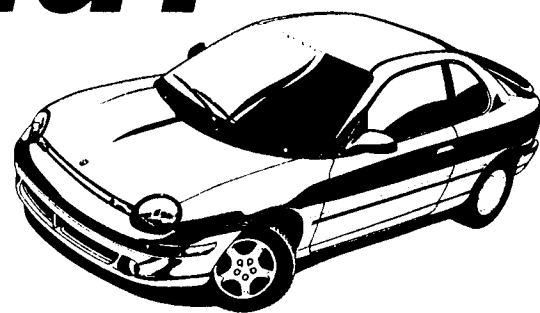


What's Driving Behrend?

• A MONTHLY SUPPLEMENT FEATURING NEW CARS, COMMUTER ISSUES, AND STUDENT STORIES AT PENN STATE ERIE, THE BEHREND COLLEGE. •

March 2001



Got wheels? What to look for when buying a used car

by Rob Wynne
auto page editor

So the snow has melted and as you are ready to get your car all cleaned up and de-salted, you realize that Mother Nature has really taken its toll over the last few months. Where did all of this rust come from? Why does my steering wheel shake? I'm going to need new tires! Will I be able to get another 10,000 miles out of the old family grocery-getter, or is 150,000 miles just the half-life of this beast? If you have asked yourself these questions more than once over the last few weeks, remember that spring is approaching quickly, and summer is on its way. If you don't want to cruise around the beaches in your "national hoopy showcar of the year," you might consider a new ride, or rather, a used one.

There is a vast array of car dealers in the Erie area, each of them offering something a little bit different. When everyone graduates from Penn State and has lots of money to spend, one way to get rid of the dough is to buy a Mercedes or Jaguar at Contemporary Motorcar. Until then, maybe the used car section at Rick Weaver Buick Pontiac GMC isn't a bad idea.

"Most college students look at Grand Ams, Cavaliers, and Sunfires," stated Dennis Carne, a used car sales representative for Rick Weaver. "They are looking for something sporty that doesn't cost a lot of money. The cars are only a few years old and can be financed for somewhere around \$150-\$180 a month with a minimum down payment."

This brings us to the money problem. According to Carne, there are

many banks through which dealerships help people finance cars. "National City is a big one for cars, but we also use GMAC, PNC Bank, and the Erie School District Credit Union." Of

the requisites of the loan states that the borrower must have a full time job. Again, a credit union may be a little more lenient.

As mentioned, the stereotypical car

not that easy yet. Depending upon how picky you are, there are various options to consider; one of those being the engine.

With the Cavalier, Sunfire, Neon, and Escort, the only engine available is the 4-cylinder. There may be different size 4-cylinders engines to choose from, but for the most part they are all similar. In the case of the Grand Am, however, there is an optional V-6 engine in some of the cars. According to Carne, the V-6 engine will usually offer slightly more horsepower and much better torque, which will result in better "pick-up."

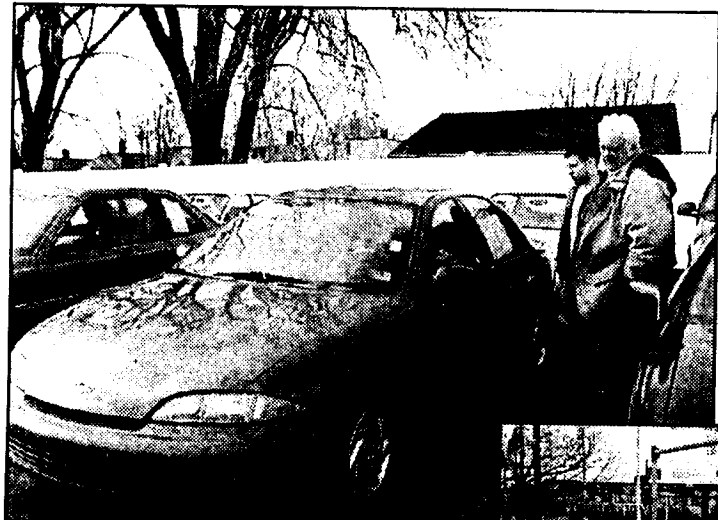
A common misconception is that a V-6 engine will use more gas than a 4-cylinder. At one time that may have

And the cost of a used truck far exceeds that of a car. For a student, purchasing one of these types of vehicles may prove to be costly, as insurance is also higher on trucks and SUV's. For example, on the Weaver lot, a 1994 Chevy Blazer with 65,000 miles is priced above the \$10,000 mark, whereas a 1995 Lumina with the same number of miles is priced to sell at \$5,988. Trade-in value is higher on trucks and SUV's, however.

Another thing to keep in mind when buying a used vehicle is that there are numerous extended warranty plans available that will cover many of the major and most costly components of your car. Prices can range anywhere from \$800-\$1800 and will last for a few years. If a car has more than 50,000 miles on it, an extended warranty usually isn't a bad investment. Just one unexpected breakdown and the cost of repairs in some cases could cost the same amount as the warranty itself.

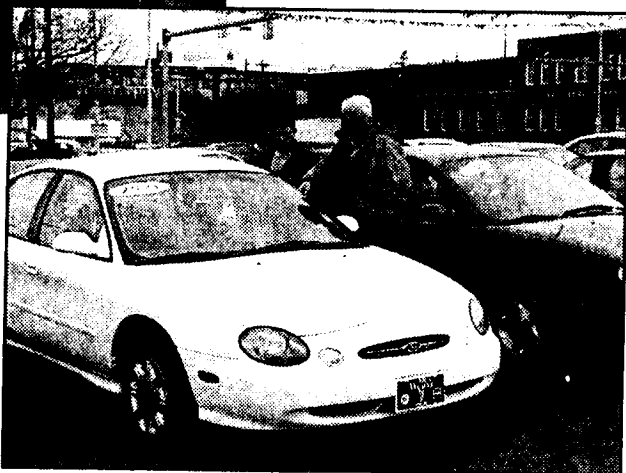
The Internet is also ever useful in the pursuit of a vehicle. Sites like Edmunds.com or Yahoo! Autos offer price quotes for most any make and model. Another very interesting site is carfax.com. For a one-time fee of \$19.95, you can check the title history of any car by just providing the vehicle's VIN number. If you're the type of person who cringes at the sight of a car salesman, these title history reports allow you to do the homework yourself.

With the number of resources available and the competitiveness of dealers on the Erie area, finding a quality used car isn't as hard of a task as one might think. Are you ready for the beach?



PHOTOS BY NEIL MAKADIA

Used car sales representative Dennis Carne and auto page editor Rob Wynne compare prices and options on two popular selling cars. At left is a 1997 Chevy Cavalier. Below, a clean 1998 Ford Taurus represents the upper price range of affordable student spending.



course the selection of banks will vary from dealership to dealership, but if you need the money and your parents can't co-sign a loan for you, many times credit unions are willing to help you out if you have been a member for a certain amount of time. Carne also explained that students must often get a parent to co-sign a loan because one

of a college student is the Grand Am, Sunfire, or Cavalier. The Ford Escort coupe is equally popular, as is the Dodge Neon. All of these cars offer a sporty design, good gas mileage, and low monthly payments. There are, of course, other cars like Buick LeSabres or Dodge Intrepids that are a bit more pricey and have bigger engines. But it's

been, but engine sizes and designs have changed over the years as have gas prices. "Whether it's a 4 or 6 cylinder, most smaller to midsize cars are going to get anywhere from 18 miles per gallon in the city to 28 m.p.g. on the highway," stated Carne.

Sport-utility vehicles and trucks tend to get fewer miles per gallon, though.

This ain't your daddy's Thunderbird...

by Tammy Srembo
staff writer

It's baaaaack. That's right! Ford is bringing back the Thunderbird after its slight time in hibernation and it's going to be bigger and better than ever before.

The Thunderbird legacy started right after World War II. No cars were produced during the war, and when it was over, cars were in great demand. Car manufacturers began scrambling for ideas for cars that would fit most of the country's postwar demand. To begin with, the question was asked, "What do the American people want in a car?" The answers were quite obvious. The American people wanted a car that was sporty, racy, luxurious, comfortable, and dependable. Car manufacturers were trying to come up with a car that would fill all those needs. Ford did just this, coming up with the Ford Thunderbird.

The 1955 model of the new Ford Thunderbird was introduced at the Detroit Auto Show in 1954. The new Thunderbirds were 2-door roadsters with a focus on power, comfort, convenience, personal luxury, performance and handling, and all-weather protection. The country's demand for the car was greater than the supply. Ford's new car and new heritage took flight.

So where did this car get its name from? Did a bird fly into a thunder cloud? Was there another cartoon in addition to 'Thunder Cats' called 'Thunder Birds' that we just don't know about? As you are thinking up silly thoughts wondering how this car got its name... don't even bother. You will not come close to the name origin. Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest looked up to 'Thunderbird,' which was a guardian spirit that had the power to invoke thunder, lightning, rain, and hail. This spirit was a very powerful force behind all storms. Ford was taking suggestions as to what to name their new car. It was actually a young Ford car stylist, Alden Giberson, who suggested the name. Giberson described the Native American spirit, and Ford immediately

liked it, naming their new car the Thunderbird.

Over the years, the Thunderbird changed more than Madonna's looks. Some of the styles included: 2-seaters, 2-doors, 4-seaters, 4-doors, convertibles, station wagons, removable hard-tops, some with portholes, removable spare tires, and different body styles and engine enhancements. Along with the many changes of the Thunderbird came three awards as Motor Trend's "Car of the Year."

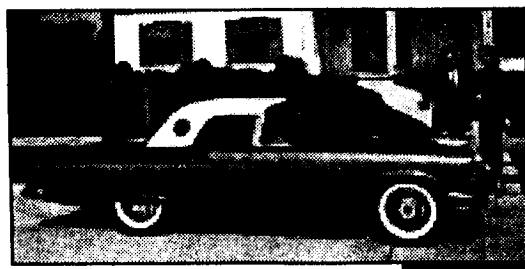
As of late 2000, Ford is laying out plans for the new Thunderbird. Although numbers and horsepower are not available to the public yet, this much is known:

The 2002 Thunderbird is a 2-seat roadster with a 3.9 Liter V-8 Engine. Not too shabby, eh? Ford wanted to point to the future while recapturing the magic of an American icon. The new car will be available in many colors, the same colors as the originals: Evening Black, Inspiration Yellow, Thunderbird Blue, Torch Red, and Whisper White. The Thunderbird will have an option of a removable hard top, or the automatic convertible top. Leather seats will be equipped in all cars. The Thunderbird will also come equipped with standard 17" wheels. Only automatic transmissions will be available. An in-dash 6-CD changer and 360 watt Audiophile system will be standard on all T-birds as well.

So when can we expect these new birds to land? Ford is projecting late Spring 2001. Car industry analyst Jim Hall reports that, "Ford officials are quietly betting that as long as the US economy remains strong through this fall, the reborn T-bird's first production year could be sold out before the first car reaches

the showroom." Every Ford dealer in the United States is guaranteed to have at least one Thunderbird for the first year or so.

These new T-birds are going to be priced at \$35,000, which is a big jump in price considering that the 1955 Thunderbird cost only \$2,695. For most people, price is not going to be an issue. So as we all anxiously await the return of the Thunderbird, and with the super high demand of this car and low-availability these first two years on the market... its already looking like a "rare bird" indeed.



Left: A very early 1957 model of the Ford Thunderbird; perhaps one your daddy owned. Below: after a few years at the drawing board, the 2002 T-Bird is expected to fly in for spring of 2001. (Photos courtesy of Ford Motor Company.)



Students help design Ford concept car



KNIGHT-RIDDER TRIBUNE/KIRTHMON F. DOZIER

These auto design students from the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, Michigan, designed the Ford Faze concept car. At left is Paul Behling, manager of special projects at ASC and a Center for Creative Studies mentor. Standing with him are students Christopher Hilts, Carrie Przybycki, Kent Thornell, Cristin Richard, Jessica Brown, Sarah Dixson and In-Yeok Chung.

Auto Page • March 16, 2001 • Rob Wynne, Auto Page Editor

•Do you have a unique or customized car that you want the rest of the campus to see?

•Do you have a funny story about "what happened on the way to Behrend one morning?"

•Are you a commuter that has to vent some steam before you blow a gasket?

Share your photos and stories with us! Due to limited space, not all submissions may appear on our page.

e-mail the Beacon:
Behrcoll5@aol.com

Ask the Mechanic



this week's car care expert:
Chuck McDaniel
•Service Dept. Manager
GARY MILLER
Chrysler - Plymouth - Jeep

It's time for inspection!

Everyone faces two things in life, death and taxes. And if you drive a vehicle in Pennsylvania, an annual and sometimes costly inspection can add to your list of weekly expenditures. Here's a few tips from our expert that may save you some time and money.

Q: What should everyone do to prepare for their inspection to save time in the service station?

A: Many people show up to get their car inspected and don't have their valid insurance card and/or registration card. We need these by law for verification, as do other stations.

Q: What is checked on the PA inspection?

A: Anything safety related is checked. This includes, but is not limited to:
-suspension/steering
-brakes
-windshield/glass
-seat belts, even the rear ones and automatic restraints. (deployed air bags are permissible.)
-tires
-exhaust system
-emissions are checked in some larger PA populations; not Erie.

Q: So if I am from another city in PA and have an emissions sticker on my car, can I still get my car inspected here?

A: Chances are you will not be able to get your vehicle inspected in Erie if you have the emissions sticker. Emissions-testing equipment is very costly and since Erie does not require such testing, your vehicle must be inspected in your home county or another that offers such testing.

Q: What are some things that may cause a vehicle to fail inspection?

A: As I said, anything safety-related is checked and must operate. There are, however, some things that people are unaware of that may cause a vehicle to fail. They include:
- large stickers in windows (i.e. grateful dead bears).
-large or multiple objects hanging from the rear-view mirror (i.e. thirty air fresheners).
-absence of rear-view mirror.
-aftermarket light covers (although legal on the road, they will not pass inspection and must be removed).
-no gas (in order to pass, the car must be road-tested by the mechanic for 5 miles).
-excessive body damage (surface rust is permissible, but any major holes are not).

Q: Should people schedule an inspection or are walk-ins welcome? How long does the inspection take?

A: Typically, due to tight schedules, people make an appointment to bring their vehicle in. We can do walk-ins as well, but you may have to wait a bit longer. The typical inspection usually lasts from 45 minutes to 1 hour; it may take longer depending on any work that needs to be done to your vehicle.

Present this article and receive \$5.00 off of a PA inspection only at:

GARY MILLER
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5746 Peach St.
Erie, PA 16509
(814) 868-3635