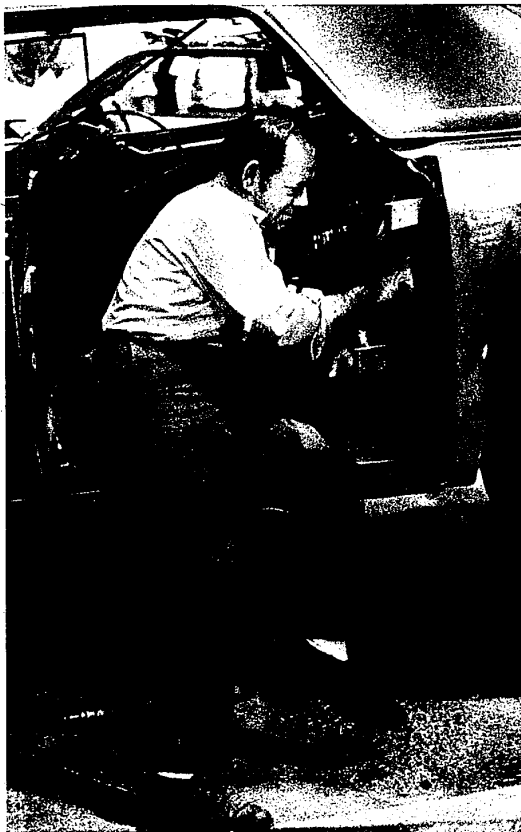




Restoring some quality to life . . .



By CARL STODDARD

Oscar Rancour moves through his large auto restoration shop with obvious zeal.

He points to a classic Packard-Dietrich, sitting dusty and rusty, gutted and stripped. Within weeks that car will look better than new, he says. Every single part will be cleaned or replaced. Even the underside of the car will be immaculate.

"It will be right on the money," Rancour admits.

It is an expression he uses often, and with reason.

SIX YEARS AGO he was restoring a car as a hobby in his garage. Today, Rancour, who lives in Southfield, is president of Classic Auto Restoration, the second largest automobile restoration shop in the nation.

In his 15,000 square foot shop in Farmington are more than 35 antique and classic cars, each in different stages of restoration. On an average, the 25 craftsmen in the shop will complete work on two cars a week.

Rancour credits his success, in part, to the recent trend toward nostalgia. People yearn for the quality of products made earlier in the century, he said. But more importantly, they want to recapture that whole quality of life.

And if it's quality people want, it's quality Rancour gives them—for a price.

TO RESTORE a Model A Ford from a pile of rust and rotting rubber would cost roughly \$7,500.

Restoring a 1955 Ford Thunderbird might cost \$6,500.

The charge for restoring any car will vary, depending on the age, condition and kind of car to be restored.

"I'm trying to build pieces of art, not the ordinary run-of-the-mill cars," he said.

"Most of these cars are Grand Classics, high prestige cars. I get very, very few Model A fans. Very few want their cars restored the way I do it."

THIS IS THE way Rancour does it.

First, the person wishing to have

his car restored must complete a lengthy check list.

This list contains 142 different items, from gravel shields to ball joints to ashtrays. The person notes those items needing to be replaced, repaired, overhauled or repainted.

When the check list is complete, Rancour gives the customer a "ball park figure" of the cost involved.

Then comes a wait of perhaps two months, because orders have backed up and because Rancour makes it a policy to have all the parts in the shop before the car is brought in.

When the car does come into the shop, it will remain there for about 60 to 90 days before the restoration is complete.

Within his shop, Rancour has the facilities and craftsmen necessary to build a car from scratch, if need be.

HE HAS a woodworking shop capable of reproducing wooden parts used in older cars. He has a glass shop that can reproduce windshields, windows and wind vents of virtually any size or shape.

He has a shop where new interiors and convertible tops are made. He also has a shop where new fenders and panels are created out of sheet metal, he refuses to use fiberglass, plastic or synthetic parts.

On his staff, Rancour has black smiths, metalurgists, pattern makers, woodworkers and other skilled tradesmen.

Their services cost the customer a flat rate of \$25 an hour.

THEY'RE ARTISTS in their field," Rancour said.

And, because of the shop's growing reputation, other skilled restorers have come to see Rancour and the operation.

"They come to see the shop, how it's laid out," he said. "We've got everything laid out the way it goes (the process of restoration)."

"It's a restorers dream, the way it's supposed to be."

But the dream is only the beginning. The ultimate goal of his company is to be able to rebuild any and all automobiles.

This, he said, would give people



a choice between buying a new car or restoring the one they have.

According to Rancour, with the growing scarcity of raw materials, the big automotive manufacturers may have to turn to restoration as an alternative to manufacturing.

But by the time the companies realize the necessity of changing to restoration, he said, it will be too late.

"I'll have my setup there long before they can. As I build up my company I'll be hiring the skilled men to do the job before they (the big car producers) can turn around."

HE NOTED THAT raw materials are already getting harder to find. Most new cars, these days, are made from old cars that have been crunched, smashed and melted down. But the steel that is produced is not refined as much as it used to be.

"They don't get all the slag off," he complained. "That's some of the reason why the steel is still on the model A and on a 55 Ford it's all gone."

The shop is located at 22456 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington.