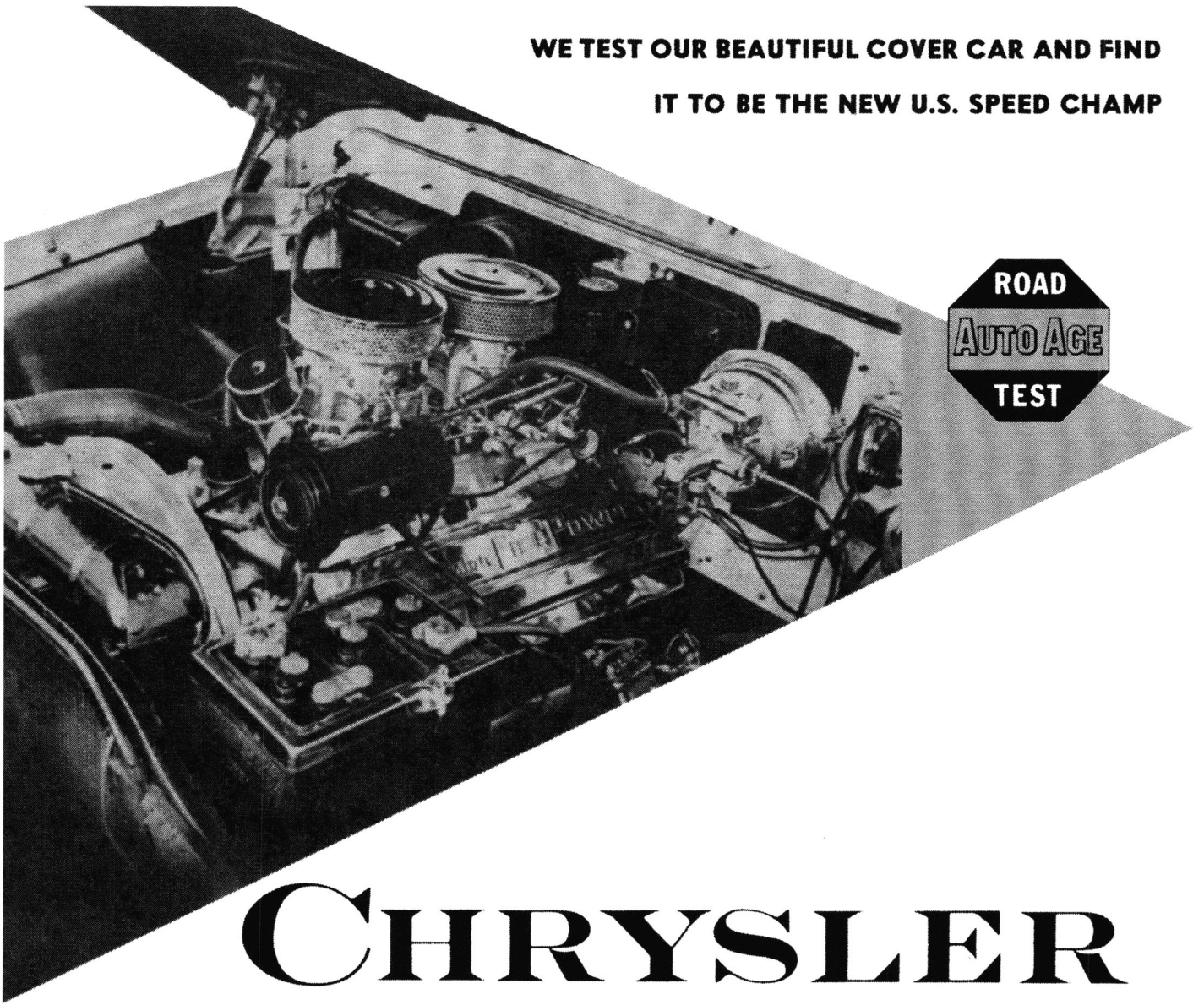


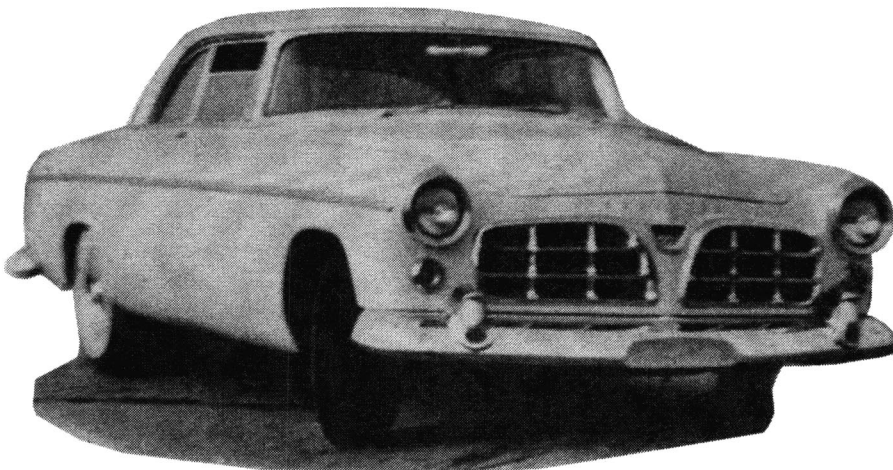
WE TEST OUR BEAUTIFUL COVER CAR AND FIND
IT TO BE THE NEW U.S. SPEED CHAMP



CHRYSLER

“300”

*—Is it the 1955
CUNNINGHAM?*



AN AUTO AGE STAFF REPORT

IF YOU HAD TRIED to tell the average car owner five years ago that there would be a production-line automobile by 1955 with a 300-hp engine, he would probably have laughed right in your face. That kind of stuff was fine on the racetrack, but on a passenger car?—Never.

On the other hand, if you had told the same story to the average hot-rod fan or sports-car follower, you might well have gotten a very blunt "so what?" Auto enthusiasts have known for a long time that it was not only possible but quite practical to squeeze 300 hp or more out of a modern American high-compression engine.

etc. Finally, with the aid of Chrysler's engineering department, Cunningham came up with a number of racing power plants that would produce 325 hp at 5,800 rpm and still retain all of the reliability of the stock engines with the exception of the ability to idle smoothly. Matching these engines with foreign-made transmissions and superb road-racing chassis, he proceeded to sweep the sports-car world, winning virtually every major race in this country and coming very close to beating the Europeans on their own home grounds, at Le Mans, in France.

Meanwhile, on the American passenger-car scene, horsepower figures climbed higher and higher and com-

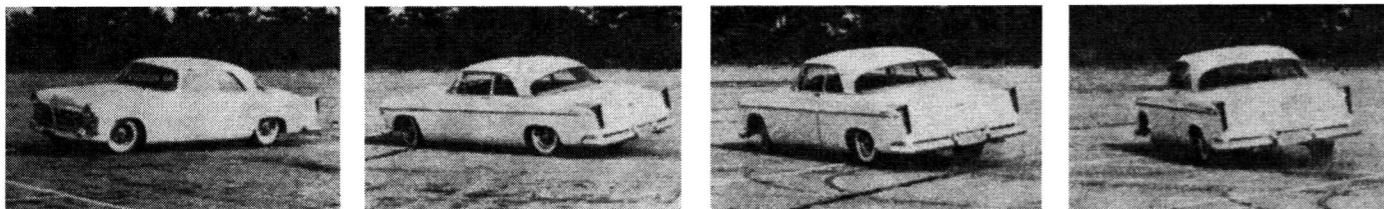
Some time later we got an okay and made arrangements for the test. Our whole staff was excited about this one. It looked like a world beater.

We didn't have to wait long to find out. The next morning, armed with pencils, pads, slide rules, stop-watches and various other pieces of testing equipment, we arrived at the Chrysler Divisional headquarters in New York City. The snarling, white monster was rolled out, we dumped all our gear into the huge trunk, climbed aboard, and were off in a cloud of rubber dust.

It was a bitter cold day, but dry, and the wind was brisk. We had put 30 pounds of air in the tires, which

off the bat. To begin with, the acceleration times were exactly the same running in "drive" range and in "low." The other surprise was not what you would expect; we were a bit disappointed with the times we got to 30. They averaged out to 3.9 seconds, which is fast, all right, but not much better than several other stock sedans we had tested earlier.

Undaunted, we tried the acceleration from zero to 60 mph. Our first run produced the sparkling time of 10.5 seconds, with the car really taking off at about 40 mph after what seemed like an excessive amount of slipping at the start. Then we did some experimenting, using



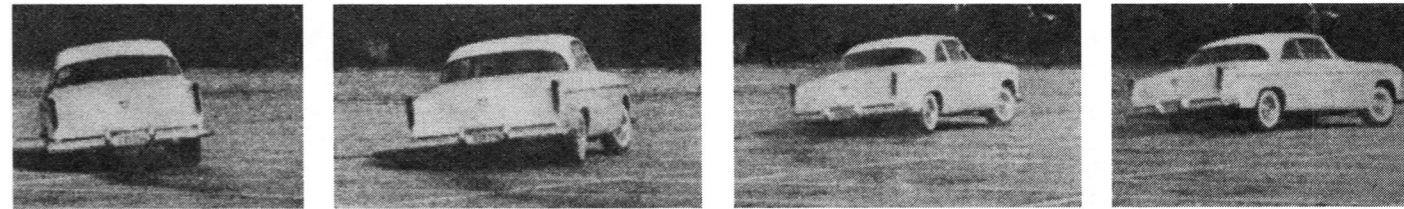
In a dramatic test of the Chrysler's superior stability and handling characteristics, one of our test drivers raced it across an open field at 55 mph and suddenly cut the wheel hard to the right, heading back the other way. The car leaned, but stayed in full control.

Chrysler Corporation knew it, too. When they first built their Fire Power V-8, they purposely had it detuned down below 200 hp so that they would have plenty of flexibility and room for improvement to keep pace with the rest of the industry without too much additional expense. But the speed boys were quick to see the tremendous potential of this new engine and one of them—a millionaire racing enthusiast named Briggs S. Cunningham—decided to make it the basis for his own new American sports car.

So Cunningham purchased a batch of engines from Chrysler and started playing around with them, experimenting in his own Palm Beach factory with all sorts of special camshafts, valve gears, pistons, compression ratios,

petition got tougher. Chrysler Corp. had a disastrous year in 1954, losing many millions of dollars, so in the beginning of this year they came out with an entirely new line of cars, the design for which are called the "Forward Look." Sales began to climb back up again, but they had a secret weapon up their sleeve. They sprung it in the middle of January. It was called the Chrysler 300.

We had heard rumors about such a car and when we heard that we were at last going to get a look at it, we got really interested. It is a real thrill to get a preview of a car that you know may well set a whole new standard for the industry. And we weren't disappointed in the least. In fact, we were so enthusiastic when we first saw the car that we put in a request on the spot to drive it.



made the car steer a bit easier, but since it is not equipped with power steering, it turned out to be a bit more difficult to handle in heavy traffic than, say, a stock Chrysler sedan. On the other hand, it had a lot more "feel," a reassuring thing in a really fast automobile.

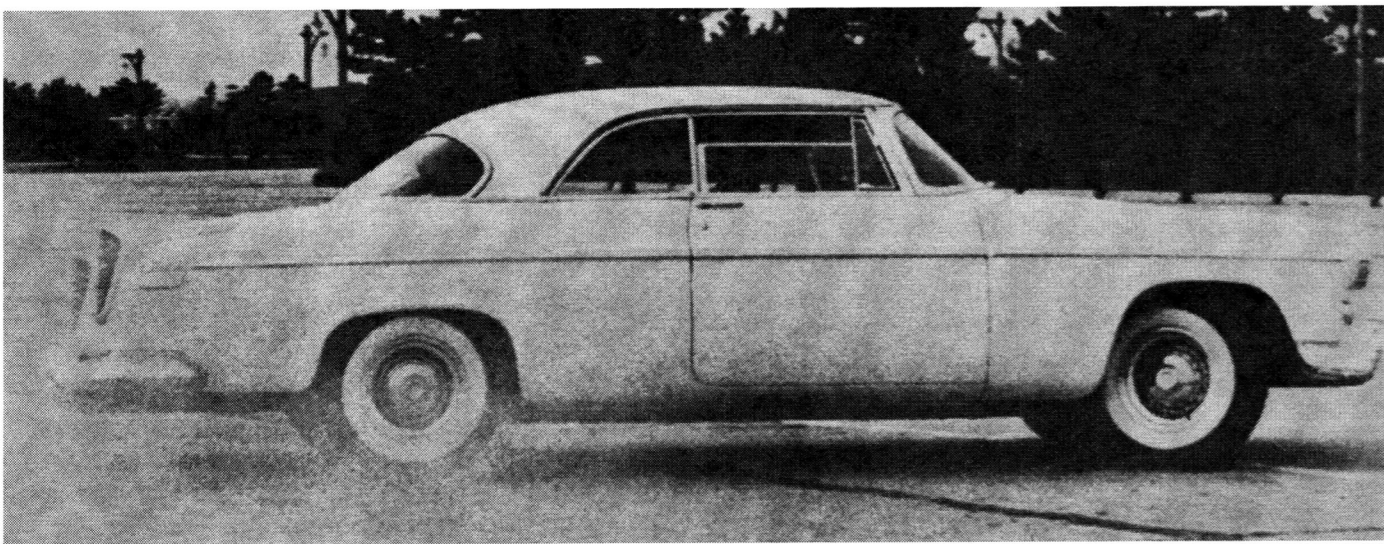
By the time we got to our testing grounds, we had each had a turn at the wheel and were getting to feel pretty much at home in the car. We had had a tough time holding it down to legal speed on the highway—not because of lack of control but because of enthusiasm—and we were anxious to see what it would do.

So we started right off with the acceleration tests. Taking them in sequences, we made half a dozen runs from zero to 30 mph. This produced two surprises right

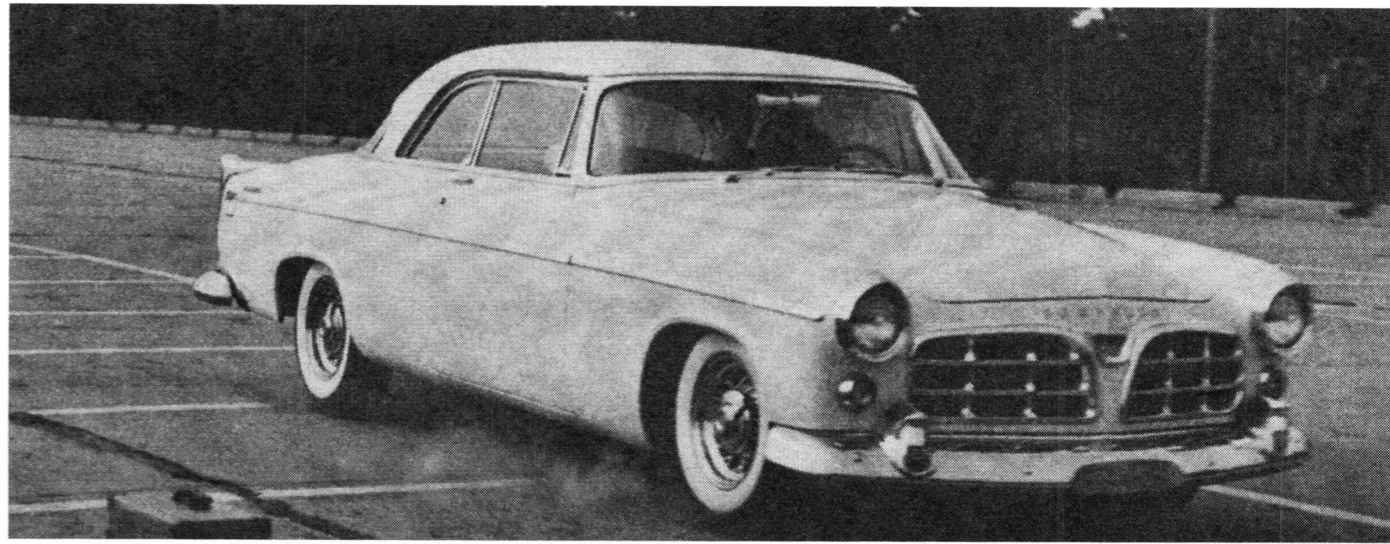
combinations of low and drive, and came up with a fantastic paradox. Our best acceleration times from zero to 60 were reached by starting out in drive range and shifting into *low* at 40 mph! With that strange method, our times to 60 mph averaged out to a neat 9.5 seconds which, by the way, is faster even than the Ford Thunderbird. We hit zero to 75 mph in 15 seconds on the nose!

Next we tried the 300 out for highway acceleration, with some rocket-like results. Above 50 mph this car accelerates so quickly—and yet so smoothly—that you reach 90, or 100 mph before you expect to reach 75. Zooming from 30 to 60 mph took just 5.8 seconds and from 60 to 75 mph we clocked 6 seconds flat. Not bad at all for a six-passenger car. We honestly didn't have

Held in a tight circle, with the wheel cut hard to the right or left, the 300 can be driven at 25 mph before the rear end breaks loose.



Car's stiffer suspension reduces tendency to dip during hard braking because of weight transfer. It is almost impossible to fade brakes.

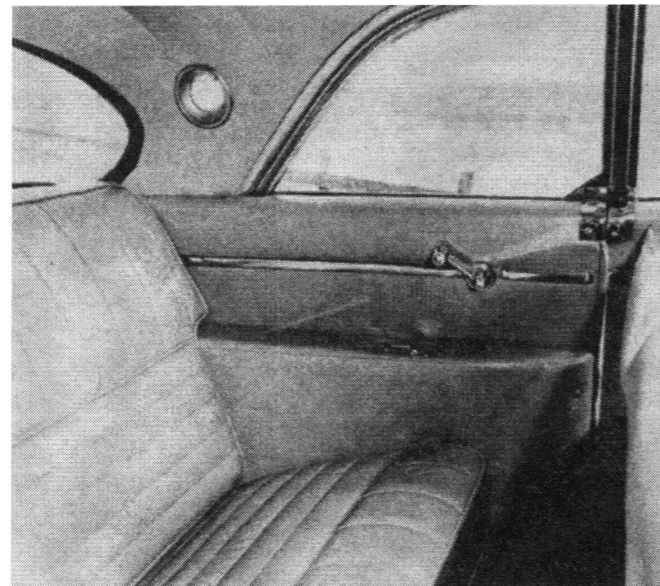


the space to wind the car out to top speed, but it was still accelerating fiercely at 110 mph on the clock and we feel that it is good for an honest 125 to 130 mph. After all, this car employs a full-race camshaft and racing-valve gear exactly like those Cunningham used in his competition cars. The 300, by the way, does idle a bit rough, but not enough to bother you unless the carburetors (there are two of them—four throated) are turned down too low, in which case it will keep stalling. We ran into that trouble but corrected it before running off any of our tests.

By the time we had completed our timed acceleration runs, it was time for lunch, so we took a break, taking the time also to get our notes in better shape.

Half an hour later we were right back with the car, rarin' to go again. The sun had come out so our photographer grabbed his camera and started to snap away. Meanwhile, we turned our attention to suspension and general handling.

Right off, the first impression of this car is that it is more a part of the road than the usual big sedan. The ride is firmer, but could never be called harsh, and the steering has a positive feel even though it is, as we said, somewhat heavy at low speeds. Out in a big open lot, paved with cement, we tried some spins and hard drifts. The car hung on beautifully but in this area we have one serious criticism. The car corners much better than you do, especially in left-hand turns. This is because the bench-type front seat is upholstered in real leather—very beautiful and long wearing—but it is much too slippery.



Interior is nicely finished in natural cowhide. This is both beautiful and long-wearing, but it is quite slippery on the front seat.

Bucket seats would solve the problem fine, but they would cut down on the seating capacity of the car and might unsell it to many people. Still, something should be done, because on any sort of a hard turn the driver finds himself slipping away from the steering wheel, battling desperately to stay on the seat at all. The only thing he can do is hang onto the wheel for dear life, and this certainly doesn't help steering control any.

Here's a feature you're not apt to see in another sports-type car. The trunk compartment is enormous—will carry luggage for six.



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: V-8, overhead valves; bore, 3.81 in.; stroke, 3.63 in.; total displacement, 331.1 cu. in.; developed hp, 300 at 5,200 rpm; full-race camshaft; special cast-iron tappets with adjustment on valve rocker arm; aluminum alloy pistons; cast iron cylinder head; compression ratio, 8.5 to 1; two down-draft four-barrel carburetors; mechanical fuel pump; integral automatic chokes; crankcase capacity, 5 qts.; radiator capacity, 25 qts.; 6-volt ignition.

TRANSMISSION: PowerFlite is standard equipment on all models. There is no manual transmission available.

REAR AXLE RATIOS: 3.54 or 3.36.

SUSPENSION: front, independent, with special heavy coil springs and heavy-duty shock absorbers; rear, semi-elliptic leaf springs, high rated, with straddle-mounted heavy-duty shock absorbers.

BRAKES: four-wheel hydraulic. Power brakes are standard equipment.

DIMENSIONS: wheelbase, 126 in.; tread (front and rear), 62.2 and 59.6 in.; width, 79.1 in.; height, 59.1 in.; over-all length, 218.8 in.; weight (approx.), 4,200 lbs.; tires, wheels, four-ply 8.00 x 15 tubeless, with bolt-on chrome wire wheels as standard equipment.

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION:

Zero to 30 mph: 3.9 seconds
Zero to 60 mph: 9.5 seconds
Zero to 75 mph: 15.0 seconds
30 to 60 mph: 5.8 seconds
60 to 75 mph: 6.0 seconds

TOP SPEED:

125 mph plus.

"300" What we would suggest would be a wide armrest in the front seat that could be pulled down to pin the driver and one other passenger into their seats, keeping them from sliding. With three people in the front seat, this sliding would be less of a problem anyway.

We did the best we could, in spite of the slippery seat, to shake the car loose but it proved to be extremely stable. Held in a tight circle, with the wheel cut all the way to the right or left, it can be driven around at 25 mph before the rear end starts to break loose into a slide, and even when it does break loose, the slide can be controlled. The steering wheel goes $5\frac{3}{4}$ turns from lock to lock—actually too slow for really accurate correction at speed in tight corners, but if the ratios were quickened up at all, power steering would be a must for parking, etc., and the car would lose much of its personality. As it is, it is a fine road machine, suitable not for racing but for high speed touring.

As far as the suspension itself is concerned, the car is a shade lower in height (just under five feet) than a stock Chrysler hardtop but the spring rates are higher and the car is a lot more stable. One of our drivers proved this when he roared across the lot at 55 mph, then cut the wheel hard to the right and headed back the other way.

The 300 leaned all right, but it showed no traces whatsoever of wanting either to spin or to turn over. All it did was to go into a nice, controlled drift—a novel but pleasant sensation in a big American car. The driver came back grinning from ear to ear.

Our next big question was, "How are the brakes?" The answer is, "Great." U.S. passenger-car brakes have been getting better all the time anyway, and with a stiffer suspension to reduce the car's tendency to dip during hard braking, they are really first-rate. We tried for over half an hour to get the Chrysler's brakes to fade and they wouldn't, even though the tires and brake linings were smoking in the 20-degree cold. And every one of the stops was made under complete control, with no skidding or side slipping at all. Many stops were made with hands off the wheel entirely, with the same results. We were all quite pleased.

Thus, our mechanical tests completed, we turned our attention to detail. Opening the massive hood (which has no ornament) we were greeted with enough gleaming chrome and other brightly colored goodies to buy Manhattan from the natives all over again. Even the dipstick is chromed, along with almost

every other metal part you can think of. This certainly *looks* like a 300-hp engine all right. It would put many hot rods to shame. We weren't at all surprised, therefore, when the car ran in the Daytona speed trials a short time after our test and beat all comers by more than 5 mph, averaging 127.580 mph for the flying mile, then went on to dominate the big 100-mile stock-car race on the last day.

Viewed from a distance or close up, this car has a quality, "custom" feel. And it should, because it is. Chrysler's original plans are to make around 1,000 of these cars, then more as the orders come in. We personally think they will go way over their first estimate; this is the hottest car in America and could be one of the best sellers if merchandised properly. We hope Chrysler gets swamped with orders for the 300. The industry has for too long lacked a sports-type passenger car like this. At this writing, their plan is to sell the car for "around \$5,000." For what it is, and compared to other cars in its class, this is a wonderful buy. Whether or not you are the type who buys cars by the horsepower, you've found your champion. You might even call it the 1955 Cunningham. ●



DAYTONA BEACH. Chrysler Corporation cars sweep first and second places in National Stock car races. Chrysler "300" (top picture) breaks record in "Flying Mile" (127.58 mph) and 160-mile Grand National (92.05 mph). De Soto (below) speeds to first place over all cars in its displacement class (112.29 mph).

This, Too, Is THE FORWARD LOOK

Another part of THE FORWARD LOOK at Chrysler Corporation is the finest engines America has yet produced. Of America's passenger-car manufacturers, only Chrysler Corporation harnesses the extra power and efficiency of the hemispherical combustion chamber used in modern airliner engines. It is not surprising that these V-8 engines break speed and endurance records.

Since the marks shown above were set, 17 more first place wins have been chalked up, plus the dra-

matic victory at the gruelling Mexican Road Race in which Dodge swept the first four places over 37 other cars in its class! All told, Chrysler Corporation cars have rolled up enough firsts at tracks across the nation to completely dominate both NASCAR and AAA-sanctioned stock car racing events.

This exceptional performance is another reason for the public's great acceptance of the beautiful cars of THE FORWARD LOOK.