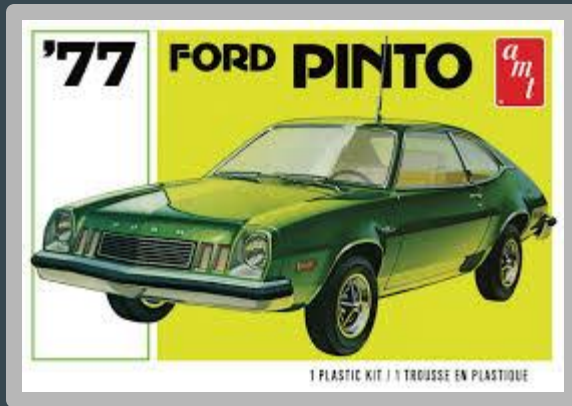




FORD PINTO



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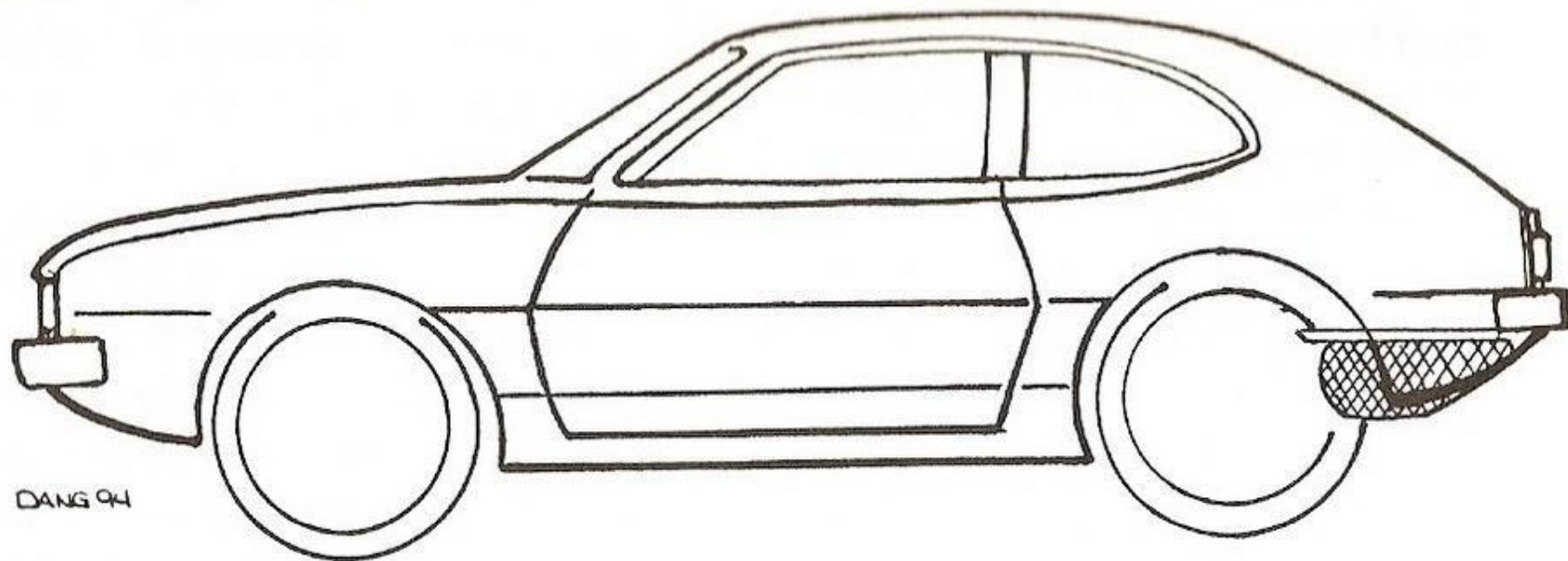


FIGURE 1

This diagram shows the placement of the fuel tank in the Ford Pinto.

Key Issues:

- In crashes of over 30mph, the rear end of the Pinto would buckle in towards the back seat
- Because of the placement of the gas tank, the tube leading to the gas filling cap would rip away from the tank itself
- The gas tank would then jam up against the undercarriage of the car and get torn apart by sharp bolts, spilling gasoline all over the road and into the inner-workings of the car
- As is common in crashes, a spark would likely the gasoline on fire, engulfing both involved cars in flame
- In crashes with any significant speed, the doors of the Pinto would jam and passengers would remain stuck inside the car, looking out into the beautiful golden light as they burn to death. (Site 3)

Ethical Issues of the case:

- Should a private company value profit above all else?
- A company should prioritize profits, but as a society we value human life, so where do we draw the line?
- “On one hand, we value human life as a social agreement that we each value our own life and therefore have a duty to respect the lives of others to preserve the right to our own. On the other hand, we have designed an economic system that incentivizes social progress with personal gain and competition, making our work values different than our personal values.” (site 1)
- It can be argued, from a utilitarian perspective, that the cars being cheaper and more readily available and the profits obtained from them outweigh the lives lost and injuries sustained.
- Because they knew of the risks of the Ford Pinto it could be considered negligence as they chose to ignore the dangers, which makes it much ethically dubious.

Known Issues

- Ford knew that there was a fire hazard when the car was struck from behind even at low speeds
- The original Pinto design included a gas tank similar to that of the Capri, which proved to be much more safe.
- In design, corners were knowingly cut to reduce production cost.
- Ford was facing competition from Volkswagen, so they sped up the production time.
- Normally, the time span from conception to production of a new car is about 43 months. The Pinto came out in under 25. (Site 3)
- After discovering the tank was unsafe, no one alerted executive Lee Iacocca who could have prevented the disaster it caused.

Unknown Issues

- The general public did not know that the Ford Pinto had a high risk of fire until after many accidents had happened.
- Ford knew about the issues but chose not correct them as it would require a costly redesign of the car and a delay on the release.
- Why did Ford rush the production of the Pinto so much?
- Ford didn't wasn't aware of the amount of backlash that the Pinto's failure would cause for the company's reputation
- "Ford decided to compress the normal drafting-board-to-showroom time of about three-and-a-half years into two." (site 2)

Conclusion

- The Pinto's design failure resulted in as many as 180 deaths.
- In 1978, Ford recalled all 1971-1976 Pintos and upgraded them with the originally proposed reinforcements and materials
- More so than the physical damage caused by the car's faults, Ford faced tremendous PR backlash for the following years.
 - They were left having the reputation of putting profits before safety and customer service.
- Today, paradoxically, Ford makes some of the safest cars on the market.
(site 5)
- Perhaps this suggests that the even for profit-focused companies, the public's opinion on ethical issues is strong and influential

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