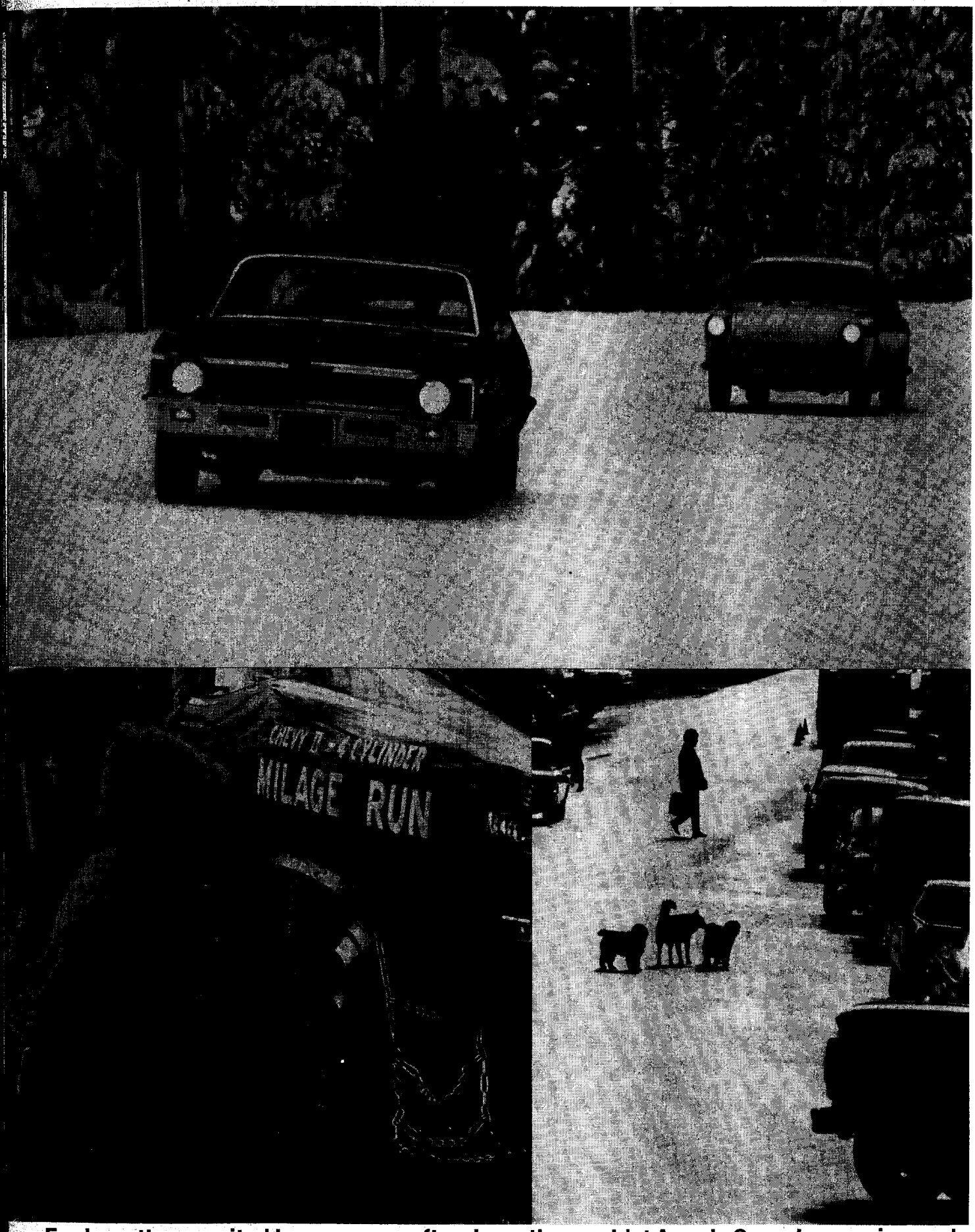
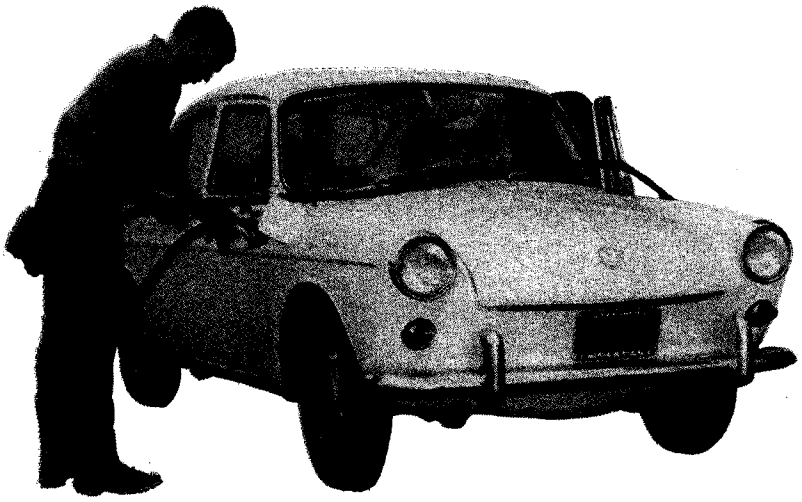


Foul weather awaited brave group after departing amidst Angels Camp's morning rush.

CHEVY II VS VW



by Steve Kelly

"How do you think a Chevy II would stack up against the new, fuel-injected VW 1600 in economy?"

"Don't know," we replied to the questioner on the other end of the line, "but why do you ask?"

"Well," came the reply from Dick Wilmshurst, president of 49er Chevrolet, Angels Camp, Calif., "I'd like to prove that our 4-cylinder Chevy II is pretty competitive to the 1600, in price, economy, comfort *and* roadability. VW is the No. 2 selling car up here in the northern part of the state, you know. We'd like to set up a 2-day run, in cooperation with Volkswagen, and we'd like MOTOR TREND to act as observer."

"Okay," we agreed, "as long as we can call 'em as we see 'em."

Several days later we were in Angels Camp (if you can't find it on a map, you'll find it referred to in Mark Twain's "Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"), which was to be the start of the 409-mile run. It was to take in altitudes ranging from 4500 feet to nearly 8000 feet, until we wound up at sea level in San Francisco. Temperatures were to range from 45° down to 0°F (though that was a surprise).

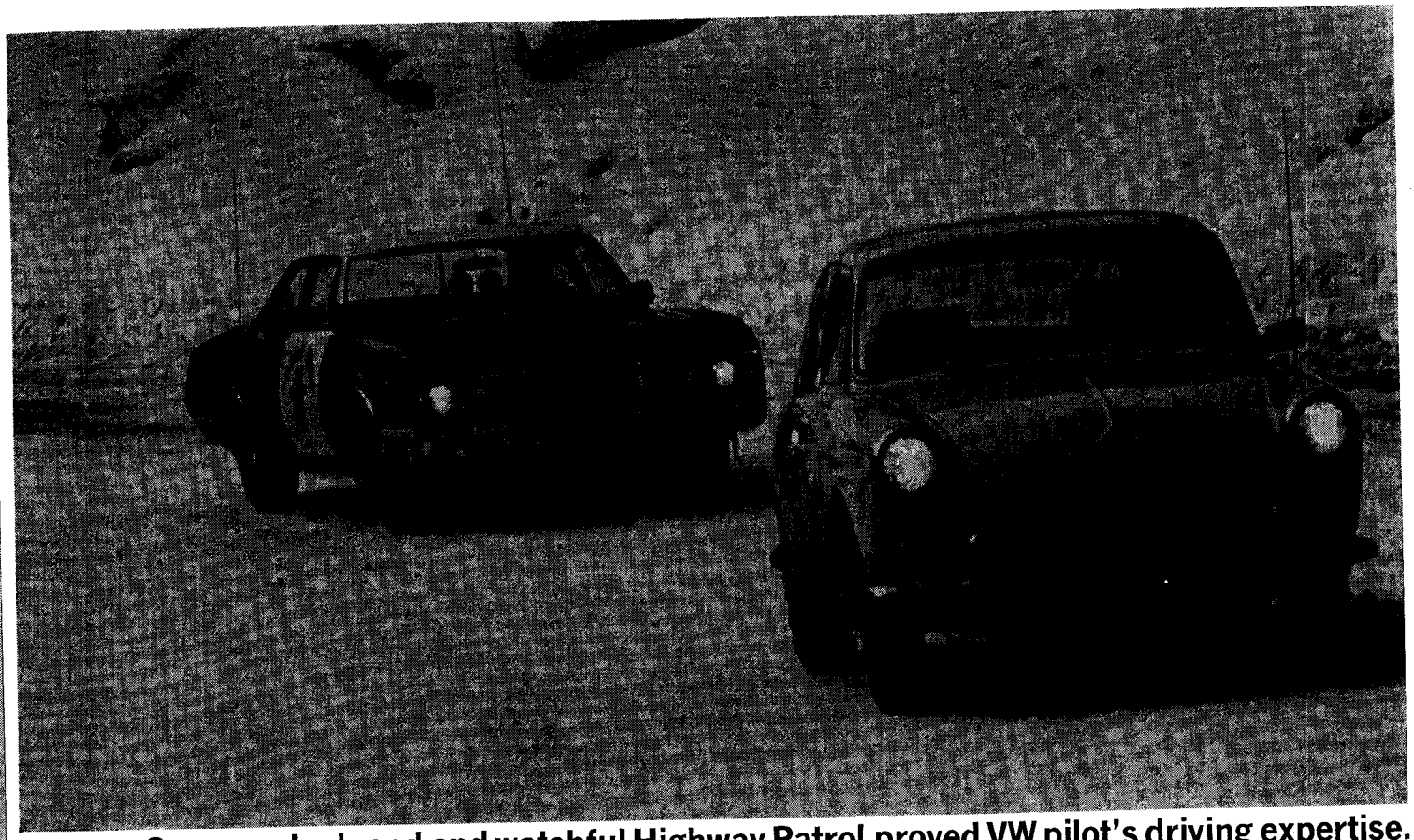
The Chevy II was a stock 2-door sedan, using a 4-banger and 3-speed stick shift, while the VW 1600 fastback was a new fuel-injected job with 4-speed stick. The Chevy II was to be driven by Wilmshurst and the VW was to be handled by Herman Ultsch of Reynold C. Johnson (VW dealer in San Francisco.) Photographer Gerry Stiles and I were to follow in a back-up car with a calibrated speedometer/odometer.

After topping up both gas tanks we took off together, edging out of town north on Highway 49 to Highway 50 — a road alternating from wide high-speed 4-lane asphalt to a narrow twisting 2-laner cutting through mountains capped with snow and armies of pine trees, following the course of the American River. Continuing northward, we crossed over 7382-foot Echo Summit, past Lake Tahoe to Tahoe City, 133 miles later and our afternoon lunch stop.

The cars went along perfectly from the beginning of our trek with an average speed hovering around 54 mph until we reached the 5000-foot level. From there until long before Tahoe's shores, snow covered everything and we had to put chains on the cars and drop maximum speed down to nearly 30 mph. Driving with chains didn't help our mileage and there were a number of times the cars went to lower gears just to keep from stalling while following a slow-moving pack of cars. The VW had the advantage during our crawl-session, since the car comes with a 4-speed box and intermediate gears give it an advantage over the 3-speed Chevy II. Another minus feature of the Chevy II was that after all that snow driving, there were pounds of slush stacked up on the outsides of the fenders just aft of the front and rear wheels.

Just outside of Reno we filled the gas tanks for the first time since leaving Angels Camp, bouncing the cars to remove any trapped air. We had traveled 175.5 miles and both gas gauges appeared to have stayed on "Full." On this first leg, to say we were surprised by the economy of the Chevy II (30.79 mpg), would be putting it mildly, but we were astonished by the fuel-injected VW (37.29 mpg). However, these were nothing compared to what was to come on the last leg of the trip.

That unbelievable last leg took us 185.4 miles from Reno west on Highway 50 through snow country over 7000-foot levels, down through Placerville, to the state capital, Sacramento, and on to Interstate 80 into San Francisco. Admittedly, it was not as rough a leg as the first one, lots of it being downhill and much of it no-stop roads, though we did plow through evening rush-hour traffic in



Snow packed road and watchful Highway Patrol proved VW pilot's driving expertise.

CHEVY II vs VW

continued

Sacramento. The Chevy II's mileage went up to 33.10, but then came the shocker.

Filling the VW, it seemed the meter had just started when it stopped. Only 4.1 gallons and the tank was full, and this gave the VW a . . . hold on for this now. . . . 45.21 mpg score. What? We checked again. Okay, it's right. It's hard to believe, but we all verified it. Both machines weighed in above factory given specs, and no tampering had been done to engine or carburetion/injection sizes. Even though Dick Wilmshurst proposed and organized the test, he was the first to admit the VW 1600 had won the economy run. But, the Chevy II doesn't have to hang its head for its performance either. Besides, an interesting point we didn't think to tell him but which one should keep in mind when comparing economy figures of these two cars is this: the lower-compression VW needs the higher-priced premium fuel (unless you can find regular with an octane rating of 94 or more), while the Chevy II needs only regular fuel (generally 4c per gallon less). Therefore, on a cost per mile basis, some part of the VW's advantage would be crossed out.

Another point to keep in mind is that every comparable VW or Chevy II cannot be expected to achieve the same economy. Cars are set up differently and it also takes a conscientious driver, one who doesn't use jackrabbit starts, drives ahead to avoid panic stops, stays close to speed limits (as we did), and generally drives conservatively. The difference between driving at reasonable speeds vs. high speeds is very evident in what we achieved on the two "economy legs" and a short, "high speed" leg. This was when we wanted to check out top speed.

Though it took awhile, the Chevy II finally wrung out at just under 80 mph, while the fastback VW nicked 86 mph — sans the vibration and noise encountered with the 4-banger. After this test phase, we drove awhile longer to a gas station, where we carefully topped up again before starting on the second leg of the "economy run." We saw that we had driven 48 miles with each car. The VW dropped to 30 mpg, while the Nova dropped to a low of 17.45 mpg.

Rating the two cars in areas other than fuel economy, we would have to conclude this: the comfort and quietness of the fastback Volks are much better than the II — top speed is greater, there's more versatility with the 1600 and certainly greater fuel economy is inherent. There's more room with the Chevy II, and we like its styling better. But in its base existence, everything about it is extremely spartan. Neither car is any great shakes as a handler, so we won't rate them in this area but confine our evaluation to domestic qualities.

Our best suggestion is for Chevy II hunters to choose nothing less than a 6-cylinder engine. The little 4-cylinder is great for low-cost operation, but you can quickly forget any thoughts of performance and smoothness of operation as the quad-cylinder engine is rough at both ends of the scale — at idle and top speed. Overlooking the small engine, the Chevy II is an attractive and appealing package that comes in more combinations than any other compact car on the market today.

So, Dick, don't hang down your head. You've got plenty to be proud of, even if you did lose your own economy run. /MT

	CHEVY II	VOLKSWAGEN 1600
Total Miles Traveled	406.4 mi.	406.4 mi.
Total Amount of Fuel Used	14.05 gals.	10.4 gals.
Average Miles Per Gallon-Full Trip	28.92 mpg	39.07 mpg
Average MPG Economy Test	31.725 mpg	41.005 mpg
Best MPG	33.10 mpg	45.21 mpg
Poorest MPG (economy portion)	30.35 mpg	36.80 mpg
High-Speed (65-75 mph) Fuel Consumption	17.45 mpg	30.00 mpg
Type of Fuel Used	Regular	Premium
Fuel Tank Capacity	18 gals.	10.6 gals.
ENGINE	In-line 4-cyl. overhead valve	Horizontally-opposed 4-cyl. overhead valve
	Displacement 153 cu. ins.	96.66 cu. ins.
	Bore & Stroke: 3.875 x 3.25 ins.	3.37 x 2.72 ins.
	Compression Ratio: 8.5:1	7.7:1
	Horsepower @ RPM: 90 @ 4000	65 @ 4600
	Torque @ RPM: 152 lbs.-ft. @ 2400	87 lbs.-ft. @ 2800
	Carburetion: 1-bbl., downdraft	Electronically metered fuel injection
TRANSMISSION	Manual 3-speed. Column-mounted shifter. Synchro in all forward gears. Ratios: 1st, 2.85; 2nd, 1.68; 3rd, 1.00:1	Manual 4-speed. Floor mounted shifter. All forward gears synchro meshing. Ratios: 1st, 3.80; 2nd, 2.06; 3rd, 1.26; 4th, 0.89:1
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	3.08:1	4.125:1
STEERING:	Manual. Semi-reversible recirculating ball nut.	Manual. Roller-type
	Gear ratio: 24:1	n.a.
	Overall ratio: 28.3:1	n.a.
	Wheel turns, lock-to-lock: 4.8	2.8
	Turning circle: 38 ft., curb-to-curb.	36.3 ft., curb-to-curb.
BRAKES:	Drum type, 9.5 in. diameter front and rear.	Disc front, 10.9 in. and drum rear, 10.9 in.
TIRES:	7.35 x 14	6.00 x 15
SUSPENSION:	Front: independent with single lateral arm with coil spring.	Independent, with torsion bars.
	Rear: salisbury (one-piece unit) type axle with two single leaf springs.	Independent, with torsion bars. Trans-axle type drive.
	Double acting, direct acting shocks at each wheel.	Double acting shock, telescoping type at each wheel.
	Overall Length: 189.4 ins.	166.3 ins.
	Overall Width 72.4 ins.	63.2 ins.
	Overall Height: 54.1 ins.	58.1 ins.
	Wheelbase: 111.0 ins.	94.5 ins.
	Front Track: 59.0 ins.	51.6 ins.
	Rear Track: 58.9 ins.	53.0 ins.
	Curb Weight: 2890 lbs.	2116 lbs.
PRICES & OPTIONS	Manufacturer's suggested retail price: $2284.00	$2279.00, P.O.E. West Coast.
	Automatic Transmission: 163.70	not offered
	"Automatic Stick Shift": 65.00*	not offered
	Overdrive Trans.: not offered	not offered
	Tires: 31.35	29.50 (whitewalls)
	AM Radio: 61.10	Dealer available only

(*Torque-Drive. price is approx.)