

steering column for clearance as well as offsetting the power train 2" to the passenger side to fit the slant 6 platform.

Our plan was to keep this on a tight budget by using a suitable donor car for much of the components. A diligent search resulted in a '71 Duster with most of the proper equipment. Part of the difficulty is that many suitable donor cars are now prized as collectibles. In this case our donor was a victim of the tin worm and beyond restoration. No doubt the purchase of a new crate motor and trans is a lot less work than disassembly of a donor car, it is a bunch more expensive.

A call was made to Mr. Street Rod to obtain their mounts for the conversion. Although they were intended for pre-'48 Mopars we figured they would work as they are designed to trim to fit each application. Manny, at Mr. Street Rod, said he had little feedback about the use of the mounts on '49 to '54 models although he knew they were similar. We started to realize we were setting our course for some uncharted waters.

A trial fit of the 318 and 904 Torqueflite showed us that we had a tight fit to allow space for the intended air conditioning condenser. After a lot of maneuvering it was decided to massage the firewall to allow more room for the passenger side valve cover and transmission dip stick. A semicircle about 1.5" deep was created with hammer and dolly. A set of patterns were made to define how much to trim the Mr. Street Rod front mounts which are used in conjunction with the stock 318 rubber insulators. Conversion to a rear sump oil pan from a Dodge truck enabled steering linkage clearance. In addition a Mopar right angle adaptor gives us more room for the oil filter. Our positioning resulted in the powertrain, including the rear end, with a 1.25" offset toward the passenger side. This did turn out as the "just miss" swap as many areas are a tight fit but once installed it looks like it grew there.

The Mr. Street Rod transmission mounts utilize the stock Torqueflite dropout in the center. Unfortunately in this area the '51 frame is wider than the '48 and earlier ones. To resolve the 1/2" shortfall we made sleeves from .125" wall square tube. Mr. Street Rod will tailor these to your application. On the plus side the stock '51 speedometer cable fit perfectly.

Most of the Duster components were adapted including the cooling and electrical systems. The '71 radiator required the mounting flange to be narrowed on one side and new mounting holes to adapt to the '51 bulkhead. A stock '71 upper hose and shortened lower hose completed the connections. New rigid lines fashioned from 60" long 5/16" steel line hook up the transmission to the integral cooler in the radiator. Space for the air conditioning condenser was



The 318 and Torqueflite is a lighter package than the 6 cylinder and 3 speed it replaced.



Mounted a little higher than the 6 cyl and 1 1/4" to the left the 318 is a good fit.



The Duster exhaust manifold tucks behind the stock steering