

# Mercedes - Benz stuffs lots of goodies in 1997 C280 Sport sedan

Continued from 12B

could think of to say about this car. You could balk at the \$35,295 base price. You'd be

silly to do so. That includes everything but the kitchen sink (power everything, Bose stereo system, automatic climate control, dual air bags,

ABS, cruise control) and a glass moon roof. The roof adds \$1,090. Add the \$790 for the Sport package, \$600 silver paint job and \$595 destination

charge and the as-tested price comes to \$38,475.

You could buy bigger cars from Detroit or maybe even

Asia for the same price or less. Yes, you could. But I don't think you are going to have a 280 Sport Mercedes clone.

You'll have a nice car, true. But you may hate yourself in the morning. This is one fine, fine automobile.

# Voluntary recall to affect Rangers, Explorers and a few 1997 F150s

Continued from 12B

with the 4.6-liter engine. When the trucks are operated at highway speeds for extend-

ed periods in temperatures under 20 degrees below zero, ice may form in the throttle body, which could prevent the

engine from returning to idle. Dealers will install a foam insulating sleeve to correct the problem.

An undetermined number of the '97 F-150s are subject to both recalls.

There have been no accidents

as a result of any of the problems, Ford spokeswoman Francine Romine-MacBride said.

Owners of affected vehicles are being notified by Ford via mail. All work will be done for free at Ford dealers.

# Chrysler sets near record with latest rosy report on its bottom line

By Brian S. Akre  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Good news about the bottom line is getting to be routine at Chrysler Corp. after decades of financial ups and downs.

The No. 3 domestic automaker gave its shareholders and workers another dose Tuesday: Chrysler announced its second-best annual profit and a near-record \$7,900 average profit-sharing payment for 96,500 U.S. workers.

Chrysler has benefited from the boom in sport utility vehicles, pickups and minivans, which represented 66 percent of its sales last year. More importantly, Chrysler is the leanest of the Big Three automakers.

"Chrysler has a better business model for building and selling cars than General Motors and Ford do," said Nick Colas, an analyst with Credit Suisse First Boston Inc. "Their net margins are better, their gross margins are better, their margins are better all the way through."

Colas noted that Chrysler had a 24 percent return on capital last year; that is, for every \$1 in capital spending, Chrysler earned \$1.25 by year's end.

"That's phenomenal in the car business—unheard of," said Colas, who noted that GM and

Ford have returns on capital of under 10 percent. Chrysler's results for the

fourth quarter and 1996 were impressive:

• It earned \$807 million for

the quarter after several one-time charges, down 22 percent from the \$1 billion it earned a

year ago. Per-share earnings were slightly higher than Wall Street expected.

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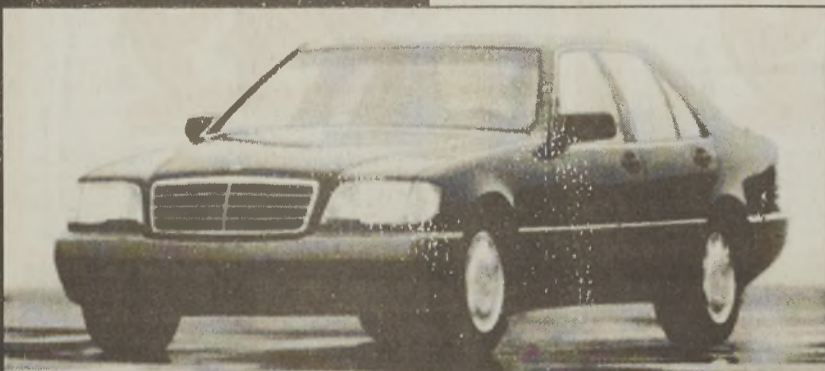
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