



The '58 PONTIAC

"Hotter than shaving with a blowtorch," says Tom of this GM bomb which set a sizzling acceleration mark for sedans.

By Tom McCahill

PONTIAC, once the untalented Big Brother of Chevrolet, has in two short years developed muscles, guts and a fairly good sack of looks.

About a year ago we brought you a report on the 1957 Pontiac that surprised no one more than this writer. The car was a real "sleeper." When I found it knocking out 0-60 mph times in under nine seconds and getting down the highway like an arrow from a 100-pound bow, I stated that Pontiac would be the kid to watch during the '57 Speed Weeks. You readers now know that these predictions came true and Pontiac became the hairy-chested bomb of the GM camp.

This is not a repeat of last year's article, as the 1958 Pontiac is as completely new as "Yanks Go Home" pennants on the moon. But the theme seems pretty similar. The '58 Pontiacs will be the cars to beat during 1958 Speed Weeks, as they are guttier and faster than ever. They are my choice for walking off with a major part of the marbles, not only in the Speed Weeks races but in the Speed Trials and acceleration tests. With brand-new suspension systems and good brakes, Pontiac will be very hard to beat in the completely new event that calls for flash acceleration, good panic braking and top roadability.

The major part of my test of the 1958 Pontiac took place on the Packard Proving Grounds, where I have logged up enough miles in the past to qualify for a squirrel cage license. This is still one of the greatest high speed tracks in the world. S. E. (Bunky) Knudsen, Pon-

tiac's prexy, rented the place for three days. The pressure on GM's own track (which is not nearly as fast) is so heavy with all GM cars making all kinds of tests all at the same time, that it would be impossible for me to get a real picture of the Pontiac's wares there. I arrived at the Packard Grounds an hour and a half late, due to heavy traffic, getting lost and the necessity of walking two of my dogs. I found the track office hip-deep in uniformed guards. Bunky Knudsen himself and E. M. (Pete) Estes, Chief Engineer, escorted me to the unmarked trailers that were spewing test cars. (This was months before the announcement date, which accounted for the heavy police protection, known as The Security Crew in Detroitese.) There were bare chassis, worm-low Bonneville models, the standard Chieftain, Super Chief and Star Chief sedans, chassis with air suspension and others with four coil springs. Estes, who is among the top of the young crop of American engineers, went over the air suspension with me. This, like all other air suspensions I have seen, resembles a nightmare in the Crane Plumbing Factory.

A manhole-black Super Chief with four-coil spring suspension was what I selected for my initial run. All engines this year have been screwed out to 370 cubic inches of displacement as against 347 inches in '57. Most models can be ordered with a single two-barrel carburetor, a single four-barrel carburetor, three two-barrel carburetors or fuel injection. The car I picked out for my main

PONTIAC'S PREXY "Bunky" Knudsen and Tom with the redesigned '58 Super Chief.



GUTSY TOM, coming out of turn at 125 mph on high-speed test oval (above), saw cars and people on the track (left). He didn't dare brake, as this might cause sway. He didn't want to take his hands off wheel to blow horn. So at full throttle he roared through an eight-foot-wide opening between truck and car on track. Photo at left was taken after narrow escape. Tom gives credit to Pontiac's superb stability.



test (though I tested them all) was equipped with a single four-barrel carburetor, which I felt would be the most popular. After a few initial laps with Jim McMichael and Public Relations Chief Bob Emerick aboard (representing a total beef displacement somewhere between 800 and 900 pounds) I took two fast laps in this brand-new rig at 122 mph-plus.

In the interest of accurate acceleration figures, I then dumped the passenger cargo and took several more laps. It was on the first of these that I was forced to call upon the accuracy and no-sway properties of the '58 Pontiac, right down to a millionth of an inch. There had been a photo team working near the backstretch (but in the infield) taking pictures of the new models for future advertisements. Somehow, signals got crossed. When I stopped to unload my cargo, several minutes of yak-yak ensued and then I started off again down the long straightaway and into the first turn of the two-and-a-half-mile track. The photo team must have thought that my tests were over because as I came out of the turn and out of the chute, dead ahead of me about 200 yards away I saw three vehicles, all parked in the middle of the roadway, right across my path. One was a model car (with model), one a truck with reflectors and cameras, and the third a photographer's station wagon.

I was doing over 125 mph, the heavy steel guard rail was on my right and to

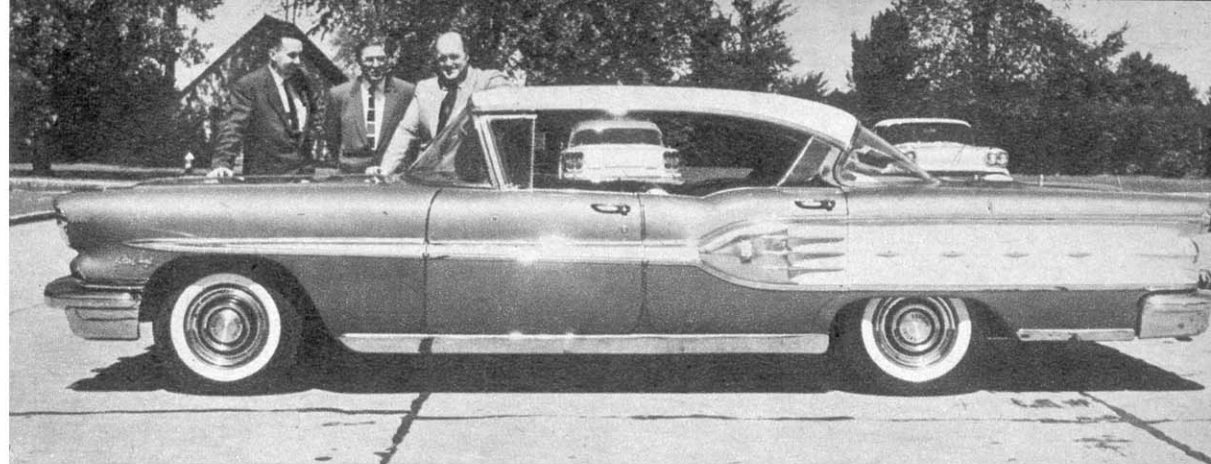
the left was a deep drainage ditch. It looked like Hallelujah Day for McCahill. Between the truck and the model car was about an eight-foot opening and though people were milling around, at that instant none were in the opening. I didn't dare attempt to brake, as this might have caused sway. As any kid who's passed third grade arithmetic might guess, this all took place in about three eyeblinks.

I was afraid to go for the horn as this might have knocked my steering off just a hair, so I just drilled on at full throttle to keep the car steady for the center of the slot, hoping it was wide enough. Fortunately, one of the crew heard the roar of the engine and everyone jumped back as I sliced through the narrow hole. I was doing perhaps 127 mph and I was the happiest guy in the world at that moment not to hear a "cruunch!"

Needless to say, the track was immediately cleared and I then turned in five laps at between 127-128 mph—this on an almost-new, first-run offering. Zero to 30 mph averaged 2.9 seconds, which ties the record set by the Dodge 500 last year. Zero to 60 averaged 8.2 seconds, which shaves by a tenth of a second the record set by the '57 Pontiac. All these times were made in a single four-barrel carburetor rig.

However, when I tried a test car with three two-barrel carburetors I found the times almost identical. The big surprise came when I drove the standard Pontiac with fuel injection. Here, 0-60 dropped

"QUITE LARGE," says Jim McMichael, trunk-tester "par excellence," of storage.



GM's Chief Engineer, Pete Estes, Knudsen and Tom with long, low, luxurious Star Chief.

to 7.5 seconds—a new sedan record for these pages. Where fuel injection really showed off was in its passing qualities. The 40-60 mph runs averaged 3.8 seconds as against 4.7 in my four-barrel test job. But the original four-barrel test job did 0-100 mph in 22.5 seconds, which is terrific in any league.

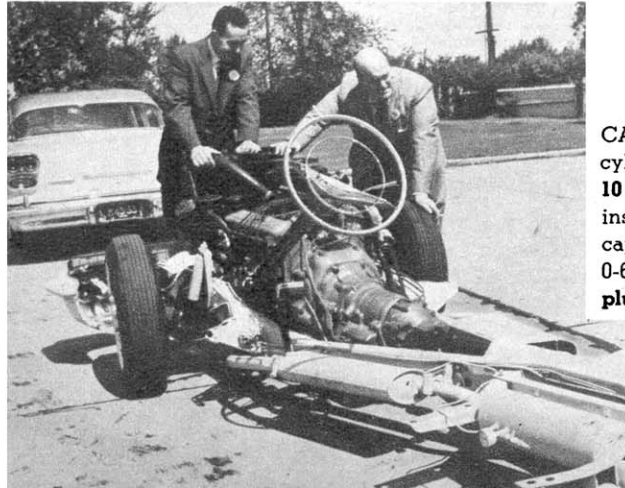
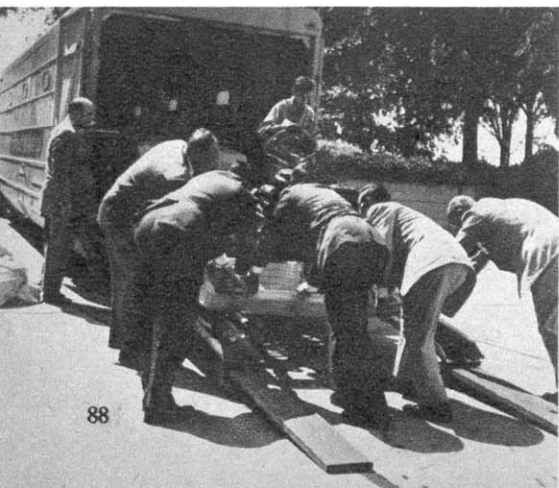
With Knudsen at the wheel we tried out the air suspension over potholes, country ditches and even made some pretty amazing flat U-turns at speeds close to 40 mph, with practically no lean at all. This rig costs considerably more than the four-coil-spring jobs. I found that the standard suspension has all been reworked and that the center of gravity in the rear now seems to fight any sway, so the '58 Pontiacs come awfully close to having a full sports car feel even in the toughest bends. This was not true at all in 1957 when they had a semi-Queen Mary roll which was far from being the best on the road. The '58

cars, though, will eat around any bend with our best American offerings and I believe their brand-new stability and anti-weave characteristics are two of the reasons a lot of photographers weren't spread all over the landscape with me at the wheel. Track drivers will know what I mean when I say that as you come out of a hard turn fast and off the banked chute, most cars, especially stock cars, develop a little sway. The Pontiac, I'm happy to say, did not.

The ride has been greatly improved for 1958. The whole car seems fresh—from its portable radio, which weighs less than a cantaloupe and can be taken right out of the dashboard and into your motel room, to its new ball-joint front suspension. The new ball joints make the steering a lot easier, a big improvement.

Later, I made the short drive with Knudsen for lunch at the Pontiac factory, where cars were already starting to come off the assembly line. There I saw the complete Bonneville series, which is as sporty-looking as American money in a Port Said saloon. These cars are two [Continued on page 174]

SECURITY CREW unloads chassis as Tom watches at Packard high-speed test track.



McCAHILL TESTS

CAR TESTED: '58 PONTIAC SUPER CHIEF. Engine: V8 cys; 370 cubic ins; 270 brake hp; 388 ft-lb max torque; 10 to 1 compression ratio. Wheelbase 124 ins; height 57 ins; width 77.4 ins; overall length 215.5 ins. Gas tank capacity 20 gals. PERFORMANCE: 0-30 mph, 2.9 secs; 0-60 mph, 8.2 secs; 40-60 mph, 3.8 secs. Top speed 125-plus mph. All times recorded on corrected speedometer.

CHASSIS-VIEWERS Estes and Tom, examine '58 Pontiac's new ball-joint front suspension.

see the amazing new
EASY-TO-BUILD ELECTRONIC



ALLIED knight-kits

in **ALLIED'S 1958**

ELECTRONIC SUPPLY CATALOG

FREE!

**BUILD YOUR OWN!
SAVE MONEY—HAVE FUN**



404 value-packed pages



HI-FI KITS



HOBBY KITS



INSTRUMENT KITS



HAM KITS

SAVE on Everything in Electronics

WORLD'S LARGEST STOCKS

Everything for Experimenters, Builders, Amateurs, Servicemen, Engineers and Hi-Fi Hobbyists. Get more for your money in Hi-Fi systems and components; build-your-own KNIGHT-KITS; recorders and phono equipment; TV tubes, antennas, accessories; Amateur station equipment; test instruments; industrial electronic equipment—plus the world's largest stocks of parts, tubes, transistors, tools and books. Send today for your **FREE 1958 ALLIED Catalog!**

Everything in Electronics From One Reliable Source
our 37th year EASY TERMS AVAILABLE

ALLIED RADIO

send for
FREE
Catalog

**ALLIED RADIO CORP., Dept. 44-A8
100 N. Western Ave., Chicago 80, Ill.**

Rush **FREE** 1958 ALLIED 404-Page Catalog

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

The '58 Pontiac

[Continued from page 89]

inches lower than the standard series and offer many deluxe features such as genuine leather upholstery and genuine leather bucket seats! With the bucket seats, the convertible I was in had enough sex appeal to pull girls on the run from 20 miles away.

In summing up, the '58 Pontiacs are hotter than shaving with a blowtorch, are much better-looking and are among the finest road cars around. They have reasonable comfort, not too much glass and will take anything you're apt to tangle with in a traffic light Grand Prix. •

Handloading Made Easy

[Continued from page 103]

or the Pacific Super Tool and a few others. These are a bit on the expensive side but last a lifetime.

Another valuable tool is membership in the National Rifle Association of America. Members are most helpful and willing to answer each other's letters asking for information. This association sponsors the national rifle matches at Camp Perry, O., and boys' training programs all over the nation. Members have at their disposal much valuable information including the latest dope on handloading. The address is 1600 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, D. C.

When you first start handloading, it is a good idea to underload the first dozen cases. Fire these and if there is no sign of excessive pressure, gradually increase your load until you have the recommended load for the bullet used.

Here is the loading procedure: 1. Punch out the fired primer from the used case to be reloaded. 2. Insert the new primer. 3. Reshape case neck so it will hold a new bullet friction-tight. If the case has been fired several times in a rifle known to build up high pressure, trim the case neck. If you picked up the case knowing it was fired in a rifle of the same caliber as your own, resize the case full length by running it through a die made for this purpose. 4. Pour in the exact measure of powder recommended for the bullet—size, type, brand name and weight. 5. Seat the bullet.

[Continued on page 176]