

Free Wheeling

By BILL CROWELL

Back in the days when they were still saying "Giddyap," automobile bodies were patterned after traditional buggy designs and were little more than orange crates on wheels.

Nowadays, the modern motorist in his steel and glass vault, feels about as secure as he does in his own living room. But that is because car bodies have undergone an engineering revolution since the early days of crank and cuss.

Take as a good example a basic item like the windshield which keeps wind, dust and insects from reaching the driver and his passengers. We take this convenience for granted today, but probably there are many still who remember the goggles and duster days of old.

It was looked upon as a tremendous step forward when plate glass windshields were first installed as standard equipment. Shatter proof (even bullet proof) glass destined to come was beyond imagination.

Bodies at first were constructed of wood with sheets of steel nailed over wood frames. Oak and hickory tough they were but still a far cry from the welded steel-on-steel bodies that protect today's passengers. Meanwhile, center of gravity moved lower and lower, giving cars greater stability.

Safety features by the hundreds now considered routine in the building of auto bodies had not even been thought of 25 years ago.

Many improvements have added to driving ease and comfort and thus help to prevent dangerous driver fatigue. One such feature is insulation that cuts machinery and road racket to a minimum.

Driving instruments have been grouped and lighted so they can be seen easily, freeing the driver's attention for the road.

Even the rear view mirror was not part of the equipment on Grandfather's first automobiles.

Controls have been arranged where they can be reached easily and naturally — or eliminated entirely. The steering wheels of early day cars might be either on the left or right. One of the first moves of the industry was to standardize their location at the left, where drivers could see approaching traffic before attempting to pass. The automatic spark advance and foot operated accelerator have eliminated two levers that formerly appeared on the steering column. Horn but-

tons, which once turned up almost anywhere, are now in the center of the steering wheel with an extension ring that allows the driver to sound a warning without lifting more than a thumb.

Not so many years ago the shift lever moved from the floor to a position on the steering column. Today, automatic transmissions are doing away with hand shifting altogether. More recently, power steering and braking have made the driver's lot still easier, leaving him free to concentrate on the road.

Interior fittings of all kinds show the effects of design revolution. Door handles describe a closed arc, or have become push-buttons so that clothing cannot snag.

Seats are more than a foot wider, giving drivers more room. Side frame members have moved out to absorb impacts from the side.

Draft free ventilation helps drivers avoid drowsiness. All steel bodies provide tremendously great protection in case of serious accident.

These and other safety factors, developed through the years, undergo continual testing aimed at still further refinements.

James Attached To Mainz Group

MAINZ, Germany (AHTNC) — Pfc. Ralph James, Jr., whose father lives in Shelby, N. C., recently participated with other personnel from the 8th Division's 504th Infantry in annual Army training tests in Mainz, Germany.

The tests, conducted under realistic combat conditions, were designed to determine the unit's combat efficiency.

The 19-year-old soldier, son of Mrs. Inez James, 410 E. Ridge street, Kings Mountain, N. C., is an automatic rifleman in the Infantry's Company C in Mainz. He entered the Army in January 1958 and arrived overseas the following December on this tour of duty.

James attended Davidson High School, Kings Mountain.

REUNION

The annual Hugh Karr Reunion will be held Sunday, September 25, at the Antioch Baptist church near Grover, N. C. Following a morning worship service at the church, a picnic lunch will be served. In the afternoon a short business and fellowship session will be held.



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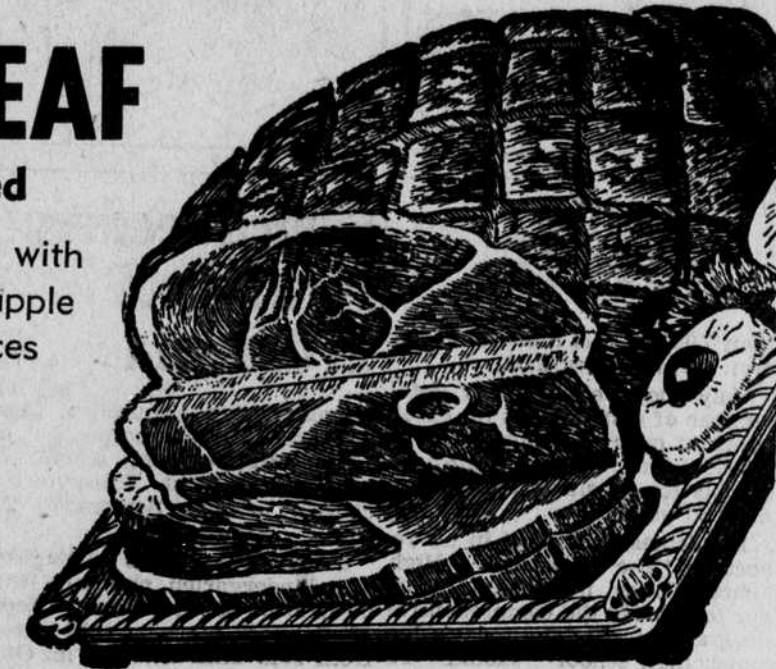
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