

corporate individuals who liked to be identified with success."

One of these individuals was Robert S. McNamara, the non-sense financial "Whiz Kid" who replaced Crusoe in early 1955. McNamara wanted every Ford Motor Company line to be a profit producer, Thunderbird included. Even in those days he was known as a "non-car guy" concerned mainly with the bottom line, so he usually gets the blame from car fans for the two-seater's demise.

But it isn't that simple. Doubts about the viability of a "personal" Ford in *any* form had been expressed even *before* McNamara took charge. They appeared in a lengthy report outlining alternative scenarios for the evolution of Ford Division products and prepared in December 1954, about three months after the two-seater began coming off the lines. Interestingly enough, one of its recommendations was that a four-

passenger Thunderbird, including a possible station wagon derivative, be seriously considered for 1958. The reason: greater sales potential. Later, Ford's own highly touted market research added impetus to the suggestion. Surveys of "little Bird" owners revealed that many objected to the lack of a second seat, the limited trunk space, and the cumbersome manual folding top. Finally, product planners were likely influenced by another GM Motorama car, the Chevrolet Biscayne, a four-place, four-door hardtop on a 115-inch wheelbase, displayed in 1955. Ford spies seemed to think that this car or something very much like it was in the offing for '58 and should thus be taken into account in the design of any new Thunderbird. The Biscayne proved to be a red herring, but an important one.

Guidelines for the 1958 Thunderbird program were laid down in early March 1955. At this point, McNamara had four options: con-

tinue the two-seater, substitute a four-seater, offer both models, or cancel the line entirely. It's doubtful he ever seriously entertained that last one, but he was vexed by what to do about the two-seater, which still had a number of vocal supporters within the company. Among them was product planner Thomas B. Case, who essentially came out in favor of Option 3, a course that was actually pursued for about a year.

Proposals for both body styles took shape in Bill Boyer's studio under the "195H" designation, signifying the '58 program. The two-seater was to retain its customary 102-inch wheelbase. The new four-seater was initially planned for a 108-inch wheelbase, but that proved too short to provide adequate rear seat space for adults, so it was extended to 113 inches. Several design themes emerged quickly on both versions: massive bumper/grille combinations with textured mesh inserts, "gull-

