

THE LARK IS DEAD: A sort of last gasp in the FAPA by Bill Danner, R.D. 1, Kennerdell, Pa., intended for the 99th mailing.

That article of Dan McPhail's about the Rolls-Royce reminds me of those programs on radio during which listeners phone and write in all sorts of misinformation to be broadcast. I can conclude only that the individual who gave Dan this stuff either was himself misinformed or was pulling Dan's leg. The engine specifications and such may be right, for all I know, but the rest--well!

The idea that the Roman numerals after the word "Phantom" have any slightest connection with seating capacity is utterly ridiculous. Rolls has never built a Phantom VII, though if Homo Tewler refrains long enough from wiping out all life on earth there may some day be one. It would no doubt come as a shock to the firm to find that after all the expense of tooling up, it had "decided to build only eight". On the Phantom V, as on all the custom models, the only standard equipment is that concerned with operation of the car; everything else is optional. Therefore, as with all true custom-built cars, there is no specific price. The sky is the limit.

I am not sure of all the dates, but the chronology of the Phantoms is something like this:

PHANTOM I Introduced about 1926 to replace the Silver Ghost, which was built continuously since 1906. Essentially the Ghost chassis with a new, large pushrod ohv six engine.

PHANTOM II Came out around 1929, with refinements in the engine and chassis, with the familiar cantilever rear springs replaced by semi-elliptics.

PHANTOM III A large V-12 introduced around 1936. One example, shown in the 1937 Paris auto show, sold for \$47,000.

PHANTOM IV A large straight eight. Only one of these was built and it is owned by the Queen. Pistons, rods, bearings, etc., are all interchangeable with those of a four-cylinder engine built for the armed forces. It may be these facts, garbled, that led Dan to think that only eight Phantom Vs were built.

PHANTOM V The current custom car. I don't know how many have been made, but there is a dealer in Miami who has sold an average of 50 per year since its introduction. Doubtless most of these are Silver Clouds, though. This is the successor to the Silver Dawn, introduced shortly after the war as the first Rolls in history with a Rolls-built standard body. When the Dawn was introduced it sold for a trifle over \$10,000; the price of the Cloud is now around \$16,000.

Since the first two-, three- and four-cylinder models built around the turn of the century there have also been the "Baby" Rolls (20hp, 20-25hp and 25-30hp; see Stef 38) and the pre-war Wraith and post-war Silver Wraith, both developed from the Baby. All of these are custom models--true customs, not Hollywood Kustoms, made by swapping parts from various cars and adding chrome gingerbread.

Before the war Rolls produced the Baby and later the Wraith concurrently with the Ghost and the later Phantoms. Since the war, however, it has had only one engine (for passenger-car use) in production at a time, so the Cloud uses the same V-8 engine as the Phantom V. A slightly souped-up version is used in the Bentley, which has been built by Rolls since about 1934. I might mention that the Silver Wraith, and possibly also the Wraith, had a six-cylinder engine which, while developed from the ohv 20hp engine, is of the F-head variety, with overhead inlet valves and side exhaust valves.

In the case of all but the Dawn and the Cloud Rolls builds and sells

only the chassis. The body is built, by any one of numerous custom-body builders in England, to the specifications and whims of the buyer. Possibly now Rolls contracts for the body and delivers the finished car to the buyer, but in the past it was not uncommon for the purchaser to take delivery of the chassis and drive it himself to the body factory, so that no one else might drive his car.

As I mentioned above, the sky is the limit in custom bodies, not only in fittings but also in price. More than one have been built with toilets concealed in the rear seat for the convenience of the elderly ladies who bought them. Rolls chassis have never been cheap, but many of the bodies fitted to them cost a great deal more. I would guess that \$25,000 is about the minimum for a Phantom V, and would be for a car ordered by someone sadly lacking in imagination or practically impoverished.

"... the Phantom VII, a 7-passenger limousine." (Ahahahahaha!)

Ted White made a point of asking for answers to a couple of questions. As mentioned in the article about speedometers, there is no fixed relationship between the odometer and the speedometer. The error, whether plus or minus, could be the same for both, but there is no reason to suppose that it is. It would be entirely possible for the odometer to read low and the speedometer to read high, though I imagine this condition is very rare.

As for British speedometers, I don't know the answer. The Met is my third British car, and the third with a speedometer that waves gently back and forth at practically all speeds. In addition, the one on the '50 Anglia gave up the ghost at about 10,000 miles and had to be repaired. The one on the Morris (which I bought second-hand) after a couple of months went haywire and would indicate 60mph when the car was crawling up the driveway in low, and hit the upper limit soon as I got into second. The one in the Met used to stay at zero in cold weather until the car warmed up, and frequently when I was driving about 50 it would show 10. This winter it seems to have gotten over this quirk and just waves continuously.

The cause for this waving in a U.S. speedometer is slight unwinding of the flexible shaft, caused in turn by lack of lubrication. If renewing the lubricant doesn't fix the trouble a new shaft will. But British speedometers seem to have this habit right from the start and it may be that all their shafts are defective (unwinding sufficient to cause this trouble cannot be seen) or that the pointers are not damped. It hardly seems that this can be the whole reason, for U.S. speedometers were formerly not damped and yet indicated speed quite steadily. The one in the Nash, for instance, is completely undamped, so that a slight blow with the hand on the case will send it up to 90mph., yet in use it is perfectly steady.

A periodic squeaking indicates a dry shaft before any damage can be done. Lubricating it is quite easy: Simply unscrew the collar on the conduit from the speedometer body and swing the shaft out from under the panel. The shaft may then be pulled out of the conduit, having a big rag handy to keep it from the upholstery. Wipe off the old dried oil and dirt and relubricate by dipping into a can of transmission lubricant, and allowing the excess to drip off. Replace it in the conduit, being sure that the squared end is perfectly dry before inserting into the speedometer again. The slightest trace of oil inside the speedometer drum will cause the sort of trouble I had with the Morris.