

Automotive



By Greg Zyla
King Features

Ford's new sport utility

Our test Escape came with the optional and powerful Taurusbred 200-horsepower 3.0-liter V-6 (\$1,480), which we recommend over the four-cylinder. Also added were side step bars (\$280), six-disc CD upgrade (\$585), side air bags (\$345) and a comfort group (\$870), which brought the final retail price to \$25,165.

The interior is very roomy when compared with the competition, and its largest-in-class cargo area of 65 cubic feet with rear seats folded is most impressive. A 3,500-pound tow rating with the V-6 is another plus, especially when you want to attach your small boat or mini-camper for a weekend of fun.

On the road, Escape is a pleasure. Its comfort factor is high thanks to a 103.1-inch wheelbase, which is one of the larger mini-SUVs. The vehicle weighs 3,238 pounds and has a turning radius of only 39 feet. It rides and maneuvers like a small car, although once in a while a bump in the road will let you know you are riding in a small SUV that offers off-road capabilities.

We took Escape over several mountain roads, and it performed powerfully and flawlessly. We also took it on some dry, dusty roads where the four-wheel-drive system kicked in. The ground clearance is only 7.8 inches, so be aware when serious off-roading is at hand. Most of the competitors

offer higher ground clearances, but this is one of the trade-offs when building an SUV on a car platform.

The fuel mileage is good at 18 mpg city and 24 mpg highway, and the Escape comes with all the safety and convenience features one would expect in a modern-day SUV. Overall, the Escape offers a roomy feeling inside, while other mini-SUVs offer up that tight, small feeling. It's good-looking, easy to drive and affordable.

This new mini-SUV is another winner from the company that has made a science out of building popular trucks and SUVs. Escape now joins Explorer, Sport-

**2001 Ford Escape
XLT
Base price:
\$17,645**

Trac, Expedition and the aforementioned Excursion in the Ford SUV lineup. We feel the Escape will continue to do well versus the competition, which includes Toyota RAV4, Honda CR-V, Chevy Tracker, Subaru Forester, Suzuki Vitara, Isuzu Amigo, Nissan Xterra and sibling Mazda Tribute.

A lot of thought went into this design, and dollar for dollar we feel the Escape might be the best of the bunch.

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Horoscopes

Aries (March 21 to April 19) As tensions ease on the home front, you can once more focus on changes in the workplace. Early difficulties are soon worked out. Stability returns as adjustments are made.

Taurus (April 20 to May 20) A new romance tests the unattached Bovine's patience to the limit. But Venus still rules the Taurean heart, so expect to find yourself trying hard to make this relationship work.

Gemini (May 21 to June 20) It's a good time to consider home-related purchases. But shop around carefully for the best price -- whether it's a new house for the family or a new hose for the garden.

Cancer (June 21 to July 22) A contentious family member seems intent on creating problems. Best advice: Avoid stepping in until you know more about the origins of this domestic disagreement.

Leo (July 23 to August 22) A recent job-related move proves far more successful than you could have imagined. Look for continued beneficial fallout. Even your critics have something nice to say.

Virgo (August 23 to September 22) Ease up and stop driving yourself to finish that project on a deadline that is no longer realistic. Your superiors will be open to requests for an extension. Ask for it.

Libra (September 23 to October 22) You should soon be hearing some positive feedback on that recent business move. An old family

problem recurs, but this time you'll know how to handle it better.

Scorpio (October 23 to November 21) Some surprising statements shed light on the problem that caused that once-warm relationship to cool off. Use this newly won knowledge to help turn things around.

Sagittarius (November 22 to December 21) Your spiritual side is especially strong at this time. Let it guide you into deeper contemplation of aspects about yourself that you'd like to understand better.

Capricorn (December 22 to January 19) Your merrier aspect continues to dominate and to attract folks who rarely see this side of you. Some serious new romancing could develop out of all this cheeriness.

Aquarius (January 20 to February 18) You're always concerned about the well-being of others. It's time you put some of that concern into your own health situation, especially where it involves nutrition.

Pisces (February 19 to March 20) Just when you thought your life had finally stabilized, along comes another change that needs to be addressed. Someone you trust can help you deal with it successfully.

Born this week: You have a sixth sense when it comes to finding people who need help long before they think of asking for it. And you're right there to provide it.

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Just for Wunnerfitz

I was having lunch at a restaurant in the Sellersville area not long ago, when a man walked by who looked familiar but whom I could not immediately identify. He recognized me however, and it quickly dawned on me. This was Alpheus Ruth, a man who for many years was a leading Berks County farmer and dairyman. He now resides at the Dock Woods Retirement Center at Kulpville (Montg. Co.) in the area where he grew up and began farming.

As a progressive young farmer with an eye to the future, Alpheus could see problems ahead for agriculture in his part of Montgomery County, with industry and development gradually crowding out the family farm. He set his sights northward, and wound up buying a farm in the Fleetwood-Lyons area, which would become known as the Vista Grande Farm. Here, he and his dedicated wife raised their family. His dairy herd of registered holsteins was recognized as one of the finest. Like many other farmers he joined the then famous Lehigh Valley Cooperative Dairies and shipped his milk to their state of the art facilities on North Seventh Street in Allentown. Later, he would become president of the organization for a period of time.

When it came to farming activities in Berks County, there wasn't much the Alpheus Ruth family wasn't involved in. One year he was a recipient of the prestigious Master Farmer award which is given each year to a select few farmers from across the state who are singled out for significant accomplishments in agricultural



Dave Hendricks

two individuals were paired together to milk a cow. I was told that there would be government officials and other prominent figures participating, so I didn't know if my partner might be Gus Yatron or Mike O'Pake or who, but lo and behold it was Phoebe! And we won too!

I'll remember that event for a long time. It was a lot of fun. Watching some of those dignitaries trying to milk a cow was hilarious. Some of them couldn't get a single squirt out! I would not question their qualifications for the leadership positions they held, but it was obvious that cow milking was not among the things they excelled in!

There's a lot more I could say about Alpheus Ruth. He was an active member of the Oley Mennonite Church where his family worshipped, and his Christianity was interwoven with his farming activities. There was no attempt to hide it. He was Pennsylvania Dutch through and through, and was an occasional caller on our Wunnerfitz Hour. A gentleman in every respect.

leadership in one form or another.

Accompanying Alpheus in the restaurant that day was his daughter, Phoebe Bittner. She and her husband still operate Vista Grande Farm. I reminded her of an event we participated in together some years ago. They had this festivity at PennSquare in Reading, called Farm-City days, where farmers would give the city folks a taste of country life. The radio station (WBYO) was there with its remote unit and did live broadcasts. I was asked to participate in a milking contest. In this particular contest,

ROARING TWENTIES

In the grid below, twenty words can be found that fit the category for today. Circle each word that you find and list it in the space provided at the right of the grid. Words can be found in all directions-- forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. An example is given to get you started. Can you find today's 20 words?

Today's Category: **PLANETS & PERIODS OF TIME**

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