



A QUICK GLIMPSE INTO ESCALANTE'S SHOP WILL DELIGHT ANY CAR BUFF. THE PACKARDS THAT ESCALANTE'S TEAM RESTORES ALWAYS HAVE THE QUALITY OF LOOKING LIKE THEY JUST ROLLED OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE.



way Packard did it," Escalante says. Underscoring his point, a 1949 Packard nearing completion looks like it just came off the assembly line. Or will, once all its trim is reinstalled.

Elsewhere in the shop, a 1932 903 owned by Cisco Systems Inc. board member Larry Carter is getting a new gas tank and having its wire wheels re-trued, a 1938 Super Eight Touring Sedan owned by Orange County businesswoman Susan Ottlie is being readied for pleasure driving and a 1953 convertible is undergoing an extensive underhood detailing. If any parts

are needed, the shop has it covered. Escalante gestures toward shelves and drawers filled with parts. "Every one of those drawers is stuffed," he says. A storage room holds even more. "Customizers take parts off cars and we save them," he says, pointing out bins overflowing with seat tracks and other rare original pieces.

Back in his office, Escalante takes a call from Harrah, phoning from Hawaii, who wants some work done on his Murphy-bodied 1929 convertible sedan. It will require that Escalante work Sunday, but he doesn't mind. "You can't punch a time clock

in this business," he says later while driving his 1939 Packard in downtown Santa Ana.

As the big convertible idles quietly at stoplight, a man on a bicycle does a double-take, then smiles and nods in appreciation of the beautiful classic. Escalante seems totally in his element as he surges the car forward when the light turns green. To say he enjoys what he does would be an understatement. "I've turned my play into work and my work into play," he is fond of saying. Anyone who walked through the doors of Custom Auto Service would heartily agree. ■