



1953 NASH-HEALEY

ON THE FACE of it, the combination was ridiculous! Donald Healey had started out during World War I as a pilot in the Royal Air Force, settling down afterward to design and race fast automobiles. By 1946 he was building cars, albeit in minuscule numbers, under his own name. And always, speed and agility were the hallmark of Healey's automobiles.

Nash on the other hand, appeared almost stodgy by comparison. When old Charlie Nash had left the presidency of General Motors in 1916 to buy out the Thomas B. Jeffery Company, his intent was to build a sturdy, comfortable, medium-priced car; and so he did. His Nash Six, introduced for the 1918 season, was a well-engineered, high-quality automobile—in effect, an improved Buick. And although in later years Nash Motors had been among the pioneers in the construction of economy cars like the Nash "600" (see *SIA* #60) and the Rambler (*SIA* #24), the company's reputation still rested to a great degree upon the medium-priced Ambassador series, lineal descendant of that first Nash. (You'll find a '52 Ambassador drive-

Report, written by former Nash staffer John Conde, in *SIA* #46, by the way.)

Now the Ambassador was an excellent automobile—big and roomy, cushy and comfortable, and built, as the saying goes, like a brick chicken house. Competitive in price with the Buick Special, it rested on a wheelbase of 121 inches and was powered by a 234.8-cubic-inch, overhead-valve six, a seven-main-bearing engine notable for both smoothness and durability. But nobody ever pretended that the Nash was a fast car, nor that its powerplant had been designed with hotshot performance in mind.

Yet there was a certain logic to the Nash-Healey "marriage." True, it came about quite by chance (see sidebar, page 14); yet there were compelling reasons for the combination from everyone's standpoint, including that of the British government:

- Donald Healey needed to develop

name recognition in the potentially lucrative American market.

- Nash needed a showroom "draw" to spark its sales drive.

• The British government desperately needed American dollars, obtainable only through international trade.

Using its Riley-powered Silverstone roadster as a base, the Donald Healey Motor Company, Ltd., set about to develop the Nash-engined, Anglo-American hybrid. Donald Healey recalls work weeks that averaged some 55 hours; and by October 1950—nine months after the project was conceived, by the way—prototype Nash-Healeys were ready for display at the London and Paris Motor Shows. By that time production of the Silverstone had ceased, as Healey's tiny Warwick factory toiled up to build the new car. Four months later, at the Chicago Automobile Show, Americans got their first glimpse of the new Nash-Healey.

What had taken place in those few short months was this:

- The Silverstone body was modified for greater width.
- In order to provide clearance for the

relatively tall Nash engine, an air intake was fitted to the "bonnet lid," to use the British terminology.

• Nash provided a shortened torque tube and driveshaft to fit the Silverstone chassis.

• Donald Healey tweaked the 115-horsepower Nash engine, raising its output to 125 at 4000 rpm. Twin 1¾-inch S.U. sidedraft carburetors replaced the original single downdraft Carter, while a high-compression aluminum cylinder head and a special camshaft were fitted.

• The Silverstone chassis was modified, using the traditional Healey trailing-link front suspension combined with Nash's coil springs at the rear, the axle being located by means of a track bar. Wheelbase stood at 102 inches.

• A sleek, all-aluminum body was fashioned by Panelcraft, of Birmingham. Overall length was 170 inches.

The new car bore no resemblance whatever to the traditional Nash lines, except for one feature. In order to make the car recognizable as a Nash, company president George Mason insisted upon the use of what Donald Healey still refers to as the "Joe E. Brown" grille of the '51 Ambassador.

At that time, however, Nash had a contract with Pinin Farina, of Turin, Italy, for the design of the company's 1952 line. Perhaps in order to bring the Nash-Healey's styling into conformity with the Ambassador and Statesman series, perhaps because the aluminum Panelcraft body was subject to nicks and dimples, or perhaps for prestige reasons, the Italian firm was commissioned both to design and build a new Nash-Healey body. The handsome new model made its debut at the Chicago Automobile Show in February 1952. Not long afterward the engine was bored an eighth of an inch, raising its displacement to 252.6 cubic inches and its output—as modified for the Nash-Healey—to 140 horsepower.

It was, as Donald Healey has noted, a

complicated way of manufacturing automobiles. Engines, transmissions and certain other mechanical components were shipped from the Nash factory at Kenosha, Wisconsin, to the Healey plant in Warwick, not far south of Coventry, England. There they were fitted to the Healey chassis and transhipped to the Pinin Farina works in Turin. From there, the completed cars were forwarded to the United States; for the Nash-Healey was intended solely for the American market.

place for styling at the prestigious Italian International Concours d'Elegance. It is not surprising, then, that 1954 production was confined entirely to coupes, which by then had been given a smart new roofline reminiscent of the then-current Nash sedans. A few roadsters were evidently registered as 1954 models, but according to factory sources they were in fact leftover 1953 cars.

Meanwhile the car—extensively modified as to both body and mechan-

ics—had been racking up a creditable record for itself on the European racing circuit, despite the fact that its basic design was that of a gran turismo automobile rather than a racing car. Its heavy engine gave it a pronounced tendency to "plow" on hard cornering; but its directional stability was excellent and the Nash-designed rear suspension proved to be superior to that of the Healey Silverstone. It was less prone to wheel-hop, and it hung on longer under hard cornering forces. And the Nash-Healey also had the advantage of an engine that was half again as large as the Silverstone's Riley mill. Held over from the



America's First Postwar Sports Car

The Italian-bodied car was far more attractive than its predecessor. The grille that had so offended Donald Healey was replaced with a less obtrusive design with inset headlamps, a feature that would be echoed by the Nash Ambassador and Statesman sedans in 1955; and in general the lines were more pleasing and graceful than the original model. Construction this time was of steel, although aluminum was retained for the hood ("bonnet," in Donald Healey's vocabulary) and the trunk ("boot") lid. As before, upholstery was of the finest leather, covering deep, foam rubber cushions.

In 1953 a handsome coupe, built on a stretched chassis of 108 inches wheelbase—six inches longer than the roadster—was added to the line. It proved to be more popular than the open car, especially after it was awarded first

Silverstone was the superb, Healey-designed "trailing link" front suspension. In this system each front wheel was mounted on a "swinging arm" pivoted far ahead of the wheel centerline and cushioned against a coil spring, giving it excellent road-holding and cornering qualities.

A number of the Nash-Healey's competitors were able to outstrip its performance on the straight stretches; but Donald Healey was to comment following the 1953 LeMans race that his drivers "reported that they could easily overtake all the other makes...through the corners, although such cars as the Mercedes, Cunningham and Aston-Martin were fitted with most elaborate and expensive independent rear ends."

Donald Healey, in his fifties by that time, was still active on the racing circuit, both as driver and engineer. He

NASH-HEALEY

continued

learned early-on that certain improvements were in order. If the Nash-Healey was to be successful in competition. The oil overheated, for instance, when the engine was run for extended periods at full-bore. Redesigned piston rings and a different camshaft solved that problem. Nash's stock Bendix brakes also left something to be desired under the extreme conditions of the track, and were replaced for competition purposes by Girling twin-trailing-shoe binders with Mintex linings.

As recorded in the very first issue of

Special Interest Autos, the Nash-Healey's competition record began at the 1950 LeMans classic, with a single pre-production car placing fourth, its average speed clocked at 87.64 miles an hour for the course. The sheer length of that contest—24 hours—was murderous to smaller, more fragile engines; of the 66 cars that started that particular race, 37 failed to finish. But it was a piece of cake to the Nash-Healey, notwithstanding damage to both suspension and brakes, sustained when the car was rear-ended by a Delage.

Returning to LeMans in 1951 the Nash-Healey placed sixth, behind a Jaguar, two Talbots and a pair of Aston-Martins—and well ahead of a couple of Ferraris. Not bad, for a car that hadn't

been intended for competition in the first place!

The year 1952 marked the Nash-Healey's high point at LeMans, where it placed first in its class (3001-5000 cc) at an average speed of 91.5 miles an hour. Overall the Nash-Healey ran third, behind a brace of Mercedes and ahead of such prestigious marques as Talbot, Jaguar, Aston-Martin, Ferrari and Cunningham. A remarkable sidelight to this record was the car's 13-mile-per-gallon fuel mileage, and the fact that it burned not a drop of oil over the 24-hour course.

A second, highly modified Nash-Healey, entered in that same race, was less fortunate. Reworked by Thompson and Taylor, of Brooklands, its engine was fitted with a hemi-head designed by Healey consultant A.C. "Sam" Sampietro. Its output, rated at 200 horsepower, must have created enormous stresses, and the car retired early from the race, nursing a broken rocker shaft.

Two Nash-Healeys were entered in the 1952 Mille Miglia. The first, driven by Donald Healey and his son Geoffrey, became involved in a spectacular crash when it aquaplaned on wet pavement, causing Donald Healey to lose control. Fortunately, there were no injuries. The second car fared better, placing fourth in its class—seventh overall—behind the winning Ferrari and two Mercedes.

The Healeys, father and son, had never been satisfied with the Borg-Warner overdrive. Too much time was lost while it engaged itself. Accordingly, for the 1953 Mille Miglia Geoffrey

Healey fitted an electrically actuated Laycock de Normanville overdrive to the car. Unfortunately, brake failure brought the Nash-Healey's participation in that event to an early end.

The Nash-Healey's final, factory-sponsored appearance at LeMans, in 1953, met with mixed results. Again, two cars were entered, and again, one fell quickly by the wayside, this time with a discombobulated oil pump. The other car ended up in eleventh place, though its speed was actually faster than the third-place car of the year before. And again, to finish the race at all was an achievement; 35 of the original 60 participants had packed it in before the event was over.

But by that time Donald Healey's attention was diverted elsewhere, to the Austin-Healey. The potential for big profits was much greater there. It had never been Nash's intention to produce the Nash-Healey in quantity. Rather, the car was intended as a prestige item, a source of good public relations copy. Following the phenomenal racing successes of 1952, the company had put on an advertising blitz that cost, according to Donald Healey, more than the entire investment in the Nash-Healey project! The company even hung the LeMans label on Ambassador and Statesman sedans equipped with the dual-barrel "power-pack" carburetor.

There has been speculation over the years as to why Nash failed to push its sporty, high-performance model. Some have ventured to say that it was because Nash dealers didn't know how to



sell an automobile of this nature, or because the typical Nash buyer wasn't of a mind to buy such a piece of machinery. The truth seems to be, however, that the company didn't want to build very many of the sporty little cars, because they lost a bundle on every one of them! It is probable that each car cost Nash at least nine grand—nearly double the port-of-entry price. In any case, annual production, even at its peak (1953), was only 162 cars.

The coup de grace came with the American Motors merger. When Nash and Hudson joined forces in 1954 there was no place in the scheme of things for the Nash-Healey. The last car left Pinin Farina's plant in August 1954.

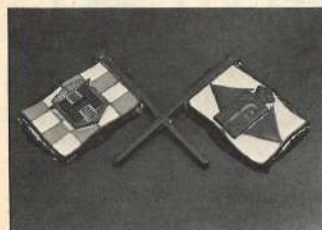
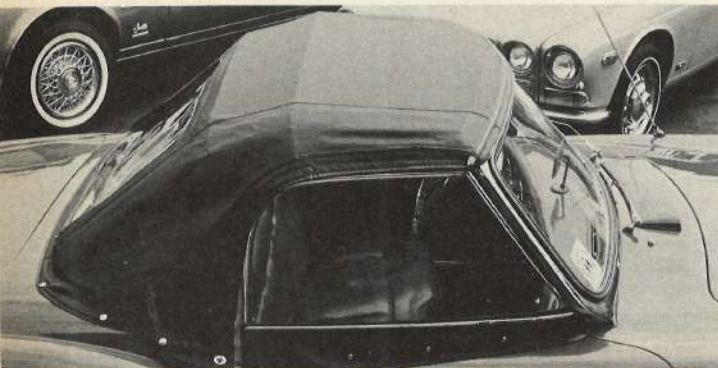
With a production total of 506 cars over its three-and-a-half year lifespan,

the Nash-Healey could hardly be called a sales sensation. Yet it had an importance far out of proportion to its numbers.

- Enough interest was generated to make the Nash-Healey an excellent showroom "draw," attracting potential buyers of Nash's production models. Evidently this was precisely what Nash president George Mason had in mind when the project was first conceived.

- The Nash-Healey's unexpectedly creditable record on the racing circuit gave another, badly needed boost to Nash sales.

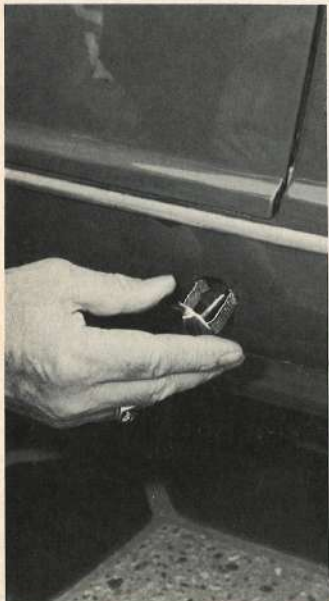
- Although its economic impact was limited, the Nash-Healey managed to generate some desperately needed American dollars, helping to redress Britain's unfavorable balance of trade.



Top: In true sports car fashion of the day, Nash eschewed roll-up windows in favor of side curtains. Also in vogue was snug roadster top with blind quarters for restricted visibility. Above: Rear deck sports delicately enameled crossed flags of Nash and car's body builder, Pinin Farina of Italy.

Comparative Specifications 1953 Nash-Healey, Chevrolet Corvette and Jaguar XK120

	Nash-Healey	Chev. Corvette	Jaguar XK120
Engine			
Cyls./valves	6-ohv	6-ohv	6-dohc
Bore/stroke	3.50/4.375	3.56/3.94	3.27/4.17
Displacement	252.6 cubic inches	235.5 cubic inches	210.0 cubic inches
Compr. ratio (-:1)	8.1	8.0	8.0
BHP @ RPM	140 @ 4000	150 @ 4200	160 @ 5200
Torque @ RPM	230 @ 2000	223 @ 2400	195 @ 2500
Induction	2-Carter horizontal carburetors	3 Carter side-draft carburetors	2-SU carburetors
Transmission	3-speed manual with overdrive	2-speed Powerglide automatic	4-speed manual
Final drive ratio	4.10:1 conventional 2.87:1 overdrive	3.55:1	3.77:1
Chassis			
Wheelbase	102 inches	102 inches	100 inches
Overall length	175.75 inches	167 inches	173.5 inches
Front tread	53 inches	57 inches	51 inches
Rear tread	54.875 inches	59 inches	50 inches
Tire size	6.40 x 15	6.70 x 15	6.00 x 16
Body construction	Metal	Fiberglass	Metal
Performance			
0-50	7.9 seconds	7.7 seconds	7.3 seconds
Stdg ¼ mile	18.0 seconds	17.9 seconds	17.0 seconds
Top speed (factory est.)	108 mph	107 mph	124 mph
Price	\$5,108 poe	\$3,515 fob	\$3,945 poe



Top: Donald Healey pulled off his usual masterful styling work in the Nash-Healey. Car looks good from about every angle. Far left: Metal plugs in rocker panels conceal jacking points. Above: Car is so well proportioned it's difficult to gauge its actual size. Left: Hood release also serves as decorative mascot.



Left: Inboard headlights were carried over to '55-'57 Nashes. Below: Rear fenders have slight kick-ups that just hint at being fins.



NASH-HEALEY

continued

• Most important, Donald Healey was able to establish name-recognition on this side of the Atlantic, while generating the funds and acquiring the understanding of the American market that would, in the years that followed, make possible the phenomenal success of the Austin-Healey.

And of course, a few lucky collectors, like the owners of our DriveReport cars, are left with one of the most desirable of all fifties cars!

Driving Impressions

We used not one or two, but *three* Nash-Healeys in the preparation of this driveReport. Car number one, the subject of Vince Manocchi's fine photography, is a gorgeous red 1953 roadster belonging to Steve LeFevre, of Fallbrook, California. Two accidents and six years under an apple tree had very nearly destroyed it; and when the late Stan Standley, of Salem, Oregon, set about to restore it his friends suggested that there was a place for him at the local funny farm.

But Stan brought the car back, after three years of concentrated effort, and even took a first with it in a concours at Cottage Grove, Oregon. The flaming red finish was not, by the way, a stock color. Asked why he painted the car in that hue, Standley—in a letter now in Steve LeFevre's possession—explained, "The reason it's red is 'cause I happen to like RED!" It's impossible to quarrel with Stan's taste, though a picky (and knowledgeable) judge might dock the car a point or two for authenticity.

Steve LeFevre acquired the Nash-Healey some three years ago from another Oregon collector, and although he has other cars, this one is so "special" to him that he commissioned a portrait of it by the noted automotive artist, Ken Eberts. It's not kept under wraps, how-

ever. It's a "driver," still good for better than a hundred miles an hour, according to its proud owner.

But we recorded the driving impressions from two other Nash-Healeys, a 1953 roadster belonging to Gordon McGregor of Carmichael, California, and a 1954 coupe owned by Ray Hren, of nearby Roseville.

The McGregor car is one that many SIA readers have seen, for it appeared some years ago, along with Audrey Hep-

burn, William Holden and Humphrey Bogart, in the motion picture *Sabrina*. It's a 35,000-mile car, all original except that a white finish has replaced the factory-applied silver. The red leather upholstery still looks like new, as does the matching carpet.

We found lots of leg room in the roadster. In true sports car fashion the seats are low; yet they're comfortable. There's even a handy armrest that folds out of the backrest. The steering column

Donald Healey Tells How the Nash-Healey Came About

The fitting of the heavy, sturdy, relatively slow-turning Nash Ambassador engine to a sports car always struck us as incongruous; and last year, when we interviewed the Nash-Healey's originator, Donald Healey (see SIA #67), we asked him how it came about.

Mr Healey explained that his little company had been building a car called the Silverstone, the first true sports car to bear the Healey name. Powered by a four-banger Riley engine, it had racked up a rather good record on European tracks. But then in 1949 a special Silverstone was built for Briggs Cunningham, this one employing the new, overhead-valve Cadillac V-8 in place of the Riley mill. It was a sensational automobile, and Donald Healey was eager to build more like it—provided he could get the engines.

Accordingly, Mr. Healey boarded the liner *Queen Elizabeth*, bound for the United States, intent upon meeting with Cadillac chief (and later GM president) Ed Cole. Donald Healey recounted the story to us:

"Aboard ship I saw this old guy with a stereo camera. I was a camera 'nut,' so I asked him what sort of results he got from this unusual equipment. He replied, 'Come down to the cabin this evening for a drink, and I'll show you.' So he said, 'I'd better introduce myself. I'm George Mason, president of the Nash-Kelvinator Corporation.' And I said, 'I'm Donald Healey, president of the smallest motorcar maker in the world!' 'Mason asked me what I was going to

America for, and I told him, 'To get engines from Cadillac!' So then I stayed with the Masons while I was in Detroit. And when I left the house to keep my appointment at Cadillac, Mason said to me, 'If you don't get engines from Ed Cole, come back and see me!' So that's how the Nash-Healey came about; Cole told me they hadn't got enough engines even to satisfy their own truck line at GM.

"At that time," Healey told SIA, "I was just about ready for the chop, as far as the bank was concerned. I owed them about 50,000 pounds, which was a lot of money to me. All of my father's money and my money were gone. So Nash-Kelvinator investigated my financial position and then said, 'Well, that's nothing. We'll give you an order to build some Nash-Healey cars, and you can pay us back in motorcars.' A very nice deal with a very nice company!

"He was a grand chap, George Mason. A very public-spirited man. He was chief of the cancer foundation at the time, I think.

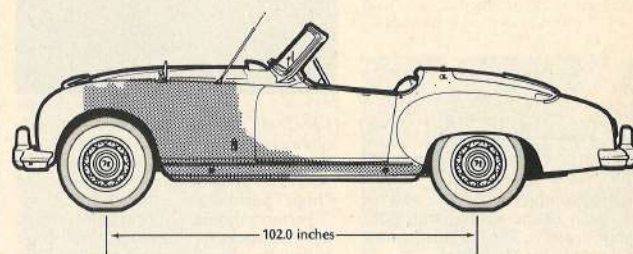
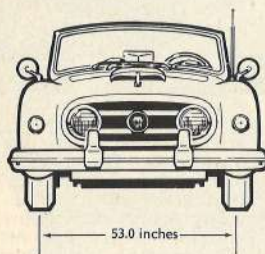
"Mason introduced me to his right-hand man, George Romney. I had some very nice visits with Romney; one of the greatest men I've met. When he spoke of running for president, some years later, I thought, 'Well, now, George, I thought you knew better than that!' That must be the most thankless job in the world. Terrible job! You've got to be a dedicated politician to take that step!

"What a fine chap, George Romney! If you ever run across him, will you mention that I talked about him?"

specifications

Illustrations by Russell von Sauer, The Graphic Automobile Studio

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1953 Nash-Healey Roadster

Price When new: \$5,128 p.o.e.
Standard equipment: Overdrive, "Weather-Eye" heater, instruments including speedometer, tachometer, vacuum gauge, oil pressure, temperature and fuel gauges, overdrive indicator light, directional signals, locking fuel box, vsw tires, cigarette lighter, dual windshield wipers.

ENGINE:
Type: 6-cylinder in-line, overhead valves.
Bore & stroke: 3.5 x 4.375.
Displacement: 252.6 cubic inches (4138cc).
Max. bhp @ rpm: 140 @ 4000.
Max. torque @ rpm: 230 @ 2000.
Compression ratio: 8.1:1*.
Induction system: Twin Carter horizontal carburetors.
Lubrication system: Full pressure to all bearings, pins; gear-driven oil pump.
Number main bearings: 7.
Electrical system: Delco-Remy, 6-volt.

CLUTCH:
Type: Single dry disc.
Disc diameter: 10 inches.
Actuation: Mechanical, foot pedal.

TRANSMISSION:
Type: 3-speed selective (Nash-built) with Borg-Warner overdrive.
Ratios: 1st 2.57:1.
2nd: 1.52:1.
3rd: 1.00:1.
Rev: N/A.

DIFFERENTIAL:
Type: Hypoid; torque-tube drive.
Ratio: 4.1:1.
Drive axles: Semi-floating.

STEERING:
Type: Recirculating ball, "walking-beam" type.
Turns lock to lock: 3.25.
Ratio: N/A.
Turn circle: 17 feet, 6 inches.

BRAKES:
Type: Bendix Servo, hydraulic 4-wheel drum type.
Drum diameter: 10 inches.
Total swept area: 171 square inches.

CHASSIS & BODY:
Frame: Box-type.
Body construction: 19 mil plus gauge sheet steel, butt-welded to form a one-piece unit.
Body style: 3-passenger roadster.

SUSPENSION:
Front: Healey independent trailing link with coil springs, sway bar.
Rear: Coil springs with track bar.
Tires: 6.40 x 15.
Wheels: 15-inch pressed steel.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES:
Wheelbase: 102 inches.
Overall length: 170.75 inches.
Overall height: 48.65 inches.
Overall width: 64 inches.
Front tread: 53 inches.
Rear tread: 54.875 inches.
Ground clearance: 6 inches.
Curb weight: 2975 pounds.

CAPACITIES:
Crankcase: 6 quarts.
Cooling system: 17 quarts, including "Weather-Eye"
Fuel tank: 20 gallons.

PERFORMANCE**
Top speed: 104.6 mph (average).
Standing start: 180.0 seconds (average).
1/4 mile: 18.0 seconds.
0-30 mph: 3.8 seconds.
0-40 mph: 5.9 seconds.
0-50 mph: 7.9 seconds.
0-60 mph: 11.5 seconds.
0-70 mph: 15.8 seconds.
0-80 mph: 22.6 seconds.

*Some sources say 8.25:1. Figure shown is taken from Nash-Healey service manual.

**Performance figures from *Road and Track* road test, June 1954 issue.



Nash-Healey is no slouch when it comes to performance. The cars did very well at LeMans, placing first in class at that 24-hour grnd in 1952. In stock form they'll crack 0-50 times in under eight seconds.

Right: Perhaps the only Mickey Mouse bit of styling on the car: non-functioning air scoops in the rear fenders. Far right: Gas filler is neatly hidden away below sheet metal.



NASH-HEALEY

continued

has a telescopic adjustment, but we didn't touch it; the setting was right, just as we found it. The only thing missing is a pair of bucket seats!

The car had been recently tuned, and it started on the first kick of the starter, located—in keeping with standard Nash practice—under the clutch. The clutch is stiff, as befits a performance-oriented automobile. The gearshift lever is a tiny stalk topped with a minuscule knob. Action is smooth, easy, and com-

paratively crisp, though the throws—again, in characteristic Nash fashion—are long. Indeed, the seat cushion is notched to accommodate "low" and "high" positions.

Performance might best be described as "enthusiastic"; the car's acceleration belies its age. A few blocks from the McGregor home we slipped onto the freeway, and at 1800 on the tach, dropped into overdrive. Immediately the tachometer needle fell to just under 1300 rpm and a little light came on, signaling that the overdrive was in operation. Nice touch. Even better is the "kickdown" switch. Unlike other over-

drive-equipped cars we've driven, this one has a little button for that purpose, located at the center of the steering post. (A chrome ring sounds the horn.) A four-speed transmission would be preferable to the three-and-overdrive, in our book; but of course Nash didn't manufacture such a unit when this car was built. And the overdrive makes an effective substitute for the fourth gear.

Steering is quick, positive, and lighter than we expected, even in parking maneuvers. Brakes are excellent. There's no power assist, nor is one needed.

Turn signals are activated by means



Far left: Speedo also houses amp light, fuel and temp gauges while tachometer is also home to a vacuum gauge. Left: Top is manually operated; goes up and down without too many gymnastics. Below: Non-cancelling directional lever sticks straight out of dash. Below center: Built to compete with Jaguar. Nash-Healey was very expensive for its time, yet Nash probably lost money on every one they had built. Bottom: Dash groups instruments in two big round pods directly in front of driver.



of a toggle on the dashboard, to the driver's left. It's a nuisance, since it's a non-self-cancelling device and we're cursed with a bad memory. Instruments are housed in two large, round dials. The one on the left includes the standard complement of speedometer/odometer, oil pressure, temperature and fuel gauges, along with an idiot light to keep tabs on the generator. Below the tachometer in the other dial is a vacuum gauge—a handy device, and doubtless one of the reasons McGregor is able to maintain an average of 22 miles to the gallon, even at fairly brisk highway speeds.

We drove with the top down, but

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The Man With the Mania



photos by Anderson Photography

"When I have seven more of them," observes Leonard Nelson (Mac) McGrady, "I'll have ten percent of all the Nash-Healeys ever built. That's what I'm looking to do!"

"I picked up the first one in '72," McGrady continues. "And then another, for a parts car; and then—well, I've just been picking them up. I do like Nash-Healeys!"

Some of Mac's cars appear to be basket cases, while others are fully restored, ready for the show circuit; and there are cars to fit every category in between. Some are rare examples, too. For instance, there is racing car number eleven, one of those prepared by Donald Healey for competition at Le Mans and the Mille Miglia. Not surprisingly, that one has taken more than its share of beatings; a new body is being fabricated for it now.

Even more unusual is experimental car



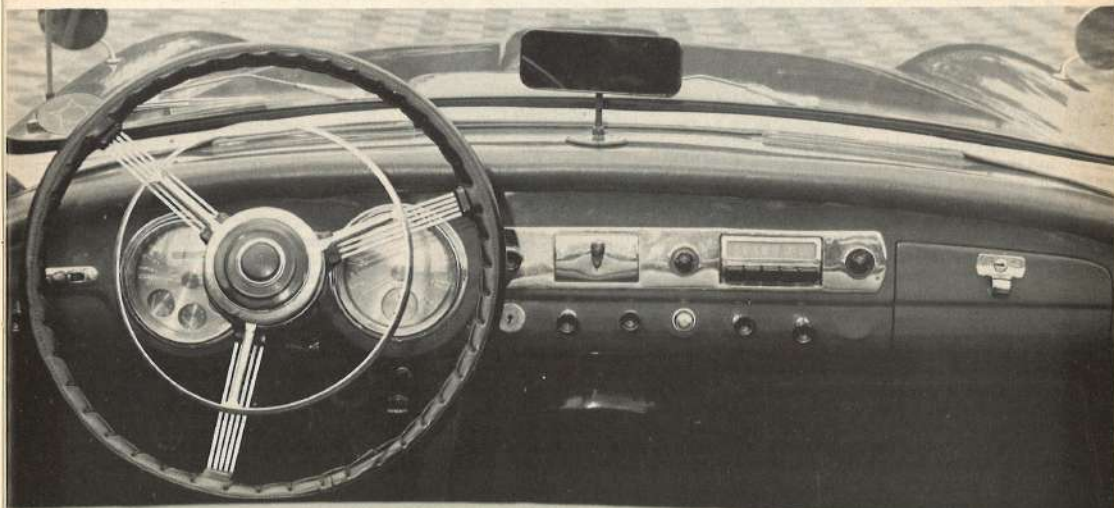
For Leonard Nelson McGrady of Aberdeen, Maryland, only one make of car will do. He's the undisputed, all-time champion Nash-Healey collector of the world.

number X-7, fitted with an aluminum body by Tickford—the only Nash-Healey ever to bear coachwork by that firm. Originally finished in red with a white leather interior, it is a convertible with roll-up windows and a power top, unlike the production roadsters. An automatic transmission and a highly modified engine fitted with a McCulloch supercharger likewise set it apart from other cars in the series. The Tickford car is in rough shape now, but once restored it will be a highly desirable and very valuable automobile.

A couple of McGrady's cars have been equipped with the 327-cubic-inch V-8 that powered the last of the Nash Ambassadors, in 1957. It's interesting to speculate what Donald Healey might have been able to do at Le Mans, if he had that engine to work with!

McGrady's collection isn't all Nash-Healeys, however. A rare Hudson Italia is presently undergoing a ground-up restoration; and Mac also owns one of the fabled Die Valkyries. Built by Spohn Carrosseriebau, of Germany, to an exotic design by Brooks Stevens, the Die Valkyrie body was fitted to a stretched Cadillac chassis and featured a removable forward roof section—precursor to the modern T-Top—and a combination grille and front bumper. The car was first shown at the 1954 Paris salon. (You'll find a Die Valkyrie pictured in SIA #20, by the way, in connection with an article about the Spohn coachworks.)

But the car that appears on Leonard Nelson McGrady's letterhead is his first love: a Nash-Healey roadster, just like our driveReport car.



Right: Nash's seating position is typically sports car, demanding "arms out" driving style. **Below:** Trunk is much bigger than on average sports car of the time; spare is stashed below carpeting. **Bottom:** Big difference in Nash-Healey coupe and roadster comes in length; coupe is nearly a foot longer.



Nash-Healey Production Figures

Panelcraft Body: (1951 model)		
1950	36	
1951	68	
Total	104	
Pinin Farina body:		
1952	150	(all roadsters)
1953	162	(roadsters and coupes)
1954	90	(all coupes)
Total	402	

Grand total, both series: 506

Source: American Motors interdepartmental memo by Carl Chakmakian, addressed to John Conde, dated November 18, 1958.

Above left: Overdrive is activated by pushing button in center of horn ring. **Above:** Thanks to dual carbs and tweaks by Donald Healey, sturdy Nash six develops 20 more horsepower than same engine in '53 Ambassador. **Below left:** Healey-designed independent front suspension allowed large wheel movement without change in caster or camber angles. **Below:** Attractive rear end is protected by one of the few adequate bumpers ever placed on a sports car.



All true, of course; but it's also true that the Jag was no match for the Nash-Healey when it came to delivering dependable service with minimal maintenance. Nor was the Jag one to readily forgive the American tendency to pop the transmission into high gear and leave it there. The tremendous torque of the Ambassador engine torques that unfortunate habit with aplomb.

In either form, coupe or roadster, the Nash-Healey is an impressive automobile, beautifully designed, meticulously constructed, and sheer delight to drive!

Acknowledgements and Bibliography
American Motors Family Album (first edition); Automotive Industries, February 15, 1951; Peter Browning and Les Needham, Healeys and Austin-Healeys; Geoffrey Healey, Austin-Healey: The Story of the Big Healeys; Geoffrey

Healey, Healey: The Specials; Nash-Healey sales literature; "Power to Win" (The story of the 1952 LeMans race, published by Nash); Road and Track, June 1954 and January 1955 (Nash-Healey road tests); Graham Robson, The Big Healeys; Joe Wherry, "The New Nash-Healey," Auto Age, April 1953. Our thanks to Bob Aaron, historian, Nash Car Club of America, Hubbard, Ohio; Ralph Dunwoodie, Sun Valley, Nevada; Mike Lamm, Stockton, California; Vince Manocchi, Azusa, California; Leonard McGrady, Aberdeen, Maryland; Norman Nock, Stockton, California; Roy and Ellie Stevens, Fallbrook, California; Capt. C.J. Logue, Fallbrook, California; Don and Vanessa Hain, Fallbrook, California. Special thanks to Steve LeFevre, Fallbrook, California; Gordon McGregor, Carmichael, California; Ray Hren, Roseville, California.

Steve LeFevre Recalls Another Nash-Healey

Steve LeFevre was a student at the University of South Dakota when our drive-Report car was new; and his father was a Nash dealer. So Steve's love affair with the sportiest and fastest of all Nashes goes back some 30 years.

Steve recalls an incident in 1953, when his father's personal car was one of the newly introduced Nash-Healey coupes:

"I was playing football for the University of South Dakota. One evening, returning from a game, we stopped at my home town where the coach let a couple of us off the bus. I begged my dad to let me take his car and drive to a town about 60 miles away, where this other fellow lived—and where we had dates for the evening.

"It was 3:00 in the morning by the time we took the girls home. Then my friend said, 'Boy, this is some car! The big thing at that time was zero-to-sixty, and how fast

you could go in a block; and this kid asked about that. So we did a block; must have been doing about 60 at the end of it, and kept right on going—up to about 90 after two or three blocks.

"Coming down out of a side driveway I saw lights. We were really rolling by that time, and I said to the other guy, 'What kind of cars do the police drive here?' He said, 'Fords,' and I said, 'We have just been had!'

"I slowed up, and the cop pulled me over. I rolled down the window and he came up and began to stutter, 'Wh-what k-kind of c-car is this?' he asked, and he got down and lay on his belly in front of the headlights and looked at that Healey suspension. And all he said when he got back up was, 'You boys better go home and go to bed. You could get in trouble with a car like this!'

NASH-HEALEY

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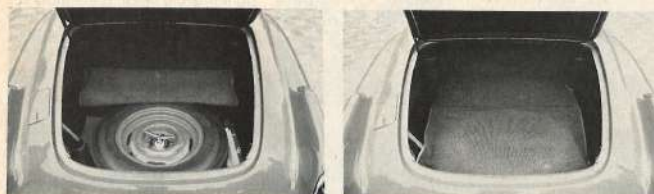
Gordon demonstrated for us how easily it is operated. It's spring-loaded, making raising and lowering a fast, one-man operation. Plexiglas windows, stowed in the trunk when not in use, slip easily in place, transforming the roadster into a snug little coupe.

To top off our Nash-Healey driving experience we took Ray Hren's coupe out for a brief romp. Since the coupe is nearly a foot longer than the roadster and several hundred pounds heavier, we expected it to feel somewhat different; and it does. It's a shade less nimble than the open car, and at speed one is more aware of engine noise. The ride, which is really very comfortable in the roadster, is even better in the coupe; and while the former may have a slight edge in cornering, this one too takes the turns with precision and with very little sway. That Healey suspension is every bit as good as it's cracked up to be!

There's a transparent plastic sunshade in the coupe that we'd like to adopt for our own car. Seating position is similar to that of the roadster, but Ray didn't have his steering post extended as far as Gordon's, and we found our knuckles rapping our knees on the turns. It's an easy adjustment, though, to extend the post; and the huge steering wheel feels good in our hands.

Like Gordon McGregor's car, Ray Hren's coupe is an original automobile, with some 80,000 miles on the clock in this instance. It's finished in two attractive shades of green, with a tan leather interior. And while it's a two-passenger job, it appears to us that with very little effort it could be transformed into a 2 plus 2.

The Nash-Healey came in for some criticism in its day, because it cost a couple of thousand more than a Jaguar XK120 (see SIA #65)—and the latter could out-perform it in most respects.



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Self-Parking New Yorker

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In comparing the specifications of the 1929 Model 69 Davis with those of the Model 28 New York Six, they check out completely, so we may assume that by March 1929, the New York Six nomenclature had been scrapped, at least for the time being.

Whether any cars of either type were produced after this we just don't know. Little appeared in the trade press, although as late as January 3, 1931, there was at least a spark of hope, as in an *Automobile Topics* item, plans were afoot to transfer operations from Richmond to Baltimore and continue production of the Davis "and its companion car, the New York Six" at prices from \$445 to \$1995." As a parting shot, the story stated that "in the \$500 class, the cars will carry new trade names not yet disclosed."

And that was it for the reborn Davis, the New York Six, the unidentified cheaper car and the Parkmobile. □

Acknowledgments

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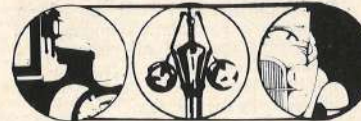
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