

AUTOMOTIVE

SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 1997 • PAGE 1 SECTION J

Navigator SUV epitomizes Lincoln's good name

CAReport



By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

BOLTON LANDING, N.Y.
— Lincoln's newest flagship — the 1998 Navigator, a full-size sport utility — is a departure for the premier domestic luxury carmaker.

Never before has Lincoln ever seriously considered entering the truck or minivan market. Even with minivan sales at their peak as the new decade rolled in, there was never a thought to add one to the Lincoln lineup.

And never mind that the sport-utility market grew from a little more than 900,000 units in 1990 to more than 2 million units sold in 1996.

Lincoln meant luxury. Lincoln meant classic.

Lincoln just didn't fit with "truck." But this Navigator, even though it's built on the same chassis and on the same assembly line as the Ford Expedition, is no truck. This sport utility is luxury. It is classic. And it's not a truck.

Lincoln General Manager Jim O'Connor aptly captures the importance of the Navigator. "July 1 (introduction to the public) will start a whole new chapter for Lincoln; it's a step in a new direction for us," he said.

The time is right since the market for another full-size luxury SUV isn't all that crowded. And Lincoln has done a lot of things right with the Navigator.

The very best of everything Lincoln is — from luxury to comfort — is built into the Navigator.



Lincoln will win big with the Navigator, especially at the way it's been priced.

And the nicest thing about the Navigator is the price: The base price is \$39,950. Add the 4X4 capabilities and everything on the option list and the price is still a reasonable \$46,000.

We tested our Navigator in a scenic part of upstate New York and walked away with the feeling that this will go down in history as a breakthrough vehicle for Lincoln.

There are a lot of reasons for that conclusion. One is the ability to get into and out of the Navigator easily. That was a primary concern for Lincoln executives because most Navigator owners will be around 60, roughly half will still have children at home and 10 percent will be retirees.

It's the same height as the Expedition, but the Navigator has running boards that are integrated into the vehicle as well as a lighted step pad. A quick step and you're in without any problems.

True Lincoln ride and handling are built into

the Navigator. Lincoln engineers used the Town Car as their benchmark in the luxury SUV development.

Comfort is provided by a four-corner load-leveling air suspension, a fully independent short/long arm front suspension and specially developed shocks and tires.

The load-leveling suspension lowers the Navigator by an inch after the vehicle is turned off. In the 4x4 mode and at speeds under 25 mph, the Navigator rises an inch to allow for improved off-road capability.

Spending of off-road capability, I still find it hard to believe that anyone with sanity will actually go off-road in a \$46,000 sport utility. Over a Diet Squirt, Lincoln officials told me that only 2 percent of those who purchase a sport utility with

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Zero Down
\$179/mo.
- Aluminum Wheels
- XLT
- Stock #72964

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- Detroit
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