

JOURNEY THROUGH AIRFLOWLAND

AIRFLOW TRUCKS? Yessiree Bob, Airflow trucks! Dodges. And for their time, big brutes. Four-ton bob-tail tankers. Except for one other model, also a four-tonner, the little-known G-80 (see footnote), these AIRFLOWS were the only four-tonners- and the biggest trucks- that Dodge had built at that point in time.

Which models were AIRFLOWS? Well, here, as in many other parts of AIRFLOWLAND, there're some questions that remain unanswered. This writer will state flatly that the following were AIRFLOWS: The K-52 SPECIAL; the LM-70 and LM-71; and the RX-70 and RX-71. I cite as my authority the heading of Group 35 (reproduced herewith) from the 1929-'39 Dodge Truck Master Parts List. Others have attributed AIRFLOW styling to at least two other models, a supposed T-36, and the K-72XF and K-72XG.

I say "supposed" T-36 for the simple reason that a thorough search of the entire aforementioned parts list reveals not one single part attributed to use on such a model. Did it even exist? It's interesting to note that "T-36" is referred to in some Chrysler Corporation sources as being the Engineering Symbol applied to the LM-70 and LM-71. With no concrete evidence of a model actually marketed under the designation T-36, we might wonder if somebody's wires got crossed. As for the K-72XF and K-72XG, we note that our parts list includes their serial numbers in the same sequential run with the K-52 Special, while other Chrysler sources ignore this model designation completely!

As usual, confusion reigns. We'll stand by group 35. If anyone can produce an AIRFLOW truck that can be proven to be a T-36, or a K-72XF/K-72XG, we'd like to hear about it.

Produce an AIRFLOW truck? Just try it! Any one. We don't care what model it is. Find it in a dusty barn, a wrecking yard, or where you will. There are some fellows who'll probably dog your footsteps, trying to persuade you to sell.

Oh, I remember well when they were on the road. We saw them sometimes in Los Angeles during WW II. Our NEWSLETTER photos are of trucks obviously built for TEXACO, but somehow, my memory is of STANDARD OIL; a deviation supported by the cover photo on the February, 1966 NEWSLETTER. And, somewhere, back in the dark parts of my memory, I even believe that some few were seen- perhaps in the late 'forties- bearing the GILMORE OIL insignia.

Anybody here remember Gilmore? "ROAR WITH GILMORE"! If that kindles a spark, you're an Angelino of some seniority. Gilmore was justly famous for old trucks. Famous in a positive way for really old trucks. When yours truly first came to L.A., as a kid (well, I thought I was grown up) in 1939, Gilmore was still making their daily deliveries to their service stations in great old brass-era monsters. Solid tires, chain drives, the whole ball of wax. They were traffic-stoppers. And they were beautiful! As the tank emptied, the driver inevitably spent his free time polishing; polishing. Somehow, a cast-off AIRFLOW fits the Gilmore image, circa 1949. Repainted in their Cream-Yellow, with the big red GILMORE, and the roaring Lion on the side, it all goes together. The driver, of course, would be polishing. Maybe my memory isn't so bad at that! But I digress.

Today, about all that's left is memories. Ten years or so ago, when nobody cared, a lone survivor stood at the back of a lot, amidst a pile of miscellaneous industrial junk in South Central L.A. Where is it today? Long gone. There are two or three known to remain, in various parts of the country. I "nearly" located one in Wyoming, two years ago. Oh, I'm sure it's there, all right. My informant claimed he'd been trying to buy it

for years. It's owner, who allegedly owned half the country north- or south..... or east or west- of Laramie, or Casper, or Sheridan was said to be "not interested" in mere money. Well, that's life. I've no place to park it anyway. One stood at the foot of the Donner Pass- on the Nevada side- just west of Reno, as recently as 1970. It, too, seems to have disappeared. It was for sale at that time, so we'll have to presume that somebody bought it. And buried it.

One of the nationally circulated old car publications recently carried an ad. An AIRFLOW truck for sale! Not long after, I recieved a letter from a man in Michigan, who'd bought one. The same? Perhaps. There just are not that many around. We hope he joins our Club. If he does, I expect he'll be the only AIRFLOW truck owner.... for awhile, at least.

As machinery, they were pretty impressive. The engines, not overly large by today's standards, were 3-5/8 X 5..... and later 3-3/4 X 5, giving about 310 and 331 cubes, respectively, in the six long bores. Low end to middle range torque was tremendous. Crankshafts were about right to anchor your Chris-Craft; with seven mains. One between each crankpin. Compression ratios were low, and so were RPM's.

Yours truly drove a similiar engine, in a '40 Dodge two-tonner, nearly a quarter-million miles between 1945 and 1950, with only modest maintenance. God knows how many miles it had on it when I first got behind the wheel. It pulled a trailer every inch of the way. Mine had a four speed gear box, and a mechanically shifted dual-ratio rear axle. It was easily capable of eighty-plus road speeds, and usually rolled at sixty or better, trailer in tow.

Not so the big four-ton AIRFLOWS. Their transmissions were five-speeds, with no evidence in the parts books of any auxillaries offered. They may have been after-equipped with Brownies, but certainly, without some up-gearing, somewhere in the drive train, they'd have had trouble holding an honest fifty on level ground. The rear ends were single-speed, double reduction units of 7.10:1 and 8.16:1 ratio. Not conducive to fast travel.

Maximum tire size was 9.75 X 20, 12 ply. Surprising as it seems today, on this size monster, the brakes were merely vacuum assisted hydraulics. Air brakes had not yet achieved really wide-spread use on the highways, and some pretty big bob-tails, of at least one competitive manufacturer (name on request) were still trying to stop with MECHANICALS! The only truck that DODGE had equipped with air, so far, was that remarkable G-80!

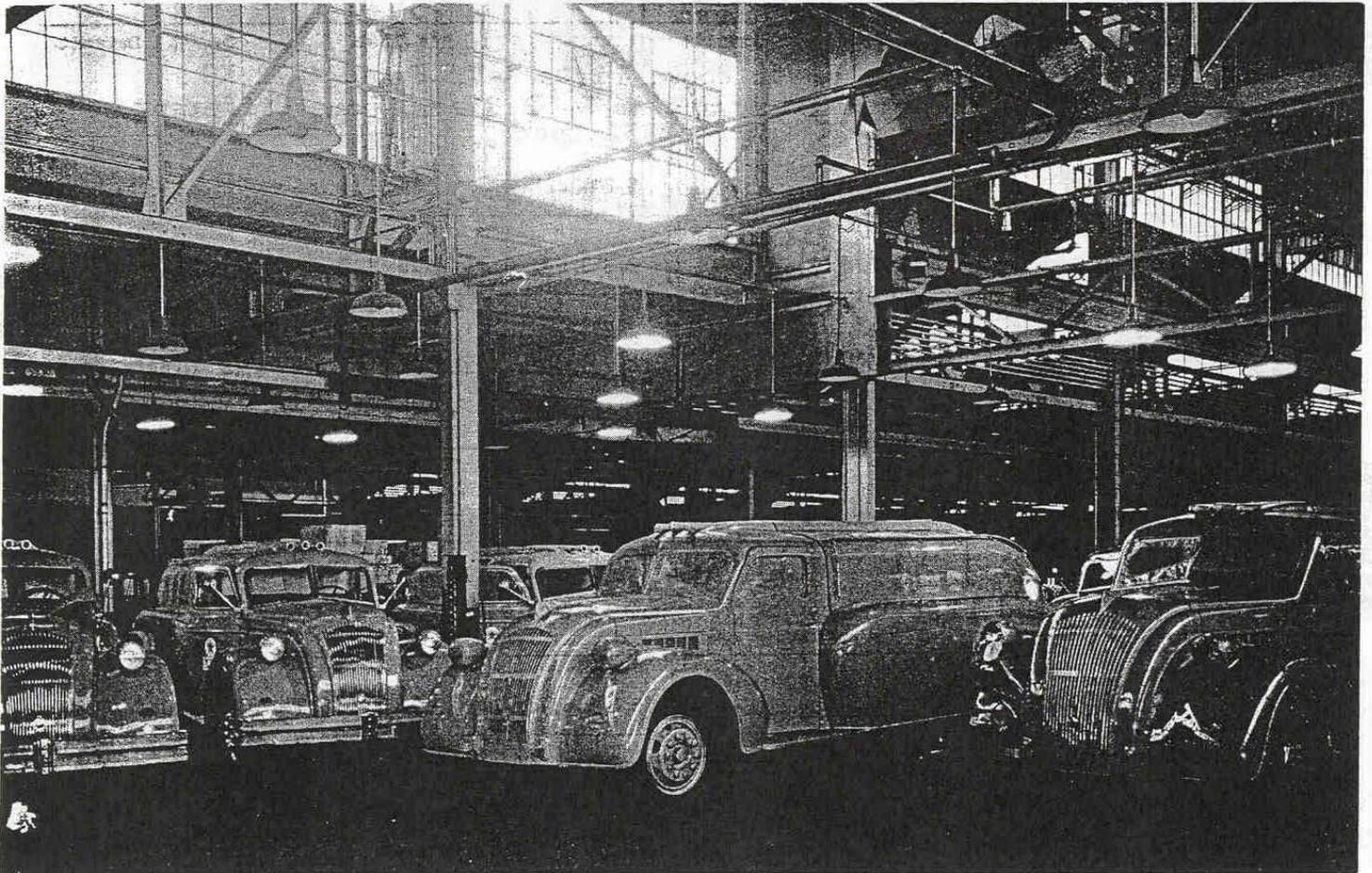
One unusual feature of the K-52 SPECIAL, and the RX-70/RX-71 was a disc type hand brake, situated just ahead of the center bearing in the propeller shaft. A huge 14" disc, with lined compressor shoes, mechanically actuated, on each side. The LM-70/LM-71 appears to have had a more conventional drum-type hand brake, similiar to, but larger than those on the AIRFLOW cars.

The creature comforts such a truck provided for it's driver were limited to what could be gained by opening and closing the window. Air conditioning (in trucks) was still twenty-five years away. Power steering had been dreamed, but was far from any practical application. Seats were flat and hard, and frequently not even adjustable. It took the leg of an elephant to de-clutch the monsters, and an ear like a piano tuner, coupled with split-second reflexes to shift them. If anybody out there in AIRFLOWLAND spends their days (or nights) pushing a new \$30,000 KW, Pete, Brockway, or what-have-you, you'll know how lucky you are- if you're an old-timer- who was there..... when big trucks first got BIG.

The AIRFLOW concept in trucks proved to be every bit as radical as it had in passenger cars. Apparently no further buyers materialized. We've never heard of one that wasn't a bob-tail tanker, in use by an oil company. The design, however, did connote a certain stylishness; enough so that a large Los Angeles firm, Bekins Van and Storage Company, adopted it in garish neon, with the tank modified to a van-type body, for use as a sign, high on the sides of their warehouses. One still exists today. It can be seen on the north wall of their building on Western Avenue, near First Street in downtown L.A.; a pleasant reminder of days gone by.

(Footnote on the G-80) Built in 1931-'32, it was the only truck known to this writer ever to employ a straight-eight engine.... using the 384.8 Cu. in. block in common with the CG, CH, CL Custom Imperials of that era, and later used in the CW AIRFLOWS. Only fifty serial numbers were assigned; and an unknown quantity actually delivered. There can be little doubt that they were almost custom built for a specific job, perhaps even a single buyer. What that Job may have been, or who the buyer was is probably beyond anyone's memory today.

Noss



Model Codes	Part No.	Per Car	Model Codes	Part No.	Per Car
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GROUP 35
AIR FLOW CAB PARTS
K-52 Special, LM-70,
LM-71, RX-70, RX-71

GROUP 35 AIR FLOW CAB PARTS K-52 Special
 LM-70, LM-71, RX-70, RX-71

AIRFLOW CAB PARTS USED ON K-52
 SPECIAL LM-70 LM-71 RX-70 RX-71

Inst. panel Assy. K-52 Spec. 701759 1
 Inst. panel (only) K-52 Spec. 624147 1

Door outside handle - Left (K-52 Spec., after 8349501) 701788 1
 Door outside handle escutcheon pad . . . 481986 2
 Door outside handle screw K-52 Spec., RX-70, RX-71. 138183 4
 Door outside handle - Right LM-70, RX-70, RX-71 701787 1
 Door outside handle - Left LM-71, RX-70, RX-71 701788 1
 Door pull-to handle. 569128 2

Group heading from 1929-'39 Master Parts List specifying models

K-52 Spec.	190"	4	8344621		Z-1001	6	Detroit
K-52 Spec.	200"			8344649			
K-52 Spec.	190"	4	8349499		Z-1001	6	Detroit
K-52 Spec.	200"						
K-72XF*	194"			8349510			Detroit
K-72XG*	197"						
KH-15*	131"	3/4	8220101		T17-1001	6	Detroit

This model list, from parts book, lists K-72XF and K-72 XG
 Parts book shows some parts same as K-52 Spec., some different.

K-52 Spec.	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-19-M-190	} 8,344,621	Dec. 1934	8,344,649	Jan. 1935
K-52 Spec.	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-19-M-200				
K-52 Spec.	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-19-M-190	} 8,349,499	Jan. 1935	8,349,610	Dec. 1936
K-52 Spec.	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-19-M-200				
KH-15	3/4 Ton	6	T-17-B-131				

This list omits K-72XF/K-72XG, but shows identical serial numbers.
 Were K-72XF/K-72XG AIRFLOWS? If so, why not listed in group 35?

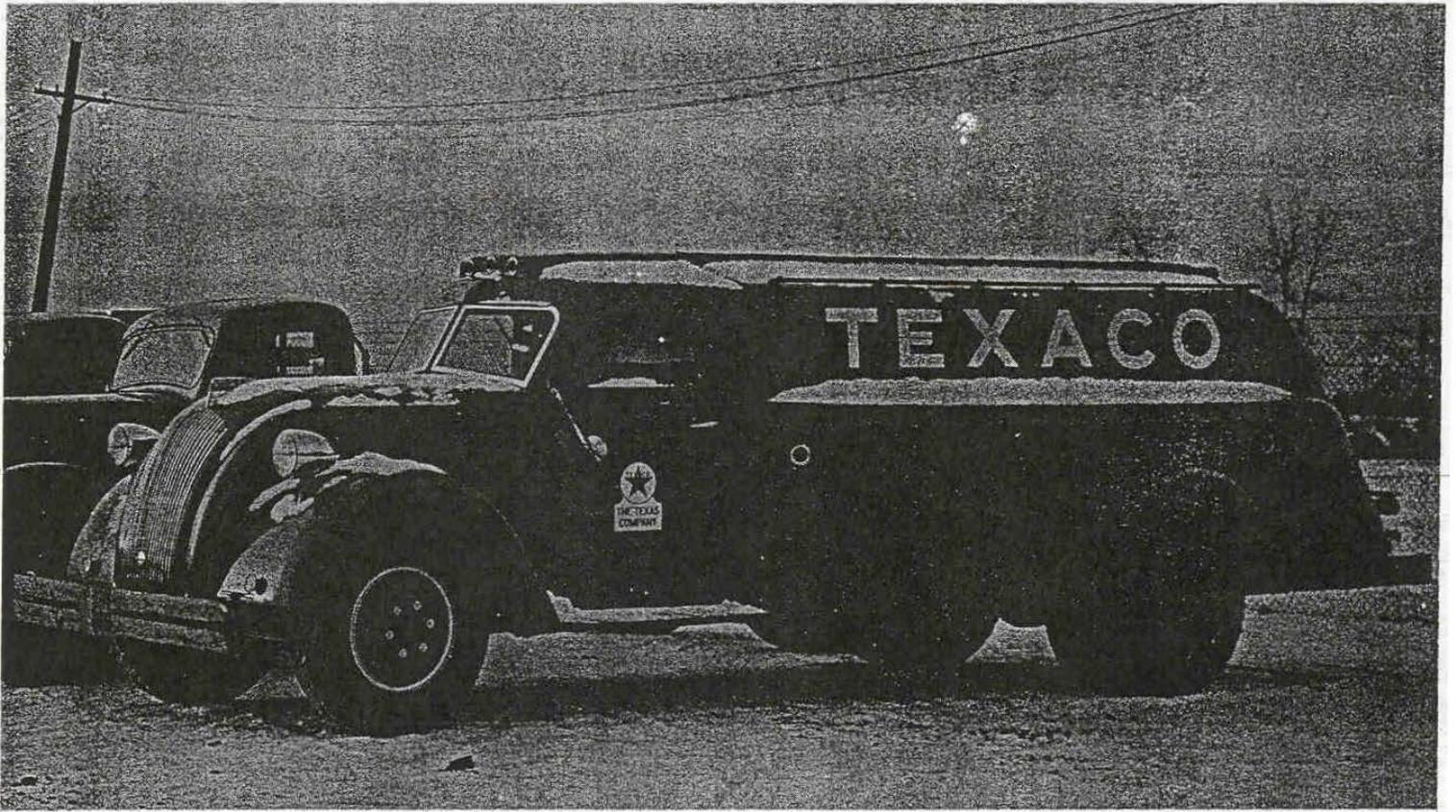
T-36	188"	4	8349511	} 8349634	T36-1001	6	Detroit
T-36	205"						
LM-70	188"		8349635	} 8349660			Detroit
LM-71	205"						
MC	116"	1/2	8156701	} 8186617	T38-1001 T38X-1001	6	Detroit Detroit
MCX*	116"						

This list and list below both show a model T-36. No parts are

T-36	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-36-M-188	} 8,349,611	May 1937	8,349,634	Jan. 1938
T-36	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-36-M-205				
LM-70	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-36-M-188	} 8,349,635	May 1937	8,349,660	Jan. 1938
LM-71	4 Ton Airflow	6	T-36-M-205				

listed for T-36. Note engineering symbol in fourth column.

RZ-68	177"						Detroit
RZ-68	220"						
RX-70	188"	4	8349671	} 8349699	T44-1001	6	Detroit Detroit
RX-71	205"						
RE-31-USA	136"	1-1/2	8479471	} 8479653	T40-1001	6	Detroit
RE-40VA	143"	1 1/2	8481001				



LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

The following letter explains our cover photo. Thanks to Mr. Kitch of Dodge Div.

Dear Mr. Criswell, Jr:

DODGE AIR FLOW TRUCKS

Ref: Paul T. Criswell, Jr. to Chrysler Corp.
12-6-65

According to my records this vehicle was first built in January of 1935 for the Standard Oil Company. The model was K52 Special, on 190 or 200 wheelbase.

In March of 1935, we built some for the Texas Oil Company. The models were K-72XF on 194 wheelbase and K-72XG on 197 wheelbase.

I can find no records of a 1934 job.

This vehicle was built for tank truck operation only.

Brief Specifications

Maximum G.V.W.	22,000 lbs.
Engine - Size	309.63 Cu. In. - 6 Cyl.
- B. H. P.	96 at 3000 RPM
- Torque	200 at 110 RPM
Rear Axle	Clark B800
Transmission	Clark 200 V
Clutch	Borg & Beck 13Q
Overall Width	87.5 Ins.

Enclosed is a photograph of the Standard Oil job.

I am sorry but I do not have any literature on this vehicle.

We are happy to supply you with this information and hope it is sufficient for your needs.

Very truly yours,

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
Dodge Truck Operations

P. W. Kitch
Truck Engineering