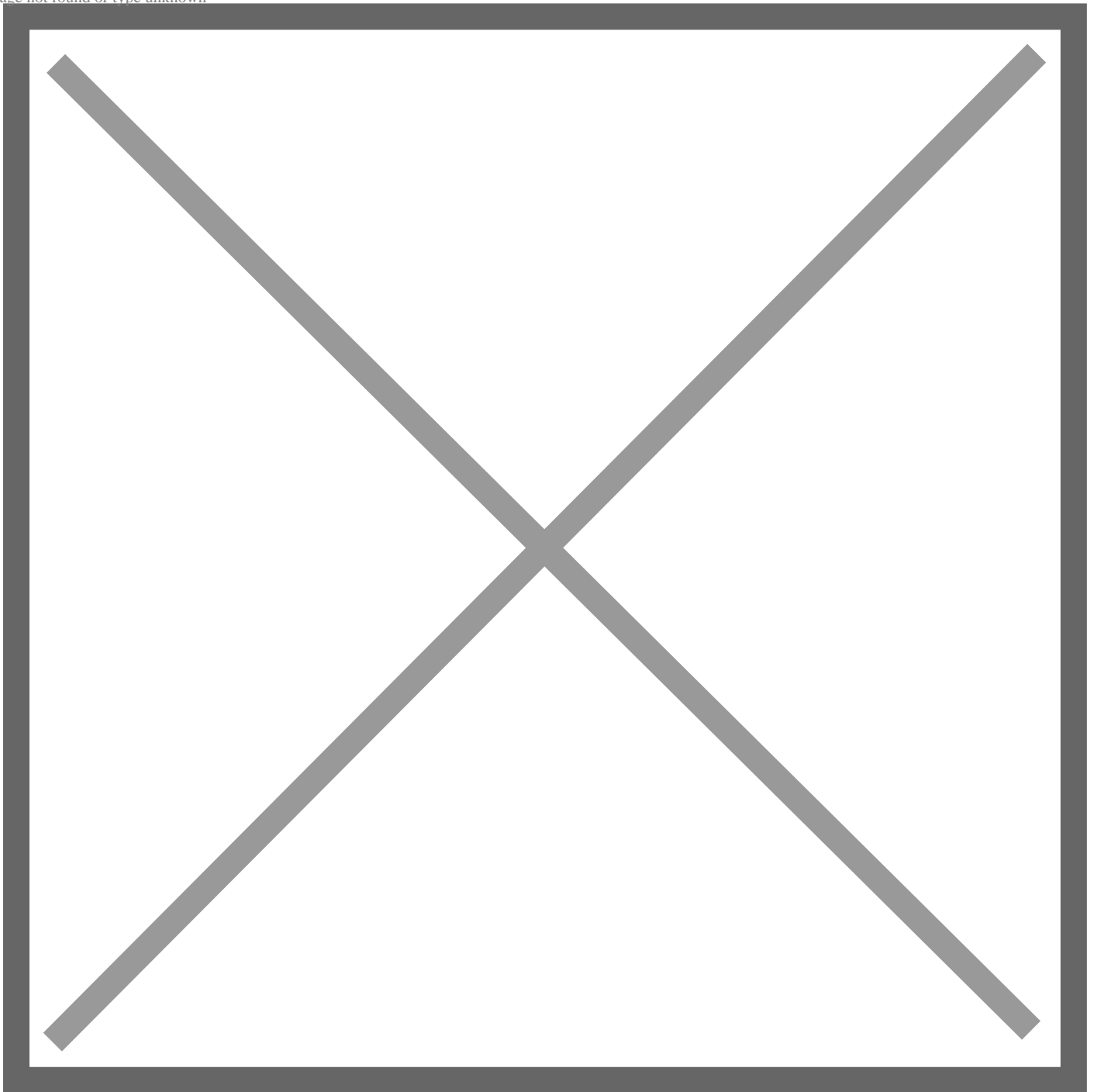


Coming to America: A Tale of Two Toyopets

August 31, 2017

On Aug. 25, 1957 – a hot summer day in Yokohama, Japan – two Toyopet Crown sedans boarded a ship called the President Cleveland and set sail across the Pacific. Their destination: to become the first Toyota vehicles on U.S. soil.

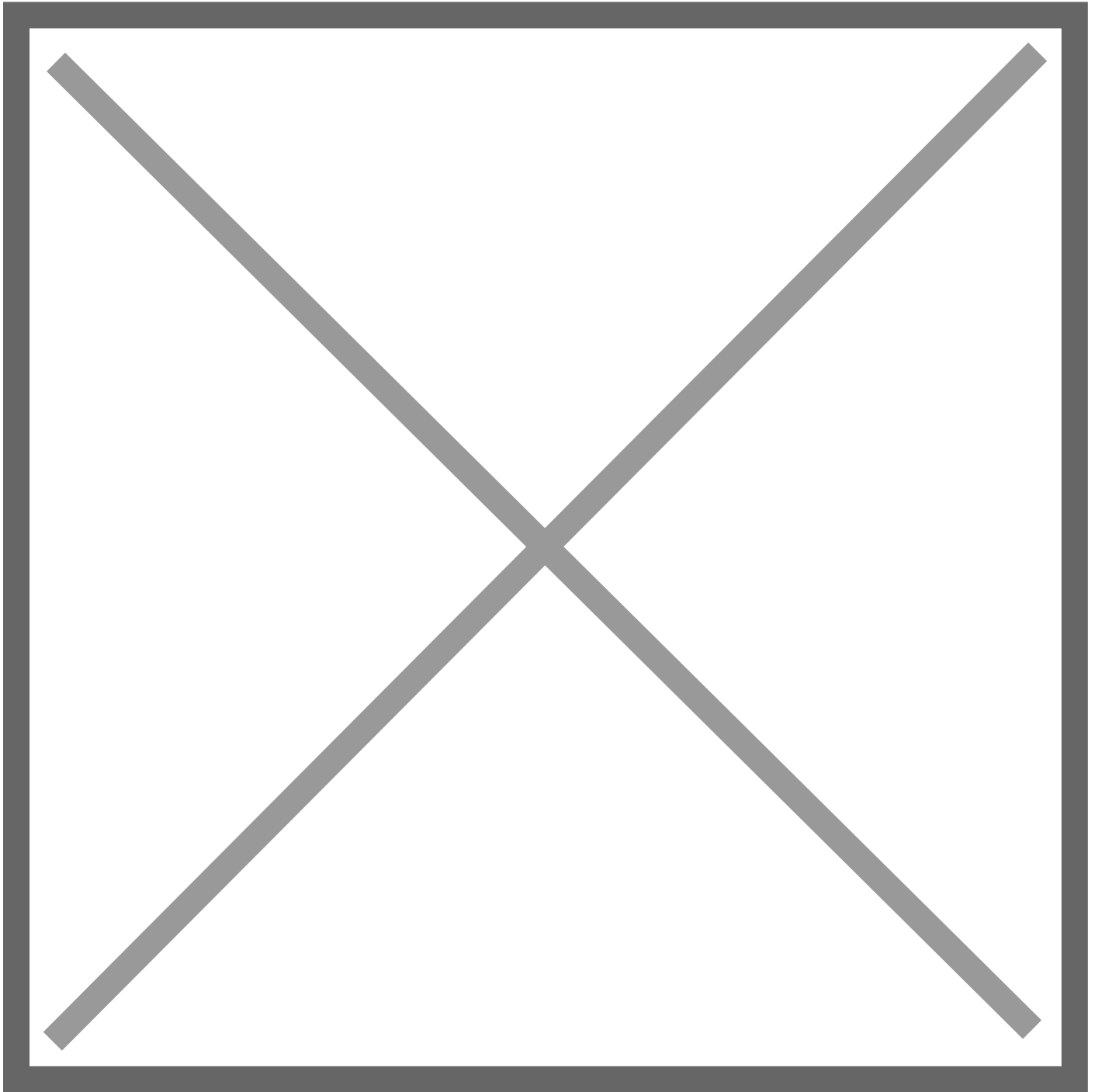
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After a pit stop in San Francisco, the Toyopets debarked at the port in Wilmington, California, Sept. 14. Toyota Motor Sales (TMS) President Shotaro Kamiya, executives Seisi Kato and Shoji “George” Hattori, Miss Japan and a throng of reporters greeted the cars. As the first vehicle swung onto the dock, a woman graced it with a bouquet of flowers. Everyone cheered.

From there, the cars headed to a garage where they waited to be licensed and registered. Performance expectations were high, and the cars looked the part, with classic 50s body styling – a handsome match for contemporary American models. The dark blue color of one also was quite popular.

On Oct. 13, 1957, Toyota executives loaded the trunks with tools and spare parts (no service stations/repair shops) and launched a five-day, 927-mile road trip, driving the Toyopet Crowns from Los Angeles to Richmond, California. Fuel economy performance was impressive: 30 mpg at speeds of 55 mph. However, mechanical problems emerged even before the trip began, with one vehicle's camshaft needing replacement.

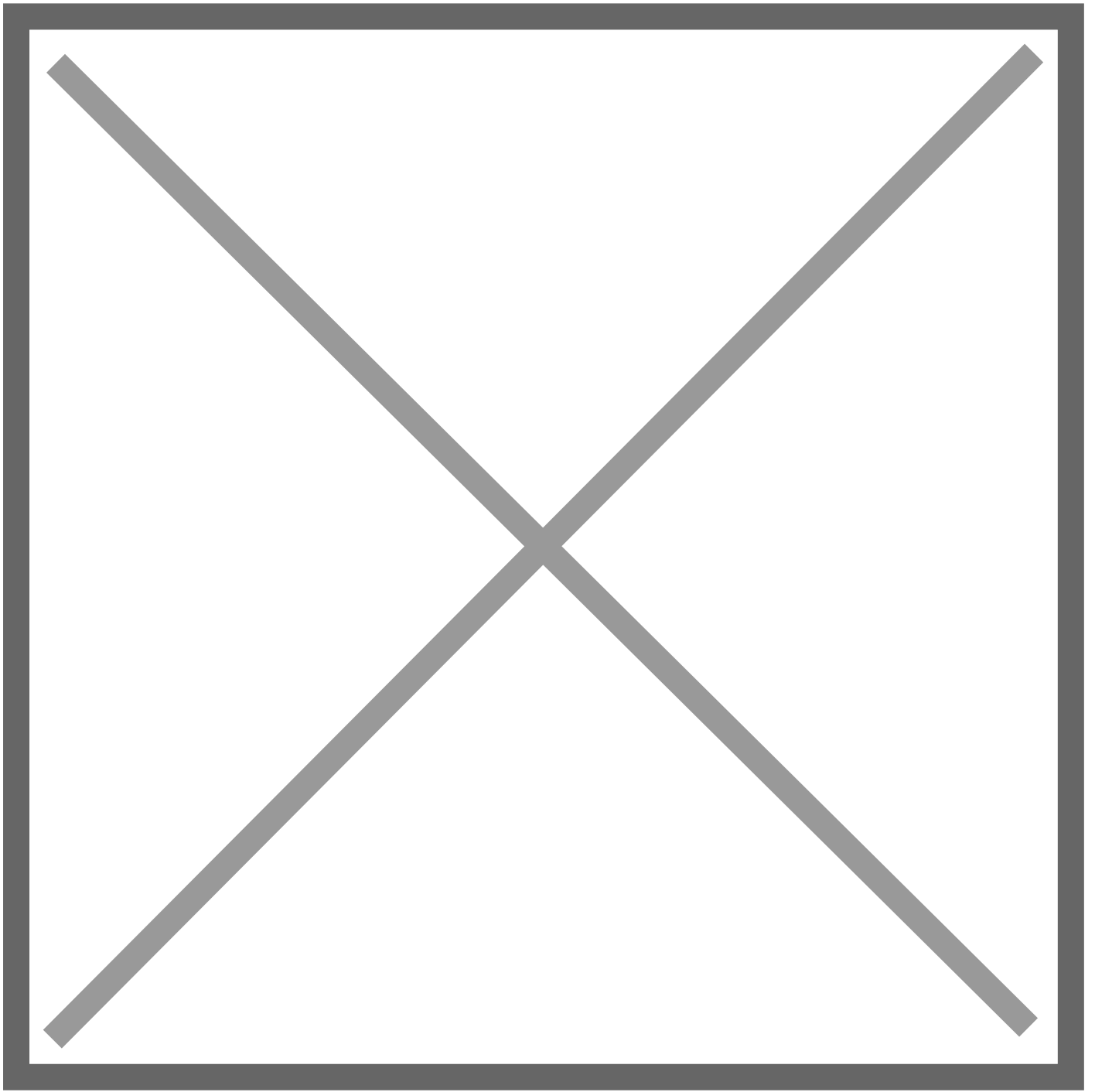


The Toyopet Crowns were well suited to mountains and San Francisco hills, but California freeways were another story altogether. The executives drove slower than the typical American driving speed, and they were easily passed by a Volkswagen van. At 60 mph, one of the sedans began protesting loudly. The vehicles, Hattori

noted, would need more power for any Hollywood dreams to come true.

Both vehicles required repairs upon return to Los Angeles. The blue vehicle was fixed and displayed at auto shows throughout the West; the other took a bow.

Toyota learned from the endeavor, limiting initial shipments of the Toyopet and moving forward with the more rugged and durable Land Cruiser. And by 1965, it was ready to premiere a car far more reliable and suited to American highways...the Corona.



First Toyota (a Toyopet Crown) registered in the U.S.