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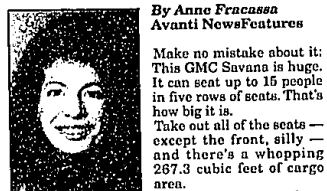
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AUTOMOTIVE

SUNDAY, JULY 27, 1997 • PAGE 7 SECTION J

Powerful GMC Savana is a man's van



By Anno Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

Make no mistake about it: This GMC Savana is huge. It can seat up to 15 people in five rows of seats. That's how big it is. Take out all of the seats — except the front, silly — and there's a whopping 267.3 cubic feet of cargo area. I'd almost bet an Eagle Talon would fit inside nicely, thank you very much. And you'd also bet this van would be clunky, underpowered, clip a lot of corners (especially if you just traded it for a sports car, be hard to handle and just suck up your gas. Well, it does that. Its EPA rating is a menial 14 mpg city, 18 mpg highway. But that's still not bad for a van this big. And it's got a 31-gallon fuel tank, so you won't run out any time soon. And it's surprising how easy it is to handle. This is not Miata-type handling, of course, but I never felt put out by the Savana. It handled city driving and highway driving and handling was superb. This rear-wheel drive Savana gives you a lot of get up and go, even with the Vortec 5000 V8 with 230 horsepower. That's not the standard engine, however. Standard is the Vortec 4300 V6 with 200 horses. I think the extra 30 horses are worth it. But you've got plenty of other choices to make. All of the powertrains come with 4-speed electronic automatics. The choices include a Vortec 5700



The GMC Savana with the Vortec 5000 V-8 starts at \$22,334. And for that price, there's a lot of standard equipment.

V8 (245 horses), Vortec 7400 V8 (with 290 horses) and the gotta-have-it 6.5-liter Turbo-Diesel V8 with 180 horsepower. By the way, the 4300 to 7400 designation is the liter size of the engine — 4.3 liter, 7.4 liter, etc. Didn't want to be called stupid for not pointing that out. The Savana, of course, has a high step-in — something you really don't want to wear a short skirt in. Especially you guys with short skirts. All kidding aside, this is definitely a man's vehicle. Unless you've got a ton of kids or drive a tour-bus or use it as a conversion van. Hmmm. GMC sure sells a lot of these — about 35,000 a year. I've got a neighbor who has a badly rusting — yet quite durable — 1983 GMC Vandura, the model the Savana replaced this year, and he won't give it up. Joe's an electrician and stores all of his electric things in there. That shocks me because he loves his vehicles so pristine and perfect.

But Joe took a look at the Savana and said, "Nah, I'll keep mine." When he looked at the sticker price, he whistled. This from a guy who just bought a loaded Tahoe. I don't know what a utility Savana would cost, but Joe said it was the same with or without the seats as a shell. For the sake of argument, I told him I believed him. But still, the price isn't really bad. A Savana with the Vortec 5000 V-8 starts at \$22,334. And for that price, there's a lot of standard equipment. And even with an option package that included power everything, air and heat (both front and rear), tinted glass, remote keyless entry and illuminated visors, the cost rose another \$3,162. Add an uplevel stereo and cassette, heavy duty trailering equipment, locking rear differential,

See Savana Truck, Next Page

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