

## **Styling**

Virgil Exner, the renowned stylist and chief designer for Chrysler Corporation, used the space and rocket theme as his inspiration for the design of the 1959 Plymouth sport Fury. In an effort to compete with the 1956-58 Fury, Chevrolet, in 1958, introduced the Impala as a special upscale model in both a coupe and convertible. Plymouth reacted, in 1959, by introducing the Sport Fury in both a coupe and convertible and available in many color combinations. At the same time, Plymouth replaced the Belvedere name with the Fury name as the top full-range model line. (The Belvedere name was retained for the mid-line models.) However, in 1959, Chevrolet replaced the Bel Aire name with the Impala name as the top full-range model line and retained the Bel Aire name for the mid-line models. This left the Plymouth Sport Fury without any model for model competition from Chevrolet.

The 1959 Plymouth Sport Fury models are as significant to Plymouth in '59 as was the Milestone Impala to Chevrolet in '58. Chrysler Corporation lacked the money to bring out a totally new design for the last year of separate body/frame construction. As a result, the Sport Fury exterior styling was made to look more like the Imperial. The greatly upgraded interior included swivel seats and a new dashboard. The upholstery, consisting of metallic vinyl and cloth, and the wool carpet created a package that outclassed anything from the low-priced three (Chevrolet, Ford and Plymouth), and many mid and upscale cars, as well as the previous Fury.

## **Engineering**

Chrysler Corporation had always been known for engineering excellence ever since Walter Chrysler started the company in 1924. The 1959 Plymouth Sport Fury is no exception. The engines, transmissions, torsion bar suspension, tapered roller front and rear wheel bearings, power steering and brakes were the same in all Chrysler Corporation cars, thus assuring Plymouth's acknowledged high mechanical quality. The top car magazines for 1959 rated Plymouth best in engineering.

### **Performance**

The 361 CID engine and the 318 CID with Super Pak, used in the Sport Fury, proved to be among the most powerful engines in the low-priced three. All the 1959 car magazines and independent testing verified Plymouth's performance. The "Torqueflite", three-speed automatic transmission, was efficient and durable. The major 1959 car magazines declared the sport Fury handling among the best, superior even to some imported sports cars.

### **Innovation**

Among the 1959 innovations on the low-priced three, only Plymouth offered innovative swivel seats to help when entering and exiting the front seats, a rear-view mirror that automatically compensated for the bright lights of the car behind, push-button heating and air conditioning controls, and instead of shims – cams for adjusting caster and camber. A steering wheel with a padded center was standard on the Sport Fury. Of the low-priced three, for years, only Plymouth had provided such innovations as safety-rim wheels, push-button transmission controls and torsion bar suspension.

### **Craftsmanship**

In 1959, no American car was noted for craftsmanship. They all rusted badly. This may be why so few 1959 automobiles remain. Plymouth had its assembly problems in 1957-58. This probably was due to advancing their scheduled designs planned for 1960 to 1957. Again, industry magazines in 1959 said the Plymouth was well-assembled, much improved over '57 and '58. The Sport Fury with its upgrades was especially well assembled. The upholstery materials were beautiful in quality and in craftsmanship.

### Additional Comments

With the introduction of the unit-body Plymouths for 1960, the Sport Fury was dropped. As a result, the 1959 Sport Fury models are unique. Though the '59 was the first Sport Fury it was reintroduced in mid 1962. Having owned a 1959 Plymouth Sport Fury, purchased new, and having restored a second one, my experience verifies that they were great cars in 1959 and I believe they should now be considered for milestone status. I agree with the following farsighted quote from "Motor Life" magazine, January 1959.

"None of today's low-priced cars are likely to become classics, by and stretch of the definition, but the 1957-59 Plymouths undoubtedly will be pointed to in the years to come as 'great' cars. It is interesting to note that they've won quite a following among car enthusiasts, including those who prefer the sportier types of imported vehicles—and such admiration must be earned, it cannot be obtained through persuasion. A Plymouth to be fully appreciated must be driven, not just looked at or sat in. "What baffles most experts is how can they do any better with the car in 1960!"

