

JOURNEY THROUGH AIRFLOWLAND

ABOUT THE WORDS AND MUSIC..... As the AIRFLOW gains in stature and importance throughout the old car hobby, it's only natural that interest increases in the literature of the AIRFLOW. Yours truly does indeed get an occasional inquiry, some from folks new to old cars- others from old car nuts new to the AIRFLOW- as to just what literature exists; what is available, where, and at what cost. Perhaps there are enough members with questions on the subject to justify a page or three. If you're already a knowledgeable collector, read no further.

Compared to the Model "T" aficionado, we're at a disadvantage. Words are generated in proportions direct to production figures and inverse to more noble attributes. There are, however, things to read, buy, and collect.

Roughly, the material can be divided into two groups; that published within the era- 1934 to 1937, and that which has been published since. The modern writings began to appear in the early 'fifties- at a time when a good many people realized (twenty years too late) what the AIRFLOW had been all about. Like all automotive literature, it can also be divided into technical literature, and a more subjective sort- the eulogies of the ad flacks, the comments of the auto columnists, and the opinions of the trade press of the era- and since the era, the praises of people in love. Unfortunately, there are no modern-day technical writings available, save the smidgen that Chrysler has offered and what once in a while appears in this Newsletter. No author has as yet treated with the AIRFLOW as has Mary Moline with the Model "A" in her new book "MODEL 'A' MISERIES AND CURES". Perhaps it's just not necessary. The AIRFLOWS miseries are minimal.

The technical writings, then, are all of the era of production- and consist of the usual factory fare- maintenance manuals, parts lists, service bulletins, and the like. At the time of publication these were all intended for Chrysler Products Dealers and their personnel. While available to the public (on order) except for the service bulletins (which were "confidential") few owners ever bothered. All these items are still around today, with collections of service bulletins probably the scarcest. A listing of what was actually published is probably in order. While it's surely not my intent to establish myself as an authority on prices, it may be of interest to at least some few members to know what the price ranges have been.

Chrysler's factory policy regarding parts lists in that era was to publish yearly a single volume paper bound parts list for each of it's marques, each book containing all models for the year; and to publish at irregular intervals a master parts list for each make, covering all models over a span of years. Prior to the AIRFLOW the last Master Parts Lists published included models through 1933. A new "Master" appeared in 1939, covering the decade of 1929 to 1939, including the AIRFLOWS completely, although many of the original parts numbers are superseded. The 1929-'39 master parts lists are probably the most useful, most desirable, and scarcest today. The entire Chrysler Product line was covered by a twelve volume set, having a shelf length of about 17½ inches. Two volumes were devoted to DeSoto, and three to Chrysler. In the case of the Chrysler books, the inclusion of the classic IMPERIALS; CG, CH and CL enhances their desirability and price. Also published were yearly preliminary parts lists, which appeared at the beginning of the model year and were designed at least partially to indicate to partsmen the changes from the previous years models. Members purchasing books by mail from advertisers should satisfy themselves that the books they are buying are not "preliminaries", or if so, priced accordingly. Many literature dealers who're not "Chryslerish" themselves don't seem to recognize the difference. In 1942 and 1947, and perhaps other years Chrysler published "Condensed Master Parts Lists", which included some AIRFLOW parts numbers.

By that time, however, the parts division was supplying less and less that was applicable to the AIRFLOWS, so their usefulness is limited- tho they are interesting- at the right price. Parts books of the early and mid 'fifties did still include an occasional listing applicable to the Airflows, but only because those parts interchanged with the post-war Sixes and Straight Eights- so they're of little use to the Airflow owner.

About price- Single year parts lists for either marque have been ranging from perhaps \$10 to \$20, depending on condition and other factors. The 1929-'39 "Masters" are harder to find, and have ranged from about \$15 to \$30 per volume when purchased individually, with reductions on larger purchases or full sets. We know of one excellent twelve volume set that changed hands recently at \$200. We thought it a bargain. The preliminary parts lists for the various AIRFLOW years might be worthwhile in the five to eight dollar range, if in good or excellent condition. The illustrations alone are of value, tho after 1934, they apply more to the Airstream cars. As for the 1942 to 1947 (or later) "Condensed Master" parts lists, we know of no sales on which to base an estimate. Their value would be limited to AIRFLOW'RS. The parts books of the early and mid- 'fifties are probably worth more to someone else than they are to you, unless you also own a car of that era.

The Factory Shop Manuals were published as single year volumes for all Chrysler Corp. marques in 1934 and 1935. In 1936, a "Master Maintenance Manual" was issued, covering 1934, '35 and '36. We know of no 1936 single year volumes. The word "Master" in the title merely signifies that they cover the three years. There is no additional material (except the 1936 models) over what appears in the 1934 and '35 single year volumes. 1937 again saw the release of a single year manual for each marque. De Soto, of course, had ceased AIRFLOW production, and even the Chrysler book concerns itself more with the C14, C15, and C16 than it does with the C17 AIRFLOW. There were some revisions made to the 1936 "Masters" as of June 1936. The books were originally prepared in late 1935. Some copies offered by sellers may have the revision pages, others not. It probably isn't crucial to value.

We've seen factory shop manuals recently (last couple of years) selling from about \$20 to a high of \$45 asking price. The latter appears unseemingly high to me, but of course, they'll never get more plentiful. For owners of pre-'37 AIRFLOWS the most desirable edition is the 1936 Master. It has the advantage of containing both pictures and information on various component parts of different year models for comparative study, and rarely sells for a great deal more than the single year editions of 1935 and 1934.

After all is said and done, the factory shop manual (to me, at least) is of less inherent value and interest than the parts books. There are many things that a modern day technician (if not a "shady tree mechanic") would look for in the shop manuals that are just not there. A t'rinstance? Well, bolt torque reference tables, for one thing. And detailed R&R (remove and replace) instructions. The pictures are fine, as they go, but being of an era before modern technical drawing techniques had been highly developed, they do leave something to be desired.

The service manuals published by the two main independent publishers of such material, CHILTON and MoToR are probably every bit as useful. There is little information in the factory books (save wiring diagrams and lube charts) that cannot also be gleaned from them, tho, of course, covering all popular cars, there's also a lot more chaff. These books are somewhat more plentiful. If you're about to buy one, make very sure of it's contents. Both publishers issued different sorts of volumes. MoToR, in particular, sold countless thousands of "flat rate" books, giving flat rate labor charges. All had parts numbers, or parts prices lists, with

the most commonly needed parts included. Those which show the parts numbers are of some value. Those which show only parts prices, along with the flat rate labor charges are hardly worth hauling home. CHILTON also published flat rate books, tho there don't seem to be nearly as many around, and all I've seen do have useful parts number lists. Both companies published "combined" flat rate and service manuals, as well as service manuals alone, without the flat rate section or parts lists. MoToR sometimes called theirs "repair" manuals, and sometimes "shop" manuals. Don't be misled- the contents are the same. The service manual alone is more frequently seen in MoToR than in CHILTON.

In the "combined" books, MoToR unvariably put the flat rate and parts lists in the front of the book, and the service section at the back. CHILTON succeeded a company or publisher called "Standard Auto Repair Manual" in this specific field, in about 1936, and followed their predecessors tom more or less loosely until after the war, when an entirely new name, "Motor Age" was adopted. CHILTON shows the characteristic of increasing the contents of the service section as time went by. Editions prior to 1940 have somewhat less of it than 1940 and onward. The two companies had somewhat different policies regarding the year models covered. CHILTON invariably went back a specific number of years from publication date for all cars, while MoToR made subjective judgements as to what their customers would need. The 1939 CHILTON covers all popular cars back through 1933; the 1940 goes back through '34. Since the 1940 edition does have somewhat more service information, and includes the '34 AIRFLOWS, it's probably the most desirable edition from the AIRFLOW'RS viewpoint. The 1941 volume excludes the '34 cars. MoToR for 1940 also includes the '34 AIRFLOWS, and was the last to do so, however, a good many editions up through 1948 or even later include the 1935 models. CHILTON pursued their pre-war policy even in the post-war years, although they did broaden their year-span a little. The last AIRFLOW, the 1937 C17 is dropped after the '47 edition.

Prices on these books vary widely, as there are obviously many factors involved. MoToR "combined" or "repair only" manuals that include the '34 models, or earlier, are very scarce and command stiff prices. Good clean copies frequently bring \$35 or more when found. Those editions going back to 1935 are more plentiful, and correspondingly lower priced. CHILTONS seem to be a little less popular with purchasers and sometimes don't bring as much money, tho from 1940 on I personally see little difference in the contents. ALL of the CHILTON "combined" books do offer the advantage of including the parts numbers, while NOT all MoToRs do. Many, if not most copies of both publications that are offered for sale today are in less-than-great shape. Nearly all of them saw service in some "Joe's Garage" and use took it's toll. A good clean copy of a desirable edition of either book is a worthwhile addition to your collection.

As noted, collections of service bulletins are hard come by. This fact has prompted our Vice President, Hardy Trolander, and yours truly to reproduce some specimens from our respective collections in the NEWSLETTER. When a collection is found, it does of course contain many bulletins that are not applicable to the AIRFLOWS. Value is pretty subjective. We might say that the price is whatever the buyer will give that the seller will take. If you should be so fortunate as to find some, be aware that there are other potential buyers. Not all Chrysler products buffs are AIRFLOW nuts!

In this writers estimation, one of the most desirable pieces of technical or semi-technical informative literature is the yearly "Ross-Roy" salesmans "Confidential Data Book". We say "semi-technical" because they are really niether repair-shop nor true advertising pieces. They were designed to educate the salesman about his product; to enable him to field

questions from his prospects, and to help refute "bad press" from the competition. They contain some lovely pictures, a lot of lurid prose, technical information, and comparison charts- to show the salesman where his product surpassed the competitors. We reproduced a section from John and Joan Baeder's copy of the '34 edition in this NEWSLETTER for November, 1971. They're great fun! The '34, at least, appeared in both loose-leaf and stapled editions. The later ones we've seen are all loose-leaf. Prices are pretty well open. Too few have changed hands within my knowledge to even estimate value.

Another technical piece that bears mentioning is the 1934 AIRFLOW body service manual. We know of no later editions. It was published under both the CHRYSLER and DeSOTO names. It's contents are pretty much "old hat" to body men today- but remember, in 1934 most cars still had wood framed bodies. Semi-unitized construction like the AIRFLOW'S needed some explaining. They seem to be quite scarce, but as it's a very thin book of only 26 pages, with little information that's vital to the owner- who rarely does his own body work, it's probably not capable of bringing big prices. If one is found, ten or fifteen dollars should buy it.

One of the greatest uncertainties in the technical literature field is the so called "owners manual". It certainly should be the most plentiful- having been stuffed in the glove-box of every car sold, and also just given away by the hundreds; but yet, they're hard to find for most any AIRFLOW model. We include them in "technical literature" for indeed, in that era, they were. In more modern times the owners manual has merely reinforced your faith in what a great car you've bought, and instructed you how to clean the upholstery. In that time, they did include a considerable amount of repair information, for the owner who wasn't always close to reliable service. Today, nearly everyone wants a copy, at least for the specific car or cars he owns. Yours truly can't help putting his tongue in his cheek every time he thinks about them. While one can sometimes be lucky and find one at a justifiable price, they generally command sums far greater than I personally think they're worth. I have a few in my personal collection, but don't buy unless the price is right. It's hard to say what is a "good" price. I have a real beaut that I picked up at the swap meet at Reno a few years ago for \$3, an AIRFLOW book; and I've seen some very rough copies of some of them at asking prices as high as \$35 to \$45.

There are some outside factors influencing prices on this item- a circumstance that also applies to sales literature- which we'll discuss next month. Owners manuals are a sentimental piece- a thing that is hoarded by the hundreds by collectors who collect little else- and sometimes hardly remember the cars the books represent. In the final analysis, there's virtually nothing in them that isn't covered more completely in the shop manuals, a factor which seems to diminish their value to any but a true dyed-in-the-wool collector of them. In other words, if you've got the shop manual, the owners manual's value is lessened from all but the "collector's" viewpoint.

Sitting here at this poor, decrepit, beat up typewriter, it's darn hard to know what you people out there in AIRFLOWLAND really want to read or hear. I know there's more than a few members who're interested in knowing more about literature; my mail has told me so. If I've bored you, or if you're already an experienced collector, you won't have read this far anyway. When I started this, I suspected it would run to "a page or three". I really wasn't expecting four!

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