Buick's four-door hardtop in medium-priced Special series. Body type, of course, isn't new, being introduced by Buick long before its non-GM rivals.

the 1956 buick

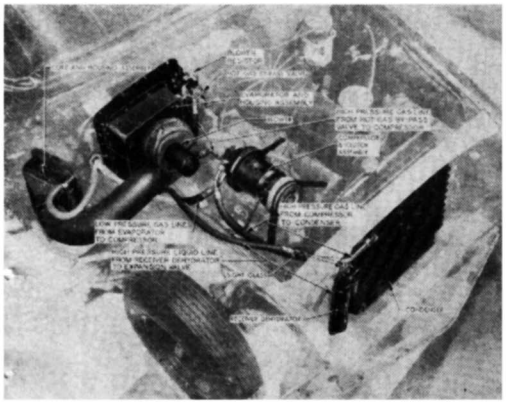
HIGHLIGHTS: top of 255 hp, big jump for the Special, hotter cam, faster variable pitch Dynaflow, suspension improvement, clever new jack, relocated air conditioning

IT WILL come as no great surprise to most people that the 1956 Buick Century will, like the '55, be one of the hottest cars of the year. More surprising is the fact that the Special will have more muscle and performance than ever before.

The Special, for the first time, will have the same 322-cubic-inch engine used in the Century, Super and Roadmaster. This is a big jump from the displacement of 264 inches offered in 1955. Horsepower is up from 188 to 220 and torque from 256 to 319 foot pounds at 2400 rpm. Compression ratio has been stepped up from 8.4- to 8.9-to-1. These changes, combined with an improved Dynaflow transmission, have resulted in vastly improved acceleration—two full seconds have been knocked off the 40 to 60 mph time, for example.

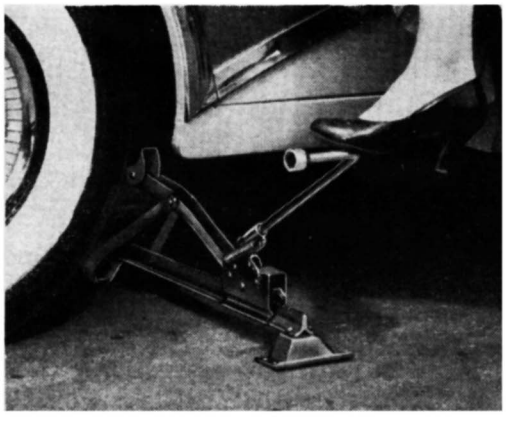
Horsepower of the engines used in the other three series has been boosted from 236 to 255. Raising compression ratio from 9- to 9.5-to-1 is mainly responsible for the increase. Torque of Century, Super and Roadmaster engines has gone up from a maximum of 330 foot pounds at 3000 rpm to 341 at 3200. Hotter cams also help in the power increase.

Even more important, perhaps, are the improvements in the Dynaflow—now standard on all but Supers—which are aimed at increasing acceleration and boosting fuel economy. A second stator has been added to the variable pitch unit, increasing torque multiplication and making for faster takeoffs and better performance in the low speed ranges. As everyone knows, the Century, in particular, was one of the fastest accelerating cars of 1955 and these improvements



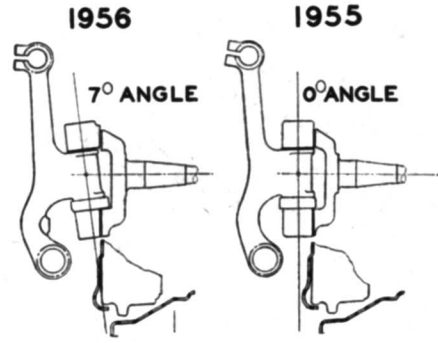
RIGHT—Kingpin inclination has been increased from zero to seven degrees to give better handling and greater stability on all Buicks. Direct acting shocks are now used at rear. Steering ratio has been cut to 17.5-to-1 with power steering.

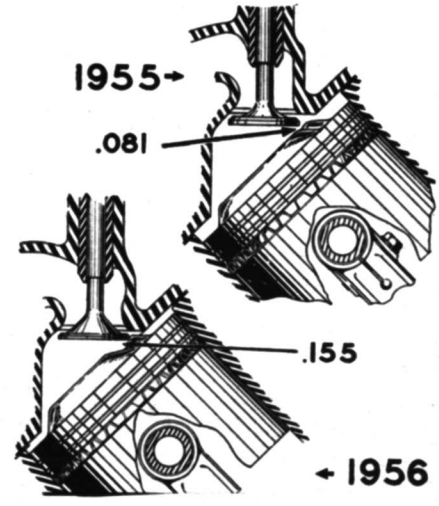
LEFT—Hot Buick becomes really cool when the new air conditioning unit goes to work. Important feature, however, is the relocation of compressor under the hood which frees extra trunk space. The system is optional on all series for 1956.



LEFT—New foot-operated jack will make it simpler and safer to change a tire on 1956 Buicks. Two bases on ground hold raised car steadier, while jacking points located on siderail of the frame are accessible and easily seen.

RIGHT—Increased valve-to-piston clearance is a feature of the V-8 for 1956 which has compression of 8.9-to-1 in Specials; and 9.5-to-1 in Centurys, Supers and Roadmasters. Exhaust system is improved with hotter valve timing.





should help it retain that distinction in 1956. And the Special will now stay right with the Century from 0 to 30! From there on up it's handicapped by its two-barrel carb. (Four-barrels are standard on the other three series.)

Styling changes are largely of the facelift nature. Grilles have been redesigned slightly with a finer mesh than last year, come to a peak in front like a very wide-angled vee instead of being flat. Minor changes have been made to rear fender end on the Roadmasters and Supers they have been lengthened approximately three inches. Ventiports and sweepspear side moldings, now Buick trademarks, remain, with only a slight change to the sweepspear on Roadmasters.

A new instrument panel, identical on all series, features a sponge rubber-covered top section and the "redliner" speedometer. The padding is standard on Roadmasters, optional of the other Buicks. Unique are fuel and temperature gages; the fuel gage shows red when gas level drops slightly under the quarter-tank mark and a window on the temperature indicator likewise shows red if the engine is running hot.

All Buick engines have double "Y" exhaust manifolds which provide for a separation of 270 crankshaft degrees between exhaust cycles of cylinders exhausting into any manifold branch. Dual exhausts are standard on Roadmaster, available on all models.

Power steering is standard on all Roadmasters and Supers, optional for Centurys and Specials. The unit has been redesigned to less pressure needed to turn and advantage has been taken of this by reducing the steering ratio to 17.5 to one, giving faster steering.

Redesigned chassis make the new Buicks handle and ride better. Direct acting shocks are now used on the rear. Inclination of the king pin has been changed and other improvements made to the front suspension to improve handling and stability.

Braking has been improved on all series thru development of new linings with a central groove running along all shoes. This relieves the high pressure zone of the shoe web, giving more even distribution of braking load of the full width of the brake. This also helps cool the brakes better and reduces fade.

Wheelbase is unchanged thruout the line—122 inches for the Special and Century; 127 for Roadmasters and Supers. Four-door hardtops, which Buick helped pioneer, are available in all series.

Buick has held third spot in sales for two years and is prepared to fight to keep it during 1956 against increasingly tough competition. The performance and handling improvements it has made should help. The Special, lowest-priced model, should be especially attractive. •

the 1956 plymouth

HIGHLIGHTS: radical restyling, bigger engine, power-pack, record player, safety features, push-button transmission selector, new station wagons, four-door hardtops

PLYMOUTH'S target for 1956 is winning back its old slot as third-best selling American car. It's basing its hopes of attaining that goal on a line of cars that are different, bigger, more powerful.

By different we mean they have been changed enough so that you won't have to take a second look to tell a '55 from a '56—and that's not true of all Plymouth's competition. The first thing that hits you when you see a 1956 Plymouth is that they haven't merely been given the normal facelift treatment of new grille, rearranged chrome trim etc. True, the basic body shell is the same, but it was all-new for 1955. However, the total effect of styling changes gives it more than just a "warmed-over" look. Probably the rear fender treatment is the main thing responsible for this. Instead of sloping down to a comparatively small tail light assembly, they angle up from the rear pillar in a smooth, flowing line, giving a definite fin-like effect.

The new Plymouths haven't stood still mechanically either. A new 277-cubic-inch engine plant is the big news. This overhead-valve V-8 has a compression ratio of 8-to-1, single rocker arm setup similar to last year's and redesigned combustion chamber. The new chamber, along with redesigned manifolding and larger valves, gives more efficient fuel flow and combustion. Long-reach spark plugs give a wider heat range, better economy (leaner mixtures can be used). A new, lighter weight valve train with mechanically-actuated valves that rotate automatically for longer life are other features. Connecting rod and main bearings are larger and detail improvements have been made in the engine lubrication system.

Initially the lower-priced Savoy and Plaza models will have a 270-inch V-8 built by Dodge, but this will probably be only until production at the new Plymouth engine plant is up to the point where it can supply enough to handle the entire line. This is basically the same engine as last year's with a 10 cubic inch displacement boost.

Styling change is most startling on the 1956 Plymouths at the rear where striking fins have been added. This car is the new deluxe convertible with extra brightwork.