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BUICK CENTURY 4-DOOR  
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DODGE DIPLOMAT  
COMPARING  
THE DESIGNER SERIES:  
MARK V & VI

## Will This 1981 Front-Drive Save Chrysler?

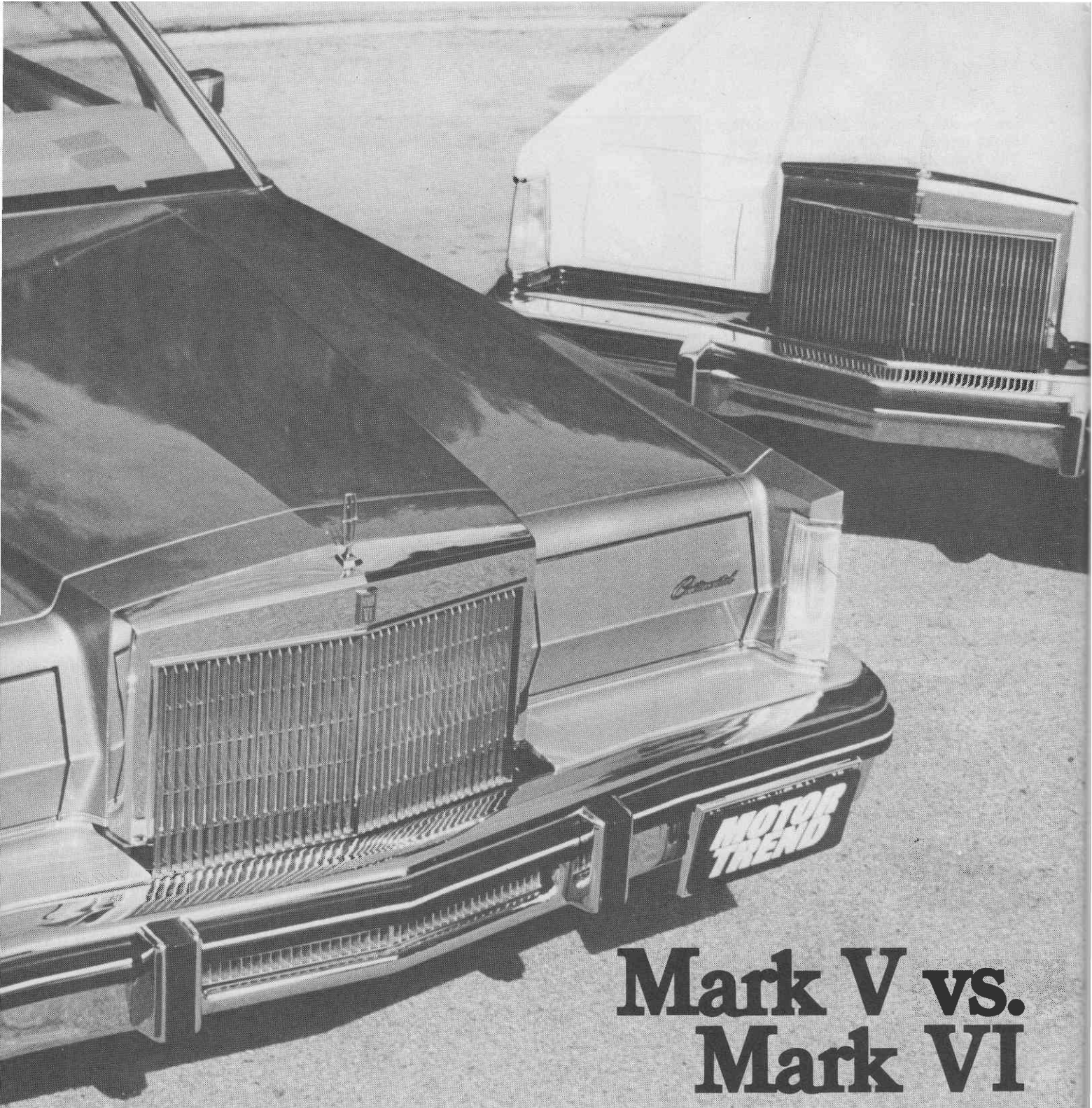
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by Leon Mandel



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# Mark V vs. Mark VI

JOHN GATES



Henry Leland was a machinist. A gunsmith, to be more precise. At the beginning of this century, a time of newly emerging technology, he was a perfectionist with a passion for complex machines. In an involved series of events that included his participation in the embryonic stages of the Oldsmobile, Cadillac and Ford companies, he became a designer and, finally, a builder of cars.

In September 1920, he began a new chapter in the history of cars by introducing to the world what would ulti-

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**A stylish behemoth is laid to rest, and its successor presents the world a new face of luxury**

---

by Peter Frey

mately become one of the biggest automotive guns of all, the Lincoln.

The car was an engineering milestone, with seven different models, all featuring an 81-horsepower 357cid V-8 engine, torquetube drive, and full-floating axles. They were well received, with

over a thousand confirmed orders received in advance of the first public showing.

By 1922, financial problems drove the new company into receivership, and it was purchased by Henry Ford. The emblem on the radiator was changed from



# Mark V vs. Mark VI

"Lincoln, Leland Built" to "Lincoln, Ford Detroit," and Ford parts began showing up on Lincoln cars. A variety of custom coachbuilders made bodies for the Lincoln, and it became, quite deservedly, a contemporary classic.

The grandest of all the Lincolns made its appearance, somewhat curiously, in the middle of the Great Depression. In 1932, the KB model with the V-12 engine was introduced, and nine superbly stylish bodies were offered, including two roadsters. It was the same year that marked the end of an era, as designers began to desert traditional styling themes and embraced the concept of a streamlined shape.

The straight-lined, square-looking styling that we associate with today's Lincolns made its first appearance with the introduction of the Continental in 1961. The Industrial Design Institute saluted the car's mechanical accomplishments with its Exceptional Achievement

medal. The wheelbase was stretched from 123 to 126 inches in 1964. Power disc brakes became standard the following year.

The 1970 version of the Lincoln saw the wheelbase again lengthened, to 127 inches. The car continued its headlong plunge into the pool of new technology and cultivated a luxury image composed of equal parts of styling, mechanical sophistication and a space-age selection of optional equipment. The Lincoln was the pioneer of devices that seem commonplace today, such as power door locks, tilt steering wheels and digital clocks. One option that never really caught on was the special steering wheel that allowed the driver to blow the horn by simply squeezing the rim.

Another automotive era ended in 1979. The press releases summed it up by calling the '79 Lincoln Continental "the last traditionally full-sized Ameri-

can car." The hardware of the matter is that the car is one of the largest mass-produced passenger cars ever to roll off an assembly line. With an overall length of 230.3 inches, a wheelbase of 120.3 inches, and a curb weight of 4763 pounds, it is a dinosaur, and the changing nature of the times will no longer tolerate such blatantly consumptive machines for personal transportation.

The child of these changing times is the 1980 Lincoln Continental Mark VI. It is *almost* visually indistinguishable from its predecessor at first glance, but it is, in every mechanical respect, a completely new machine, more efficient, more capable, and roomier in every dimension except the distance between the front and rear bumpers.

The car's wheelbase has been reduced 6 inches, it's 11 inches shorter overall, and it weighs 930 pounds less. It is the ever-so-carefully-designed successor to one of the premier luxury vehicles man-



## ✓ ROAD TEST DATA

### Lincoln Continental Mark V

#### ✓ SPECIFICATIONS

##### GENERAL

Vehicle type	Front-engine, rear-drive, 6-pass., 2-door hardtop
Base price	\$13,594
Options on test car	Bill Bliss option, AM/FM stereo radio w/ tape player, moonroof, anti-skid braking system
Price as tested	\$18,770

##### ENGINE

Type	V-8, water-cooled, cast iron block and heads
Bore & stroke	4.0 x 4.0 in.
Displacement	400 cu. in.
Compression ratio	8.0:1
Fuel system	2-bbl carburetor
Recommended fuel	Unleaded
Emission control	Air injection, exhaust gas recirculation, catalytic converter

##### Valve gear

Overhead valves, hydraulic lifters	
Horsepower (SAE net)	159 at 3400 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	315 lb.-ft. at 1800 rpm
Power to weight ratio	29.95 lb./hp

##### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	3-speed Select Shift automatic
Final drive ratio	2.75

##### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	120.3 in.
Track, F/R	63.2/62.6 in.
Length	230.3 in.
Width	79.7 in.
Height	53.1 in.
Ground clearance	5.08 in.
Curb weight	4763.6 lb.
Weight distribution, F/R	2652.5/2111.1 lb.

##### CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity	25 gals.
Crankcase	5 qts.
Cooling system	17.3 qts.
Trunk capacity	18.1 cu. ft.

##### SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, single
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##### Rear

lower arm, coil springs, telescopic shocks, stabilizer bar	
Live axle, 4-link arms, coil springs, telescopic shocks	

##### STEERING

Type	Recirculating ball and nut with integral power unit
Turns lock-to-lock	4.1
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	45.1 ft.

##### BRAKES

Front	11.8-in. vented discs, power assist
Rear	11.8-in. vented discs, power assist

##### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	15 x 6.0 in.
Wheel type	Forged aluminum
Tire make and size	LR78-15 Wide WSW
Tire type	Radial
Recommended pressure, F/R	26/26 psi

#### ✓ TEST RESULTS

##### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph	3.9 secs.
0-40 mph	5.9 secs.
0-50 mph	8.4 secs.
0-60 mph	11.6 secs.
0-70 mph	15.6 secs.
0-80 mph	21.2 secs.
Top speed	N.A.
Standing quarter mile	16.5 secs./76.1 mph
Passing times (40-60 mph)	5.7 secs.
(50-70 mph)	7.2 secs.

##### BRAKING

30-0 mph	47 ft.
60-0 mph	190 ft.

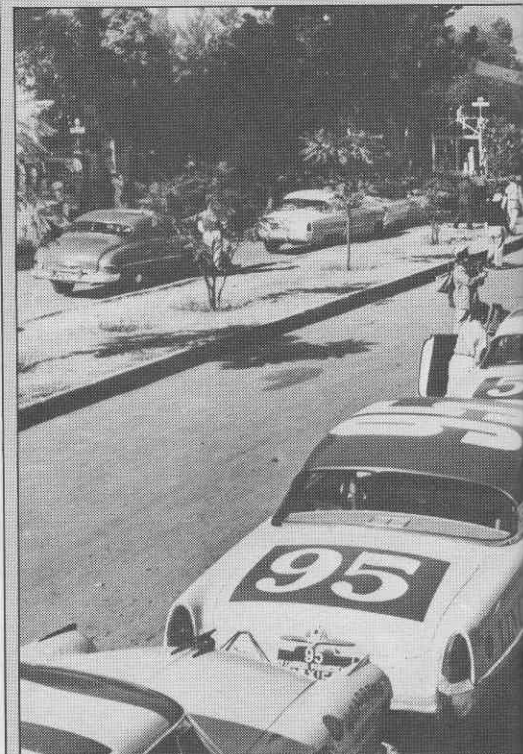
##### FUEL CONSUMPTION

EPA, city	12 mpg
MT 73-mile test loop	14.2 mpg

##### SPEEDOMETER

Indicated	30 40 50 60
Actual mph	30 40 50 60

## In the past they



Once upon a time, Lincolns were race cars. In 1952, the car entered a period of performance emphasis, and two Californians convinced Ford to enter a team of Lincoln Capris in the 2000-mile Carrera Panamerica road race. The four-car team dominated the international Stock class of a competition that included some of the most potent high-performance cars then available.

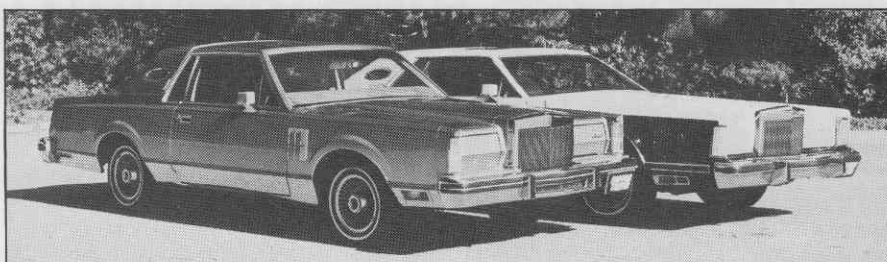
In the first race, the winning Lincoln averaged better than 90 mph over a torturous course that wound its way over a 10,000-foot mountain range.

## Comparison of Interior/Cargo Space Dimensions

Front	Mark V	Mark VI
Head room.....	37.5 in.	38.0 in.
Shoulder room.....	60.5 in.	60.7 in.
Hip room.....	55.4 in.	56.5 in.
Leg room.....	42.3 in.	42.1 in.
<b>Rear</b>		
Head room.....	37.1 in.	37.8 in.
Shoulder room.....	59.0 in.	60.9 in.
Hip room.....	54.3 in.	57.0 in.
Leg room.....	34.0 in.	38.0 in.
Trunk volume.....	18.1 cu. ft.	22.0 cu. ft.

ufactured in this country. The commercial success or failure of this new incarnation of a traditional automotive standard of excellence will have a considerable effect on the financial fortunes of the Ford Motor Company.

Aside from the money angle, there is



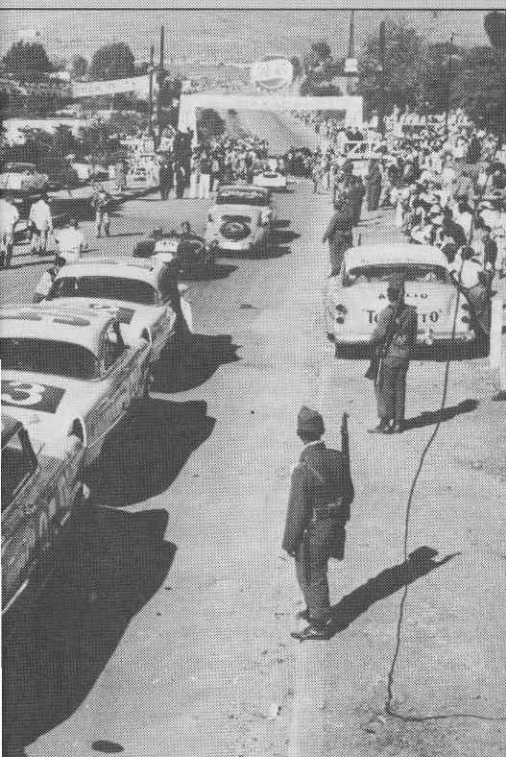
something else at stake. The 1979 Mark V was the essence of unconstrained American automotive opulence, conceived and executed in a time when fuel economy and space efficiency were the concerns of lesser cars. It is the task of the Mark VI to carry on without compromising that image. It must step boldly forward into the new age, bravely flying the twin battle flags of luxury and economy, offering itself up as a mechanical sacrifice to determine if there is room for such cars in the '80s.

## Mark V

In 1978, a Diamond Jubilee Edition of the Continental was offered to commemorate Lincoln's sixth decade of production. The public response to that model seemed to indicate a definite market for a car that has an exclusive "cut above the rest" image. And so there followed in 1979 two special versions of the Mark V: the Collectors Series and the Designer Editions.

The Designer series is composed of

were fast ...



The winner topped 115 mph for the last 229-mile leg of the race.

The racing program proved to be such a resounding success that company officials credited it with a 30% gain in sales. It also prompted them to field a team each year through 1954, and each time they won their class.

The back cover of the advertising information brochure they published about the racing effort bears a picture of the winning car along with the words, "Powered to leave the past behind."

—P.F.

## ✓ ROAD TEST DATA

### Lincoln Continental Mark VI



## ✓ SPECIFICATIONS

### GENERAL

Vehicle type	Front-engine, rear-drive, 6-pass., 2-door hardtop
Base price	\$15,424
Options on test car	Cartier Designer Edition package, electronic radio, Message Center
Price as tested	\$19,107

### ENGINE

Type	V-8, water cooled, cast iron block and heads
Bore & stroke	4.0 x 3.5 in.
Displacement	351 cu. in.
Compression ratio	8:1:1
Fuel system	Variable-venturi carb
Recommended fuel	Unleaded
Emission control	Air injection, exhaust gas recirculation, catalytic converter
Valve gear	Overhead valves, hydraulic lifters
Horsepower (SAE net)	140 at 3400 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	265 lb.-ft. at 2000 rpm
Power to weight ratio	29.4 lb./hp

### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	4-speed automatic overdrive transmission
Final drive ratio	3.08:1

### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	114.3 in.
Track, F/R	62.2/62.0 in.
Length	219.1 in.
Width	76.1 in.
Height	55.3 in.
Ground clearance	5.6 in.
Curb weight	4122 lb.
Weight distribution, F/R	2377/1735 lb.

### CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity	20 gals.
Crankcase	4.0 qts.
Cooling system	14.5 qts.
Trunk capacity	22.0 cu. ft.

### SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, upper & lower A-arms, coil
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### Rear

springs, telescopic shocks, stabilizer bar live axle, 4-bar link w/upper & lower control arms, coil springs, telescopic shocks

### STEERING

Type	Recirculating ball and nut with integral power unit
Turns lock-to-lock	4.0
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	40.0 ft.

### BRAKES

Front	11.08-in. vented discs, power assist
Rear	11.08-in. vented discs, power assist

### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	6.0 x 15 in.
Wheel type	Cast aluminum
Tire make and size	Michelin 205/75 R15
Tire type	Steel radial
Recommended pressure, F/R	30/34 psi

## ✓ TEST RESULTS

### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph	3.58 secs.
0-40 mph	5.42 secs.
0-50 mph	8.01 secs.
0-60 mph	11.14 secs.
0-70 mph	14.89 secs.
0-80 mph	20.55 secs.
Top speed	N.A.
Standing quarter mile	16.08 secs./75.6 mph
Passing times (40-60 mph)	5.72 secs.
(50-70 mph)	6.88 secs.

### BRAKING

30-0 mph	55 ft.
60-0 mph	180 ft.

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

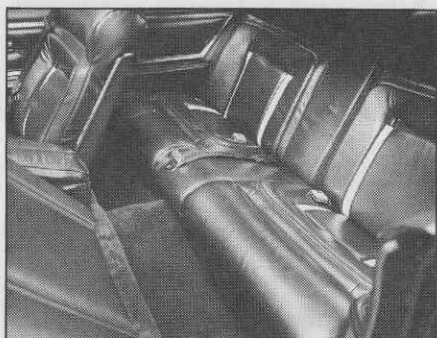
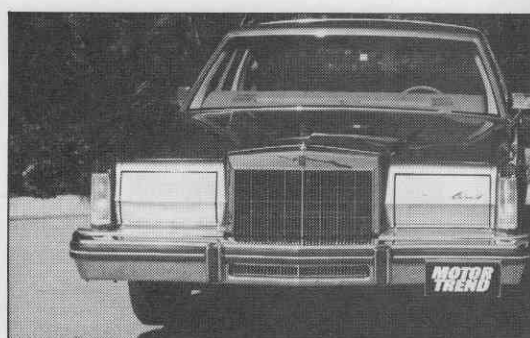
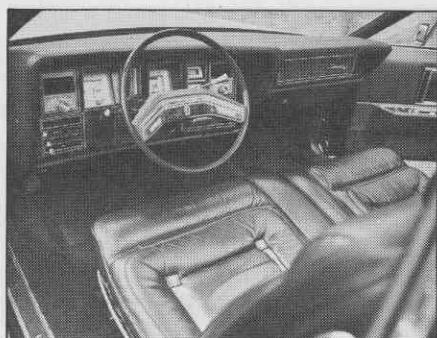
EPA city	15 mpg
MT 73-mile test loop	22.8 mpg

### SPEEDOMETER

Indicated	30	40	50	60
Actual mph	30	40	50	60



## Mark V vs. Mark VI



Mark V

Mark VI

cars with the color, trim and roof treatment specified by internationally famous designers. Bill Blass created the subject of our examination, and there are other models, by Givenchy, Cartier and Emilio Pucci. All come equipped with turbine-style aluminum alloy wheels except the Pucci version, which has wire wheel covers. Interior appointments include a 6-way power-adjustable passenger seat with reclining backrest, interior lighting group, grey cut-pile carpeting in the trunk, the designer's

logo inscribed in the opera windows, and a personalized 22-karat gold-finished nameplate on the dashboard.

The Bill Blass edition has a sort of nautical look. In the advertising brochures, it's pictured in a marina setting with yachts in the background and the inevitable group of handsome men and beautiful women lounging around in natty boating attire. It features a Midnight Blue metallic-and-white paint scheme, with blue bodyside moldings, and a dual gold paint (not tape) stripe.

The interior is done in either blue with white trim, or white with blue, and gold buttons. Leather for the seats is optional. A white vinyl Carriage Roof that simulates a convertible top is standard, with a conventional vinyl top, also in white, optional.

Other optional equipment, which has almost come to be expected on such top-line luxury cars, includes a sliding glass sunroof, cruise control, power door locks, illuminated entry system, variable-delay windshield wipers, headlamp group, and an electronic garage door opener concealed in the driver's-side sunvisor. Excellent sound systems have become a Ford/Lincoln trademark, and the Mark V offers a variety of AM/FM stereo radios combined with 8-track and cassette tape players, and 40-channel CB radios.

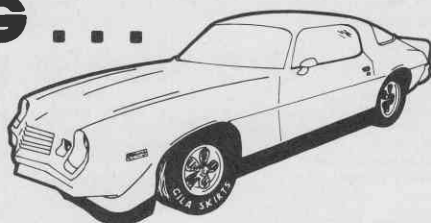
The wide variety of options ends in the engine compartment. The only powerplant available is a 400cid V-8 with a Select Shift 3-speed automatic and a 2.47 axle in 49 states, with a 3.0 ratio for cars destined for high altitudes or the optional Traction-Lok (limited-slip) differential, and Sure-Track (anti-skid) brakes.

Though the styling of the Mark V was unchanged from '78 to '79, there were some mechanical and engineering refinements made. Theft protection has been enhanced by improving the strength of the lock mechanisms in the doors and steering column. Weight reduction techniques that included use of plastics, high-strength lightweight steel, thinner glass, and aluminum for such engine parts as the intake manifold and water pump produced a 400-pound weight reduction, as compared to the 930 pounds surrendered by Mark VI models.

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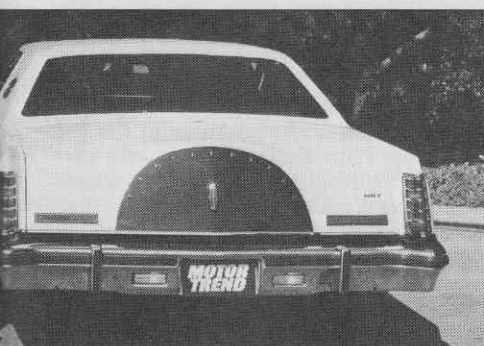
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Even with the weight loss, the Mark V is a huge piece of machinery, albeit a desirable one in terms of potential value. It is the last of a breed and has sufficient quality and style to assure eventual classic status. It is entirely likely that, in 10 years, the owners of such cars will discover that they have a piece of collectible automotive history.

## Mark VI

**F**rom a corporate viewpoint, the 1980 Lincoln Continental Mark VI cannot be a failure. L-M Division has created a new car from the ground up, spending so much money in the process that the car *must* be a success, and they have gone to considerable trouble to see that it will be.

One precedent-setting step they took was aimed at expanding the potential market by offering for the first time a 4-door version of the Mark series of Continentals. Also, fully appreciating the marketing value of special editions, they have repeated the Designer Series concept that worked so well in the past. Our Mark VI test vehicle is the Cartier model. It has a two-tone paint scheme in Light (lower) and Medium (upper) Pewter Metallic. The Landau vinyl top matches the medium color, and the interior is done in shades of both. The accent pinstripes are dark red, and the cast aluminum alloy wheels are color-keyed to the body.

In the interior, the passenger's seat is powered, and the vanity mirrors in both sunvisors are illuminated. The Cartier logo appears on the floor mats and rear deck lid, and his signature is engraved in the opera windows. The obligatory gold-finished nameplate appears on the dashboard.

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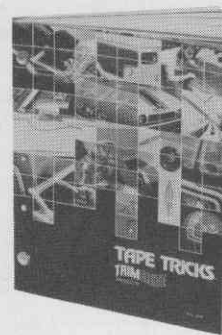
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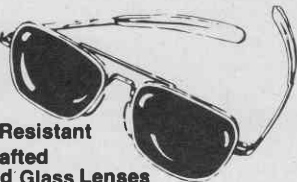
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## Mark V vs. Mark VI

The Designer Series package is an option that is part of a tremendously long list of equipment that includes the entire range from rocker panel moldings to a powered moonroof, and every protective, comfort, light and convenience group imaginable. The new options for 1980 are primarily electronic, including such things as Keyless Entry, an electronic AM/FM stereo search radio with cassette tape player and Dolby, and a Premium Sound package that includes six speakers and a separate power amplifier for the radio. The dashboard is a three-module exercise in black plastic with enough flashing symbols and numbers to satisfy even the most ardent technophile. Also available is the Message Center, which is a programmable on-board computer that will perform a dazzling array of time-and-distance computations.

The electronics reach into the engine compartment in the form of the third-generation electronic emissions control (EEC III), which is a computer-controlled maze of sensors and controls

that automatically vary the fuel-air ratio and ignition timing. The system also helps promote maximum fuel efficiency, as does the standard 4-speed automatic overdrive transmission.

The powertrain offers a choice of two familiar engines, with an electronic fuel injection (EFI)-equipped 302cid V-8 standard. The optional engine is a 351cid V-8 with a variable-venturi electronically controlled feedback carburetor. A 3.08 axle is standard with the 302; a 2.73 ratio comes with the 351.

The fuel efficiency of the Mark VI was of paramount importance and manifested itself in every aspect of the design. A massive weight reduction program involving plastics, aluminum and lightweight steel resulted in weight reductions in almost every area of the car. Even the P-metric radial tires were chosen for their light weight as well as lower rolling resistance.

The major mechanical parts of the car have also received considerable attention. The newly designed frame has special body mounts to minimize noise





### Breakdown of Weight Savings

Body.....	391 lb.
Frame.....	78 lb.
Engine.....	185 lb.
Suspension.....	80 lb.
Driveline.....	56 lb.
Brakes.....	64 lb.
Automatic temp. control.....	26 lb.
Sound insulation.....	50 lb.
Total:	930 lb.

and vibration transfer to the interior. The front suspension is an upper and lower A-arm design that replaces the Mark V's single lower arm and drag strut setup. The calipers for the front disc brakes have been revised for simplicity and improved reliability. The steering linkage and power assist have been modified for quicker turning, less effort and more precise control.

To promote overall convenience and comfort, outward vision was improved by raising the car's overall height 1.7 inches and lowering the cowl, hood and beltline. The interior noise level was reduced with molded panels of sound-deadening material that covers 96% of the floor area. In an inspired bit of design you'd probably never notice, the hinges are tilted so that as the door swings open, it also raises up to clear the curb. Damned clever, but then many things about the Mark VI are.

### Impressions

Despite the efforts that were made to improve the Mark while retaining its essential character, it is our impression that these are completely different vehicles. Things were both lost and gained in the transition.

To drive the Mark V is to be the captain of your own huge, luxurious ship. In an operational sense, the Mark V is massive, smooth and competent only in conventional boulevard or highway applications. Any abrupt maneuvers or spirited cornering—neither of which it was designed for but which are a part of real-world motoring—upsets its equilibrium considerably.

What it was designed to do, it does very well. It isolates the driver and passengers from the outside world, and when you're driving, it makes you feel—and makes other people think you are—rich. Even with its rather straight-lined, sharp-edged styling, the car has a certain rakishness and projects the image of the driver as an elegant rogue.

This intangible quality is exactly what we found lacking in the Mark VI. It has a more formal look—the result of a more squared-off roof and trunk line—that would tend to make you think of the driver as a successful accountant. We wouldn't be surprised if the average age of the buyers goes up, and not just because of the price.


It also feels different to drive. The Mark VI is much more mechanically

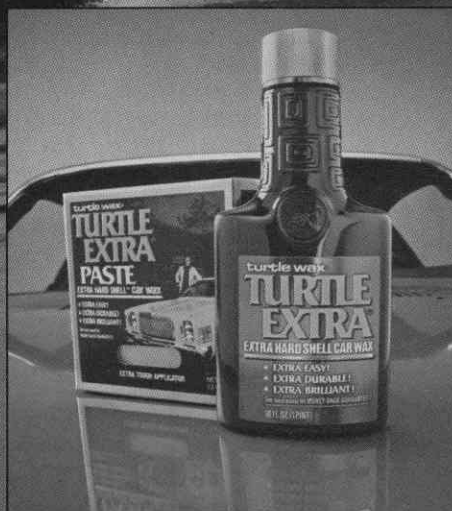
competent than the Mark V, and while completely at home under urban and highway conditions, it also shows a surprising willingness to perform with a most un-Lincolnish sportiness.

The interior is fully as comfortable as that of the Mark V, and it isolates you from the outside equally well, but it produces none of that feeling of decadence. It is light and airy, as opposed to the cocoon feeling of the Mark V, and has a little too much space-age gadgetry and undisguised plastic to fit the traditional definitions of luxury.

Perhaps that provides as appropriate a summation as any. The Mark V is the

pinnacle of 60 years of automotive definitions. The Mark VI is treading new ground, establishing new rules and standards but dragging the dead weight of history with it. It might have been better to take the full plunge into the future without trying to hang onto the past, but that would have been a terrible gamble, unacceptable to the accountants who run the automobile industry today.

And while we know the Mark VI is a better car than its predecessor, what we don't know is how the absence of that element of rakish styling will be accepted by the typical Mark buyers. 



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