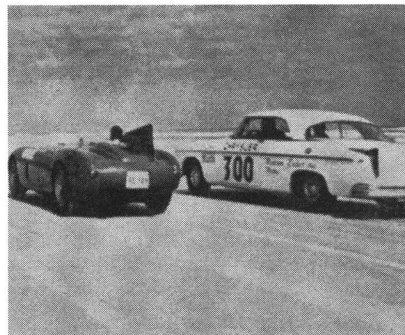




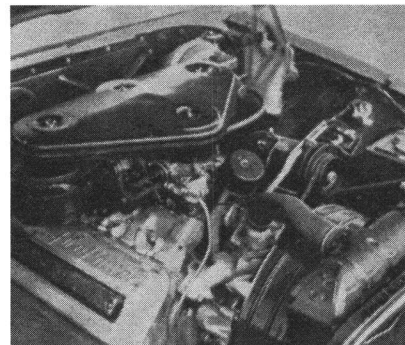
Uncle Tom and Warren Koechling, Miami airline pilot who set blistering new one-mile record of 127.580 in Chrysler 300 over sand-packed course.



Detroit housewife Vicki Wood sped to the Women's National Speed Trial Championship at a blazing 125.838 mph in Brewster Shaw's borrowed 300.



Poised beside mighty 300 is this year's NASCAR pacer, a Jaguar. Chrysler cars won five of the first eight places in speed trials competition.



Chrysler's 300-hp power plant is the product of collaboration among company engineers and Briggs Cunningham, who used engine in his Le Mans cars.

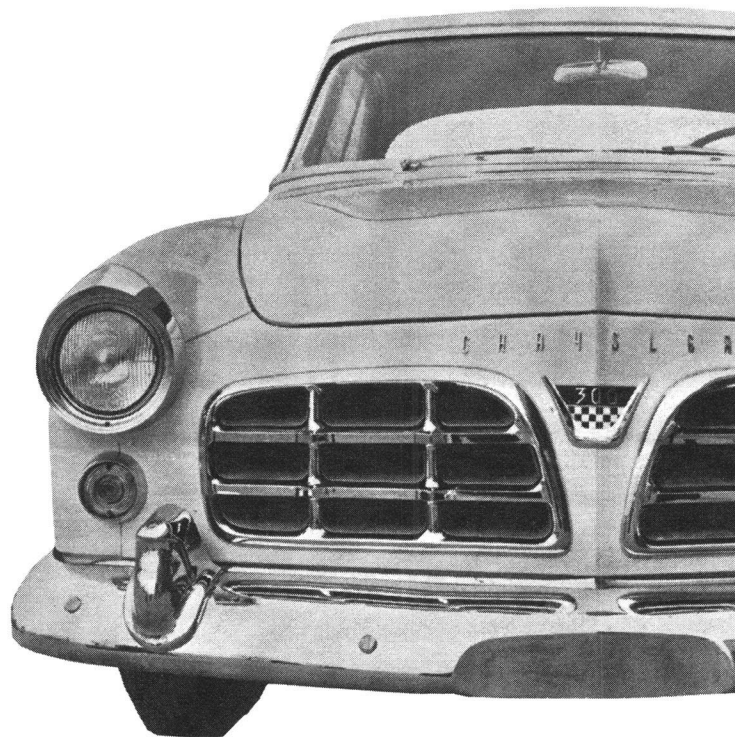
The CHRYSLER 300

Fastest full-size sedan in the world, says Uncle Tom of this mighty 130-mph NASCAR record-breaker.

By Tom McCahill



Behind the 300's design, say Chrysler spokesmen, are the demands of sports car enthusiasts who have written in asking for modified FirePower engine, simple unadorned exterior and sports car feel.



ANY bookkeeper with the chest development of a garter snake will quickly get a Charles Atlas mental physique the instant he slips behind the wheel of a new Chrysler 300.

Here is the most powerful sedan in the world, and the fastest, teamed up with rock-crushing suspension and a competition engine capable of yanking Bob Fulton's steamboat over the George Washington Bridge. The power plant is a close Chinese copy of the famous Cunningham Chryslers, developed for LeMans. Rather rough on the idle side, these wheel-twirlers quickly smooth out under way. During the Daytona Beach Speed Trials the 300's were an immediate sensation when one whizzed south at over 130 mph and then came back fast enough to average 127.580. Right behind the winning car was another 300 driven by Brewster Shaw, the defending champion, who was just a mile per hour off this pace. In the acceleration trials, one mile from a standing start, these cars with their overlap cams didn't fare too well; the winning Flying Mile 300 ended up in fifth place and four miles per hour off the

top time—behind the winning Cadillac, two Chevrolets and a Buick Century.

This hairy-chested Chrysler offering is a composite of several things. Body and style-wise it is a blend of the Chrysler Windsor and Imperial, lushly appointed with powder puff leather upholstery. It is a big, comfortable car when parked, hitting the scales at better than 4,400 pounds, and seems comfortable to me when under way.

This is definitely not the car for Henrietta Blushbottom, your maiden schoolmarm aunt, to use for hustling up popsicles for the kiddies. In fact, the 300 is not a car for the typical puddling male to use. This is a hard-boiled magnificent piece of semi-competition transportation, built for the real automotive connoisseur. This car can cruise across the Texas plains at 110 mph through the life span of a century plant—and I don't mean Buick Century.

The one I tested was the Flying Mile winner, driven by Warren Koechling. There were no power steering or other suburban gimcracks on this barge. But, and I bow my head as I say it, power steering would have made it more pleasant to drive. Though the tires were at competition pressure of 55 lbs., when I took it over the highways it was not easy to steer, muscle-wise, and the ratio was too slow. With power steering and its lower ratio, you'd have less wheel-winding to effect the same directional change and you wouldn't need that extra vitamin pill to do it.

The suspension, when hitting road bumps or in rounding turns, was as severe as a New Hampshire winter, which is the way I personally like it, but I realize that a compromise would have more popular appeal. On the beach I made a number of hard cuts and full, fast 360-degree turns and found that there just wasn't the slightest bit of "plop" in this rig. It was as solid as Grant's Tomb and 130 times as fast.



Making hard, full 360-degree turns, Tom found this baby solid as Grant's Tomb.

When the Chrysler boys tossed this one together, their first thoughts were of building a prestige car that would fully utilize the potential of the great Chrysler V-8 engine. They are frank to state that they didn't contemplate too much interest in this glandular wildcat and so were amazed when they received over a thousand orders within three days after its press introduction and two months before any would be available. The 300 can now be ordered with everything from a golf ball polisher to a sable softener—but no air conditioning. As they tell me, with that big mouthful of carburetors (two four-barrel jobs, meaning one barrel per cylinder) there just wasn't enough room left under the hood for front end conditioning equipment and the trunk had to be kept free for your collection of speeding tickets. In fact, as one Chrysler man said to me, "Oh hell, how can you get hot with a 130 mph breeze in your face?"

All other accessories such as heater, radio, electric windows and musical cigar lighters are available, including the power brakes which are very much needed to rustle down 2 1/4 tons at high speed. In addition to the admitted prestige value they were after with this car, and believe me they have that, I can't help feeling that Chrysler has its eyes focused on Mexico next November. If enough of these cars are sold before the big tamale starts to unwind, these cars will be eligible for the big jumping bean pay-off. Chrysler, like many other

manufacturers, has not enjoyed looking into the Lincoln's tailpipes three years in a row in this greatest race of the Americas. Regardless of what you may have read in other publications, Chrysler cars have made serious efforts to win this hassle before but have finished carrying the empty water bucket every time.

The 300's should be the cars to beat south of the border next fall but this may not be possible, for several reasons. Though they can do a 0-60 in 9.8-10 seconds flat, so can some other cars including the Chevy. The Chrysler's 4,400 pounds-plus being whipped around and up mountain bends is not nearly as happy a thought as doing the same thing with a car that weighs much less. A Buick Century, highly tuned by the factory, might easily give the Chryslers an extremely bad time, just like the one that led them home in the Daytona Beach 160-mile Road and Beach Race (only to be disqualified for an unauthorized pushrod alteration). These Chryslers reached the 130-mile-an-hour mark on the downwind run only after unraveling at full bore for 2 1/4 miles. In a race such as the Mexican deal, such open throttle performance will only pay off during the last two days when the cars get on the open plains. Until they reach the plains, the car that can wind up the quickest—and stop, twist and turn like an eel—will have it all its own way.

This is a big automobile, on 126 inches of wheelbase, with an overall length of 219 inches and 79 inches wide. The height is 59 inches. It has a tapered tread from 60.2 in the front to 59.6 in the rear. The suspension in front is by high-rate heavy steel coil springs backed by heavy-duty shock absorbers mounted within the coils, plus four rubber limit bumpers; and rubber bushed torsion rod stabilizers. In the rear are semi-elliptic springs with straddle-mounted heavy-duty shocks. To hand-rock one of these cars when parked is similar to playing ping-pong with an anvil.

Getting back to performance—the acceleration time for 0-30 in 4 seconds flat; 0-50 in 7.2; and 0-60 in 9.8-10 is great but a long way from fantastic. After all, this engine is no larger than the original 180-horsepower, 331-cubic inch engine introduced back in 1951, so the power additions such as the hot cam and extreme carburetion only start to pay off once the car gets more than half unbound. It hits 90 mph in 16.9 seconds and over 120 in about a mile and a quarter. With a manual three-speed transmission and a guy who knew how to paddle it, only shifting in the high rpm areas where the power was approaching 300 hp, I feel sure that these cars could have taken the other American stock cars in the one mile acceleration runs.

In summing up, I was greatly impressed by the 300 as a car for the sports car-minded man who wants the sureness of sports car suspension and the pride of owning the fastest full-size sedan in this or any other country. I wouldn't recommend this car for Henpecked Oscar and his seven kids to use touring the suburbs with an occasional trip to the seashore. This is a rig for the Highway Thyroids to travel 700 to 900 miles a day; for those who don't give a damn if Little Nellie gets a saddle-tough alma mater when they breeze over rough roads at 100. I personally like this sedan for my kind of use. I like a car that stays on its feet under the hardest conditions and with enough guts to fell a mastadon with one blow. I also realize that the guy who buys this for his one-and-only family hack has rocks in his head. It's too masculine for a pet. •

SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL TESTED:

Chrysler 300 Hardtop Coupe (with PowerFlite transmission)

ENGINE:

V-8; overhead laterally-inclined valves; bore 3.81 inches, stroke 3.63 inches; brake horsepower 300 @ 5200 rpm; compression ratio 8.5 to 1; piston displacement 331.1 cubic inches

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase 126 inches; overall length 218.8 inches; tread 60.2 inches front, 59.6 rear; width 79.1 inches; height 59.1 inches; weight 4,400 pounds; standard tire size 8.00x15; gas tank 20 gals

PERFORMANCE:

0 to 30 mph, 4.0 seconds
0 to 50 mph, 7.2 seconds
0 to 60 mph, 9.8-10 seconds
0 to 90 mph, 16.9 seconds
Top speed, 130 mph

PRICE:

\$4055.25 FOB Detroit. Add \$294.40 for power steering, heater and radio