

In Retrospect

like a Ford Tudor or five-window by spinning the rear wheels as you exited a right angle intersection in downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana, which allowed the rear end to swing wide in a kind of noisy first-gear dirt-tracking yaw. Ersatz, but gratifying. Nobody ever did that in a Packard.

Sitting behind the steering wheel is another exercise in nostalgia. The steering wheel is a large three-spoked device carved from a solid billet of pearlescent prewar plastic by elderly Polish craftsmen working in the old Packard plant on Detroit's East Grand Boulevard. It is a steering wheel designed to conjure up visions. It would look very much at home sticking out of one of those blonde mahogany Telefunken radar/phonographs that were so big in the Fifties.

The instrumentation is complete and self-explanatory, but the control knobs are something else altogether. These latter devices are all the same size and shape, all

carved from the same solid billet of sturdy prewar plastic as the steering wheel, and all equally, inscrutably anonymous. Even the radio controls conceal their identity in marbled beige mufti. God help the novice One-Sixty Super Eight Packard Station Wagon driver if fate should ever conspire to make him use the lights, heater, hand choke, cigarette lighter and radio on short notice.

You reach over, switch on the radio—giving it about three minutes for the tubes to warm up—and you get Wee Bonnie Baker singing her popular rendition of "Oh Johnny Oh!" backed up by Orrin Tucker's orchestra. "South of the Border" is also big, but war songs like "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" and "The Last Time I Saw Paris" are beginning to show up on the Hit Parade.

Push KOWL and they interrupt the music to tell you that France has fallen. Push another and you learn that Artie Shaw is marrying Lana Turner (his third, her first) in spite of the fact that Betty Grable was divorcing Jackie Coogan so she could become the third Mrs. Shaw. On KCBN the word is that some guy named Frank Jackson has buried a mountain

climber's pick ax in the skull of Leon Trotsky in Mexico and Trotsky isn't expected to live.

But none of that heavy stuff made much difference to Mr. Solid Citizen Packard One-Sixty Super Eight Station Wagon Driver in those days. Smoothly, silently humming along the road from Reno to Carson City in his big cream-colored boat-car the Middle-American of that era didn't concern himself too much with what was happening Over There, wherever "Over There" might be. Nineteen-forty was America's last full year of innocence and America was enjoying the hell out of it.

Ronald Reagan played George Gipp in "Knute Rockne, All-American." Charles Laughton gave a dynamite performance as "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Walt Disney had done it again with "Pinocchio." "Of Mice and Men" was turned into a movie and an entire generation of boys would henceforth amuse each other with impersonations of Lennie the half-wit. W. C. Fields fans got a double thrill when "My Little Chickadee" and "The Bank Dick" were both released the same year. Good times were had by all.

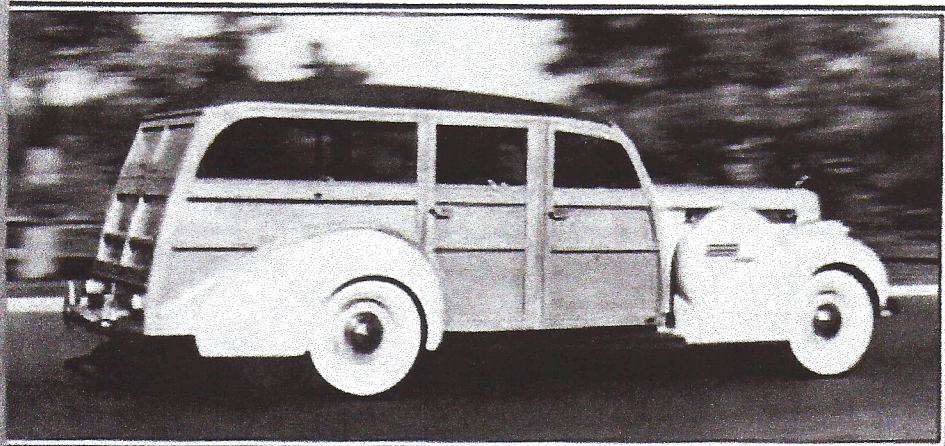
Even Washington seemed pretty far away. The presidential race between FDR and Wendell Wilkie was probably the hottest issue of the day. There was a lot of noise about Lend-Lease and our non-violent participation in the Battle of Britain, but the average guy wasn't too interested unless he worked the swing-shift at Lockheed making Hudson bombers for the R.A.F. In fact it wasn't too hard to find rather vocal German sympathizers among one's friends and neighbors at that early phase of World War II. Through Lend-Lease, and the burgeoning European hostilities, Packard was given one more chance to make it big.

The British had made a deal with the Ford Motor Company to produce the sensational Rolls-Royce aircraft engine that powered the Spitfires. Ford had done a lot of research and development in the production engineering area and appeared all set, when old Henry Ford—always a sort of muddled pacifist and now half nuts besides—pulled the rug out from under his son Edsel, as well as the British government, and welshed on the deal.

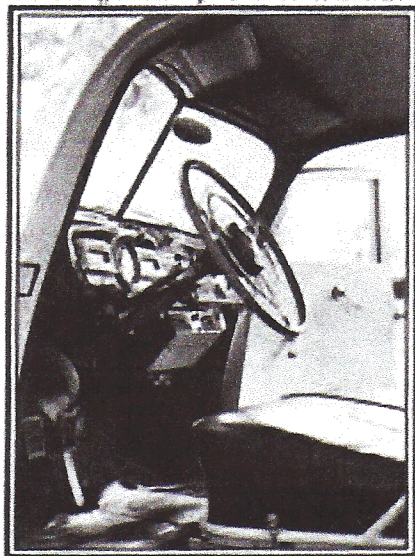
Because of that, the British switched to Packard and Packard found itself in a position to make quite a lot of money. Ford turned over all of their preliminary data and Packard was able to get into the Military-Industrial Complex Club easily and expeditiously. It was the first of a number of important war materiel contracts handled by Packard in the Second World War, and the apparent mismanagement of the resulting profits is regarded by many old Detroit hands as a prime cause of the company's final undoing in the postwar years.

In spite of the fact that Packard's fiscal woe had led them to water down the quality of their eight-cylinder cars, one

continued on page 101



Above: "... a wooden body that would make the cabinets in your house look like packing cases." Below: "... inside ... it's like sitting inside a prewar cabin cruiser."



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	Flathead, straight eight
Bore	3 1/4 in.
Stroke	4 1/4 in.
Displacement	356 cu. in.
Horsepower	160 @ 3,500 rpm
Compression ratio	6.41/1
Transmission	3-speed, column, overdrive with freewheeling
Suspension, front	Independent, Safe-T-flex, coil springs, arm/lever-type shocks, anti-sway bar
Suspension, rear	Semi-float rear axle, semi-elliptic springs, Aircraft-type hydraulic shocks
Tires	7.00 x 16, 4-ply tubeless nylon
Brakes	4-wheel servo-hydraulic, 12-in. drums
Wheelbase	127 in.
Tread, front	59 3/16 in.
Tread, rear	62 1/2 in.
Weight	3,855 lbs.
Price	About \$5,000