This Fiero GTP design study (*top*) maintained a Fiero GT look in the shape of the front air intake. Rear styling (*above*) sported "flying-buttress" sail panels with a recessed backlight and, of course, a prominent rear spoiler. A full-width taillight theme helped identify the car as a Fiero. Note the stylish, if somewhat fussy, alloy wheels.

neering features along with a near entry-level price. Initially, Corvairs came only as four-door sedans, but with the mid-1960 debut of the Monza 900 series based on a pert new club coupe, the car's image was refocused in a new direction. The Monza, casting off its economy car image, became a sporty coupe featuring a high-level interior trim with bucket front seats. That was soon joined by an optional floor-mounted, four-speed manual transmission. A hot turbocharged Spyder option and Monza/Spyder convertible models followed for the 1962 model run.

For 1965, when a complete redesign was scheduled, all styling emphasis was placed on strengthening Corvair's sporty nature. The Monza concept had turned Corvair's initial "oddball" adversity into a unique advantage, and the emerging "youth market" embraced the concept with enthusiasm.

Ford tried to respond to the sporty Corvairs with the '61 Falcon Futura (*CA*, November 1984), but the two-door Falcon's utterly conventional styling and character didn't work out at all well in a would-be sportier application, except for the 1963 Sprint with V-8 power. The '65 Mustang, largely based on Falcon engineering and components, was Ford's next response. With the sporty long-hood/short-deck styling and high-performance V-8 options, this one hit the jackpot—but that's another story altogether (*CA*, October 1988).

The Corvair survived for 10 years, with just one major body redesign in 1965. Fiero lasted only half as long. While the Corvair was completely a product of the Sixties (1960-69), the Fiero (1984-88) was a product of the safety/economy-oriented Eighties. Fiero has now been absent from the marketplace for nearly six years, but at least it left an enduring legacy. Its unique composite Enduraflex body panel construction over a driveable metal space frame has been utilized by General Motors in its futuristic Chevrolet/Pontiac/Oldsmobile front-drive minivans. This construction technique came close to being used for the GM-80 Camaro-Firebird replacement

Ron Hill: GM Designer

Ron Hill has served as the Chairman of Transportation Design at the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, since October 1985. During the 31 years preceding that, he worked as a designer for General Motors in many capacities. During the Fiero's gestation period, he headed a GM Advanced Design Studio. When CA interviewed him for the Personality Profile published in the August 1993 issue, he made several comments regarding the Fiero:

CA: How did you get involved with the Fiero?

Hill: At the last stage of my career with General Motors, I was running one of the Advanced Studios. About 1979, we had a project with Pontiac R&D, with a man by the name of Hulki Aldicacti. Hulki's a fascinating person. Well, Hulki had this idea of doing a . . . what they wanted to do was to look at doing a vehicle with perceived quality in terms of fit-and-finish, going against the grain of a large corporation such as GM. Because basically what large automotive corporations are, are metal-benders. That's the majority of what goes on in an automobile factory: distorting and bending metal. He wanted to do a composite body—he wanted to try it out with a new system. They thought that they would do it low-production. "Low-production" turned out to be two-passenger. Actually, Oldsmobile had taken the then-new X-body, which was just entering the scene at that time. . .

CA: The front-drive X-body quartet [Chevy Citation/Pontiac Phoenix/Oldsmobile Omega/Buick Skylark].

Hill: I'll give you an example of why that sort of thing never happened before. An annual [design project] was doing a mid-engine Corvette. I worked on two or three of them over the years. And what would happen is, despite all the advantages—and certainly a number of disadvantages—is we would end up being unable to achieve what was necessary because of the unavailability of transaxles. And all of a sudden with the advent of a transverse-front-engine/front-wheel-drive vehicle, we had a component that could be used, for example, in a mid-engine, small, commuter-type vehicle.

CA: Which in this case eventuated into the Fiero.

Hill: Exactly. Hulki was the lead on that team; I was the lead in Design Staff. We actually drove the car in March of 1980, actually '81 I think was when we drove the first pre-prototype. And everybody ignored us up until then because it was a fantasy, you know. It was a "shelf car."