

Pettys strike the strip

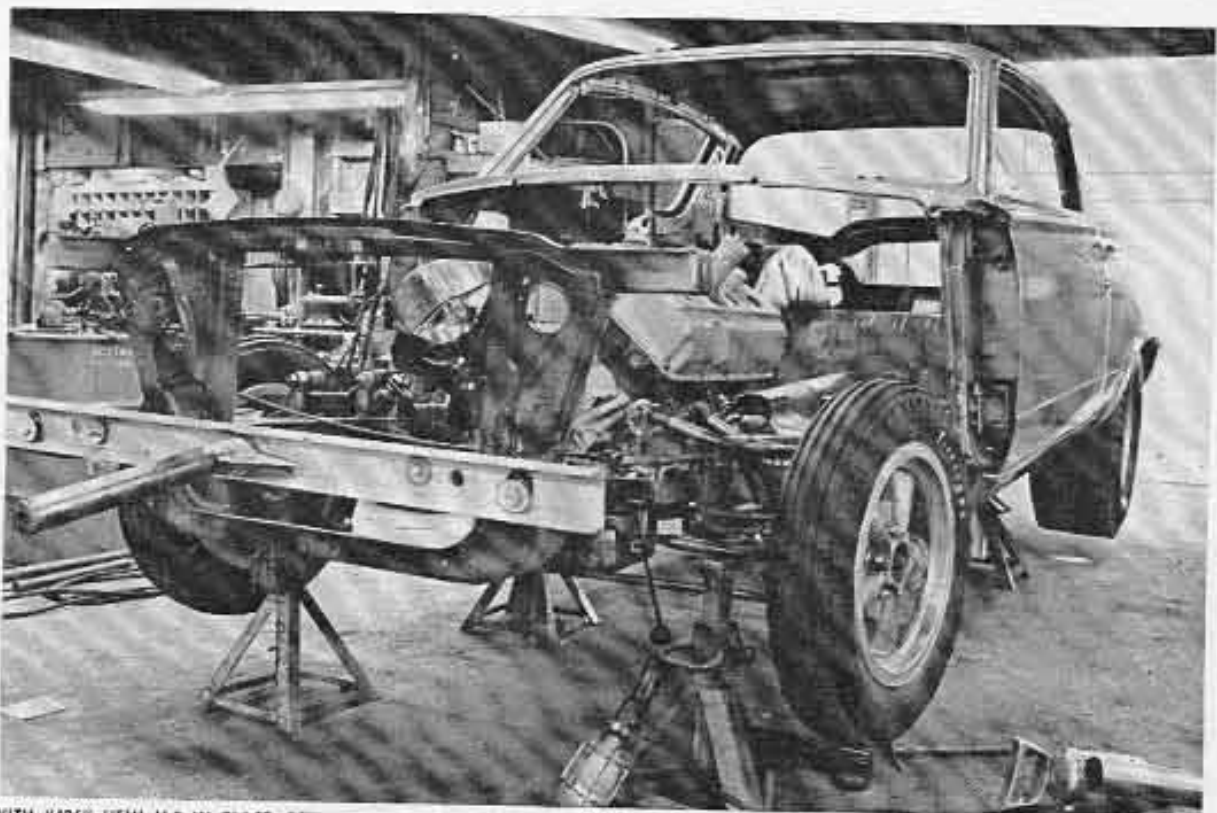
Lee and Richard Petty move from ovals to straights with a hot new Barracuda "426"

FOR REASONS well known to everyone who follows stock car racing, Plymouth's Pettys and Pettys' Plymouths will make some spectacular detours to the nation's drag strips during 1965. Poppa Lee and Son Richard haven't been idle this past off-season. □ They were working on a hemi-engined Barracuda fastback, which they've now campaigned in demonstration runs around the Southeast. Their first time out netted elapsed times in the 10.50s, with top speeds up to 140 mph. □ Richard has done some exhibition drag racing in the past. He found strip operators more than willing to pay for the honor of having him whip off a few quick quarter-miles for the fans. With NASCAR's current rules leaving the MoPars at a disadvantage on its stock circuits, Lee Petty decided a hot Barracuda might be just the thing to offset this setback. □ Lee began with a stock Barracuda—driving it into his Randleman, North Carolina, shop. He then set about gutting it, taking out absolutely everything (including engine, all running gear, and all soft parts). Petty had no shortage of Plymouth's famous 426-inch hemi engines. □ To handle the tremendous torque of this V-8, Lee reinforced the chassis and body with heavy steel tubing. Tubing runs all the way from front to back, to make a firm connection between the front sub-frame and the main section in the rear. □ He

then called up his stock car experience to help him beef and lighten the rest of the car. Front suspension had to be extra-heavy duty to handle the hemi's weight, but mag front wheels, aluminum brake drums, firewall, and other parts make up for this. □ Exhibition drag racing has turned hot stuff on the East Coast. It's common practice now for fans to look as much for showmanship and name drivers as for loud and fast action. One piece of show biz involves sprinkling the strip with dance-floor resin, then laying down long lines of rubber from the rear slicks of a dragster. This gives a uniform and excellent surface to run on. Two hot dogs, usually nationally known drag racers, then run off grudge matches amid an announcer's frenzied fanfare and the crowd's wild hysteria. □ It's this new atmosphere that the Pettys will enter. Their Barracuda, named the 43/Jr. (Richard's stock car racer is #43), will run against cars that have no technical specifications and no inspections. It's a class where anything goes—but really goes. □ The Pettys will still be active in stock car racing, particularly on the USAC tracks, NASCAR, where this team did exceedingly well in 1964, seems pretty well out for them. But judging by their NASCAR experience, Lee and Richard should do some remarkable things on the country's drag strips.

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WITH "426" HEMI V-8 IN PLACE, PETTY'S REWORKED FRONT SUSPENSION TO WITHSTAND WEIGHT AND TORQUE OF HEAVIER POWERPLANT

continued ▶



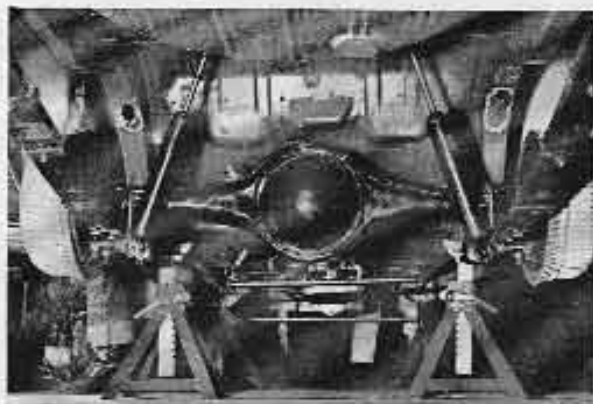
LEE PETTY (SEATED) GETS MEASURED FOR DRIVING STANCE BY HIS COUSIN GENE. ENTIRE INTERIOR WAS GUTTED TO REDUCE WEIGHT.



Reworked, heavy-duty A-arms surround new torsion-bar adjusting setup. Torsion bars adjust at front with simple bolt. This makes varying the spring rates an easier job.



Poppa Lee Petty takes responsibility for setting up and maintaining new Barracuda.



Super-sized, finned, aluminum brake drums give total stopping power. Front drums are empty. Note tubes through frame rails.



Tubes extend to front sub-frame assembly, add strength to the chassis. Small magnesium front wheels may be replaced later.



ALUMINUM DASH/FIREWALL STANDS AT LEFT, FIBERGLASS BUCKET IN CENTER, AND NEARLY FINISHED FASTBACK WAITS QUIETLY AT REAR.