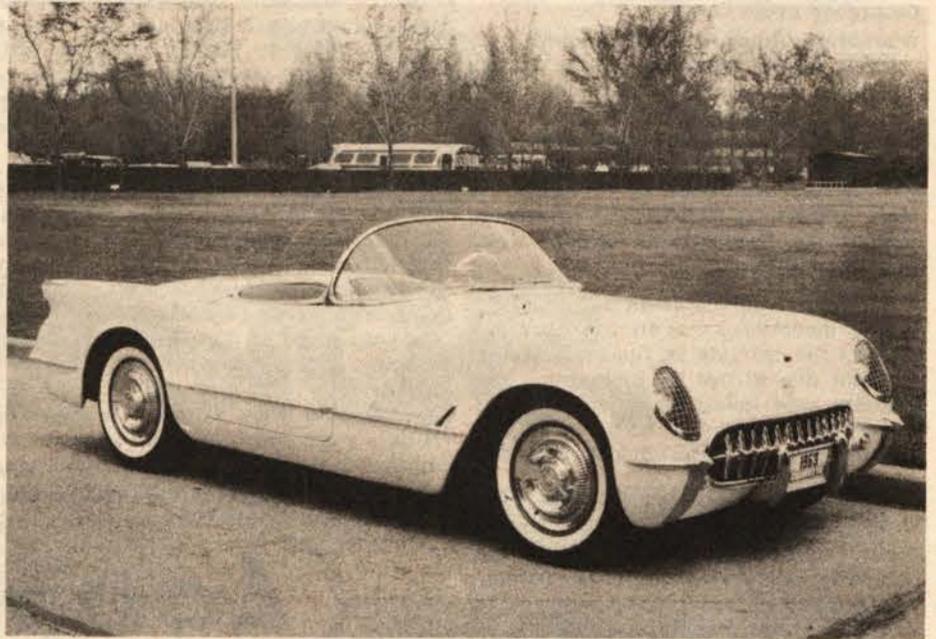
mint condition now bring as much as 6-10 bills, which is much more than the car's original cost of about \$3000. Experts say if you can pick one up for less than three thou, grasp it! You can't help but make a profit in the future. Many years ago, the original Bird was discovered rusting outside a body shop by George Watts of Santa Ana, California. The Bird is no longer rusting and today is worth about \$25,000. The four-seater T-bird which came out in '58 is of comparatively minor interest to most collectors.

The big engine in the early Bird was a 312cid, 285hp V8 equipped with a four-barrel carb. Although not much by today's standards, it can still get with it. And in its prime, it was one of the hottest cars around. In fact, a 1956 *Motor Trend* test showed that the Bird stood up quite favorably in performance with the Corvette. It actually beat the 'Vette in the 0-60mph test run with an 11.5 second clocking.

On June 30, 1953, the first fiberglass Corvette rolled off the production line and they have continued to roll to this day. Well over a quarter-million of these popular cars have thrilled their owners for 24 years.

In the first 1953 Corvette, the GM engineers stressed handling and performance in a 102 inch wheelbase. A 150 horsepower six was mated with a Powerglide transmission to push the 2800 pound car with amazing quickness. The original Corvette was available only in white, with the '54 version adding blue to the color selection.

The first V8 Corvette, with a three speed synchromesh and more color choices, came in '55 and in 1956, along with a drastic body change, the Corvette went completely to the V8. The first Corvettes



The snappy original Corvette was available in white only.

were equipped with windshield washers, turn indicators and an electric clock. A radio and heater were optional equipment.

Many of the '50s vintage 'Vettes are still running on the road. '54's through '57's can still be found in non-mint condition for about five-six grand. Another good point about these fiberglass cars is that you don't have to worry about body cancer.

The last entry in the sports car race was the Studebaker Hawk. The Hawk was first produced in 1956 with the four different models being designated the Flight Hawk, Power Hawk, Skyhawk and the

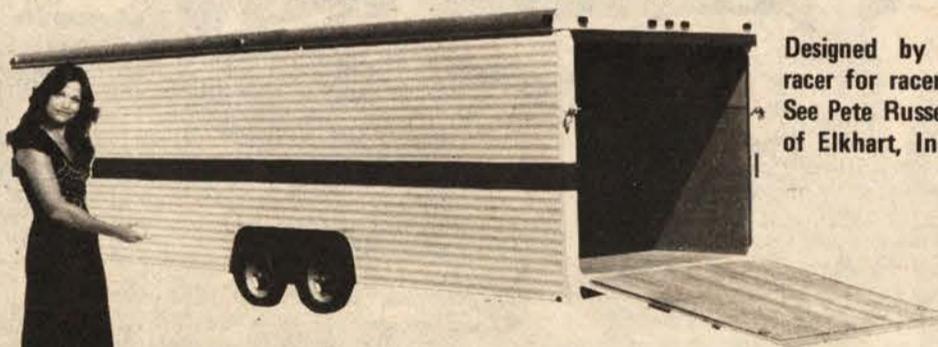
super luxurious Golden Hawk. Both six and eight cylinder engines, including a supercharged 289, were available in the Golden Hawk. The Flight Hawk was available in five passenger coupe and hard top body styles; the Power Hawk in coupe only; and the Sky Hawk and Golden Hawk in hard-top models only.

A survey 10 years ago showed that many felt that the 1950 styling advances of Studebaker were quite outstanding. The Hawk models were the best examples of this styling leadership. The Hawk had a low-slung appearance which looks good even by today's standards. A long

Continued On Next Page

## PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT . . .

from wind, rain, dust and human hands



Designed by a racer for racers. See Pete Russell of Elkhart, Ind.

A First Class Rig

### STANDARD UNITS OPTIONS

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Battery Pack     | Water Tank      |
| Electric Pump    | Ramp Door       |
| Electrical Winch | Interior Lights |

SEND FOR  
INFORMATION  
OR CALL

FOR THE TRICKEST PIECE AROUND LOOK TO THE LEADER

### BOCK DRAGSTER TRAILERS



### TRUCK SLEEPERS



- ELECTRICAL JACKS
- 5TH WHEEL TRAILERS
- HEAVY DUTY TRAILERS



# RACE TRAILERS INC.

1651 WEST FRANKLIN, ELKHART, IN 46514

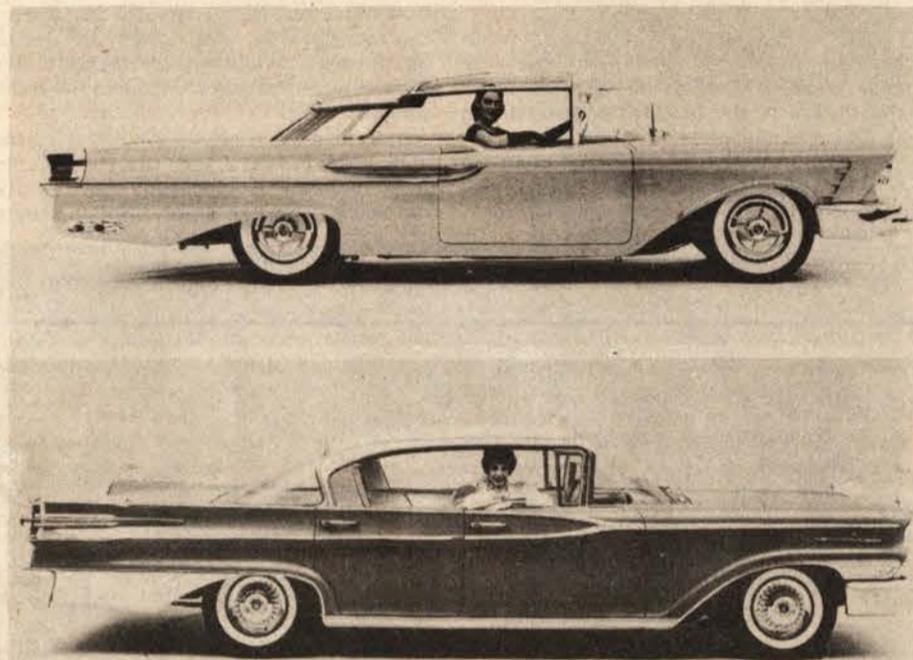
219/293-1217

Continued From Preceding Page  
sweeping hood and short rear deck accented its design. For the collector, the Golden Hawk will probably appreciate considerably in the years to come. It should also be mentioned that in 1958 a so-called Packard Hawk was produced, the Packard name being acquired from the combining of the Packard and Studebaker companies. Hawks are still available and should be a good future investment.

### Luxury Cars

The 1950's saw several really great luxury cars—the Cadillac Eldorado Brougham; the rebirth of the classic Lincoln Continental in 1956, the Mark II; and the Packard Patrician 400.

The limited production '58 Caddy Brougham was an all-out attempt by Cadillac to put a true luxury car on the market. Costing well in excess of 10 bills (an unheard of price tag for the time period), The Brougham sported many new futuristic goodies for the first time: innovations such as fuel injection, rear-mounted hydramatic, four headlites, and air suspension all debuted on this car. Another of the distinctive features of the design was a completely chromed rear quarter panel.



The XM-Turnpike Cruiser (top), the 1957 Mercury and the 1959 Mercury (bottom) illustrated one of the closest relationships between a "dream car" and a production car. The scalloped treatment in the rear quarter, one of the most prominent features of the Turnpike Cruiser, appeared on the 1957 Mercury but ran only as far as the rear door. It was extended all the way into the front door in the 1959 model.

picked up today for only about \$500 to \$1000. Exactly how their value will appreciate in the years to come can only be guessed at.

### Unique Cars

Under the classification of unique cars we have included the very interesting Ford retractable hardtop which was produced between '57 and '59. This vehicle attempted to monopolize on the tremendous interest in convertibles, which probably hit their popularity peak during the '50's. The car was actually an attempt to allow a person to enjoy a "rag-top" without the noisy, flapping canvas top and extremely drafty conditions during the winter.

The rather square Fords of 1957-'59 were well suited to a retractable hardtop. The retracts were characterized by a long trunk into which the top was lowered. Six reversible electric motors and 12 relays were used in the top lowering process. Four screw-jacks were used to secure the roof and the rear deck lid. Of course, when the top was down there was very little storage volume. A small metal box located on the floor of the trunk served as a location for a small amount of luggage storage.



The '54 Mystere dream car had quite an influence on the familiar '57 Ford.

duced the now popular T-top design. You should be able to pick one up for about \$300-400. Getting one with an operational top, however, is another thing!

in that it had a transparent top over the front seat. These Fords will probably never be considered true classics but one in good condition should bring upwards of \$2000.

### Old Favorites

Several cars during this era have achieved a high interest level. Interesting styling innovations explain the attraction on some of the limited production models. But the popularity of the standard production '57 Chevy is hard to explain.

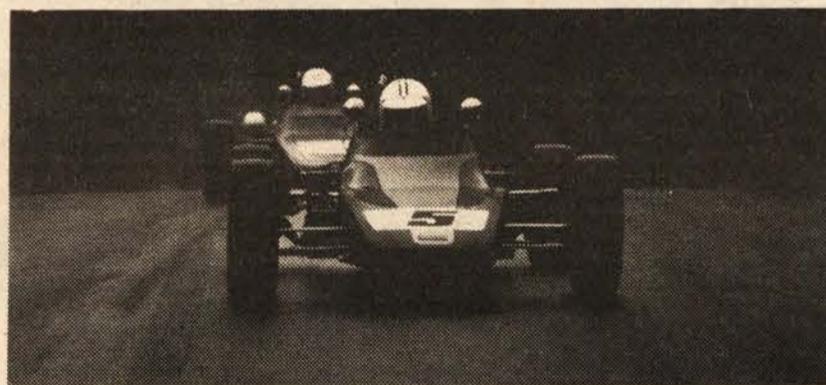
In 1955, Ford introduced a major body change in its Ford line. The top of the line was the Crown Victoria, which used chrome to great advantage. Directly aft of the front window, a piece of chrome swept up over the center of the roof and then down the other side of the car. The '56 Ford also had this model available. A Sunliner vehicle in '54 was also a rather unique car

But why the '57 Chevy? There were tens of thousands constructed, which violates the cardinal rule of becoming a classic—low production. The two-door hardtops and the limited production Nomad Station Wagons are the most popular. You can still pick up an occasional standard '57 for as little as \$300, which makes it one of the most reasonable of the classics. The top of the line Bel Air was characterized by a neat triangular two-tone on the rear quarter-panel. The 283cid block was available in a 270hp version with twin four barrel carbs, and a 283hp version with fuel injection. It was one of the real movers in its day.

To pick up a Nomad wagon is going to  
Continued On Next Page

# WINNING

can be very rewarding with the  
**Jim Russell School of Canada**



And not just while you're at the school. We like to keep track of our students. So after you've graduated, anytime you're placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in an amateur or professional race, the Jim Russell Canada School will reward you with its own prize money. However, the rewards of the school itself are just as important. The best training methods. Which means you'll be out on the track driving a formula Ford from the day you start.

And that's the only way to learn to drive a racing car . . . and win!

If you're after these kinds of rewards write for our free 36-page booklet.

For all information write for our free 36 page booklet to:  
**JIM RUSSELL INTERNATIONAL RACING DRIVERS SCHOOL CANADA LTD.**  
1065 LAKESHORE DRIVE C-15  
DORVAL, P.Q., CANADA H9S 3E1  
TEL.: 514-636-0365



**2 SCHOOLS**  
Jim Russell Canada has two operations: Jim Russell School at Le Circuit in Canada and the British School of Motor Racing at Riverside, California. (not affiliated with Jim Russell, Rosamond, Calif.)

If you were to find one of these monsters today, you will probably find that the air bags of the highly-touted air suspension system have probably long since collapsed, and will need to be replaced with normal springs. However, even if you have to throw a few hundred in her to get her back in shape, she may, according to some experts, be worth five times your approximate \$3000 investment. Most Cadillacs of the 50's don't rate much with the car buffs, that is, with the exception of the unique Brougham.

The Brougham was designed to complete with Ford's luxury car of the period—the Continental Mark II, which was built during '55-'57. The Mark II had a boxy design not at all unlike the T-bird. It was a style that still looks good and is copied today. It proved to be more reliable than the competition and was powered by a 368cid V8. \$5000 should still get you one of these "Deuces".

The Packard Company down through the years was known as a maker of fine luxury cars, and they built some fine ones during the 1950's. As mentioned earlier, the 1950's saw the demise of the Packard Company. But the most luxurious of the Packard cars was the massive square Patrician 400. This was a luxury car in every sense of the word and a few of these well-built 400's and the less expensive Clippers can be seen on today's highways. The 400 doesn't yet have the appeal of the Mark II or Brougham. One can be

The retractable cost about \$400 more than a standard Ford convertible. The high cost and limitations on body style were probably the reasons for the cessation of production after the '59 model. Although not considered a true classic, the retractable was the last attempt to mass produce a combination convertible/hardtop vehicle until Corvette intro-

## TURBO

### BOLT-ON SYSTEMS FOR

# 924 - 280Z

**Power — Performance**  
**Reliability — Economy**

B.A.E. Turbocharging Systems offer TRUE BOLT-ON performance, without cutting or welding. Fully engineered to fit your car.

Systems available for most foreign (even with injection) and some American cars, pickups, motor homes and diesel-powered engines.

SEND \$2.00 FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION TO B.A.E.

## B.A.E.

3032 KASHIWA ST.  
TORRANCE, CA 90505  
(213) 530-4743

