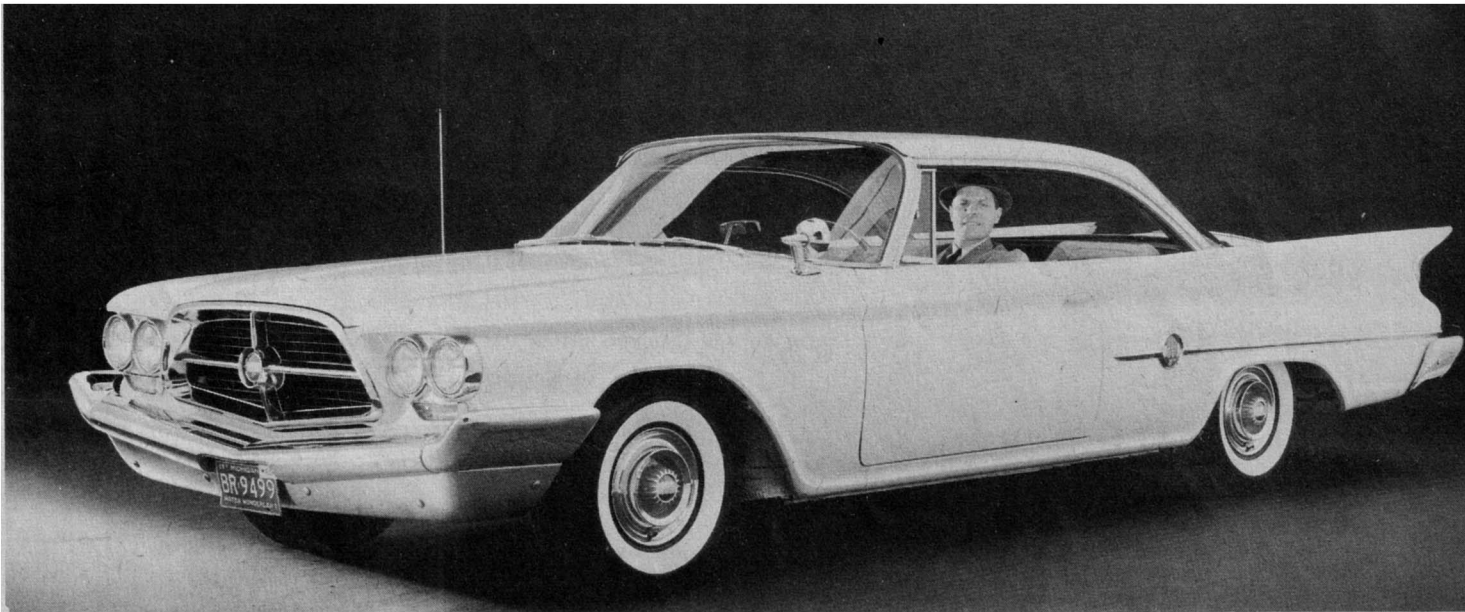




The Chrysler 300F Weighs in for 1960



Touted as the most powerful Chrysler ever built, the F offers two engine choices.

In CARS' first issue, we predicted that this one would be hot and good.

We were right. Still, it has drawbacks—and here we sum up both sides

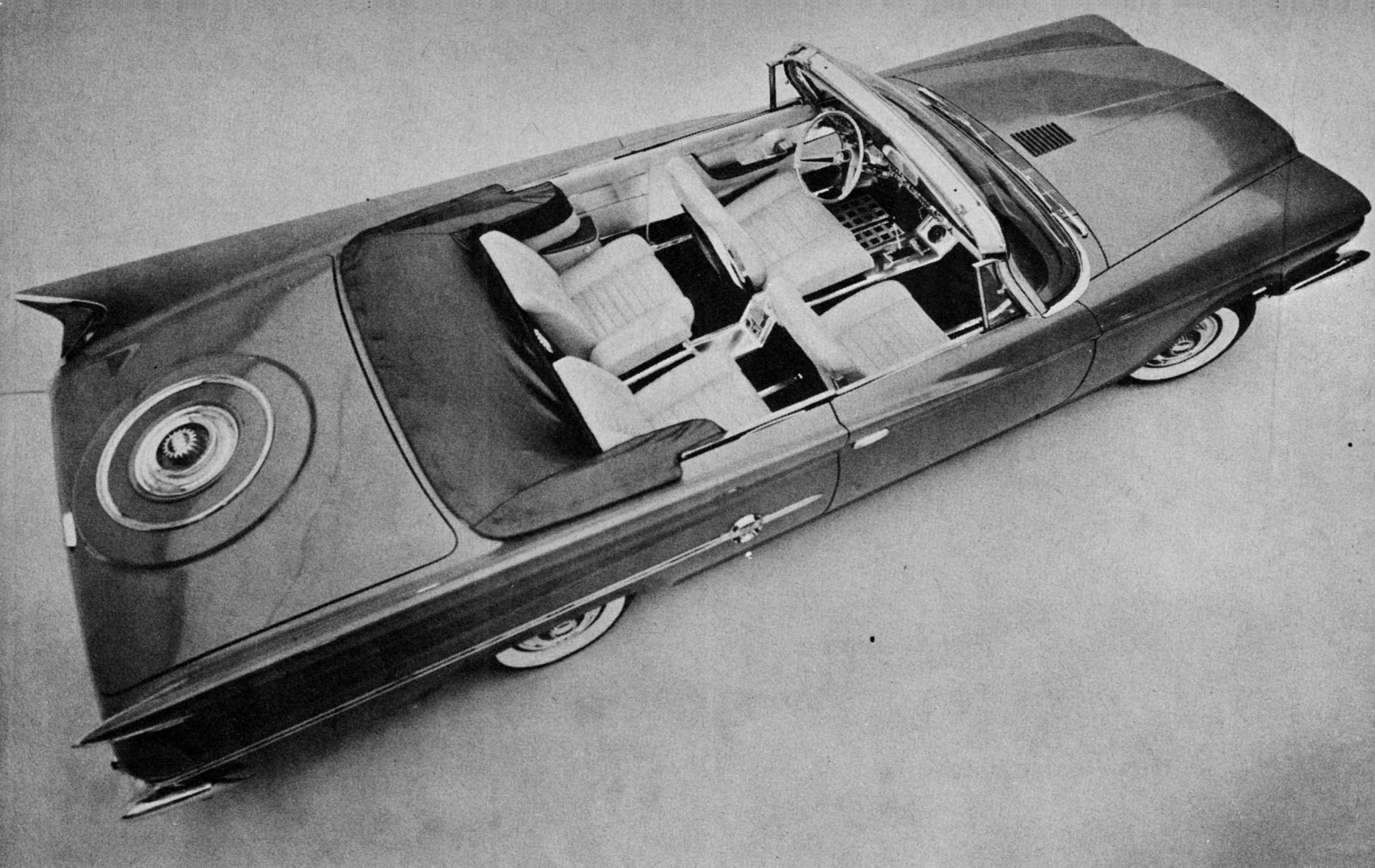
by Jeffries Oldmann

THERE ARE very large horses under the F's hood—either 375 or 400 of them, depending on the model—and they dominate everything you and the car do together. The 300's have never been a shy breed of car. In last year's E, we kicked down and snooted by a couple of Jags that were trying to make up their minds about passing a line of follow-the-leaders on U. S. 206. I'll never forget the look on those Jag drivers' faces when they heard what the E had to say about it. And this year, even with the "baby" ram-tubed 375 mill, I wouldn't have time to see it.

Power, and the equipment to use it properly; to transfer it, brake it, steer it and suspend it—in short, the

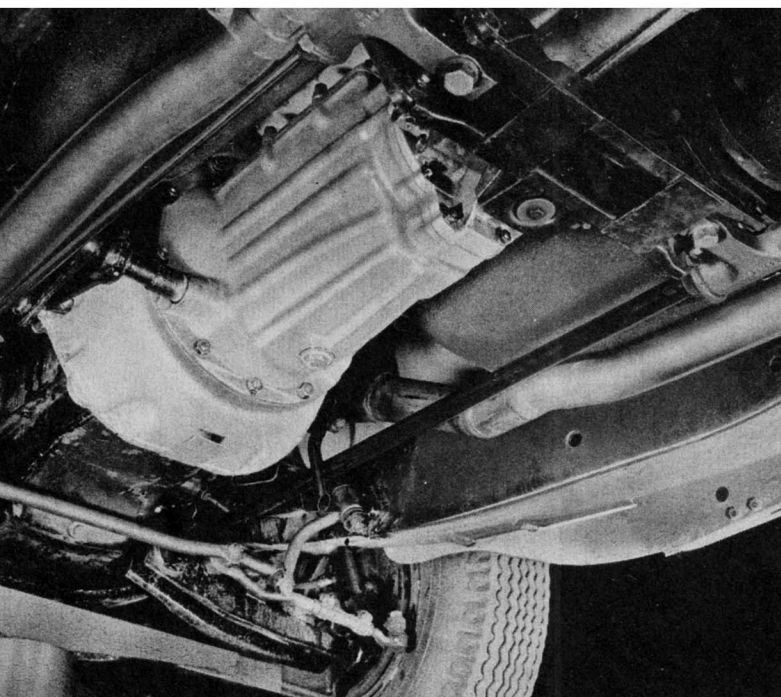
engineering that went into this completely new member of the proud 300 line—have never been wrapped up into a better balanced package of its kind. The car is a joy to drive, with handling characteristics superior to those of more conventionally-sized "hot" cars.

I almost said "sports cars." Is it a sports car? With a 126-inch wheelbase under a body two and a half yards longer than that, with power brakes and steering, 9.00 x 14 tires and 413 cubic inches of piston displacement, it's more like a runaway locomotive. But it leaps like a flea, stops on a speck, and has meanwhile flicked around a corner as if tethered to a center post. It may not be a sports car to a purist—it's not to me, even—but it

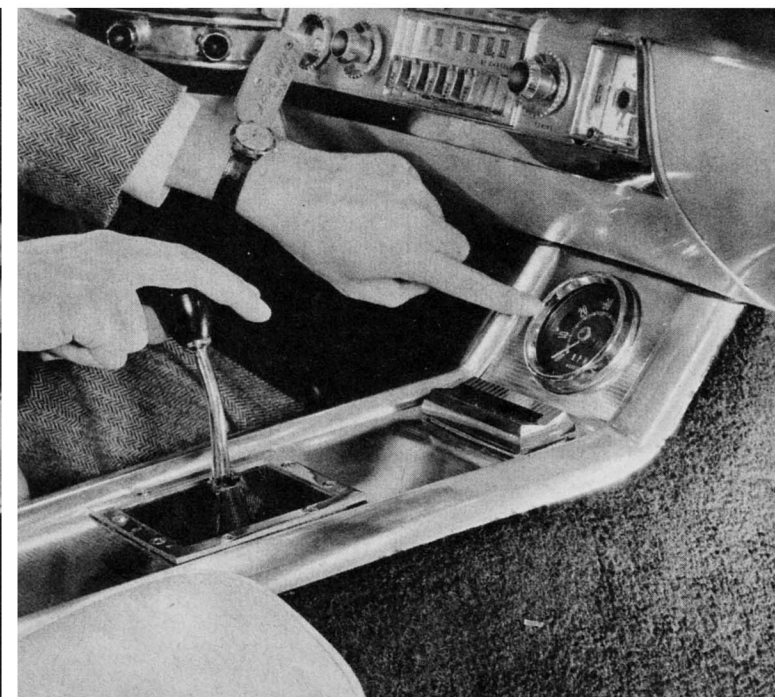


The "sports car interior" is a dubious feature. Some details (like the driver's scuff plates) are sound; others just gimmicks.

The option of a French Pont-a-Mousson four-speed manual gearbox is a long-awaited ultimate step in the right direction for the 300 line.



A genuinely useful addition to the instrumentation, the tachometer is nevertheless positioned so as to be difficult to read at even moderately high speeds.



CHRYSLER 300F

delivers sports car performance. There seems little point in comparing it to anything but a sports car—or else to what the Chrysler Corporation, in classifying it, calls the "sports-type automobiles."

That's a pregnant phrase, and there's considerably more to be said about it in a moment, but, first, let's get the performance round-up out of the way. (The exact statistics appear in the table.)

One, I have yet to drive an American car that pleases me more, as a driver, than a 300. As a latest example of the breed, the 375-horsepowered model, with its push-button automatic transmission, seems to me to have done a magnificent job of inheriting this tradition. (The optional 400-horsepower type, with its four-speed stick shift, hadn't yet come East for testing when this report was compiled. Pity.) It's a responsive, fast-acting piece of road machinery, with *no* little idiosyncrasies that have to be allowed for and, as far as I can see, no limitations. She will go anywhere and do anything you could possibly ask for touring work, and, what's important, never even give you the feeling that you might be approaching the ragged edge. She *does* have a top

PERFORMANCE

Zero-45 mph	4.7 seconds
Zero-60 mph	7.5 seconds
30-50 mph	2.4 seconds
50-80 mph	2.5 seconds
Mileage	12 mpg (approx)

speed, of course, and, the fins being somewhat smaller than has been the case in the past, it *does* fall below the point where she might become airborne. However, the tachometer—yes, sir, a tachometer—which is calibrated to 6000 rpm—without a red line, but the 375 horsepower comes at 5000—is only nudging 2800 at 70 mph on level highway, so there is room for experimentation. (She idles at 725-750, according to her tuning specs. Mine idled a hundred below that, which leads me to believe she was a bit de-tuned, but I never noticed it on the

road.)

Two, she's tractable when it comes to running characteristics. She does not lean on corners, sway in a wind, or bounce on stops and starts. Thanks to torsion bars on the front end, stiffed up well over her non-300 Chrysler cousins, and her even tougher rear leaf springs, she simply does not nosedive or put her tail in a bucket. All this adds to her responsive feel on the road, but she also does a handsome job of smoothing out road shock even with the hard suspension, and, combined with the absence of wind noise or engine roar, this means she can be driven for hours on end under all kinds of conditions without leaving you in what the trade calls "sports car stupor."

For these reasons, and because her solidity and grace inspire confidence, while her performance earns it, this is a car that makes you as good a driver, and as safe a one, as your own abilities permit you to be.

As a piece of machinery, then, the 300F is the superb touring car that previous 300's would lead you to expect. The fact that this is a year in which Chrysler has re-engineered its products has not in the least effected the steady progression toward excellence which has marked this limited-production line from the beginning. The unit body should show up as an influence toward keeping her solid and well-put-together over the years. At the moment, when she's brand new, this long-term benefit has yet to show any great contrast with the excellent but undoubtedly less permanent bolted construction of last year's E. As a result, if you've owned a previous 300, you will probably find yourself growing even fonder of this one's handling and riding qualities as time passes.

Whether you'll grow fonder of the interior design is another question entirely, and one I wish I had the answer for.

"Sports-type automobile," as I said earlier, is a phrase brimming over with possibilities and significances. It's the sort of all-in-together-boys description that means various things to various people, and can't be pinned down to any one class or kind (Continued on page 64)

SPECIFICATIONS OF CHRYSLER 300F

EXTERIOR DIMENSIONS	
Wheelbase	126.0"
Length overall	219.6"
Tread	front 61.2"; rear 60.0"
Width overall	79.4"
Height	hardtop 55.1"; convertible 55.5"
Tire size	9.00 x 14
ENGINE	
Type	90° V8
Valves	ohv hydraulic
Bore and stroke	4.18 x 3.75
Piston displacement	413 cu in.
Compression ratio	10.0 to 1
Maximum bhp at rpm	Standard: 375 at 5000 Optional: 400 at 5200
Maximum torque at rpm	Standard: 495 at 2800 Optional: 465 at 3600
Carburetion	two 4-barrel
Fuel pump	mechanical

FLUID CAPACITIES	
Fuel	23.0 gal
Crankcase (with filter)	6 qts
Coolant	17 qts

RUNNING GEAR	
Transmission ratios (automatic)	first 2.45; second 1.45; max overall torque multiplication 5.39
Transmission ratios (manual)	first 3.35; second 1.96; third 1.36; fourth 1.00; reverse 3.11
Rear axle ratios (manual)	Standard: 3.31; optional: 2.93, 3.15, 3.23, 3.54, 3.73
Rear axle ratios (automatic)	Standard: 3.31;
Brake lining area, effective	251 sq in.
Brake drum diameter	12"

The cast crankshaft is remarkably massive, and thanks to the short stroke has a 15/16-inch overlap between the connecting rod and main bearing journals, resulting in high rigidity. Some of the speed shops have been running this basic engine on the dyno at 7,000 rpm without any ill effects. In fact, the Comet does not require a crankshaft damper for its normal operating speed range.

The manifold is cast in one unit with the head, to eliminate a bolted and flanged connection, save weight and simplify production. Six individual risers lead from the intake manifold to the individual intake valves. One interesting feature of the manifolding is that a small water-heated pad is included between the carburetor and manifolding to prevent icing even on the dampest winter days. Compression ratio is a conservative 8.7:1 but higher ones have been tried successfully. The engine is designed to run on regular gas.

The Comet is available with either a standard transmission or an automatic. The automatic is a light torque converter and two-speed unit contained in an aluminum housing. A separate heat exchanger is not required for cooling the oil. Performance is somewhat snappier with a straight shift, but then we've always been hot rodders at heart. On the straight shift, first is a 3.29:1 not synchronised. Second is 1.75:1. The automatic has a low of 1.75 to 1 and

a high of 1.1 not counting the torque converter ratio. Maximum ratio at stall is 2.40. Little is gained in acceleration by revving in low with the automatic shift.

The stock Comet is available with a 3.56:1 axle ratio, perfect for economy. However if you want more go and do not mind the penalty in fuel, the 3.89 option for station wagons should do very well on the sedan too. There is no particular point in gearing for top speed, as the Comet is already more than adequate in this respect, while low speed acceleration is always a fruitful field for improvement, even in more powerful cars.

The nine-inch brakes used on the Comet have a 2½-inch width at the front and 1½ at the rear. On the wagon, 2½-inch linings are used front and rear. The duo-servo brakes provide amply adequate stopping power on both the sedan and the wagon, even after repeated decelerations.

Even future repair costs were thought of. For instance the inevitable trip to the bump shop for removing parking lot scratches ceases to be a major problem on the Comet thanks to its removable fender panels, an improvement needed on most new cars.

Driving the Comet impressed us both with its stylish features and its excellent down to earth engineering. Why not do your own road test on it? ♦ ♦

This may be true—that is, maybe even the people who own 300's secretly long for a four-seater pseudo-airplane with a jukebox instrument panel and a partition running down the middle of the passenger cabin—and perhaps the Chrysler Corporation has secretly shaken its head sadly and then given them what they want while hiding a broken heart. Nor can anyone object if the Chrysler people try to please their customers. But I'm a little bit taken aback by the fact that so many of these new interior features not only make the car decidedly uncomfortable for everyone but the driver, and somewhat less comfortable for him than it might be, but are also very difficult to make any real use of. No Chrysler interior designer seems to have taken the trouble to go for a ride in a competing four-seater sports-type automobile and found out where its design could be improved on.

The interior of the 300F, as you can see from the pictures accompanying this article, is built around four semi-bucket seats separated two to a side by a "control console" built over the shaft tunnel. This apurtenance, clad with flimsy, scratch-prone aluminum, contains only a tachometer, the power window controls, two ashtrays and two cigarette lighters. (In the stick shift type, the stick comes up through the forward ashtray port; where the front seat ashtray has been moved to cannot be made out from available pictures; the auto shift pushbutton space on the dash, at the driver's left, has been covered by a screwed-on plate with, apparently, nothing behind it.)

Of these "controls," one—the tach—obviously belongs on the dash, where it can be read without turning away from the road. Using the tach to shift the pushbutton three-speed transmission requires simultaneous looks in opposite directions—neither direction being over the hood. As a result, the best thing to do is ignore the tach and keep her locked in Drive.

Another "control"—the forward ashtray and lighter—can be reached, even by a long-armed driver like myself, only if he either hunches forward with every flick of his ashes or cramps his correspondingly—but not freakishly—long legs by moving the seat forward. Even then, he either takes his eyes off the road or dribbles ashes not only into the little cup provided but also all over the lighter, where they will smear his fingers and drop into the lighter well the next time he uses it. Furthermore, his wife in the passenger seat has to smoke left-handed or else twist

The Chrysler 300F Weighs In

(Continued from page 25)

of car. The small Volvo, for example, is a sports-type automobile. So is the Morgan. So was the two-seater Thunderbird, so is the Studebaker Hawk and so is the current, or overgrown, T-Bird, which sells a great number of copies without, as far as I can see, being outstanding in anything but its looks.

One of the things that impressed me greatly about last year's 300E was the fact that, with its extremely comfortable but straight-through seating, it was not only a sports-type car squarely in the *gran turismo* tradition but also a highly versatile general purpose car in which I could take a family—two kids, one wife, and her mother—for a Sunday drive. At one point, also, I carefully lined the trunk with newspapers and plastic sheeting and transported a full-grown rabbit hutch.

Now, not many 300's are going to be asked to cope with rabbit hutches, and I felt damn silly doing it. But the point was that if you had or could get about five thousand dollars to put into one car that you expected to keep for a while, and which would therefore have to be capable of all kinds of spur-of-the-moment work; which had enough integrity not to be out of style, or worn out, over a period of time longer than one or two model-years; which had performance and prestige all wrapped in one, like a sort of latter-day Duesenberg with a much wider market, then this was it. Dollar for dollar, you weren't likely to find anything better, or easier to maintain.

This year's 300 is a four-seater sports-type automobile, period.

The Chrysler Corporation declares that its "newly designed" interior and exterior reflect the recommendations made by owners of previous model 300 cars." It has produced a 1960 version which, it says, these owners "have indicated they would like to own and drive."

around each time she wants to use this convenience. Both are awkward for her—and, incidentally, she has little twisting room to curl up and nap in on long drives, and she is continually kicking the fiberboard wastebasket off its precarious hangers on the quarter panel beside her right foot. The wife in question is neither inordinately picayunish nor small or large, and more graceful than average, so it seems to me quite a few women will be complaining of this.

The power window controls are closely spaced, forward of the ashtray. They are even less convenient for the driver to operate, particularly when he has other things to do while approaching or pulling away from a tollgate. Furthermore, he is hemmed in at the right elbow by a fixed armrest which is no help as an armrest to anyone but his passenger, and quite a hindrance on turns.

The armrest top is hinged, and opens to expose a sort of supplementary glove compartment. As a thing in itself, that's good, but it needs to be because the "main" glove compartment is a good six inches narrower than its door would lead you to believe, and is as flimsy and fiberboardy as that aforementioned gimmick, the wastebasket, whose hanger slots are not even reinforced.

Returning to the "control console," which dips sharply toward the rear seat floor, and then rises to meet a similar armrest, we find that another ashtray and lighter, together with the rear power window controls, are located just behind the front seat. This puts them completely out of reach of the rear seat passengers—and struggling forward out of the low, back-slanted buckets is a real test of agility which no one would care to make repeatedly. For the life of me, I can't see why this "control" package couldn't have been located just in front of the rear armrest, where there is an obvious and natural blank space in the sheet metal.

Finally, the "console" forces the driver and left-side passenger to either climb over it—if they can—or get in and out on the street side of the car. I wonder what my insurance company would make of this.

The dashboard is a Wurlitzer, Dad. Up at the driver's right, where the tach should be, we find the heater controls, presumably put there because their pushbuttons offer a group in symmetry with the transmission controls. Under these, below the lip of the dash where they can't be seen without bending the head, are the radio controls, even though a driver tends to fiddle with the radio

much more often than he does with the heater. Which heater, incidentally, has trouble delivering enough warmth to him, while roasting his wife's ankles—and his hand when he reaches over to make sure she's not just being crabby—and freezing his kids in the back seat. I assume this is due to the presence of that Great Wall of China.

The speedometer, which is quite easy to read, and the other gauges—including ammeter and oil pressure, thank you, Chrysler, but not too

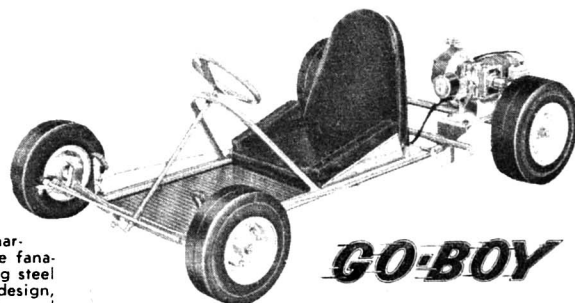
much because they're *not* easy to read—are housed under a clear plastic bubble at the base of the steering column as it enters the dash. At night, they glow with Chrysler's new "Panelescent" system, and the entire assembly looks as though there ought to be a coin slot in it. It has knobs spaced around it, one for the rear window defroster—nice—one for the map light, one for the dome light, and one for the powered radio antenna. On the driver's left, besides the transmission buttons, are the

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main lights and window wipers, and the turn signal indicator. This means you can't just stick out one long finger and flick for turns, or lane-changes under turnpike conditions—you have to take your left hand off the wheel. This is not a thing to do at passing speeds, or when negotiating city streets.

This seems to be a car whose interior, to sum up, discourages passengers, and encourages the driver to sit back and for Heaven's sake not do anything. This melange of bad ideas, none of which seem to have been designed with use in mind, but all of which can be made to look and sound good by salesmen and ad copywriters, stops dead at the edges of

the passenger cabin. Surrounding it is a remarkable car which can afford to give away points if it has to. But I suspect that the competition—and I'm sorry to see the 300 dignifying it by descending to its level—sells to people who want flash and don't care about engineering. Whenever Chrysler has tried to sell to these people, it has come in third, and often lower. I don't see how this interior—which, by a narrow margin, isn't even as well-designed as their competitor's—can help to improve matters.

But what a lovely piece of machinery the car is. I'm yearning to get hold of the stick-shift model, and a report on it will appear here shortly. ♦ ♦

Drag Rules—AHRA

(Continued from page 10)

Roadster class in an effort to bring back the true streets machines.

Altered C/S and Roadster classes (and their fuel-burning alternates; Fuel C/S and Hot Roadster) are largely unchanged. However, the new rule requiring stock wheelbase and tread in these divisions may cause some headaches.

It's rather a minor item, but the antique term "Open Gas," a legacy from dry lakes racing days, has been eliminated. The correct term for gas-burning rail jobs is now officially "Gas Dragster." The rules in this class are the same, but take a look at the new Fuel Dragster regulations:

You can now dump in the "joy juice" and have a go without having to compete with the big boys like Garlits, Cagle, Postoian, *et al.* There are three classes divided by displacement only (not weight/displacement ratios) at 488 inches or over, 304 to 487 inches, and 303 inches or under. The popular Flathead Dragster class for unblown flatties has been retained, and a blower ups any car one class.

Most rodders aren't too concerned with sports cars, but we might mention that D/Sports have been eliminated due to a dearth of entries. This class, which included MG's, VW's, etc., will probably not be missed.

Being an old Four Banger man myself, the new X/Class rules are especially interesting to me. The only change is that there is now one division for gas-burners and one for fuelers. Other than fuel require-

ments, anything goes in the way of blowers, dragster body, etc. in each class.

STOCK CAR CLASSIFICATION

Unlike some associations, AHRA is convinced of the future of Stock classes in drag racing both at the local strip and at the Annual American Championship Drags. After all, this is where the average hot rodder breaks into the game.

Requirements as to what is "stock" have been tightened up, especially in Super Stock class. Last year practically anything went in this division; but now all parts must be "assembly line production." If you don't know whether your stocker qualifies, better write AHRA and ask.

In addition to the ten Stock classes (both stick and automatic trans) run last year, there is now a two-class Modified Stock division for "cheater stocks."

This division is split at 300 cubic inches. All cars over this displacement are limited to one four-barrel carburetor, and cars of less than 300 inches can have only one two-barrel pot. No racing equipment can show on exterior of engine, but you can do all you want on the inside within displacement limits.

Well, that's about the picture in a nutshell. We've tried to give you a capsule report on the major changes in the 1960 AHRA rules, but we strongly recommend you order an official AHRA rule book to avoid any mistakes. Send 50c to: AHRA, Box 2365, Kansas City 2, Kansas.—Don Elliott.

CLASSIFICATION

The portion of the 1960 AHRA rules dealing with classification fol-

lows. Please take note of this important official statement:

These rules were submitted to CARS magazine before final proof-reading and comparison with the original rules meeting transcript in order to make this edition. While this copy of the 1960 AHRA rules is believed to be correct and accurate, AHRA will not be held responsible for typographical or other minor errors and strongly recommends that you order the official "1960 AHRA Rules Book" by sending 50c in coin to: A.H.R.A., Box 2365, Kansas City (2), Kansas.

(Signed) E. A. Williams
Technical Committee
Chairman
A.H.R.A.

1. GAS COUPE/SEDAN—designated (G). Must run service station pump gasoline.

1. There shall be five classes in this division, classified according to total car weight divided by total cubic inches engine displacement.

Designation: A/G, B/G, C/G, D/G or E/G—preceded by car number.

Class "A" 0 to 8.99 pounds per cubic inch

Class "B" 9.00 to 10.99 pounds per cubic inch

Class "C" 11.00 to 12.99 pounds per cubic inch

Class "D" 13.00 to 14.99 pounds per cubic inch

Class "E" 15.00 and up pounds per cubic inch

2. Must have a coupe or sedan body produced by an American automobile manufacturer. Top may be chopped, sectioned or channeled for a total height reduction of four (4) inches. Must have four stock production type fenders.

3. Interior may not be gutted; must have full upholstery. Two bucket seats may replace front seats in coupes and two-door sedans, but they must be fully upholstered. Seats must be located within four (4) inches of original location.

4. Headers, with maximum of two pipes per car, will be permitted. Header plugs or by-passes may be open during competition running. Exhaust system must have mufflers and tailpipes adequate for street use. Collector tubes to be capped off for street use must be at least six (6) inches long. All exhaust systems must remain on the car during all competition and must be connected to headers at all times so as to direct exhaust gasses to the rear of car when collector tubes are capped.

5. Must have full transmission. Locked rear ends will be permitted; also, quick change and ratchet type