



# THE '57 PONTIAC

*"The hottest full-sized sedan I have ever tested," reports Uncle Tom.*

By Tom McCahill

AS A sleeper, the 1957 Pontiac would make old Rip Van Winkle look like a benzedrine addict.

I discovered this after receiving a letter from Pontiac's Director of Public Relations Bob Emerick, calmly asking when I'd like to test their new offering and making none of the usual Michigan pitchman claims: "It's the longest . . .

lowest . . . widest . . . most powerful . . . totally new concept . . . etc."

The McCahill Circus—complete with boat, dogs, Jim McMichael and etceteras (I've got more etceteras than any guy in the business)—was about to head south. A quick phone call to Detroit suggested that a real test of the '57 Pontiac would involve several thousand miles of driving—and that the best place to start would be Florida. Bob rose gamely to the bait and when I tossed my hawser ashore at the Daytona Beach Boat Works, there he was—with a brand-new sunburn and gleaming 1957 Pontiac—waiting for me on the dock.

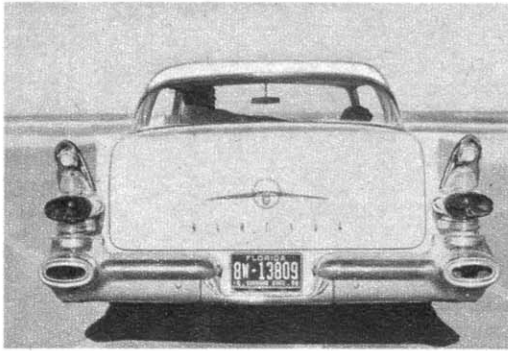
The next three days were spent cleaning up the boat and puttering around—and then one night I discovered just what a sleeper this car is.

I was stopped for a traffic light on US No. 1 when a messy-faced young kid sidled up to the Pontiac driving one of those weird vehicles known to the Pilgrim fathers as a "rod." Mind you, until now I'd paid the Pontiac less attention than P. Samuel Whiteman might give to a ferryboat fiddle player. The light snapped green and the kid in the rod shoved his foot through to the front axle. Having anticipated this possibility, I had slipped the Pontiac Hydramatic into the Third or acceleration range. With McMichael, my wife and a dog in the car, the Pontiac momentarily stood still while the wheels spun and then—*zoonk!* I whipped past and away from the kid so fast that if his radiator cap hadn't been screwed on tight, my vacuum would have sucked the water out of his cooling system. "What's this?" I exclaimed.

I had driven the Pontiac around Daytona for many miles and never had a suspicion that this car, with an engine that idled as smooth as hair tonic over a bald head and was as well behaved in traffic as a New York City police horse, contained under its hood one of the most hairy-chested, fire-eating, explosive screamers I'd ever driven. Here

**McCahill really gets around when he tests a car. Here he gives the Pontiac once-over from all angles.**





Famous chrome striping Tom calls "jukebox decoration," has been completely removed.

was a bomb with finesse. A fast trip to the measured mile on the beach to get the speedometer calibrated correctly and then back to a hard surface road quickly revealed the facts: 0-60 mph in 8.3 seconds and over 100 mph before you can yell "Cop!" makes the word "sensational" seem very trite. "Phenomenal" would be more like it. This car had more than twice the boff of any Pontiac built just a few short years ago.

I got back to the boat and dug out the specifications Pontiac had forwarded. The car was the Super Chief with the big engine, displacing 347 cubic inches. If you bear in mind that the Chrysler-powered Cunningham racers of just two or three years ago had big Chrysler V8 engines that only displaced 332 inches (the same as Cadillac in those days) you'd see that the new Pontiac has an engine just a squirrel and a half smaller

New Pontiac stands an inch over five feet, is 206.8 inches long, has 122-inch wheelbase.

than the average college gymnasium. Also, before you read this, fuel injection will be available (which seems pretty unnecessary to the writer unless your job calls for chasing guided missiles).

The year is young in new car testing and I have many cars ahead of me, such as the Chrysler 300C and others, but at this writing let me go on record as stating that after making nearly 100 acceleration tests, the 1957 Pontiac is the hottest full-sized sedan I have ever tested. It may be topped next month. But as this goes to press the Pontiac smashed every acceleration record ever reported in MI for a full-sized production sedan.

I can hear that change jigglers in Southeast Bearnose, Mont. shouting, "But what's happened to the economy? Horsepower costs dough and consumes gas." Answer: this big 10:1 compression ratio engine averaged 18.6 miles to a gallon all the way from Florida to New York with the car fully loaded with three people, an 80-pound dog and several hundred pounds of luggage. You old-time Pontiac owners with the junior-sized six cylinder arrows under the hood would have quite a time topping that.

Before I get completely away from performance, let me state that young Bill Knudsen, Pontiac Division Chief, set out (so I understand) to give this car the ability to whip up to legal speeds in the least possible time. That he accomplished this is beyond question. But how about top speed? Of late, top speed

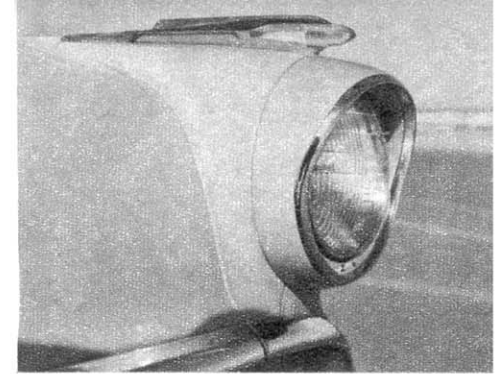
has come to mean less and less to buyers since practically all cars have proved their ability to do better than an honest 100 mph. However, this Pontiac Super Chief with the big engine will get right up to 130 mph with a reasonable tune-up job—and some in absolutely stock condition have already done as high as 144 mph on the Salt Flats. The Pontiacs will be the cars to keep a wide eye on during the Daytona Beach Trials.

By now, if you are the owner of a typical wife who's probably as bored with all this performance yak as a Russian interpreter's "No," here's what else the car has to offer. The chrome striping, which I was criticized for calling "jukebox decoration," has been removed completely. This is a 90 per cent improvement. If they had only gone one notch further and removed the two chromium sperm whale parking lights on top of the front fenders I'd give the car a clean bill of health, style-wise.

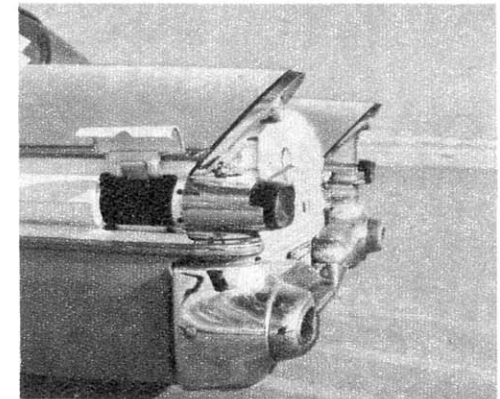
The roadability is good, but not the greatest, and the steering I found extremely hard and lumpy until I gave it two full lubrication treatments. Putting 30 pounds of air in all the tires also added to the car's stability and improved the steering. The front seats are comfortable, though not over-lush, and the rear seat is far from the most comfortable in the world for a 1,500-mile trek, though plenty adequate for average use.

One feature this car has is a real better-than-just-for-gloves compartment. Another [Continued on page 176]

"Roadability is good." Stability, steering are improved with 30 lbs. of air in all tires.



Tom liked styling except for "two chrome sperm whale" front fender parking lights.



Jutting taillights, dual exhausts and gas tank on left rear fender stylize rear end.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### MODEL TESTED:

1957 Pontiac Super Chief four-door hardtop

### ENGINE:

V8 cylinder, OHV; bore 3.94 inches, stroke 3.56 inches; maximum torque 359 foot pounds @ 2800 rpm; brake horsepower 270 @ 4800 rpm; compression ratio 10.0 to 1

### DIMENSIONS:

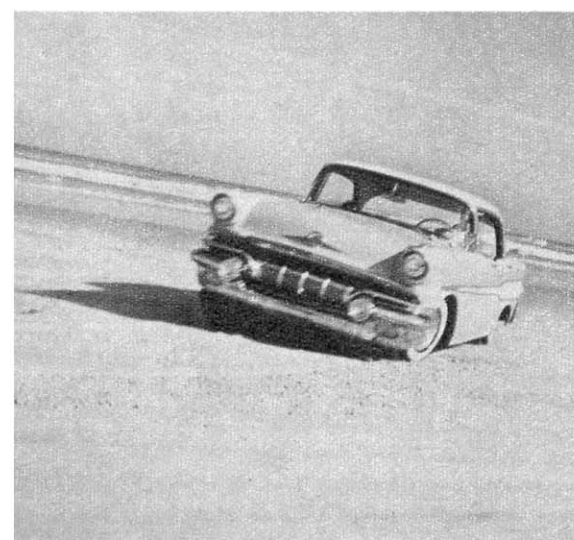
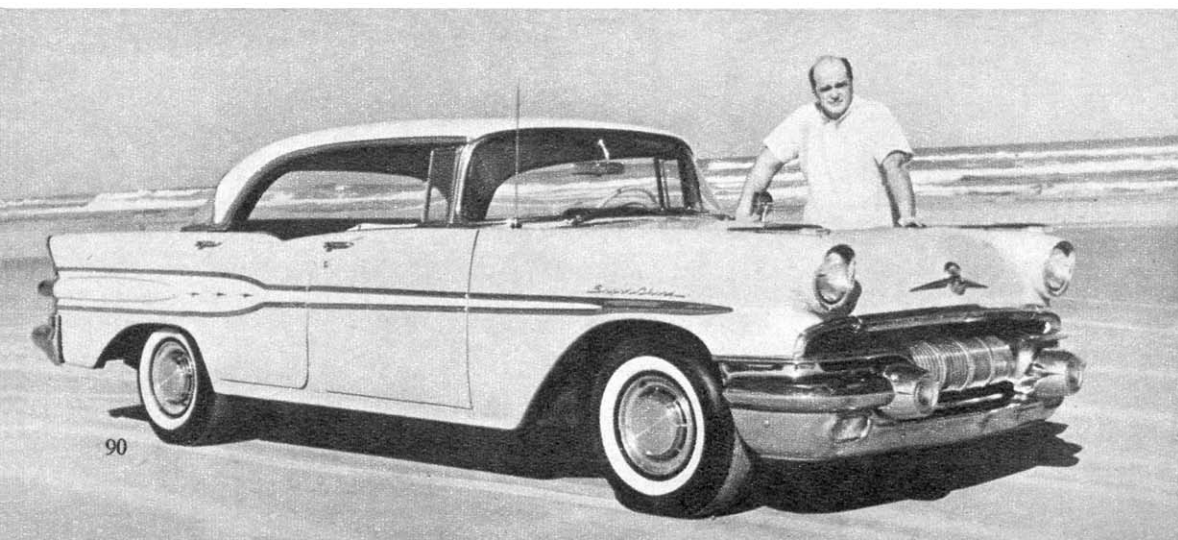
Wheelbase 122 inches; overall length 206.8 inches; tread 59.0 inches front, 59.4 rear; width 75.2 inches; height 60.1 inches; weight 3,750 pounds; standard tire size 8.00x14; gas tank 20 gals

### PERFORMANCE:

0 to 30 mph, 3.1 seconds  
0 to 50 mph, 6.2 seconds  
0 to 60 mph, 8.3 seconds  
0 to 70 mph, 10.9 seconds  
Top speed, 130 mph plus, depending on tune

### SPEEDOMETER ERROR:

At 60 mph on speedometer, actual speed 54.8 mph



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## You Think This Is Cold?

[Continued from page 174]

ber." That's the correct quotation, by the way, not "cool as a cucumber." Two boys named Beaumont and Fletcher coined it back in 1600. They used it in a play called Cupid's Revenge.

Any questions? Class dismissed. •

## The '57 Pontiac

[Continued from page 91]

is its combination windshield cleaner and washer that squirts on plenty of water with a push of the button, wipes it immediately and automatically stops. The door-close grips, which also serve as armrests, allow you to really get your hands around them for slamming doors to full latch. An interesting note in this year's Pontiac is two large chrome strips, one on the gas pedal and one on the brake. In huge etched-and-painted letters one says "Brake" and the other says "Power." What'll they think of next? Maybe arrows on the steering wheel marked "Right" and "Left"? The trunk space on my test car will not receive this year's Gold Spittoon Award for being the largest in the industry. In fact, it's on the small side in this day of the big caboose.

We drove this car from Daytona Beach to New York in 20½ hours. It was one of the best peace-of-mind drives I've had in a long time because in passing, and in the few tight squeezes you're bound to find yourself in during such a run, the fantastic acceleration, especially from 30-60 and 40-70 mph, means that you're around obstacles before you can blink twice. The only situation that could possibly block you would be a stone wall across the road.

If you're the kind of sport who likes to pop his vest buttons with pride over the athletic prowess of your steed, then the Pontiac is one car you can buy with complete confidence. Nothing built before will beat you in the fast dash to Bloody Mary's—and my crystal ball doesn't see too many others coming up that could do it either. With fuel injection added to this bomb, you can throw your Zippo away. Just hold the end of your cigar out the window, push the pedal marked "Power" and the air friction will ignite it instantly! •