

A VENT WINDOW VIEW (Peddling Pink)

(Oct. 2014) B.K.Showalter

It is probable that the color pink has been smeared, sprayed, and brushed upon conveyances for as long as wheels have (ahem!) been 'round. However, in the period known by those of us who enjoyed life in an era known as The Fabulous Fifties, the color "pink" by 1955 had become a favorite on a great many products. No longer was pink a color found primarily in women's lingerie departments for that was the decade in which makers of women's wear realized that "flesh tones" could not compete with the sexier pinks that were becoming fashionable. And, by the time true pink had taken over the feminine underwear market (including those infamous uplifting garments ostensibly designed for support) other industries were beginning to consider pink for their products.

Certainly this was a reasonable move, for it was patently clear that color accentuates temptation. Movie stars and teenaged girls in those infamous sweaters proved that; meanwhile, honest to goodness scientific researchers were learning that "color" influences butterflies, bees, and many other creatures as well as humans. According to my extensive research on **Wikipedia**, the corporation that has produced items branded with the name "Playtex" since 1947 has braved cultural opinion several times, including, in 1955, the use of television to advertise women's undergarments.

Apparently, (along with teenaged boys all across America) a number of automobile designers, advertising VIPs, and other manufacturing mucky-mucks in Detroit noticed those ads. With color TV still a hoped for eventuality, my guess is that the color pink had less to do with what captured their attention than females modeling latex. It may be unfair of me to say that it was the uplifted styling that caught their communal eyes, but one might presume that every male on those automotive design staffs noticed not only colors but shapes. And, keep in mind that in those days, few women (if any) held positions on automotive design staffs.

That became clear by the mid-fifties when Detroit began adding fins to the rear fenders of their new "rocket-shaped" models. At first, their designs changes were a bit subdued, but by the time Chrysler's 1957 models landed in showrooms, they wore fins tall enough to serve as rudders on a supersonic jet! What else could the engineers and sales staffs at the Big Three come up with that would help sell cars? Well--think "PINK!" Early on, GM's idea of pink in most cases was an orangey "baked salmon" color, but Chrysler and Ford went for... ummm ... a pink greatly admired by hootchy-cootchy dancers. Can anyone forget those Custom Royal Lancers that Dodge produced in 1957? Along with their marvelous fins, those cars were often dressed in three colors with rosy pink paint applied to various locations--fins, lower side panels, or roofs for contrast.

Ford in 1955 and 1956 used pink as a primary color on many of their Fairlanes, be they sedans, wagons, or convertibles; fact is FOMOCO used pink paint on standard-sized Fords through at least 1959. Real men might wonder at the idea of

driving a car that was coated in pink, but that color remained available in various shades from a number of car makers for several more years. In my opinion, the most daring were the stylists who tried heroically to sell those Hudson/Nash hybrids in the mid-Fifties; their paint schemes were color charts on wheels as many of their productions offered three-color paint jobs, designs intended to tempt the public into purchasing those machines. Those Hudson-Nash stylists deserved a blue ribbon for their use of pink in the paint schemes offered on the 1957 Hornet; without doubt, they were the most daring stylists in the Fabulous Fifties. Too bad their futures weren't as rosy as their paint jobs!