

Falcon Six



Six-cylinder Falcon equipped with two-speed automatic lacked enough steam for our 50-70-mph acceleration runs with 600 pounds of sand aboard. Willow Springs straight was too short.

Base Price: \$2349. **Price as Tested:** \$2919.20.

Options: "170" Six, automatic transmission, radio, heater, white-wall tires, miscellaneous.



Extra weight didn't make much difference in Falcon's stopping distance—only six feet longer from 60 mph when fully loaded.

THE MAIN REASON for buying a station wagon should be that you feel there's enough need for the extra space to warrant spending those extra dollars. Add the cost of shorter tire life and higher gas bills to the wagon's initial cost, and that cargo space becomes pretty costly. To get the most value out of a wagon, it's imperative that it be equipped properly in the first place. This means taking a long, hard look at the options *before* you put in your order. A wagon set up the wrong way can be worse than no wagon at all.

The Falcon wagon, equipped as we tested it (101-hp engine and two-speed automatic transmission), is a typical example of "the wrong way." We expect a lot of people will disagree with us, because this particular wagon was (and still is) number four in sales popularity.

Our performance chart [page 25] shows that the Falcon was by far the slowest of all wagons tested. We weren't concerned too much with its 0-60-mph time. What we were concerned with was the distance it took in the 40-60-mph and 50-70-mph passing zones. These are very critical, because they represent the time you're exposing yourself and your passengers to the dangers of oncoming traffic when you pull out to pass another car.

In our opinion, the 170-cubic-inch Six has neither the power nor the torque to handle the wagon's weight. The two-speed automatic also has to take a share of the blame. One of the reasons the Falcon's passing times and distances were so high was that there's no passing gear available. At speeds lower than 45 mph, the transmission would kick down into LOW, but it shifted out again at about 48 mph, so this made it pretty useless for highway speeds.

We usually recommend automatics in wagons, but not with this particular six-cylinder engine. The three-speed manual wouldn't really offer much improvement, either. Its second-gear ratio is 1.83 to 1, which is, for all practical purposes, identical to the 1.82-to-1 LOW of the automatic. At maximum engine rpm, second gear would still be good for only 55 mph.

The optional 260-cubic-inch V-8, coupled with either the two-speed automatic or the three-speed manual, would bring the Falcon's performance up to a more realistic level. If you aren't much interested in hauling, towing, or much highway use, then the Six might be all right. Don't even consider the 144-inch Six.

From the angle of fuel economy, you'd still be better off with the V-8. The Six in our test vehicle needed a 3.50-to-1 rear-axle ratio, while the V-8 would need only the 3.00-to-1 unit. This means that at legal cruising speeds, the V-8 wouldn't be working nearly so hard as the Six. With the Six, we had the throttle to the floor all the time and still couldn't stay with traffic. The very best we could get was 19.5 mpg. Quite a few of the larger-engined wagons we tested did far better.

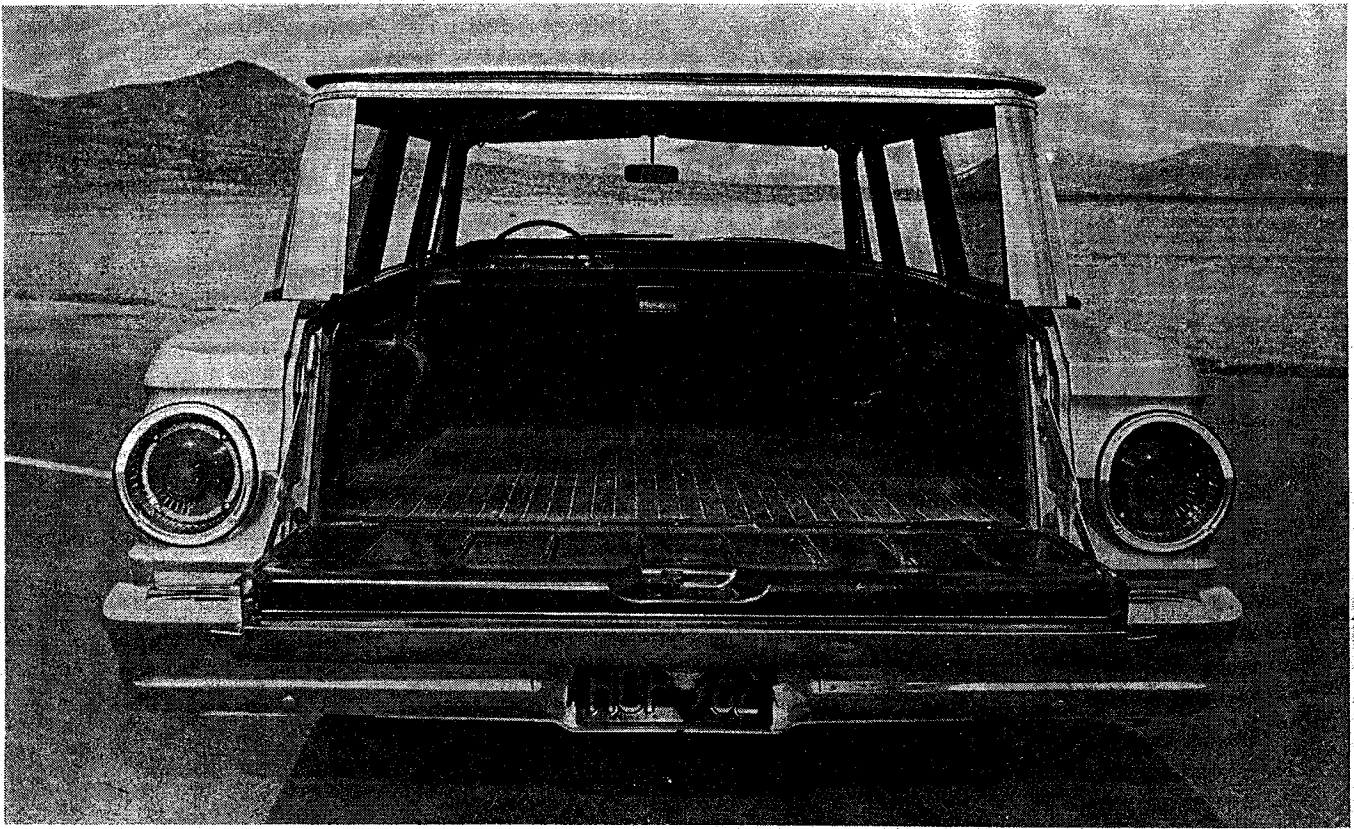
Ride and handling were about average. Stiffer rear springs are used on the wagon, but the front coils are the same as on Falcon sedans. The factory offers towing and heavy-duty suspension options, and they should be considered seriously even for normal service.

Brakes are larger than those on standard sedans, but they still faded quickly when used hard. Straight-line stops were hard to make, due to uneven braking effort at each wheel when the brakes were hot.

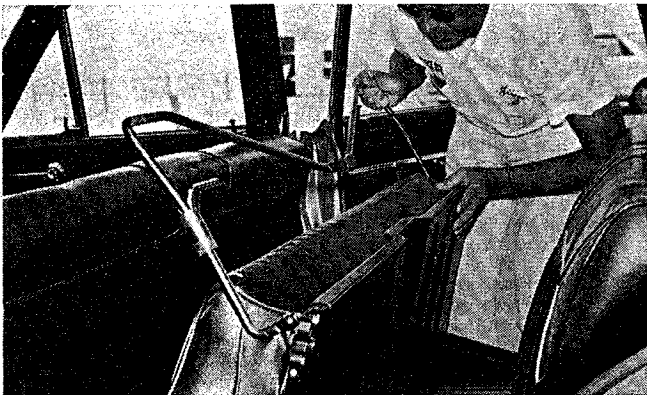
The interior was fairly utilitarian and should stand a lot of abuse. The same molded plastic cargo area side panels used in larger Fords are also in the Falcon. We weren't particularly impressed with the cargo deck covering. This is a pliable, soft, rubber mat and isn't fastened down. Most of the time it was wadded up in one of the area's four corners.

With a little help from the option lists this could have been a very satisfying wagon capable of doing an honest day's work.

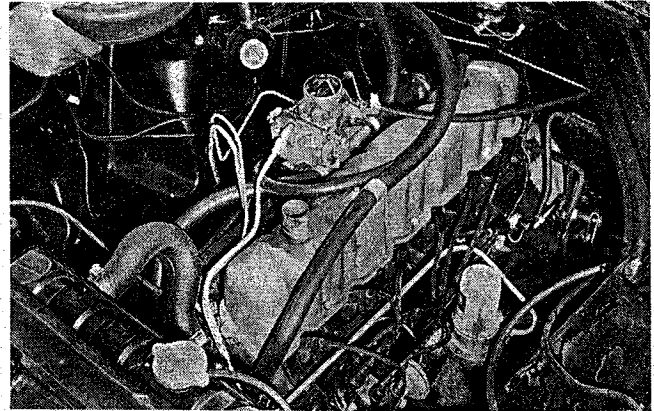
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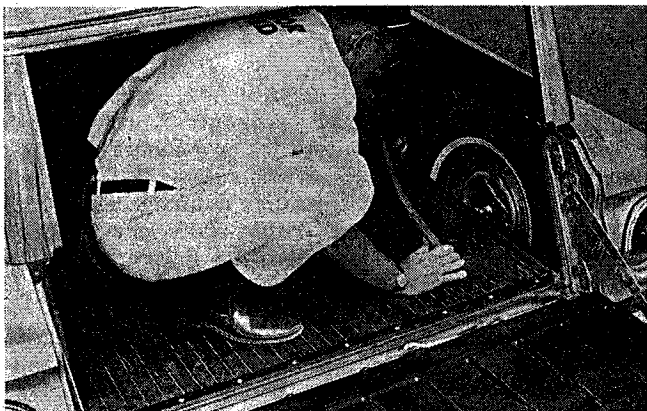
FALCON'S RUBBER FLOOR MAT ISN'T FASTENED DOWN. IT COMES OUT EASILY FOR CLEANING BUT SLIDES AROUND TOO MUCH UNDER WEIGHT.



Folding legs support back-seat cushion when down. Vinyl interior is durable, but headliner can easily be punched or torn.



Single-barrel Six with 101 hp gives performance that's barely adequate. For load carrying, 260-inch V-8 is a better choice.



You have to stoop somewhat to get out the spare tire. It rests behind removable panel at the right rear side of station wagon.



Weight of sandbags made Falcon sit low, squat during acceleration runs, greatly increased acceleration times and distances.