



JIM LODGE

with its predecessors. Gear changes from 2nd to 3rd are practically impossible to detect under normal throttle, and from 3rd to 4th, there's absolutely no feel regardless of a wide-open throttle. Downshifts still retain their advantage of engine braking, but the process is devoid of mechanical clanks and whines. This has all been accomplished by use of a 2nd fluid coupling and sprag clutch (Jan. and Apr. MT).

A new P position on the quadrant offers the advantage of acting as a hill holder or parking brake. Unlike other parking pawls, this one lets you start the engine in this position. To move ahead, normal gear selection is then made. An improved version of the '55 Hydra-Matic is offered on 860 and 870 models.

Chassis: Basically the same as '55 but with improved shock absorber valving (slightly softer action) and full-length rear spring liners, improved steering knuckle and support assembly.

The power steering unit has been redesigned for more compactness and turning resistance has now been cut from 9 to 4½ pounds pressure. Road feel has been retained, however. Heavier universal joints to accommodate the increased engine torque complete the picture.

ball centers. Exit and entry, like last year, are entirely satisfactory and strictly functional. The windshield cornerpost, steering wheel and doorsill are all designed with the idea in mind that people have to get in and out.

Visibility in general is excellent with one exception. Our 4-door Catalina was in character with other hardtops in having a rear window that reduced visibility in the rear view mirror to a ridiculous state unless we were willing to draw in our necks like a turtle. The well-placed side mirror overcomes this design problem. The windshield on the test car was remarkably free of distortion and high enough to let us see the most difficult overhead traffic signal. A tinted top edge reduced sun glare, at least psychologically.

Instruments and dash controls remain functional and easy to read. Pontiac has retained its speedometer which shows a red area from 0 to indicated speed. Radio controls, heater, vent and wiper are easy to reach and simple to operate. The 2-speed electric wipers produce the usual limited curved windshield sweep. They are quiet and positive in operation.

Center-located glove box, handy cigarette lighter, windshield washer and clock with built-in accuracy, completed the conventional array of items that contribute to

Detroit-type driving ease and comfort.

Lack of wind wander or cartrack sway, better body stability and a softer ride, place this car among the more stable '56s.

HOW CAR PERFORMS

With 227 hp under the hood ornament you can't help but notice the eager performance potential that Pontiac's ads have been plugging. Acceleration is smooth and rapid enough for anyone not bent on qualifying for pole position at Indianapolis. Performance figures indicate an all-around increase in performance (see performance table).

In the passing range of 50 to 80 mph, 3.7 seconds were cut off of last year's averages. Manually shifting from LOW to D3 to D4 range produced no appreciable decrease in time required to reach any given speed. Many similar tests of various automatic transmissions indicate that automatic gear changes can no longer be improved on by manually shifting thru the various ranges.

To have flashing performance from 0 to 50 mph and a bucket of mush from 50 to 70 mph is not good, or even safe, performance. The driver of such a car would be extremely handicapped in trying to pass another automobile on the highway. For a car to have good all-around per-

formance by our standards, it must be capable of reserve power output under all but excessively high speed conditions, which aren't practical on our outmoded highways, anyway.

By comparison, the '56 Pontiac will have to take a back seat to last year's model in fuel economy. The marked horsepower increase this year will cost you about 1½ mpg and more if you have a lead foot. Fuel economy and high speed definitely don't go hand in hand.

The new Pontiac has more built-in roadability than last year's model, which was up among the top of the production car list. The improved steering system gives more positive control, and while the shock valving is slightly softer than last year, this is no baby buggy ride. You will feel the bumps but in a rather satisfying way. "Solid and predictable" keynotes Pontiac's ride.

Body lean is held to a reasonable minimum and there is no flighty tendency to blaze a new trail in a tight turn. A deliberate breakaway can be corrected by a quick turn into the skid, providing you're on your toes. The powerplant has enough moxy to power you out of trouble (usually) if you miss the curve marker.

Dashboard surfaces are taken in stride and dips are negotiated without undue

AN MT RESEARCH REPORT BY JOHN BOOTH

'56 PONTIAC

Star Chief 4-door hardtop with Strato-Flight Hydra-Matic transmission, power steering and brakes, pushbutton windows, radio, heater, dual exhausts, padded dash, and 6-way seat

PONTIAC FOR '56 represents a concerted effort on the part of the Pontiac Motor Division to gain a host of new owners. The 3rd, 4th, or 5th place on the national sales ladder would be a mighty juicy melon to taste. How they are going about getting more sales is apparent from driving the car and from watching the changed philosophy in advertising. For many years, Pontiac said nothing about performance; this year they openly brag about "flashing getaway," and "power to go." They have cause too, for there is considerable improvement in the Star Chief's ability to move, as you will see.

NEW FEATURES

Engine: A whopping 227-hp V8 sports many improvements over last year's model. Even the less expensive 860 and 870 models boast 5 more hp than the '55 power-pack maximum of 200.

This big jump in horsepower is the result of a bore increase to 3¹³/₁₆ inches from 3¹/₄, giving it a very substantial 316.6-cubic-inch displacement. Compression ratio has been upped from 8.0 to 8.9 to 1, while 7.9 is optional on manual shift models, thru the use of a dished piston for operation with regular grade gasoline. Carburetion has been improved by a new 4-barrel pot with enlarged throats. More efficient breathing characteristics have been accomplished by an improved intake manifold with less air restriction. A better performance index has been established with use of a new cam on Hydra-Matic-equipped cars that allows an increased lift and longer open period of the aluminum-treated valves.

Transmission: The new Hydra-Matic (Strato-Flight) is a symphony in smoothness. Gone is the annoying jerk associated

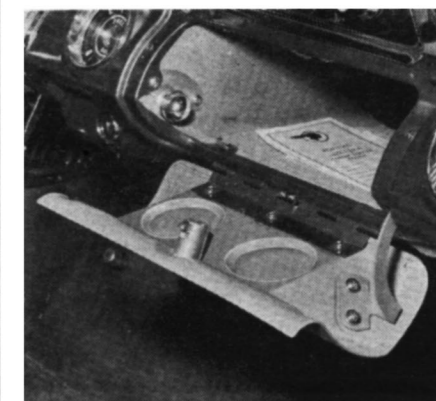
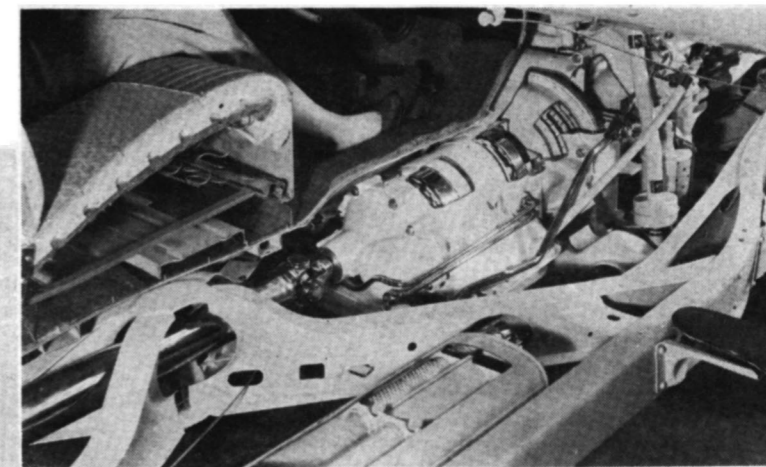
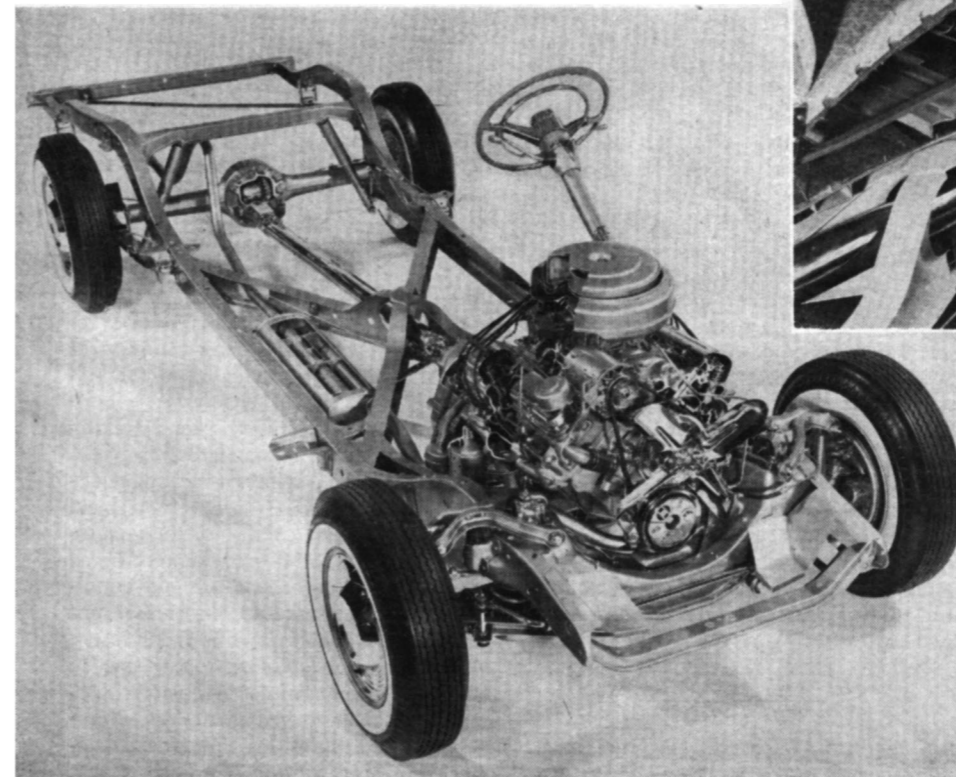
Body: Body changes have been confined to a minor facelift and an increased length of 2 inches, adding to the illusion and feel that the Pontiac is a big car, while cutting down on parkability.

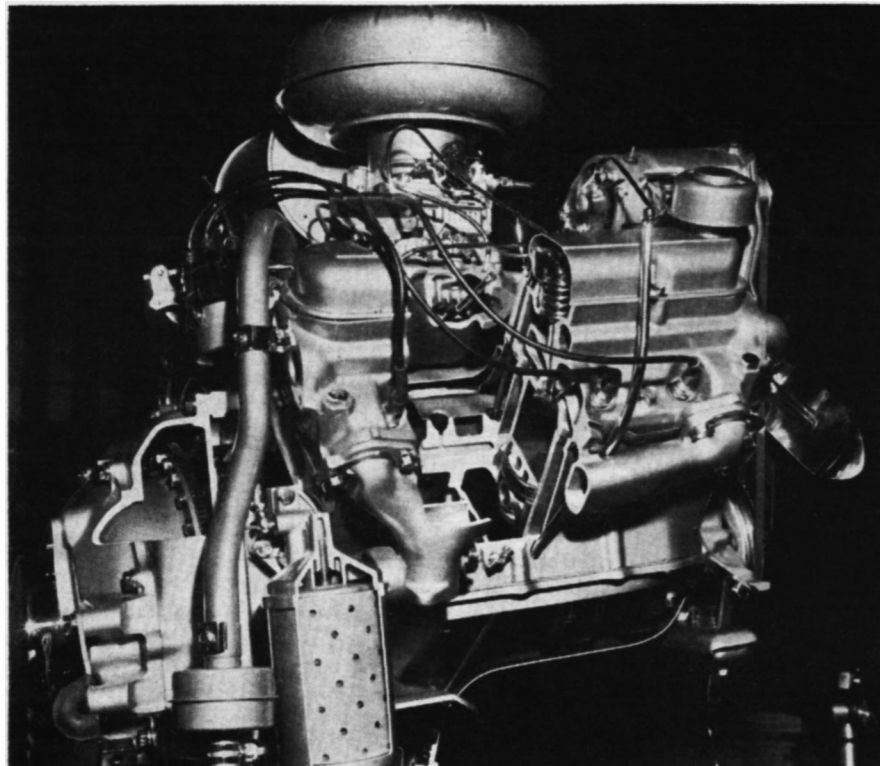
DRIVER'S COMMENTS

Like last year's model, the '56 Pontiac is right up in the front ranks in ease of handling. All fenders are visible from the driver's position and the reduced effort required to turn the power-assisted wheel makes parking an easy operation, if you can find a big-enough space. Steering wheel, brake pedal and accelerator are conveniently placed for effortless operation. The transmission selector lever is conveniently mounted on the steering column and can be flicked to any desired position with one finger without removing your hands from the wheel.

Driving position is excellent with plenty of head, shoulder and footroom. A redesigned front seat helps here, especially if you are fortunate enough to have a new 6-way power job. Regardless of the driver's physical characteristics, this new seat can be adjusted to the complete satisfaction of all but a handful of basket-

ROAD TEST





about average. Chrome trim was lined up from one panel to the next and appeared to be of good quality.

There were air leaks around the windows that produced some weird noises at high speed, a result of styling in theory without much practicality.

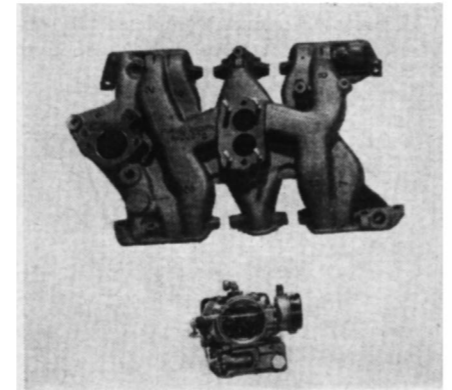
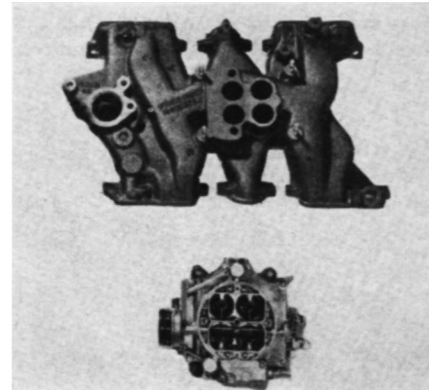
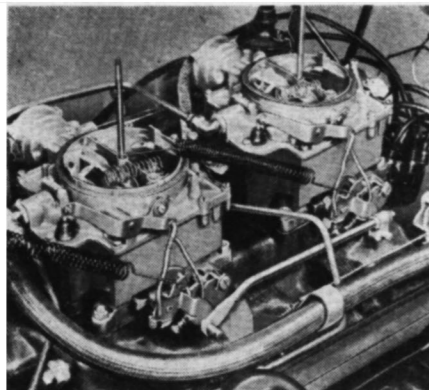
Upholstering, floor mats and headlining were of top quality in both material and workmanship. The padded dash was well fitted and interior doorpanels were protected from excessive wear by strategically placed chrome trim.

During our test, no mechanical difficulty was experienced. There were no squeaks or rattles.

Service-wise, this car is conventional. It should present no particular service problems other than the usual engine inaccessibility due to accessory plumbing. The hood opens wide and is counterbalanced with springs.

OPTIONS

With 15 models to choose from, including the luxury Safari station wagon or new 9-passenger wagon, practically any style desire can be catered to. In addition, the almost unlimited choice of accessories,



Pontiac's 227-hp V8 is shown above. Depending on the horsepower desired, twin 4-barrel carburetors and manifold come with the 285-hp Strato-Streak engine, the single 4-barrel setup is on the 227-hp model, and the 2-barrel unit is standard on the 205-hp engines regularly delivered in the Pontiac 860 and 870 series

'56 PONTIAC ROAD TEST continued

front end oscillation. The power steering unit has a positive return-to-center tendency that goes a long way toward creating the feeling that you are in control.

Mud or ice can cause trouble due solely to the torque output at the wheels. A light foot is a must when accelerating under these conditions.

PASSENGER COMMENTS

Our 4-door hardtop presented little difficulty to the rear seat passengers on either entry or exit. The doors swing wide and the window sill is cut back far enough to avoid excessive body twists to clear the top. Seats both front and rear are firm and comfortable; in the test car, they were upholstered in the optional 2-tone top grain leather.

Head and shoulder room in the rear is ample for 3 people but legroom is just barely adequate for the average man. With the front seat all the way back, a tall person will probably begin, after a few hours, to dicker for the front seat with its ample legroom.

Visibility from the rear seat is excellent and in the case of the hardtop the lack of a centerpost gives a feeling of spaciousness.

Rear ashtrays and good draft control add to the riding comforts of the rear seat passenger.

CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Our test car was very well put together. Body panels fitted well and paint was

from internally adjusted side mirror to front-mounted air conditioner with a recirculating feature for quicker cooling will allow individual personalizing to the 'nth degree.

Full power features, signal-seeking radio (the feature is standard this year), electric windshield wipers (vacuum standard), trumpet-type horn, windshield washers with foot control or fully automatic control, 360-degree hand-operated seat or 6-way power seat, and turn indicators, all go to make up one of the most complete lists of accessories in the industry.

Safety-wise, in addition to the padded dash (optional), Pontiac has safety door-latches as standard equipment. We recommend the addition of seatbelts by the dealer or yourself. (See page 74.) —John Booth

P E R F O R M A N C E

'56

(227-hp engine)

ACCELERATION From Standing Start
0-30 mph 4.0 0-60 mph 11.4
Quarter-mile 18.1 and 76 mph

Passing Speeds
30-50 mph 5.1 50-80 mph 13.7

FUEL CONSUMPTION Used Mobilgas Special
Stop-and-Go Driving 12.1 mpg

Steady Speeds
20.2 mpg @ 30 18.8 mpg @ 45
16.2 mpg @ 60 12.6 mpg @ 75

STOPPING DISTANCE 164 feet from 60 mph

BRAKE FADE Slight on 7th stop from 60
Almost complete on 11th stop
Complete on 12th stop
Good recovery 2 minutes, but wheel grab in right rear
Complete recovery 5 minutes

TOP SPEED Fastest run 107.8 Slowest 104.7
Average of 4 runs 106.2

SPEEDOMETER ERROR Read 31 at true 30, 47 at 45,
63 at 60, and 79 at 75

'55

(180-hp engine)

From Standing Start
0-30 mph 4.4 0-60 mph 13.8
Quarter-mile 19.7 and 70 mph

Passing Speeds
30-50 mph 6.2 50-80 mph 17.4

Used Mobilgas Special
Stop-and-Go Driving
14.5 mpg over measured course
16.5 mpg tank average for 2964 miles

Steady Speeds
21.9 mpg @ 30 20.1 mpg @ 45
17.4 mpg @ 60 13.6 mpg @ 75

167 feet from 60 mph

Fastest run 102.0 Slowest 99.3
Average of 4 runs 100.3

Read 32 at true 30, 48 at 45,
63 at 60, and 79 at 75

S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 3.94 in. Stroke 3.25 in. Stroke/bore ratio .844:1. Compression ratio 8.9:1. Displacement 317 cu. in. Advertised bhp 227 @ 4800 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.717. Piston speed @ max. bhp 2600 ft. per min. Max. imep 148.6 psi. Max. torque 312 lbs.-ft. @ 3000 rpm.

TRANSMISSION: Conventional transmission is 3-speed synchromesh with helical gears. Automatic transmission is Hydra-Matic, 2 fluid couplings with planetary gears. Overdrive not available.

RATIOS: Conventional transmission: 1st 2.39:1, 2nd 1.53:1, 3rd 1:1, reverse 2.53:1. Automatic transmissions: Dual-Range Hydra-Matic: 1st 4.10:1, 2nd 2.63:1, 3rd 1.56:1, 4th 1:1, reverse 4.62:1. Strato-Flight Hydra-Matic: 1st 3.97:1, 2nd 2.55:1, 3rd 1.55:1, 4th 1:1, reverse 4.31:1.

REAR-AXLE RATIOS: Conventional transmission 3.64:1. Dual-Range Hydra-Matic 3.08:1. Strato-Flight Hydra-Matic 3.23:1.

STEERING: Turning diameter 44.9 ft. Number of turns lock to lock: mechanical 5.1, power 4.3. Type: mechanical, recirculating ball bearing; power, Saginaw recirculating ball bearing.

WEIGHT: Test car weight (with gas, oil, and water) 4055 lbs. Test car weight/bhp ratio 17.87 to 1.

TIRES: 7.10 x 15 tubeless. Optional 7.60 x 15.

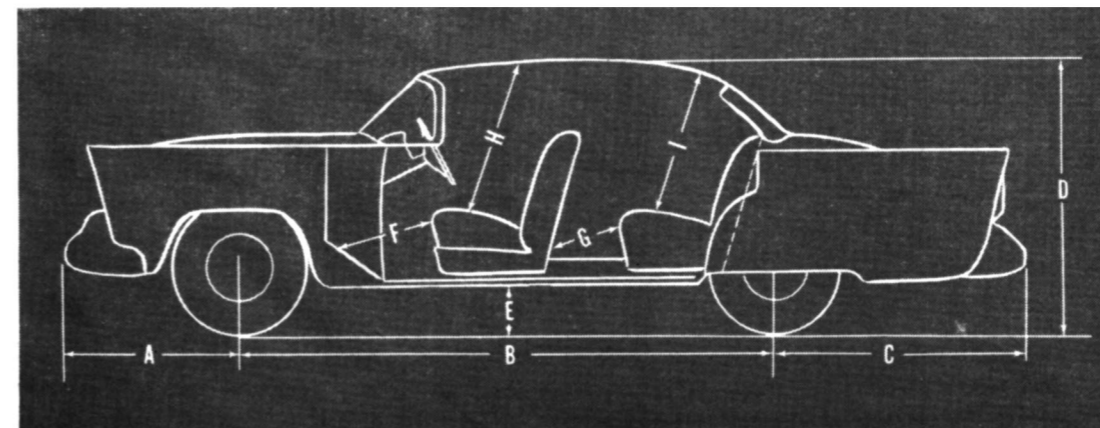
PRICES: (Including suggested retail price at main factory, federal tax, and delivery and handling charges, but not freight.) CHIEFTAIN 860 2-door sedan \$2236, 4-door sedan \$2294, 2-door hardtop \$2366, 4-door hardtop \$2439, 2-door station wagon \$2564, 4-door station wagon \$2647. CHIEFTAIN 870 4-door sedan \$2409, 2-door hardtop \$2476, 4-door hardtop \$2530, 4-door station wagon \$2744. STAR CHIEF 4-door sedan \$2523, 2-door hardtop \$2661, 4-door hardtop \$2731, convertible \$2853, SAFARI 2-door station wagon \$3124.

ACCESSORIES: Dual-Range Hydra-Matic \$188, Strato-Flight Hydra-Matic \$205, power brakes \$38, power windows \$97, power steering \$108, 6-way power seat \$93, radios \$90 or \$118, heater \$89, dual exhaust \$21, seatbelts (installed) \$11 per passenger, air conditioning \$431, powerpack \$31.

DIMENSIONS

A FRONT OVERHANG 35.1
B WHEELBASE 122.0
C REAR OVERHANG 53.5
D OVERALL HEIGHT 60.5 (62.5 unloaded)
E MINIMUM GROUND CLEARANCE 6.7 (at frame side rails)

F FRONT LEGROOM 24.8
G REAR LEGROOM 23.1
H FRONT HEADROOM 36.0
I REAR HEADROOM 35.9
J OVERALL LENGTH 212.8
K OVERALL WIDTH 75.1
L FRONT SHOULDER ROOM 56.7
M REAR SHOULDER ROOM 56.4
N TRUNK CAPACITY N/A



'56 PONTIAC
Star Chief 4-door hardtop
with Strato-Flight Hydra-Matic.

