


mission, which also debuted in 1940, Packard did offer the aforementioned Borg-Warner electric overdrive beginning in 1939. The Packard Econo-Drive gave you essentially five speeds forward, and you could shift without a clutch except when coming from a standing start. In 1941, Packard offered their Electro-matic clutch, which worked much like Volkswagen's automatic stick shift. With that setup, you had an automatic clutch, but you still did the shifting yourself. Packard finally came out with their own fully automatic transmission, called the Ultramatic, in 1949.

The 282-cu.in. straight-eight produces a lot of torque at low rpm, so the big car pulls from a stop pretty well, and the Econo-Drive overdrive makes it possible to cruise at modern freeway speeds with ease. But even though Packard 120 models with overdrive are capable of high-speed driving, there are a couple of factors that might limit the prudent modern driver's enthusiasm.

The first is the car's brakes. Though excellent for the era, they cannot equal the stopping power of modern, lighter cars with disc brakes. The other issue is that the wheels and tires of the heavy old Packard must be carefully balanced, because the car is softly sprung for a good ride. Any imbalance would make itself abundantly clear in the form of tire-destroying vibration at high speeds.

As we roll along through the old orange-growing town of Santa Ana, California, I get the urge to just keep on going over to old Highway 66 to head

eastward. Even though the car is 65 years old, Packard's legendary dependability and the car's condition would make it very likely that we could drive all the way to Ed Stifel's home in West Virginia comfortably and without drama. After all, the Packard Motor Company prided itself on quality and dependability from its inception.

Today, thanks to Ed Stifel's determination and Herculean effort, I am able to experience for a brief time what it was like to drive one of the cars Packard built during its halcyon days, when the company's understated, stylish, quiet, comfortable and reliable cars were still the masters of the road. I imagine Ed's Uncle Dick would be proud to see his cherished Packard restored to such impeccable standards after all these years. 

Owner's View

Owner Ed Stifel remarks, "My childhood friends and I frequently rode our bikes around Uncle Dick's semi-circular driveway at his home, passing that beautiful Packard, which was usually parked out back beneath the large porte-cochere, and we marveled at its stately elegance and classic beauty. It was then I determined that one day I would own such a regal automobile.

Ed kept track of the car over the years, but it wasn't until six years ago that he was in a position to obtain the old Packard. "Years before it had been parked down in a hollow near a stream and covered with a plastic tarp. It was rusty, running, full of holes, dull, cracked and broken. You'd need a tetanus shot to go near it. But in July, 2000, the dream of a young boy on a bike was fulfilled."

"The car is a joy to drive: steady, responsive, comfortable and dependable. It's lovely in its lines and never fails to attract admiring attention from all who see it. I know Uncle Dick, wherever he is, smiles once more when he thinks of his Packard."

WHAT TO PAY

1940 Packard Model

Low	Average	High
\$10,000	\$18,000	\$26,000



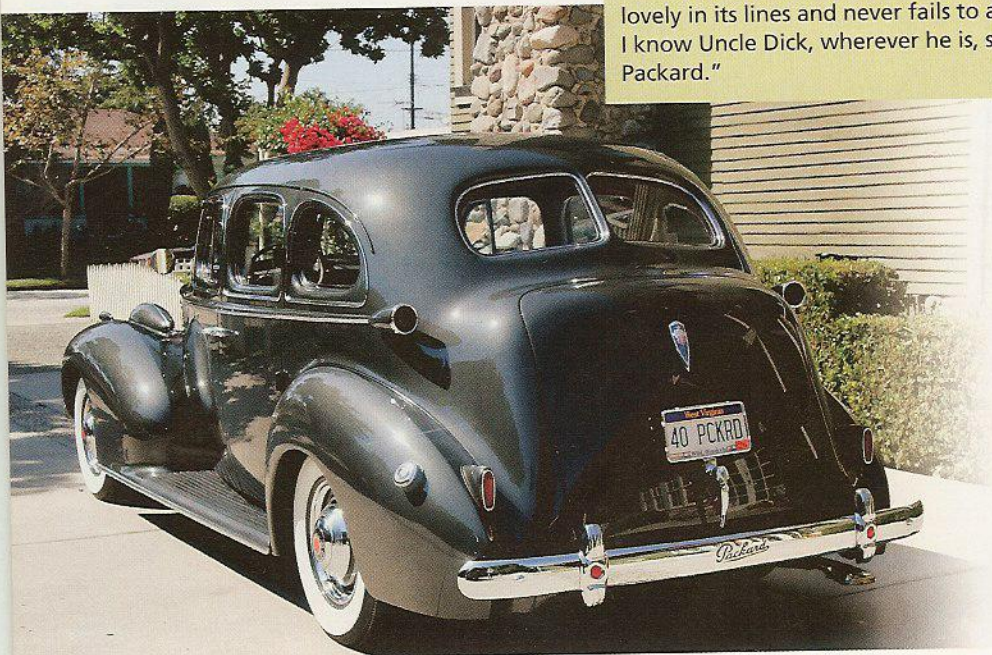
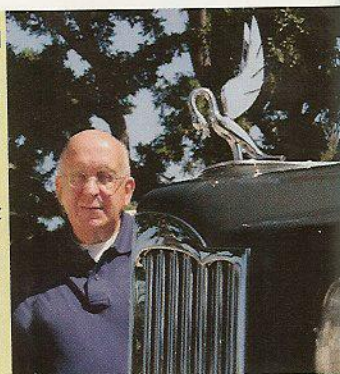
PROS:

Smooth, rattle-free ride
Quality through and through
More comfortable than the living room couch



CONS:

Few found regularly for sale
Brakes not up to today's standards
Finding trim parts for these cars can be difficult



CLUB SCENE

Packard Automobile Club
P.O. Box 360806
Columbus, Ohio 43236
800-478-0012
www.packardclub.org
Dues: \$40/year; Membership: 4

Packards International
302 French Street
Santa Ana, California 92701
www.packardsinternational.com
Dues: \$45/yr; Membership: 2,0

Eastern Packard Club
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Stratford, Connecticut 06615
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