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In his foreword Chairman John Poole says we all know the feeling of biting off more than we can chew. The answer to that is, either we chew like hell or we take smaller bites. That's exactly what has happened with our project "from low gear to overdrive" so in our wisdom we decided to do it in two bites instead of one with the result being extra volumes spread out over a longer period . . .

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Whole district revolved around Hec 43

HEC POOLE was often referred to as the "father" of National Park and at the height of his career during the late 1940s, the whole district revolved around him—he probably employed the majority of the workforce at some stage, organised most of the social and sporting events, then quietly slipped out of the district to do a similar exercise for Tūrangi . . .

Special heaven for all truckies 48

To meet a request to contribute to this book LAURIE LITTLE, with the help of Dorothy Bowen while both were residents of Avonlea Resthome during the early 1990s, started to write his memoirs. He was not able to complete the task before his last journey to "truckie heaven" but the brief memories he did write are a valuable first hand account of the transport industry when it was in its infancy and later boom years . . .

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The district was well represented by one man truckies with dreams of becoming big time but most found it very hard to make ends meet and while some made it, many dropped by the wayside. DICK ATKINSON was one who seemed to fit this description . . .

Vic Le Prou and his trucks. 55

Taumarunui born Graham Manson, retired in Rotorua since 2006, talks about his interest in "mechanical things" and from a very early age he knew his life was going to revolve around logging trucks and Caterpillar tractors. He has taken a special interest in the logging and timber trucks of VIC Le PROU which he remembers well during his youthful days . . .

Diamond T served Doug well. 61

His Diamond T was a reliable workhorse for DOUG WOOD when he carted logs at National Park. However, by the end of the 14 years it was like the proverbial old faithful axe with seven new handles and six new heads . . .

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Sons often followed their father (and/or uncles) into the same walk of life and CLIVE OLIPHANT was no exception. He grew up with trucks and eventually took over from his father Birnie (featured in Vol 1) as a small operator serving local needs. Clive and his mother Lindsey talk to Ron Cooke about keeping the wheels turning in the family business . . .

Hopkins had "never give up" attitude. 74

HENRY WILLIAM (Bill) HOPKINS was one of the pioneers in the King Country sawmilling and transport industries. He arrived in the Taumarunui district from Norsewood (near Dannevirke) in 1905 and fortunately much of his family history was recorded in serial form in the Taumarunui Press from November 1953. Unfortunately he had passed away earlier in the year just before he reached the part of his life when he started building truck bodies and returning to sawmilling in the National Park area . . .





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From firewood to river metal 88

Advertisements appearing in the Taumarunui Jaycee publications Enquire Within between 1965 and 1968 boldly stated that Spencer & Smith were the Taumarunui pioneers of the metal industry. The metal being referred to was road metal and to explain more about this well known local industry are sons ROBERT SPENCER of Whangamata and his younger brother HAROLD of Manunui . . .

Saga of Harold's top hat rock 101

Over 1300 people turned out on Saturday 27 August 1995 to mark "Taumarunui Day" and more importantly to unveil a monument that was to re-identify the town as Heart of the King Country. HAROLD SPENCER, the man who instigated the rock project, said he was "extremely happy" with the response from the town and all he could proudly say, as being part of the Heartland King Country project, was that it had been an exciting and humbling experience . . .



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Johnny Stuart—a modern pioneer 104

ELLIS GEORGE STUART, commonly known as Johnny, was carrying throughout the Ohura district in an important transitional time—during the move from horses and carts to motor driven vehicles. Ruth Sandiford Phelan, a former journalist, took an interest in the activities of the Stuart family and commences this coverage with what she could find about Johnny before moving on to the achievements of his son "DK" . . .

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From contractor to carrier. 125

RUSS ALDRIDGE had just left school when he purchased an ex army Dodge 6x6 from his brother-in-law Cecil Lyford in 1948. Russ admitted in an interview with Audrey Walker that this was the beginning of a long and often innovative involvement in transport . . .

Motorised trailer was first of its kind in NZ 128

The Mapiu workshop produced a first of its kind in New Zealand in 1959 when RUSS ALDRIDGE was inspired to build a motorised trailer. The idea was unique and worked well on steep roads and airstrip tracks before more powerful trucks came on the scene . . .

Colour change for trucks in Waimiha 134

Waimiha locals would have noticed in 1971 that TONY WADE and HAROLD CARTER were now driving dark green trucks. Tony's was a new International spreader and Harold's old Dodge was no longer the familiar pale green, yellow and dark green of Mokauti Transport. Audrey Walker explains why Waimiha Transport was on the road . . .

The hard working Crombies 137

GORDON CROMBIE visited his sister Mavis after his return from service in the 2nd World War. Mavis and husband Tiny Blake owned a bakery in Ongarue. Gordon's path in life was set when he met Ongarue's Ruby Jones and to stay in Ongarue and marry her he wasted no time and bought Tom Taylor's carrying business. Audrey Walker explains . . .

Robin Wilson returns to Ongarue 141

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Youngest Adam brother despatched to Ongarue 143

When the opportunity came to expand Jack Turner Ltd's business it was young BRIAN ADAM who was sent across to Ongarue to take on the challenge. It proved to be a good move for Brian, leading on to his own operation almost a decade later . . .

Move from Ongarue to Manunui 149

In 1983 BRIAN ADAM bought an old mill site in Manunui on the southern outskirts of Taumarunui. "It was a hell of a mess and it took more than a year to clean up," he said with some disappointment so it was some time before the new depot became fully operational. Audrey Walker explains . . .

The transporter's dream team. 155

AUDREY WALKER asks if it was an exaggeration to say Darryl's organisational and Woody's driving and maintenance skills make the dream team for a transport company? Their combined strengths have certainly guided Ongarue Transport well since they took over the business on New Year's Day 1998 . . .

All part of the team. 155

Darryl and Woody are extremely grateful to have had strong staff retention within the company and their policy is to acknowledge this loyalty . . .

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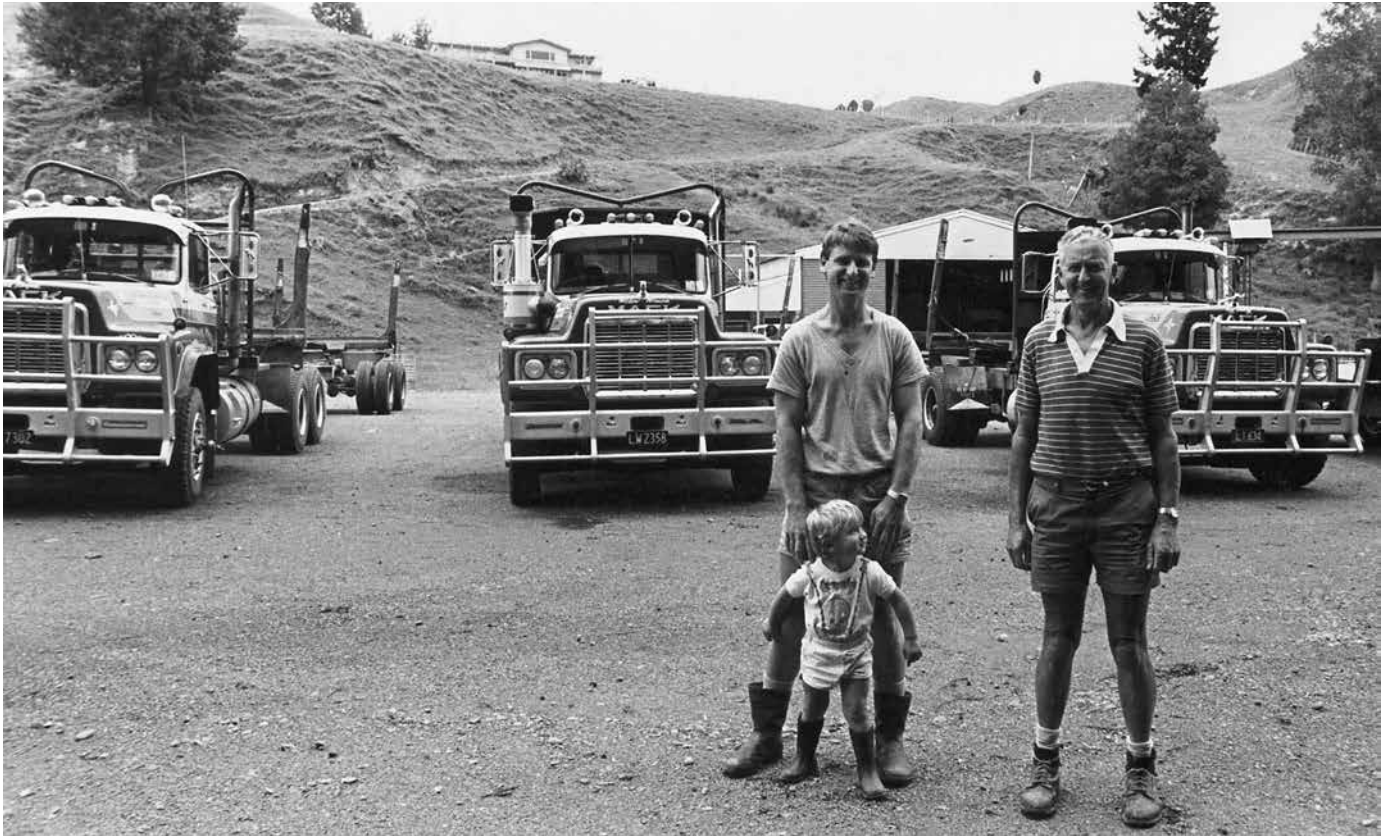
Truck Photo Index 175

This index only features the trucks shown in the photographs. Gavin Abbot of Opotiki has done his best to identify or confirm the make, the model and the year of manufacture but there may be variations that readers may know about.

Coming Up. 176

Due to an excess of stories yet to be completed, a 3rd volume will be published to continue from where Vol 2 left off. Some of the well-known names of King Country transport operators along with their experiences and another great selection of historic photographs will be offered.





The difficult decision had been made! The last three drivers, Peter McLean, Mike Jensen and Thomas Warren all had new jobs so the remaining Mack R600 logging trucks (in the background) were put on the market. The day when this three generation photo was taken in 1988, John Poole and son Robbie were witnessing the end of a 40 year era while Colin (right) doesn't know whether to smile or look dejected.

- photo courtesy Poole collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11161).

From low gear to overdrive

There is a time in life when you have to give up what you enjoy most. For COLIN POOLE and his son John it was saying goodbye, after more than four decades, to driving and owning a fleet of modern trucks set up mainly for the timber and farming industries. JOHN POOLE talks about his, and his father's, involvement with an industry that constantly changed from the early days of low gear to the now accepted ease of overdrive . . .

The last official load of logs over the notorious Punga for Colin Poole Ltd came on a typical wet wintry day in 1988 when their three late model 350 hp Macks dropped their loads of pine at the former sawmill of Hutt Timber & Hardware in Manunui.

It was definitely a gloomy day for Colin and John on 19 May 1988 as they met their trucks near Moerangi and followed them back to Manunui to be unloaded for the last time.

But according to John it was equally depressing in October 1988 when the same three Macks, heading in the opposite direction this time, paused on top of the Punga for a last photograph on their delivery run to Mike Lambert, their new owner of Mt Maunganui.

The realisation that the end of an era for their family had occurred was slow to sink in. Just prior to the sale going through John says life had changed so much, losing his wife Heather and bringing up three children by himself was bad enough and life without trucking was, on



Colin Poole started driving trucks in 1940 and in the following four decades saw huge changes in the industry. His son John summed it up when he said his father experienced it all "from low gear to overdrive!"

- a 1977 photo by Colin Seccombe, Taumarunui (ref: 15307).

its own, going to be rough but as they say, one door shuts and another opens.

He had been running the trucking business with his father Colin since 1977 and now they had decided to concentrate their energy on the family's 1000-acre sheep and beef farm on the outskirts of Taumarunui.

John stood and reflected for a moment about life with his father, a relationship he says was not strictly father and son but more about being good mates and being able to work together without conflict.

His mind started to wander back to his father's early days at National Park and how he entered into the industry long before he was born.

"Dad started driving trucks at the age of 16 in 1940 with a special dispensation for a heavy traffic licence because of the 2nd World War and a shortage of drivers at the time."

At first Colin worked as an "off-sider" (a truckie term for being a working passenger)



The National Park railway yard was reputed to be the busiest in the North Island in the years following the 2nd World War. This scene, during the late 1940s, shows a mixture of local contractors waiting for empty railway wagons (which sometimes took days) and as one can imagine valuable working time went down the tubes. There were no forklifts either and all drivers had to unload their trucks and load the railway wagons by hand. The frustrated drivers remain unidentified but it was an easier job for Gavin Abbot (our expert in identifying old vehicles) to recognise the makes of the trucks. From left front are: Chevrolet, White 704, Ford V8, then two Chevs. In the rear are three more Chevs.

- photo courtesy Poole collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11221).



A bus load of 30 former sawmillers, bushmen, truck drivers and other interested people joined together for a nostalgic tour of old sawmill sites around the National Park area. Pictured on the log dump at Tongariro Timber Co on 7 April 1984 are: BACK ROW (from left): Garry Skinner, Bill Bleasel, Mick Roderick, Bob Deadman, Thomas Warren. THIRD ROW: John Birrell, George Andrews, Doug Wood, Colin Poole, Don Tait, Allan Weal. SECOND ROW: Rod McLiesh, John Poole, Les Mott, Clarrie Kelland, Tiger Weir, Reg Marshall, Bryan Wood, Rangī (Tup) Woods, John Marriner, Garth Poole. IN FRONT: John Bowring, Ian Weir, Hec Poole, Warren Sinton, Wally Payne, Snow Kendall, Jim Nelson. ABSENT: Richard Payne.

- photo by Ron Cooke, Taumarunui (ref: 14141).



The choices for modern day farmers to buy and sell livestock are wide ranging. For example, PGG Wrightson offer nationwide services "online anytime, anywhere" as well as the age-old saleyard auctions, on farm sales, private sales or specialist stud stock sales. Back in the good old days, during the 1950s and 1960, stock agents for Wright Stephenson & Co (as they were then known) could regularly be seen in action at the Taumarunui Saleyards. On this day, Richard Jellie, Rod Ferguson and Derek Stephens have the firm attention of prospective buyers . . .

- photo courtesy Richard Jellie collection (ref: 14890).

Stock buyers and others

DAN SYMONDS relates his experiences as a Borthwick's livestock buyer around the central King Country and his memory of the trucking industry along with the truck owners and drivers he worked alongside plus more importantly the building of lifetime relationships with his clients . . .

Dan begins by explaining the roles stock buyers and stock agents and says while both were deeply involved with livestock their jobs were quite different.

"Stock buyers were paid a salary by a freezing company and were expected to obtain a large proportion of the killable stock in their domiciled district."

On the other hand stock agents were employed by mercantile companies like Wright Stephenson & Co or Dalgety & Co.

"They earned a commission for their companies by sales from one farmer to another, or by organising large saleyard entries for auction."

Undoubtedly there was competition among the buyers and agents but both had a lot to do with livestock carriers and were involved with them constantly on a day to day basis.

As stock numbers increased through the sixties and seventies other buyers for different exporters resided in the central King Country.

Some remembered by Dan during his career included Arthur Horton, Bill Rice (Ohura),



Dan Symonds served Borthwicks for 41 years, starting in 1947 as a stock clerk until retiring in 1988. Stock buying was a tradition with the Symonds family—Dan followed in the footsteps of his father Bill who served Borthwicks from 1931 until 1965 and with an older brother John, the family clocked up collectively 105 years with the same company.

- photo courtesy Dan Symonds collection (ref: 17599).

Derek Stephens (Matiere), Gordon Vance, Gerald Gray, Hugh Ritchie, Bill Wordley and Charlie Cotter.

Earlier agents were Derek Brown, Alan Laurence, Tony Homersham, Win Higginson, Bill Foote, Bert Nelson, Rod Ferguson, Comer Board, Bill Fouhy, Derek Tuck, Alistair Moore, Quintin Hogg, John Carr, Merv Crocker, Ted Woolston and Peter Murray.

A FAMILY TRADITION

For Dan stock buying was a family tradition having followed in the footsteps of his father Bill as a Borthwick's employee based in Te Kuiti. Dan's older brother John also joined the firm and between the three collectively put in 105 years of service.

Dan has seen many changes in the industry over the years and firstly casts his mind back to how stock was transported to the works.

The movement of livestock over large distances, from the early 1900s and to the mid 1930s was done by drovers and New Zealand Railways stock wagons.

"Fat lambs and freezing works cattle were mainly railed from the various small loading



Watch out, the Mayor is in town! Is his yellow truck standing sentinel or is it suggesting that the Mayor is available to ratepayers to voice their concerns? After all, "DK" is parked opposite the Post Office and with three parked vehicles (and a bus) it's highly likely he was bailed up trying to put the world right—speculation is a wonderful thing so why spoil the mood . . . - photo courtesy Stuart collection (ref. 12233).

DK: A man who was larger than life

Ruth Sandiford Phelan soon discovered that it was impossible to separate DON STUART the truckie from Don Stuart "The Mayor of Ohura"—overall he was a man who was larger than life . . .

If there was a job to be done—whether that be in his own trucking business, the RSA, civic duties, community work or helping out family, friends and neighbours—Don, known as "DK", would put his hand up and his back in.

He began his lifetime career in cartage as a newborn. His father E G (Johnny) Stuart owned and ran Stuart Carriers—Ohura since the early 1920s; by the time DK was born at the midwife's house in Ohura on 26 May 1924 Johnny had moved from horse and cart haulage to motor-driven Ford trucks.

DK would have grown up with the knowledge of the long hours required, diverse skills and determination needed, and commitment to hard work. By the time he was 14 years old and leaving school, he was a casual driver doing after work hours and weekends for his father.

The 2nd World War intervened in DK's career. He joined up with the Army in 1943 but after two months transferred to the Air Force. He wasn't allowed to fly planes because of colour blindness. His rank was Leading Aircraftsman and he spent 15 months in Overseas Service in 1944-1945 in the Pacific.

Coming back from war service DK bought a 1942 Chev truck with a rehab loan and worked with his father Johnny, buying the



Don's daughter, Pam Grimes, says her father had his name put on the truck doors "just in case he got lost!" Nobody believed that as after almost 30 years of being actively involved with Search and Rescue that reason was highly unlikely but in keeping with his sense of humour Don took as much as he dished out.

- photo by Ron Cooke, Taumarunui (ref. 15227).

business from Johnny's estate after his death in December 1946.

DK married Myrtle Ellen O'Riley, the eldest daughter of Len and Flossie O'Riley on 20 April 1946 at the Anglican Church in Taumarunui. They had four children: John, Ray, Mary and Pam. They all went to Ohura Primary and Secondary School and Pam went on to Taumarunui High School to finish her schooling.

HE WORE MANY DIFFERENT HATS

Life was busy and varied for DK as he wore many different hats. He had been a full and active member of the Ohura RSA since his return from military service; and he was on the Social Committee of the RSA from 1946 until the hall was sold during the 1970s.

In 1947 he was one of the original members of the Ohura Voluntary Fire Brigade. An injury to his left hand in 1948 meant he could no longer hold a hose but he remained alert to any needs in the Brigade and manned the phones occasionally.

Don only had a finger and thumb on one hand and in keeping with his sense of humour would show his missing fingers to any child he saw sucking their thumb what the result of their bad habit would be.

And he was constantly growing and diversifying his trucking business.



In 1975 these logs from over the ridge beside the Maramataha Stream were cut in to short lengths because of the awkward changing cambers on the corners of the winding track from the bush skids. Alterations were made to the International F1800 to carry short logs and it operated that way from then on. The changes can be clearly seen in the photo below taken 10 years later. The front bolster was moved forward from its original attachment point position between the two rear wheels and the trailer bolster put on the rear of the truck. The coupling for the pole trailer previously used can be seen below the end of the log. The big solid logs were held in place by chocks, plus a chain if considered necessary. Very different from the staunchions on modern logging trucks carting stacks of uniformly cut logs from plantation forestry.

- photos courtesy Joe Pittams collection (refs: 17108 & 17115).



The bets are that they wished the truck still had the old pole trailer set up when Bruce Hodgson attempted to load this log. No matter how hard Laurie Simpson stamps he won't get those front wheels back on the ground. The end of this big matai log in the Te Rongoroa bush near Ongarue was destined to be sawn off and put on the firewood heap so the truck could take the rest to the mill. During the 1990s, this was some of the last bush to be milled by Endeans which by now had changed hands and was owned by George Ottaway.

- photo courtesy Bruce Hodgson collection (ref: 17080).

brother and Johnny Kereopa drove it. When Rufus left the mill settlement Endeans took over the truck.

Later a contractor with an International did the job before Endeans bought an A5 Bedford for the job, and lastly a cream KM Bedford.

The International RF174 logger worked on steadily until 1965 when it was replaced by another International, this time a 1964 model of the F1800, bought from CP Hartage Ltd.

Known as *Red*, this truck saw Endean's Mill out until 1990 when the effects of regulations to cease native logging led to the mill's closure.

Long time mill manager George Ottaway bought the mill and carried on intermittently as logs became available for another six years.



Red has preferential treatment over the other old trucks rusting away in the open at Endeans's mill. She is stored under cover in a timber stacking shed.

- photo courtesy Audrey Walker collection (ref: 18651).



Sitting quietly in the mill yard while lichen grows on the windscreen this TK Bedford can't be credited with carting timber to the rail for Endeans. It is a Johnny-come-lately bought by neighbouring farmer Ian Reed in the 1990s from Owhango firewood merchant Fred Richards. George took it on when Ian left the district. The Bedfords that really did do timber cartage work were a green A5 and later a cream KM Bedford.

- photo by Ron Cooke, Taumarunui (ref: 17604).



It remains a mystery as to whose legs those are so we can't credit the agility of the hay bale transfer to anyone in particular. Are the trucks moving? Maybe not. The small Ford appears to be driverless but that could be Colin Clark behind the wheel of his Mitsi 320V8.

- photo courtesy Tony Gulbransen collection (ref: 17665).



A new direction for Ongarue Transport in 2010. Two Mercedes groundspreaders operated by Graeme Chick and Milner Lankow. The Mercedes pictured is an AXOR 1833AK. Other machines include an Hitachi digger EX100, a Komatsu loader WA180 and a Fiat Allis 645 loader. The digger is generally useful and amongst other things cleans out the effluent pond from the truck washdown.

- photo courtesy Tony Gulbransen collection (ref: 17661).



A nice piece of photogenic action as Murray Jonassen tips fertiliser into John Salmond's airstrip bin at Te Maire.

- photo courtesy Murray Jonassen collection (ref: 17712).



TONY GETS SATISFACTION

Darryl has popped in to the sign workshop in Matamata where his son Tony was working on the new International Eagle. It was destined for driver Jim Erni and was the first International in the Ongarue fleet since the early 1980s. Tony had done a signwriting apprenticeship with Sign Design in New Plymouth when he left school and since 1997 has been signwriting all Ongarue trucks. "I get a lot of satisfaction from being able to do them and Dad and Bryan let me customise the trucks as I see fit, starting from the way they are painted through to the final design. Not that we change them much, it's more to do with the different lines of the different brands." Tony acknowledged that the colours and logo have been around a long time and why change something that looks so good. Tony drove for Ongarue Transport for five years, starting out on the small 4-wheeler *Little Toot* and working his way up to the bigger Mitsubishis before moving on to drive Fonterra milk tankers.



Tony carefully applying the finishing touches to a new trailer.

- both photos courtesy Lynda Gulbransen (refs: 17588 & 18644).

TRUCK PHOTO INDEX

This index ONLY lists the trucks shown in photographs although there may be some anomalies with identifying the exact model. Every effort has been made to find the correct information but in many cases the owner could not remember or our resource material was not detailed enough. It would be very much appreciated to receive feedback on any corrections or from readers who can provide additional information. The text also contains details of other makes of vehicles not mentioned in this photo index and are indexed under "Truck Makes" (by maker's name only). Why not have a shot at identifying the grilles at right?

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