



Rear, a Super four-door hardtop; right, a Roadmaster (chrome bands on trunk identify it); left, a Special

'56 BUICK

Buick offers a new idea in "age-labeling" of cars by stamping model year "1956" on the grille medallion



ALL BUICKS now have the same engine—the 322-cubic-inch V8. Horsepower, however, is different: 220 on the Special, 255 on the Century, Super and Roadmaster. The additional 35 horsepower on the more expensive Buicks result from higher compression ratio (9.5:1 compared to 8.9:1 on the Special) and more carburetion (four barrels compared to two barrels on the Special).

Styling changes are minor: Wider front grille; full wheel cutouts on all models, not just on two-door models as in 1955; rear fenders are longer with less chrome showing around the taillights.

Performance in the lower speed ranges has been improved by adding a second stator to the Dynaflow transmission. This, plus the bigger engine, is said to give the 1956 Special the same performance from 0 to 30 as the 1955 Century.

Brakes have new linings, grooved along their full length to relieve the high-pressure zone in the center of the shoe and also to aid cooling. Brake area on the Special is increased.

Steering ratio is 17.5:1 with power steering, which is considerably faster than previously. The rear axle, including the differential, is completely redesigned.



Called a sport sedan by Chevrolet, this Bel Air four-door hardtop has no center pillar to obstruct vision



Luxury member of the station-wagon line, the two-door Nomad combines utility and beauty in one vehicle

'56 CHEVROLET

WITH A NEW grille and spearlike two-tone paint treatment, the 1956 Chevrolet is instantly recognized from any angle. Big news is the four-door hardtop model. Except for the front end, most of the styling changes have been in the handling of trim and interiors. The grille has been drawn forward into a shallow V and made wider to give the front end a lower look.

Four engine choices are available: The familiar overhead-valve Six with 140 horsepower this year; a 162-horsepower V8 for hand-shift models; a 170-horsepower V8 for Powerglide; and a Super Turbo-Fire V8 of 205 horsepower as an optional power pack with four-barrel carburetor, dual exhausts, 9.25:1 compression.

New this year for Chevrolet is a nine-passenger station wagon, the third seat of which is removable for hauling cargo.

Also new are the following: High-lift camshaft on the two most powerful V8 engines; a full-flow oil filter for reduced engine wear; directional signals standard on all models.

Major change in Chevrolet styling is in its front grille. It is wider and has been made more pointed





All new this year is the front-end styling of the Hudson. Shown here is the 1956 Hornet V8 four-door sedan

'56 HUDSON

Hudson has a new grille that makes it instantly recognizable as it comes down the highway. The grille, a broad mesh design, features a bold "V" in its center, a styling motif that is repeated in Hudson's side treatment as well as in its interiors.

A narrow band of gold color that runs horizontally along the rear fender makes three-tone cars actually four-tone and two-tone cars three-tone.

All 1956 Hudsons use the 12-volt electrical system. Three basic engines are available and, in addition, two optional

six-cylinder engines. Horsepower is up in all of them.

The Hornet V8 engine develops 220 horsepower with a compression ratio of 9.55:1 and a 352-cubic-inch displacement.

The Hornet Six develops 165 horsepower with a 7.5:1 compression ratio. An optional twin-carburetor kit increases the power to 175 horsepower.

The Wasp Six develops 120 horsepower and can be obtained with twin carburetion which boosts output to 130 horsepower.

A redesigned dashboard features a horizontal thermometer-type speedometer. A crash pad of foam plastic covers the top of the dash. Reclining seats that make up into beds are optional.

Continental tire adds 10 inches to the length of the hardtop. Narrow panel on rear fender is gold colored





Speed-line styling along the side panel of the Ambassador hardtop is new for 1956. This is the V8 model

'56 NASH

Nash has four horsepower ratings for 1956, ranging from 130 to 220. Included in the engine list is the new Statesman overhead-valve Six, which is said to have the highest ratio of horsepower to displacement of any six in the United States.

Principal style element of the Nash continues to be its inboard front headlights—a treatment that was adopted from the Nash-Healey sports car. For 1956, the parking lights, mounted in the fenders where the headlights are on other cars, have been enlarged and placed inside a

miniature grille to give the leading edge of the fender a diagonal appearance.

The rear fenders have been restyled and raised almost three inches. The taillights are greatly enlarged.

Other changes for 1956 include: Adoption of the 12-volt electrical system; rear-view mirror is enlarged; front brakes on the Statesman are wider; parking-brake handle is now on the left side of the steering column; Ambassador wheels have been widened and tire size increased.

Nash continues its all-welded, no-bolt body construction which, their engineers claim, offers superior energy-absorbing characteristics in collisions.

Rear fenders of the Nash have been raised and the taillights have been made larger and distinctive

You can always spot a Nash by its inboard headlights. Parking lights in fender have been enlarged





Four-door hardtop of the Oldsmobile Super "88" features a new pattern of slash two-toning along the side

'56 OLDSMOBILE

Oldsmobile, which pioneered the slash-type two-toning so common today, has two variations of it this year. The two-toning of the "98" series is distinctively different from that of the "88" models.

Principal styling change is the grille which is now a wide, slender oval of utmost simplicity. Rear-fender styling is new.

Oldsmobile offers the improved Hydra-Matic with the jerkless shifts that result from the addition of a second fluid cou-

pling, actually a dump-and-fill clutch. Mechanics can set the ignition points without removing the distributor cap this year, thanks to a small access door in the side of the cap. The parking brake is now operated by the left foot and a Park position is incorporated in Hydra-Matic for the first time.

Horsepower on the Super "88" and "98" models is 240, compression on all Oldsmobiles is now 9.25:1. The engine on the "88" model develops 230 horsepower.

Grille is adapted from the styling of the Delta dream car. Parking lights are in outer ends of the bumper





Fenders, hood and trunk have been raised on the President V8, now the largest car in the low-price field

'56 STUDEBAKER

New sheet metal plus a sportster that will go 120 miles per hour give Studebaker lots to talk about in 1956.

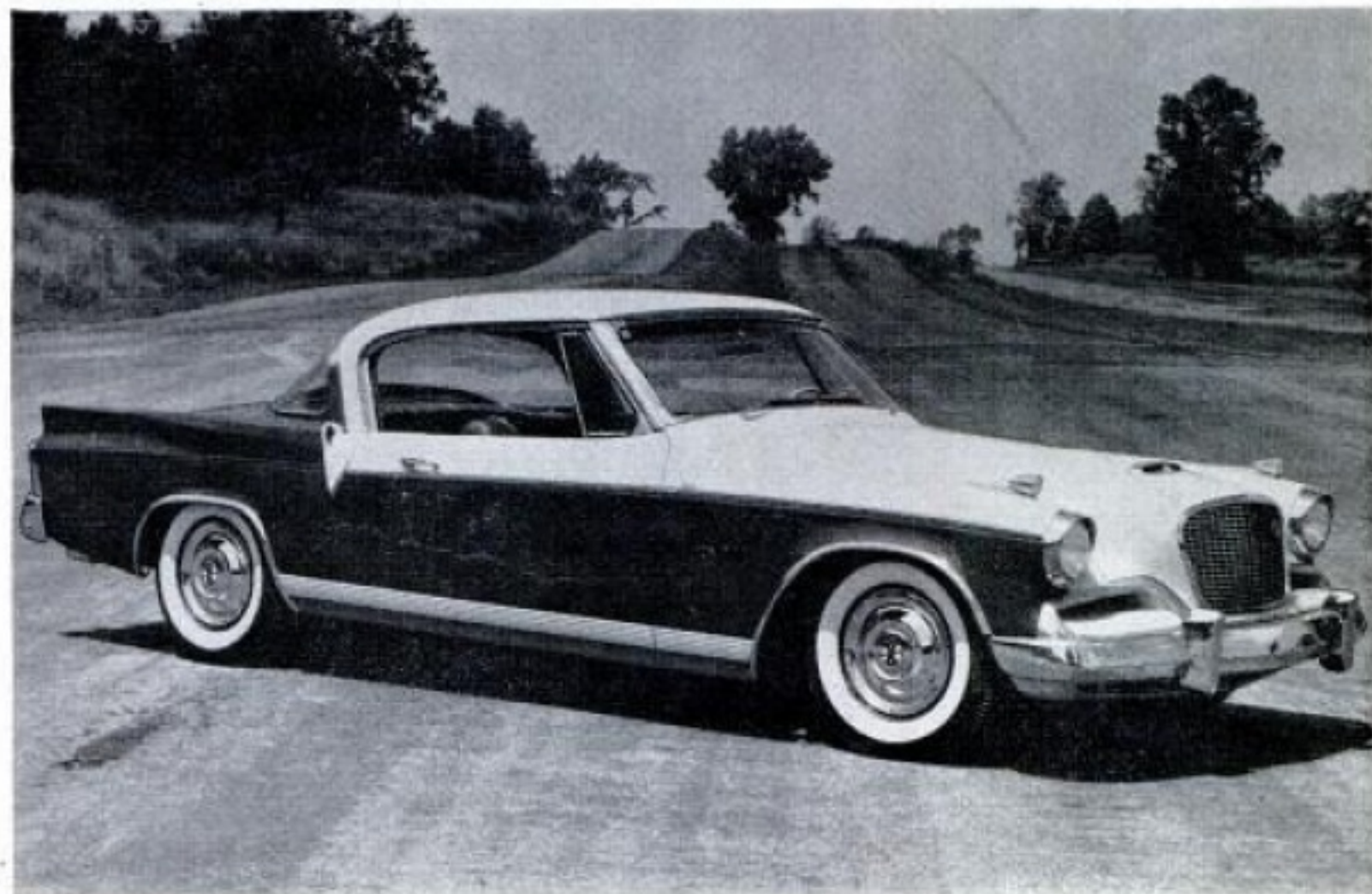
Sedan models have hoods and trunks squared up to make them appear much larger. All Studebakers are now in the low-price field. The Champion 6 has 101 horsepower, the Commander V8 has 170 horsepower, the President V8 has 190.

The Hawk sportsters come with horsepower of 190, 210, and 275. The 275-horsepower Golden Hawk has tailfins and the performance of a racing machine.

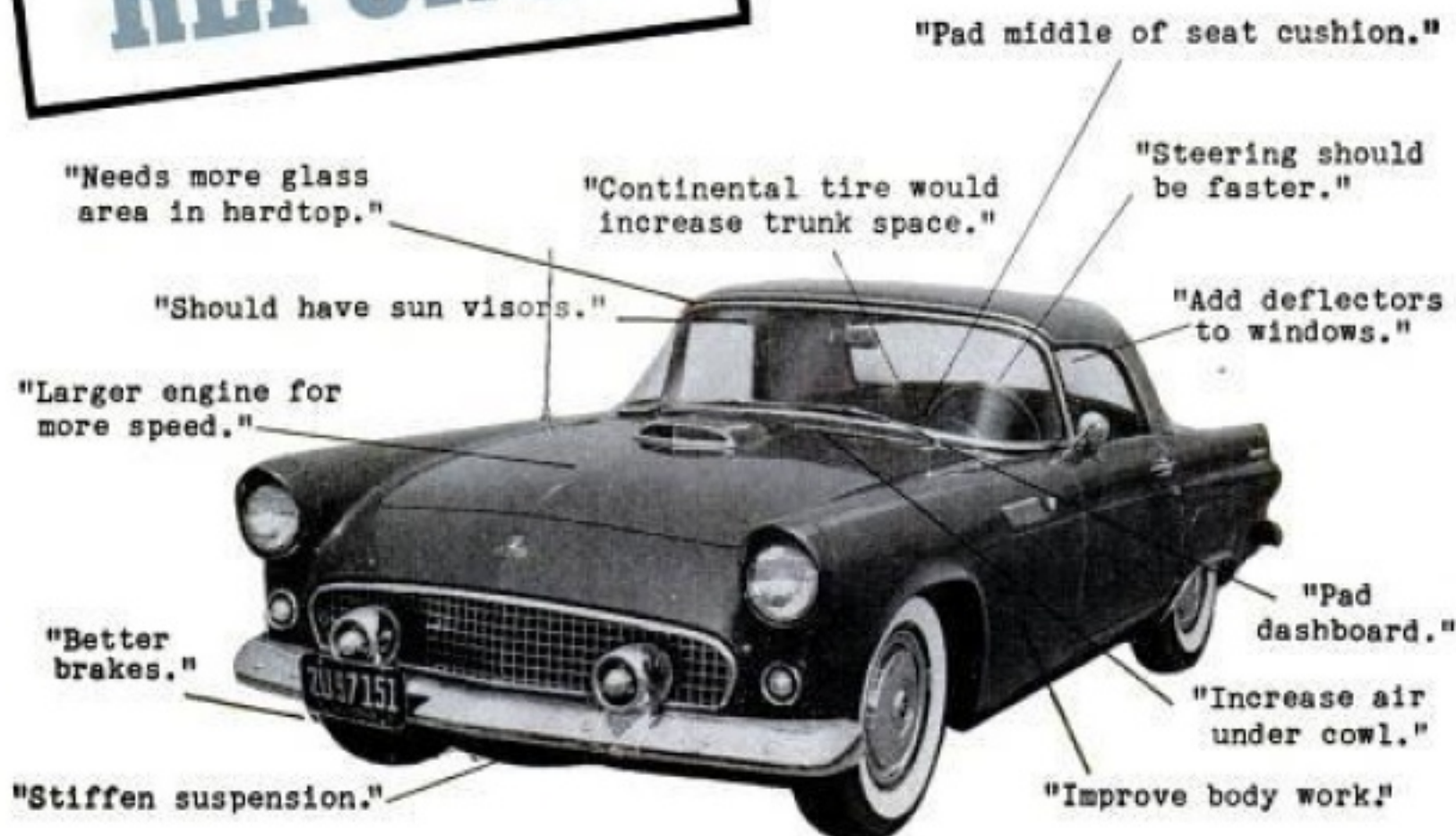


Hawk's trunk lid has a promising styling trick: The decorative texturing of a previously ignored area

Studebaker's "bomb" is the Golden Hawk. It weighs only 3375 pounds, has 275 horsepower, will go 120



OWNERS REPORT:



Owners of the 1955 Thunderbird say they want these changes made in their cars

And these are the changes Ford made for 1956:

'55 Thunderbird Owners Like Performance And the '56 T-Bird Will Provide Even More

By Thunderbird Owners

DO AUTOMOBILE companies react to the complaints of owners? If our Thunderbird Owners' Report is any indication, they certainly do. Ford reacted—but quick!

We asked 1000 owners of the 1955 Thunderbird about their cars and tabulated the complaints. We compared this list with the changes made in the 1956 Bird. The similarity is amazing as you will see. This evidence proves the accuracy of the Owners-Report technique of reporting on automobiles.

Here are the complaints of the 1955 owners and the action taken by Ford to eliminate them in 1956:

"Poor visibility with top on. Blind spot

over left shoulder. Should have more glass area in hardtop."—California manager.

In the 1956 Thunderbird, the plastic hardtop is available with two portholes that eliminate the blind spot the California owner complains about. The soft top also has more rear-window area in the new Bird.

"I have been disappointed in the top speed of 110 miles per hour. Car should have a larger engine for more speed."—Illinois chemist.

Ford has put a 225-horsepower engine in its Fordomatic-equipped 1956 Thunderbird. The displacement is 312 cubic inches compared to 292 cubic inches of the 1955 car.

"Continental tire kit should be standard on car to give more luggage space."—California housewife.

This has been done in 1956. Luggage space has also been increased by changing the position of the dust shield behind the seat. Now the Thunderbird trunk will hold enough suitcases for a long trip plus a set of golf clubs.

"There are three of us in the family and the hard part in the middle of the seat is uncomfortable."—Indiana distillery owner.

By redesigning the cushion, Ford has softened the center portion of the seat that is directly over the driveshaft. The seat has also been made level so it is more comfortable for three persons.

"Would like wind deflectors on doors to keep wind out."—Missouri merchant.

This change has been made in the 1956 Thunderbird. Small wings have been added outside the regular window.

"Increase air intake under the cowl."—Pennsylvania attorney.

On each side of the 1956 Thunderbird

there is a push-out vent that scoops plenty of air into the passenger compartment. Especially on automatic transmission models, the 1955 Thunderbird was very hot inside with the hardtop in position.

"Convertible rear window should have a zipper so it could be opened."—West Virginia sales-promotion man.

The new Thunderbird has a zip-out rear window in its soft top.

"Soft top should be a one-man job. It takes at least two now. It is impossible to get the top behind the seat unless you have 30 minutes to do it. It takes 13 operations to get it down and behind the seat so we just leave it resting on the body."—New York businessman.

Ford has not made the top automatic, despite the pleas of many owners, but the operation has been improved. Ford says one man can operate it without too much trouble now. This has been done by the addition of a link in the main support on each side.

"Develop a practical sun visor for the

ADDED PORTHOLES
TO HARDTOP

SUN VISORS ARE INSTALLED

PADDED DASHBOARD IS OPTIONAL

1956 Thunderbird

CENTER PORTION OF SEAT
IS NOW PADDED

BACK WINDOW OF CONVERTIBLE ZIPS
OPEN CONVERTIBLE TOP CAN BE PUT
UP BY ONE MAN

WINDOWS HAVE SMALL VENT PANES

INSTALLED A
BIGGER ENGINE

CHANGED TRUNK TO
INCREASE LUGGAGE ROOM

SCOOPS ON SIDES COOL
PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

CONTINENTAL TIRE IS STANDARD

DECEMBER 1955

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SPECIFICATIONS—1956 THUNDERBIRD

Wheelbase	102 inches
Over-all length	185 inches
Over-all width	70.2 inches
Over-all height	52 inches
Over-all steering ratio	23.0:1

ENGINE

Fordomatic models	
Bore and stroke	3.80 x 3.44
Displacement	312 cubic inches
Compression	9.0:1
Horsepower	225 at 4600
Torque	324 at 2600

Overdrive models	
Bore and stroke	3.80 x 3.44
Displacement	312 cubic inches
Compression	8.4:1
Horsepower	215 at 4600
Torque	317 at 2600

Handshift models	
Bore and stroke	3.75 x 3.30
Displacement	292 cubic inches
Compression	8.4:1
Horsepower	202 at 4600
Torque	289 at 2600

front windshield."—California engineer.
Interior sun visors have been added to the top of the windshield. In fact, these were added as a running change during the 1955 season.

"Two rear clamps for the hardtop are too hard to operate."—Wisconsin butcher.

The clamps are changed for easier operation but it is still an awkward arrangement at best.

"As long as they made the dashboard appear padded, why didn't they pad it?"—Utah moulder helper.

Buyers can get the padded dashboard as an extra-cost option in 1956. It is part of the safety package.

"Safety belts should be standard."—Indiana technician.

For 1956, the Thunderbird has seat belts as an extra-cost option, also part of the safety package.

Best-Liked Features

But there is more to the Thunderbird story than complaints and changes. The 1955 owners had many wonderful things

to say about their "personal cars." All the following good points are retained on the 1956 models.

The feature mentioned most frequently is the power or performance of the car. Sixty-one percent of the owners listed that characteristic.

"I like the acceleration best. I get a buzz each time I tromp on the gas."—Texas electrician.

"Car runs good. Have never been passed when I didn't want to be and have been tried by everything from a Cadillac on down."—Colorado fireman.

"I have made about 22 round trips between Las Vegas and my home in California averaging about 100 miles per hour. I have never been as comfortable at high speed in any other car. The Thunderbird is a good road car."—California electronics executive.

Second on the best-liked list is handling. There were 46 percent of the owners who mentioned this.

"Ease of handling. So easy to handle in traffic as well as on the road. Easy to park.

Thunderbird for 1956 retains its removable plastic roof. It takes two men to put it on or take it off. Optional this year are windows in the quarter panels. The locking clamps are improved on the 1956 models



Ford sold 16,155 Thunderbirds for 1955. Owners in the 36 states shown in color took part in our poll

Percentages from PM Poll of Thunderbird Owners

OVER-ALL RATING OF THE THUNDERBIRD

Excellent	70%	Fair	4%
Good	25%	Poor	1%



Dealer service

Excellent	36%
Good	26%
Fair	21%
Poor	17%

Owned other sports car?

Have owned	22%
Have not	78%

What was other car?

Jaguar	10%
MG	9%
Other	3%

Own another car now?

Yes	71%
No	29%

What is the other car?

Ford	22%
Mercury or Lincoln	12%
Other make	37%

Would buy another T-Bird?

Yes	75%
Might	19%
No	6%

What should be changed?

Soft-top design	20%
Brakes	12%
Suspension	9%
Interior ventilation	8%
Seat design	8%
Dash gauges	7%
Trunk space	6%
More horsepower	6%
Needs no changes at all	18%

MOST-FREQUENT COMPLAINTS

Soft-top operation	29%
Door fit	18%
Window operation	15%

Poor body work	15%
Rattles	13%
Interior ventilation	11%
Windshield distortion	9%
Brakes inadequate	8%
Hard-top operation	7%

No complaints at all 15%

BEST-LIKED FEATURES

Power, performance	61%
Handling	46%
Styling	45%
Comfort	20%
Roadability	19%
Compact size	8%
Distinctiveness	3%

"I think I will never return to a big car."—California attorney.

"I like the way it handles. No car I have ever had has given me this feeling."—Oregon truck driver.

"A fine personal car for the whole family. Easy to drive for anyone. Especially good for women drivers. But does not compare with the Jaguar or Mercedes 300SL I own for driving at speed with safety."—Massachusetts owner.

Right behind handling came styling in the list of best-liked features with 45 percent praising it.

"The styling sold me. No ugly grille or chrome ornamentation. No juke-box look. Also I'm tired of driving a six-passenger bus when I am usually alone or have only one passenger."—Indiana attorney.

"Beautiful styling. Has sports-car look

with the continental flavor."—Michigan technician.

"Styling has dignity and respectability plus speed and acceleration. Doesn't resemble a crazy teen-ager's dream."—Maryland retired research scientist.

Other Best-Liked Features

After these three best-liked features come comfort, roadability and compact size, in that order.

"Comfortable on long trips. Two tops make it a real all-weather car."—Texas student.

"I have driven it for a straight 30 hours and found it very comfortable."—Florida Air Force pilot.

"I like its roadability—the way it handles on the mountain roads we have here."

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ROAD-TEST DATA

At press time, no production model of the 1956 Thunderbird was available for road-test purposes. *Popular Mechanics* does not road-test engineering prototypes of any car because such prototypes are not necessarily typical of the cars the public is able to buy. Floyd Clymer did road-test the 1955 Thunderbird and here are the results:

1/4 mile from zero	- - - - -	14.7 seconds
1/2 mile from zero	- - - - -	25.9 seconds
0 to 30 miles per hour	- - - - -	4.1 seconds
0 to 60 miles per hour	- - - - -	11.7 seconds
Top speed	- - - - -	112 miles per hour
Over-all gasoline economy	- - - - -	18.2 miles per gallon

Road-test data on a production version of the 1956 Thunderbird will be published as soon as possible.



Completely streamlined, the low, sleek body is designed and built by one of Italy's most famous body shops

Volkswagen Gets a Sport-Coupe Model

LOW AND STREAMLINED, a two-passenger sport coupe is available on a Volkswagen chassis. The car, called the Karmann-Ghia-Coupe, has standard VW chassis components with only those minor modifications made necessary by the drastic streamlining. Designed to seat two persons comfortably on adjustable bucket seats, the car does have two additional jump seats in the rear suitable for children or for adults on short trips only. Normally the area behind the front seats is used for

luggage. The engine is the standard four-cylinder air-cooled power plant that has made the VW famous for reliability and economy. It is in the rear, of course, and puts out 36 horsepower. Price of the car is about \$2400.

SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase	94.5 inches
Over-all length	163 inches
Over-all width	64.2 inches
Over-all height	52.2 inches
Weight	1782 pounds
Top speed	72 miles per hour
Average fuel consumption	32 miles per gallon

In the rear is the VW air-cooled four-cylinder engine. The battery is mounted in the engine compartment

