

Where Did They Go?

In the late 1950's, one of the high points of the year for a car obsessed lad here in the Paper City was the week or two in September when the next year car models were introduced at the local dealerships. Louie was one of the few kids in my circle of neighborhood friends who were as crazy about automobiles, as I was. Saturdays in September would find us dropped off downtown, usually by his 95 pound mother wearing a pill box hat and elbow length gloves, driving their 1955 black Cadillac Fleetwood. The two of us would then set out for the dealerships on a tour of in person inspection reviews, promotional model buying spree and a quest for new car brochures. Usually we would start with H. J. Cooper to check out the Chrysler products. Any Imperials on display would draw us in. The gun-site tail lights and the sheer size of these parade floats would be targets for our running commentaries and criticisms. We would always sneak a quick look into the service area to marvel at all the stuffed exotic animals lining the tops of the service bays. Our contempt for Buicks did not prevent us from a quick visit to Otis Boylan Buick just so we could loudly complain about various styling touches on the latest models and laugh. Salesmen would shoot daggers at us. Our collection of car brochures would be growing after leaving Orrin B. Hayes Oldsmobile. We usually did not bother with Art Post Rambler. At Paper City Pontiac Cadillac, we usually were dumb struck by the latest Futurama touches on the Cadillacs. The Pontiac s in the showroom suggested that parents' cars did not have to be boring. Then we would hike over to see the Chevys and Fords on Portage Street. If we still had some bucks in our pockets after buying any promos we may have found and a bag of DeYoungs peanuts, the parts department of DeNooyer Chevrolet could always be counted on to have have some irresistible models for our collections especially Corvettes. Full size Corvettes on the property would be sought out. Then down to Cronley Ford to end the day. Later we would spread all the car brochures on the floor at home to marvel and wonder how much better the next year cars could be. Our new promotional models would be fingered, polished and put on display in our rooms. All those new finned cars parked in dealerships lining Michigan Avenue and Portage Street we saw on these memorable Saturdays became tail lights at some point during the year. For each car, someone answered "What is it going to take to sell you this car today?" with a acceptable counter offer. There really was an ass for every driver's seat. What happened to all those cars? There were 329,808 1958 Mercury s sold; 233,686 1958 Dodges sold and 738,814 1958 Buicks sold. When was the last time you saw any one of these 1,302,308 cars? If you see any of these, it will most likely be one of the top of the line glamour models. Something like one of the 1,139 1958 Dodge Custom Royal Convertible Coupes. Yet there were over 30,000 1958 Dodge Cornet four door sedans produced. Most likely, the sedans went about a dreary service life as family transportation appliances until they slipped into beater-hood, while the convertibles received special attention and care. The sedans were bought and driven by people who just needed a car. They rolled on Sears Interstate tires. Their paint rarely felt the renewal of a Simonize wax job. Like almost all sales years, the majority of 1958 new cars did not have any exceptional equipment or features, so as they slipped away, there was nothing about them to catch the eye of a car enthusiast looking for something cool

to restore. They just continued to slid down the scale from being family cars to old cars to junk.

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