

Scale 1/43

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Shape of the Future

At the beginning of the 1930s, Howard W. Kizer, a fleet manager for the American oil brand "Texaco", came up with an idea on how to modernize the "image" of heating fuels.

He thought, tanker trucks were already a specialty built vehicle so why not design a modern version that would capture the imagination of the people.

For better understanding, a major part of the American population were still heating their homes by coal, but the American oil industry wanted to convince the American people to start using oil for heat. A major part of their strategy was to use a modern brand presentation campaign.

In 1933, a design studio by the name of Bel Geddes was instructed to create a modern tanker. In 1934, six vehicles were commissioned. The chassis was built by the company Heil Co., a coachbuilder in Alabama. The Heil Company was founded by Julius P. Heil, a German emigrant, and

still exists today as a manufacturer of truck bodies. They now specialize in design and production of waste collection trucks.

To follow the modern streamlined design, a Hercules six-cylinder rear-mounted engine was installed into the car. This allowed the driver to sit very close to the floor which was necessary due to the streamlined design. Another issue that arose was the driver was not going to be able to shift the gearbox appropriately because he could not hear the engine revs. The designers considered installing a tachometer, but the cable was not able to stretch the length of the truck. So the designers mounted a microphone in the engine compartment and wired it to a speaker in the cabin – just like some automakers do these days in order to make the car sound more exciting.

The vehicle had a length of 8 meters, but only a height of 1.80 meters. This means that the Doodlebug tanker was not even higher than a '34 Ford at that time!

The end result was exactly what Texaco wanted, a modern brand presentation for the American oil industry.

Because of this revolutionary performance by Texaco, other American oil companies were forced to follow this way. So that some streamlined tankers were built in the 1930s. As mentioned before, only six examples were built of the Diamond T Doodlebug tanker in total; however none of the original vehicles exist today.

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