



By RAY BROCK

"CARRIAGE TRADE"

It doesn't take an oldtimer to remember the days when most of the automobile manufacturers concentrated their efforts on four-door sedans and coupes, but just take a look around a crowded parking lot nowadays and see how many of the '57 models fall in the aforementioned two groups. Three-passenger coupes are a thing of the past and although the four-door sedan is still with us, not many of them still have the door frame around the windows with a post between the floor and the top of the body. Four-door hardtops are the rage.

The fight between manufacturers for increased sales has brought about a whole raft of new body styles during the past half dozen years starting with two-door hardtops around 1951, then all metal station wagons in '52, fiberglass bodied sports cars in '54, steel bodied sports cars in '55, four-door hardtops in '55, slab sided pickups in '56 and now in 1957, four-door hardtop wagons, convertibles with steel tops and what may be classified as a passenger car pickup. This last is what we are concerned with this month.

Chevrolet made the first attempt in 1956 at producing a pickup which could be used for family use but even with the nice lines achieved by the use of fiberglass rear fender panels, it was still a pickup in cab design and chassis. This year, Ford took the same idea and then went one step further when they brought out the Ranchero. It is truly a coupe passenger

car but then again, it is a pickup, or depending upon your needs, almost a pickup.

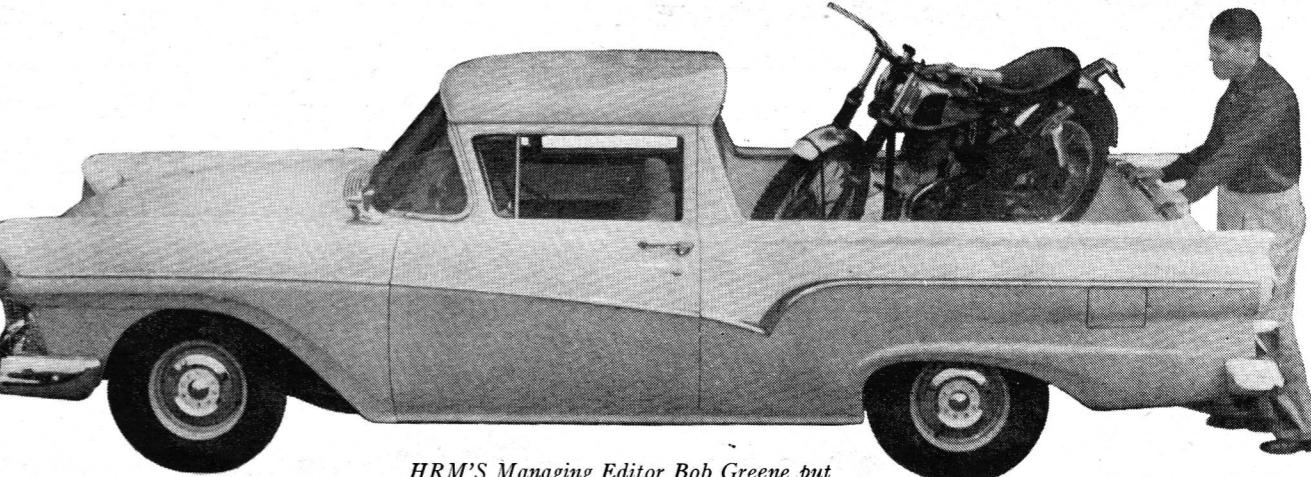
The method used by Ford to come up with the Ranchero is so simple that it makes you wonder why none of the manufacturers tried it before. The basic idea used was to take a two-door station wagon, slice down just behind the driver's seat to the bottom of the side windows, then trim off the back of the wagon at that level. For the floor, they stamped out a piece of metal with strengthening ribs and dropped it across the regular station wagon floor stamping that has indentations for drive-line, spare tire and the rear seat passenger's feet. A new piece of metal to keep the driver's back from the elements and a bit of chrome trim to cover the edge around the belt line of the car completed the job.

Sit in the driver's seat and you'll swear that you are in a passenger car. The trim is the same as that used in the passenger cars and wagons, the feel in the seat is the same and the high-in-the-saddle feeling that accompanies a normal pickup is not present. Driver and passengers sit the same height off the road as those people in any '57 Ford passenger car. By lopping off the body behind the driver and welding a new bulkhead across the opening, one thing has been gained that is really going to please the door slammers that are always remembering the good old days when—. The extra bracing across the body just at the rear of the door frames

stiffens the body so much that you'd swear the door you've just closed belongs to a 1928 Pierce-Arrow.

The split type seat back like that used in two-doors is used in the Ranchero and when the right side is folded forward, the spare tire is revealed, clamped to the rear panel with the bumper jack and lug wrench wedged between the tire and the body to prevent rattles. The area behind the driver is not occupied and has enough room to easily hold a two-suiter suitcase or a large box for normal car trunk odds and ends. For trips, the spare tire and jack could be delegated to the pickup bed and a fair amount of luggage protected from the weather behind the seats.

The pickup portion of the Ranchero is paneled with body metal to give a smooth finish to the inside of the bed and a large "inspection" plate is fastened in the paneling of each rear corner with sheet metal screws so that the wiring for the taillights can be serviced. When compared to Ford pickups of the last few years, the Ranchero compares favorably in the size department. Before the '57 slab sided pickups came out, the width of a 1/2-ton pickup bed was around 48 inches and length, about 78 inches. Measurements across the Ranchero bed are 57 inches at the top edge with the rear wheel wells extending into the bed six inches on each side, and the length across the top with the rear gate up is 67 inches. The bed is six inches longer on the floor due to the rear gate



HRM'S Managing Editor Bob Greene put his stamp of approval on the Ranchero when he discovered that he could easily haul his Velocette Scrambler to events.

Right half of seat back folds forward to get at spare. Metal ledge beneath large rear window gives body extra rigidity. Vision to all sides is good in Ranchero.

Ford bridges the gap between truck and family car with their sleek new Ranchero

PICK UP

Photos by Eric Rickman

forward slant. The rear gate uses the station wagon center lift latch which eliminates the dangling hook and chain on regular pickups. With the tailgate down, however, the sliding link arrangement used to hold the tailgate level would certainly not hold the weight load of the chain and hook.

In the chassis department, the Ranchero frame is identical to those for the station wagons and very nearly the same as the Custom and Custom 300 sedan frames. The location of a crossmember, a few rear body mountings and rear shock upper brackets are the only places where they differ. The frame is of the ladder type construction with box section side rails that are widened out in the passenger region for added foot room. The wheel base is 116 inches and the tread is 59 inches front and 56 1/2 inches rear.

The front wheel suspension is independent with unequal length A-arms for each wheel and ball joints to support the one piece spindle and support between the A-arms. Both arms are one piece stampings, new this year, and the ball joints are riveted to their outer ends. The front stabilizer bar is fastened with clamps and rubber bushings directly between the lower A-arms similar to the arrangement used by Ford from '49-'51 and all the linkage used in the past few years eliminated. Front coil springs are, according to the parts book, the same as those used on station wagons. Direct act-

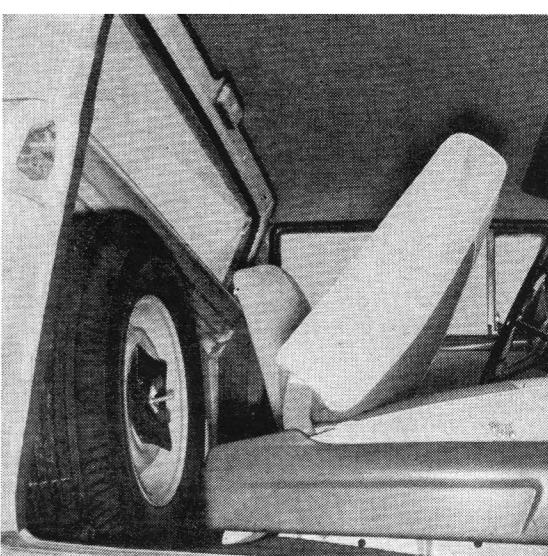
ing tubular shocks are mounted inside each front coil spring.

The rear suspension is of the conventional longitudinal leaf type with the front end of each semi-elliptical spring rubber bushed and fastened to a frame bracket and the rear end shackled through rubber bushings. No stabilizer bar is used on the rear suspension, with side sway controlled by the two-inch wide spring leafs and the angular mounting of tubular shock absorbers.

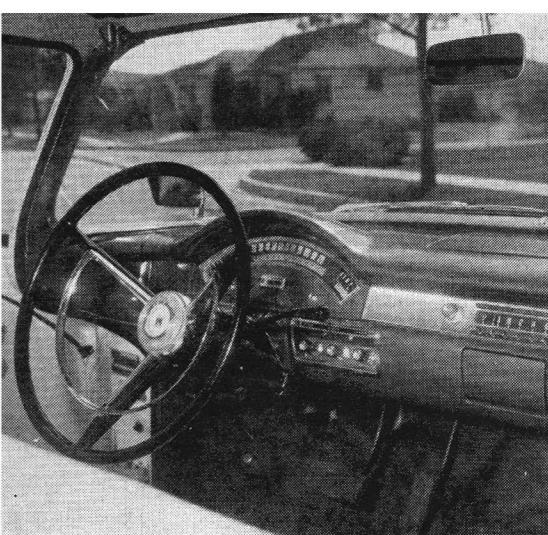
The rear end is also new for '57 with a heavier banjo type steel housing and a removable center section. Differential gears are much stronger than in previous years and Ford has returned to the straddle-mount pinion arrangement with this rear end. The pinion gear and bearings can be pulled from the carrier without having to remove the entire center section and this should make replacement of the pinion seal an easy matter. A selection of gear ratios is available ranging from 3.10 to 4.11 depending upon transmission. The ratio used in our Fordomatic equipped car was 3.56.

In the engine department, our test car had the 292 cubic inch Thunderbird V8 rated at 206 horsepower but the Ranchero is available with any of the passenger car engines. Starting at the cheap end and working up, this includes the OHV six cylinder engine with 223 cubic inches rated at 144 hp, the 272 inch V8 rated

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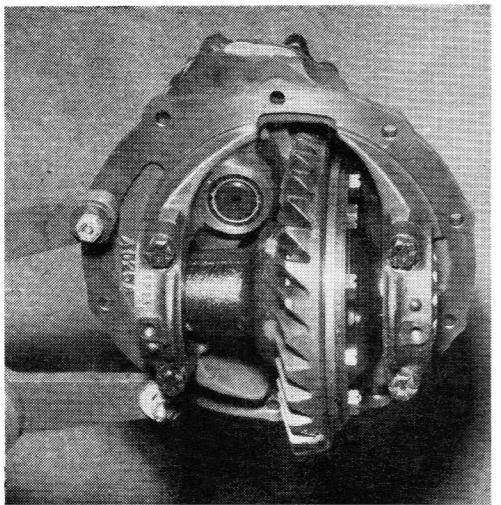
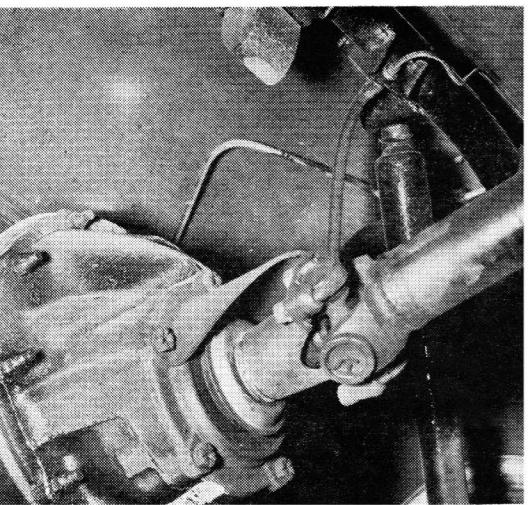


Steering wheel and instrument panel is identical to Ford's wagon series as is upholstery. All extras available in the Ford line will fit the Ranchero models.



"CARRIAGE TRADE" PICKUP

continued



FAR LEFT. Ford's new rear end for '57 cars has removable center section plus a removable pinion housing. Steel shield over the U-joint will snub rear end against rubber bumper, hooked to frame, on bottoming or acceleration.

LEFT. From this view, husky ring gear and straddle mount pinion can be seen. The pinion is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches below the center line of the rear end and the axles are not interchangeable, the left being shorter than the right axle.

at 190 hp, the 292 V8 rated at 206 hp and the 312 inch Thunderbird Special V8 rated at 245 horsepower.

Our test car was equipped with the Fordomatic transmission and was quite easy to drive although the shift points are solid and very noticeable when under full throttle acceleration. In normal traffic and light throttle conditions, the shifts are seldom noticed. We made no timed acceleration or speed checks with the Ranchero but performance seemed to be just fair. It would have undoubtedly been better with the 312 inch engine but with the 292 engine, the car would have been a sitting duck for the boys in the stock class at any drag strip.

The weight of our Ranchero was 3680 pounds with a full tank of gas and this included the Fordomatic (84 pounds over

the conventional transmission), radio (15 pounds), and power steering (37 pounds). A similarly equipped Ford F-100 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton pickup would weigh approximately 150 pounds less (3530) and the two-door Ranch Wagon weighs about 140 pounds more (3820). One interesting comparison between the Ranchero and the $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton pickup is that with station wagon springs, the Ranchero is sprung slightly heavier both front and rear than the pickup. In other words, the Ranchero is equipped to handle a heavier load than the F-100 pickup. Two pictures with this story show our test Ranchero empty and also with a load of nearly 900 pounds and the extra load deflects the rear springs less than three inches. With the extra 900 pounds in the bed, the Ranchero rode better although handling and braking were not

nearly as good as without the extra load.

In the brake department, the Ranchero is once again as good or maybe better than the $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton pickup. We say maybe better because although both the Ranchero and the F-100 use 11-inch drums, the F-100 has slightly longer lining on the shoes but the Ranchero uses wider lining. In brake area the Ranchero is slightly better but uses a 14-inch wheel and tire while the F-100 stays either with the 15 or 16-inch variety. The 14-inch wheels crowd around the brake drum tightly so that under severe usage such as with a heavy load, we'd estimate the F-100 brakes would show less fade due to the advantage of better air circulation around the drums.

The brakes on our test car were not of the power variety but even so did not

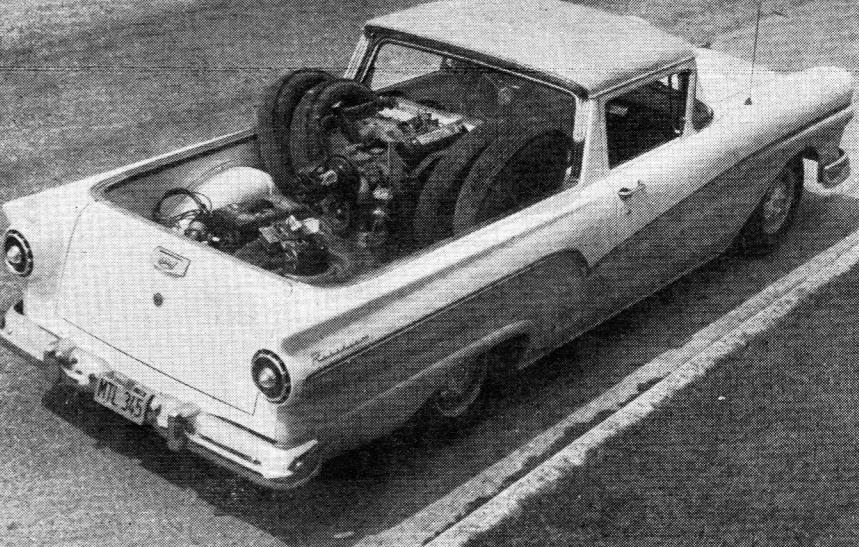
require excessive pedal pressure to stop the car at any speed. Fade and erratic stops showed up quickly if a few severe stops were attempted but for normal driving the brakes should be ample. If a heavy load is to be carried, the driver should automatically drive slower and allow more stopping room.

Cornering qualities of the Ranchero were excellent and a large part of the honor for this undoubtedly should go to the station wagon springs and stabilizer. There was only a small amount of roll experienced and the car seemed to stay "glued" on the tightest corners we attempted. Although we never did push the Ranchero to its limit, it seemed to be a well balanced machine and should "drift" through corners with the best of them. During all of the cornering tests, the Holley four-throat carburetor never starved out once.

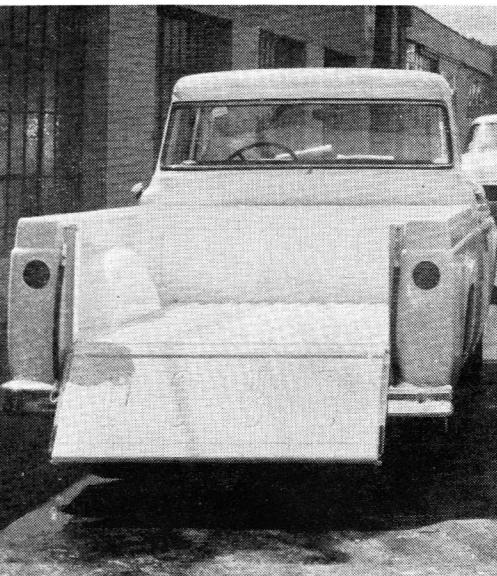
We made a few runs up Los Angeles' steepest street, Fargo Hill, to see if the 32% grade would affect the carburetor but this didn't phase it. Even after stopping for several minutes on the grade for photos, the engine fired up as soon as the starter spun. On the mileage side however, the carburetor, cam, engine or everything put together didn't get the job done very well. We made no steady speed mileage checks but overall mileage for several hundred miles produced just under 13 mpg and on one tank load with nothing but highway driving, 14 mph was the best we could do. None of the driving we did was for economy but on the open road, we expected a bit more.

For the guy who has his own business and not enough money to afford both a pickup for the shop and a family car, the Ranchero is just the ticket—as long as he doesn't have too many kids. The seat will carry three adults quite well or two adults and two children of the small-medium size. For the hot rodder who wants to tow a dragster, carry a box full of tools, a couple of drag slicks and spare engine parts to the drags on Sunday, yet still take his favorite gal friend to the drive-in movie on Saturday night, the Ranchero is perfect. The car is a natural for the customizer since almost any custom tricks that will work on the '57 Ford will work equally well on the Ranchero.

During the length of time we had the Ranchero for our test, we wondered if maybe we could figure out a good excuse for buying one. We don't really need a pickup but if somebody were to make a nice fiberglass top for the bed, we could use it for fishing trips to the high Sierras. In our opinion, the Ranchero is both functional and appealing to the eye. If some of the other manufacturers don't chop the back half of their station wagons off and follow suit next year, we miss our bet. The $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton pickup sales are going to drop off because the Ranchero is here to stay.



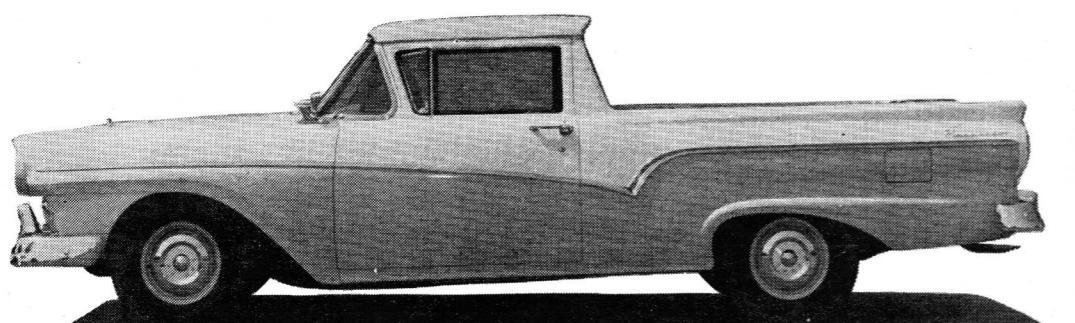
For our test, we loaded a complete 1957 T-Bird engine, five tires and wheels, a tool box and miscellaneous parts. The Ranchero rode well but brakes suffered some.



In styling, the Ranchero is much lower than the $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton Ford F-100 pickup and doesn't have as many cubic feet of bed but width of tailgate opening is the same.



F-100 pickup bed has square rear corners and no inside paneling while Ranchero corners are rounded and interior paneled.



A 900-pound load in the Ranchero was carried very well due to the heavy springs. The load was far forward and only lowered body over wheels 3 inches.

