

editorial opinion

A car by any other name
often is the same cat

I've got a beef to take up with the motor car moguls.

It came to mind the other day when I was thumbing through the pile of press releases and photographs of the "new" 1978 models being introduced. Gazing at the pictures, I became uncomfortably aware that a number of the car models looked nearly identical.

Now this is nothing new. The big guys, General Motors, started this trend a number of years ago by designing one style car to fit into a number of model lines. Apparently, it was so successful that Ford and Chrysler have picked up the idea and are going great guns.

A Crackerbarrel investigation revealed that the rationale from the lofty heights of automobilism is that the practice saves the consumer lots of money. Of course we know who really saves money, or should I say makes money out of the deal.

But what the heck, let Ford, Murphy and the gang make the big bucks, but for crying out loud, a national protect should go out from sea to shining sea for a show of imagination from the auto designers.

MAYBE my perspective has been ruined from growing up in the 50s when every car looked different. Now, I'll have to admit, I'm easy to please. I don't care if the chassis are the same, or the engines or all the rest of the gunk that's under the hood.

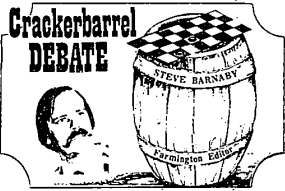
Since we've all got to pay such outrageous prices for cars, anyway, why can't the auto companies soothe our egos by at least making those roaring hanks of metal look different?

I mean how can a working stiff feel any good when he knows that everybody else knows his Buick is just a Chevy in disguise? Actually, I'm surprised that the auto company execs who yell about the glories of the free enterprise system and individualism would produce cars which only serve to promote the spirit of collectivism.

Of course, when you think of it, the auto companies really haven't done much in their collective wisdom with the internal combustion machine, either.

Since it's invention, lo so many years ago, all the corporate brains have ever been able to do is build bigger and more powerful gas guzzlers. Those same collective minds have yet to invent any other kind of engine.

A FEW EXAMPLES will demonstrate what I



mean about the unimaginative spirit that has hit the auto folks.

Just take the autos pictured on this page. One of them is the 1978 Oldsmobile Cutlass Salon Brougham Sedan (fancy name, anyway). The other is the 1978 Buick Four-Door Century Sedan (not such a fancy name).

Now come on guys, who do you think you're kidding?

Of course there are numerous other examples of this corporate mundaneness.

Ford Motor has the basic Granada. Fine car, it looks like a Ford. Then there is the Mercury Monarch. Fine car, it looks like a Ford—Granada, that is.

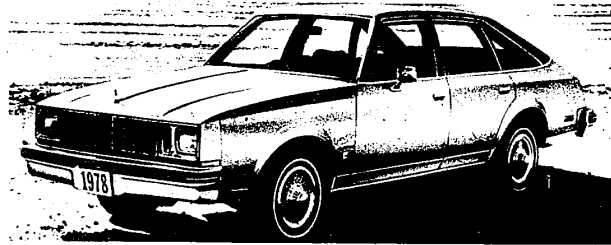
A friend of mine who has something to do with design at Ford says this is done because that while some folks swear by Ford, others wouldn't have anything but a Mercury.

My favorite example is the Oldsmobile Starfire which by any other name could be called the Pontiac Astra, the Buick Skyhawk or the Chevy Monza fastback.

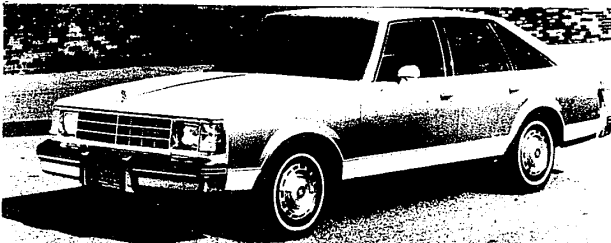
Makes you sick doesn't it to think your paying for a Buick but really driving a Chevy? Actually, it does not matter to me whether I drive a Chevy or a Buick but some folks live just to be able to buy a car identified with a name.

The folks who really are the suckers are those driving around in a Cadillac. Cadillacs, as we all know, are supposed to be the supreme of the cream. They never even become used cars—just "previously owned."

If you really want to feel bad go dig out a picture of the old Studebaker Hawk of the 1950s. Looks an awful lot like the Cadillac Seville.



You may think you're looking at the same automobiles. But, in reality, the car at the top is a Oldsmobile Cutlass Salon Brougham Sedan and the auto below is the Buick Century Sedan.



tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

A wall around dissension

I was shuffling down Farmington Road the other day, indulging in some window shopping when I noticed my friend Bristow bopping down the street whistling. "Smoke Gets in My Eyes."

He looked as if he were in a fantastic mood. Suspiciously, I detained him in an attempt to find out what happened to make him fall in love with that little spot of the world.

"What's up," I asked. "Oh, the sky, the sun, the clouds," he answered in his usual taciturn tone as a limp cigarette hung on for dear life to one corner of his mouth.

After a few more attempts at sophisticated humor, he finally confessed a part of the secret of the universe, said that he had at long last obtained some relief from one of the banes of his existence, Snyderly, a crusading non-smoker.

"Now just a moment," I began. "Don't knock non-smokers. I'm a non-smoker. I'm even a contributor to the American Cancer Society."

"YEAH, but you're not Snyderly," he answered. "Snyderly's such a determined crusader, he thinks that rudeness is a virtue. He thinks nothing of snatching cigarettes out of your hand, throwing them on the ground and stomping on them."

"That would make it difficult to work with him," I agreed.

"Work with him? That's what he does in restaurants when he's trying to be polite," Bristow answered. "You

should see him when he's around people he knows."

"One day he burned incense all afternoon as a protest against the boss' 65-inch-long dime cigars," my friend continued.

"You mean your boss smokes smelly cigars?" I said, wrinkling my nose and switching my allegiance to Snyderly.

"He thinks they make him look like his hero, Theodore Roosevelt. At any rate, that little gambit almost cost Snyderly his job. Not because the boss took personal offense. Snyderly dropped the matches he used to light the incense into a wastebasket filled with old newspapers and plastic bags from the cleaners. Well, I can't begin to tell you what an odor pervaded the place. Snyderly's match combined with the collection of refuse," my friend said.

"WE HAD TO EVACUATE the office," he said after a dramatic pause.

"We didn't catch it right away because it was in Snyderly's basket and he kept on complaining about the smell by yelling 'pollution, pollution,' at the top of his lungs. He usually does that whenever someone lights up, so we took no notice. Then, he started coughing, we ignored him, because he usually does that about once every half hour when the boss lights up one of his cheap cigars."

"How did you notice the fire?" I asked, in wonderment.

"The boss started coughing and pointing toward Snyderly. Even then,

we thought that he had finally learned his lesson about those cheap smokes and was trying to give Snyderly some credit. Then we noticed the smoke billowing out of the waste basket and decided to make a run for it."

"What happened next?" I said, fascinated.

"Well, suffice to say the fire department managed to save the office but it'll take the company a few weeks at best to repair the water damage. Besides, the insurance company is hinting rather darkly about the possibility of arson," he said, taking the cigarette out of his mouth and waving it in small arcs to emphasize his point.

"But why are you happy, then. Was Snyderly fired?" I persisted.

"NO, BUT in anticipation of a new state law that would require a non-smoking section in each office, the company is erecting a fire proof wall around his desk," Bristow said.

"Here's a sketch of it." I looked at the small, square building that would hide the rebel's working area. It even had its own door.

"Of course, you'll notice the decoration on the door," Bristow pointed out with pride. "It's my idea."

I looked at the detail that had eluded me and finally noticed a small half moon etched into the doorway of the mini-office.

"I rather like it," Bristow said with a half grin that was too self-conscious to be a smile. "I think I might enter that design in a contest."

Daniels Den

By EMORY DANIELS

Gospel, Ethel Waters, and Dad

The news last week of Ethel Waters' death brought back memories of my youth—a 5-year-old boy, fidgeting in a church pew on a Sunday night.

Miss Waters' obituary included these lines from her favorite hymn: "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me."

Twenty-eight years ago those words filled the echoing chambers of a small basement church in Saginaw. It wasn't Ethel Waters singing behind the pulpit, but it still is a very special memory for me because it's my first recollection of Dad singing in public.

DAD WAS BORN on a farm near Prescott where he attended school through the eighth grade, passing over an agricultural scholarship to MSU because Grandma needed him to help in the fields.

Like many young men of his generation, Dad grew restless about the prospect of remaining "down on the farm," and joined the CCC. He ended up pulling forestry duty in the UP for FPR, he then moved to Saginaw to live with his aunt, got a job in a tool shop, married, and was drafted. Some time after military service, Dad settled on truck driving as a career.

I suspect it was in the early years of his marriage, though, that Dad was talked into singing in church. And I'm sure a major reason was that my mother's father was a minister. Dad sang tenor and sang by "ew" because he couldn't read musical notes.

Often, on either Sunday morning or evening, he'd be asked to sing a solo in church. While listening, I suddenly became aware that "Dad had a special talent—that a lot of people appreciated his singing and considered him pretty good."

DAD'S REPERTOIRE included the standard church hymns and never-high-spirited numbers such as "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." In fact, Dad did best on the "newer" hymns.

As a young boy, I somehow got the notion that dad was the only person who sang these "newer" hymns because I recall thinking Miss Waters borrowed the song from my Dad when I first heard her sing it.

One of Dad's favorite hymns was "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me." Another was "How Great Thou Art." On occasion, when Dad chose the latter hymn, he would sing all seven verses. That hymn actually is the Swedish national anthem and Dad had obtained a score with all the verses on it, including three which many people have never heard.

After a few years of hearing his solos in church, some friends finally persuaded Dad to cut a record. So he went to a recording studio in Michigan along with cousin Marjorie, who was an accomplished organist.

His mother and dad had died of cancer a couple of years earlier, and so for one side he selected "Precious Memories, How Thy Linen..." On the other, he sang a favorite—"Pilot Me."

AFTER THE RECORD was cut, Dad returned to the practice of singing in church whenever asked.

He also sang in the family automobile when we were on long trips, or when driving a truck on a long haul.

I've always imagined that Dad was singing one of his favorite numbers when he was putting into Lansing to drop off a load before steering his rig toward home. But the truck never turned east. A motorist going the wrong way on a one-way street drove in front of him; Dad whipped the wheels to the right to miss the car, which came in front of him out of nowhere. The truck jack-knifed, and ended up smashed against the corner of a brick building.

I was a sophomore at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant and had just returned to my dorm when Uncle Merle met me with the news Dad had been killed, and I should pack a small bag and go back with him for the funeral. As we drove back together in silence, I recalled the vision and sounds of Dad lifting his voice to that spirited hymn: "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me." That was one of my precious memories—one I relived again last week.



"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein

Grandmother's life is OK

I have just relinquished my temporary role of working grandmother. Five days and \$200 later, our five-year-old grandson, Dylan, has returned home to his mother and I have lost my child-sitting job.

Never again will I criticize Dylan's mom for complaining about having to take care of her son, work eight hours a day, cook, do the laundry and clean the house. I now realize it ain't easy. Speaking of cleaning the house, if I walk with a slight limp it's from tripping over Dylan's flying saucer, kite, plastic toys, Fonzle doll and two dozen assorted toy cars and trucks, all of which are included in the \$200 I spent.

If I kept a diary, this would be a recap of Dylan's five day visit at our house while his mother was on vacation. Saturday, Aug. 27, I took Dylan to our subdivision swimming pool where I sat with all the young mothers hoping they'd think I was one of them.

But my make-believe world was soon shattered when Dylan yelled, "Grandma, I want some ice cream." That kid is so hot, but he never learned to call me "mommy" despite my instructions. Anyway, the ice cream cost me \$2 because Dylan suddenly developed a ravenous appetite and devoured two hot dogs, a coke, an orange pushup and corn twists.

I FINALLY dragged the little merman out of the water and took him home to unwrinkle. Although I had cooked two chickens, which is a real

event, Dylan would settle for nothing but a burger chef. After dinner, we had to pick up a baby sitter and pay her \$5 for watching Dylan while we went out. That's also included in the \$200.

Sunday, Aug. 28 was more of the same. It wasn't until Monday, Aug. 29 that I became a full-fledged working grandma. I had to wake Dylan at 8 a.m., dress him, give him a bowl of super sugar snaps and chocolate milk which he dawdled over for 45 minutes, and whisk him off to nursery school before I went to work.

Being disorganized, as are most "Brenda Starrs" of the journalism world, my house looked like the pits and I had nothing for dinner because the dog ate the two chickens I had left on the stove.

Anyway, after eight hours of slaving over my hot IBM typewriter, I dashed to nursery school to pick up Dylan, who was depressed and seemed to have a high temperature. He missed his mother and was suffering the effects of spending 12 hours under water in the kiddie pool over the weekend before I went to work.

After two sips of chicken noodle soup (Jewish penicillin), homemade by Campbell, Dylan dropped off to sleep on the chair watching the 6 p.m. news. He is, after all, a discriminating child.

I CARRIED the little angel up to bed, and my back went out of whack. Like I always say, only young couples should have children.

I pushed two baby aspirin into Dylan's mouth and he chewed them without waking up. But grandma and grandpa didn't sleep a wink that night and took turns feeling Dylan's head to see if he had a fever. We haven't had a thermometer in the house since our 18-year-old daughter broke the last one when she was three.

Tuesday, Aug. 30, Dylan woke up feeling fine. I was so exhausted I forgot to dress him, and he was the only kid in nursery school wearing Spider Man pajamas.

Dylan and I took Wednesday, Aug. 31, off. That's the day I spent most of the \$200 on his school clothes, school shoes, gym shoes and winter boots. When I later took him to the pool, he was the only kid wearing snow boots with a bathing suit. He refused to take those boots off, and you know how grandmas are suckers for their offspring's offerings.

My daughter came home late Wednesday and had to take two trips back and forth to her house to transport Dylan, his clothes, shoes, boots, toys, 20 packages of bubble gum (sugarless) and four pounds of cookies (expensive).

Was Dylan thrilled to see his mother? If he was, it was only lasted until she told him it was time for bed at 7 p.m. "I had a good time before you came back," Dylan sobbed. "Grandma treats me better."

Would I be a working grandmother again? You bet I would.

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