

THE WHEELBARROW JOHNNY



1956 Golden Hawk
Owner: Anthony Brouzes

FEATURE MODEL



The 1956 Golden Hawk

by Fred K. Fox

Swift of wing and sleek of stature, the mighty 1956 Golden Hawk was this and more. Not since the golden days of the powerful 336 ci President 8's had Studebaker produced a car capable of running with the fastest of the world's automobiles. The 1951 Commander V8 was lively and quick, and the Speedster perked up the Loewy coupe, but when the 1956 "Goldie" blasted out of South Bend, it set automobile journalists to buzzing. Frank Rawsome Jr. of POPULAR SCIENCE (Dec. 1955, pp. 136) noted: "With some 275 horsepower to urge a comparatively light car, its acceleration and top speed will peel the smug smirk off many a Thunderbird owner's face." POPULAR MECHANICS (Feb. 1956, pp. 183) called it a "Bombshell" and MOTOR TREND (Feb. 1956, pp. 52) claimed that "Top speed potential borders on 130 mph"



Owner: Patrick Green

little timorous to say the least, but for the word "sport" in regard to the Hawk and the herd of personal sports cars that followed was deceiving. The average American wanted a sporty looking family car and this was a fact that Studebaker well realized.

Introduced along with the Golden Hawk were three other Hawk models: The Sky Hawk, the Power Hawk and the Flight Hawk. The Sky Hawk was a hard-top model like the Golden Hawk, but it did not have the fiberglass fins. The Sky Hawk was powered by a 289 ci President V8. Next down the line was the Power Hawk, a pillar coupe (originating from the 1953 Starlight) which was pushed along by a 259 ci Commander V8. At the bottom of the list was the Flight Hawk, also a pillar coupe which had the long stroke 185.6 ci Champion 6 under its hood. Four different Hawk models proved confusing to the public and probably for some salesmen, so in 1957 Studebaker switched to two Hawk models; the Golden Hawk and the Silver Hawk. The Silver Hawk V8 replaced the Power Hawk (although it had a 289 V8

The Golden Hawk of 1956 was the only model produced by Studebaker-Packard (1954-61) that really combined the knowledge and products of the two companies into one car. To do this, the engineers shoe-horned a 352 ci, 275 horsepower Packard V8 engine and an optional Twin Ultramatic transmission (they came standard with three speed and overdrive) into what was nothing but a modernized (?) 1953 Starliner. The result was an extremely fast family sports coupe which considerably altered Studebaker's postwar economy image. The Packard engine which gave the Hawk all of its zip presented quite a problem when one tried to take corners like one was driving an Aston Martin. The Skypower Packard engine was much heavier than the Studebaker V8 (no lightweight itself) and thus the Golden Hawk was extremely front-end heavy. The overweight front-end combined with the long 120½ inch wheelbase made high speed cornering a



All 1956 Hawks featured this non-functional hood scoop bubble. The bubble shape was unique to 1956.

instead of a 259 V8) and the Silver Hawk 6 replaced the Flight Hawk. The 1956 Golden Hawk and Sky Hawk were replaced by the new supercharged 289 V8 Golden Hawk. By 1959 only the Silver Hawk survived, but then that is another story.

The accompanying pictures show some of the features of the 1956 Golden Hawk. As mentioned before, it was basically a 1953 Starliner with a new hood and grill, sculptured trunk lid, fiberglass fins and added ornamentation. Interestingly deleted was the chrome trim that ran along under the windshield and along the top of the doors. This trim was revived again on Golden Hawks in 1957. Trim items included stainless steel wheel cutout protectors, horizontally grooved trim just above the rocker panel and a stainless steel "halo" just forward of the rear window. The "halo" was set farther back than the similar item used on the 1955 Speedster. Wire wheel hubcaps continued as an optional item. Dual exhausts were standard on the Golden Hawk and the original exhaust extensions were heavy vertical chrome affairs with a vertical fin in the middle. These extensions directed the exhaust straight out rather than down as did the Hawk horizontal exhaust deflectors of 1957-64. Luckily, the Golden Hawk did not copy the popular design fad of extending the tailpipes through the rear bumpers. Ford, G.M. and Chrysler used this trick and the almost immediate result was sooty black and rusty bumpers.

The Hawk series was the result of executive pressure on the designers to produce a more conventional looking sports coupe. The 1953 Loewy coupe (actually designed by a Loewy associate by the name of Robert Bourke) was a clean and beautiful design, but the "top brass" felt that it had to be "modernized", thus the fins and raised hood. Designer resistance to large fins resulted in the unique and toned down fiberglass fins of 1956. In 1957, the popular craze took over and larger flared fins were grafted onto all Hawks. Although controversial, these fins were (and still are) admired by many auto lovers. Fortunately, designer pressure and lack of funds kept Studebaker from switching the Hawk windshield to the popular wrap around style. The Loewy coupe windshield was already very close to the driver and a wrap around windshield would have produced a "dog leg" that would have made entry very dif-

FEATURE CAR

The selection of the feature car for this 1956 Golden Hawk issue was certainly no problem. Anthony and Toni Brouzes own one of the nicest examples around and besides, their pride-and-joy has some rare items that one seldom sees on Golden Hawks of this vintage.

The Brouzes' live in Modesto, California where Anthony operates a jewelry shop in the famous McHenry Village. One Sunday afternoon this past spring, your editor visited with the Brouzes' and took advantage of the good weather to shoot a few pictures and take a test drive. Recently repainted in its original black, the Golden Hawk has approximately 75,000 miles on it. Equipped with the standard, but seldom seen, three speed and over-drive transmission; the car is quite enjoyable to drive. Having driven to their home in a 1960 Hawk, it was quite a contrast to slide behind the wheel of the 1956. The first thing one notices is the controversial fender-mounted turning signals and the small hood bubble which is unique to this year of Hawk. Inside, the driver is confronted by the classic engine-turned stainless steel dash which was standard in Hawks from 1956 to 1961 (a similar, although differently designed dash was used in the 1955 Speedster). The Golden Hawk has the full compliment of gauges

with the vacuum gauge only registering vacuum readings instead of both vacuum and pressure as in the supercharged 1957-1958 Golden Hawks. Other interior differences from later Hawks include flared door armrests (these were used



Anthony Brouzes takes a look at his "Skypower" 352 V8. Note the twin air cleaners.

ficult. The wrap around style was incorporated into sedans and wagons in mid-1955 and was carried on into the Larks where it was finally eliminated by Egbert and Stevens in 1963.

Except for the 1965-66 models, the 1956 Golden Hawk was the only non-Studebaker powered car to come from Studebaker after World War II. The Packard engine gave the Loewy coupe the power some people wished it could have had in 1953. The engine was the same one used in the 1956 Clipper Custom. A four inch bore and 3½ inch stroke with a 9.5:1 compression ratio and a 4-barrel Carter carburetor gave the 352 ci engine 275 horsepower at 4600 rpm. At this time, the Chevy V8 had 205 horsepower, the Ford V8 had 202 horsepower and the mighty Olds 88 had 240 horsepower. The engine can be quickly differentiated from the Studebaker V8 by noticing the valve covers which are bolted down on the edges instead of in the middle as all Studebaker V8's were. Hydraulic valve lifters made the properly tuned Golden Hawk engine hard to beat for quietness and smoothness of operation. If modern thin wall casting methods could have been used to produce the Skypower 352 V8, the resulting lightweight engine would have been a perfect match for the Studebaker chassis, but even as a heavyweight it still resulted in a unique and completely functional combination.

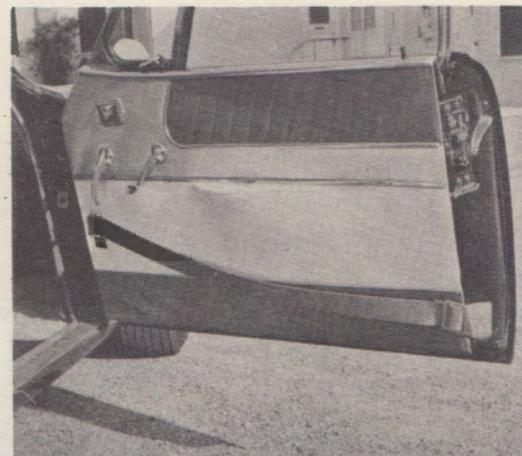
in the rare 1957 Golden Hawk 400 and in 1958 Packard Hawks), different dash switch combination, a braid cord along the edge of the headliner above the windows and the non-dished steering wheel.

The big 352 cubic inch "Skypower" Packard engine with hydraulic valve lifters is a very responsive and quiet engine. The Brouzes' car has the added zip of a dealer installed dual four barrel intake manifold and carburetor setup. This arrangement was used on the famous Packard Caribbean and many dealers, as well as hop-up enthusiasts, installed it on 1956 Golden Hawks for extra power. This combination gave the Golden Hawk about 290 horsepower. Driving the Hawk around the residential streets of Modesto certainly did not give us a chance to determine its full potential, but the strong feeling definitely existed. The optional power steering considerably reduced the heavy front end feeling and actually made the Hawk quite easy to handle. It certainly would make a pleasurable long distance tour car.

Anthony and Toni have had the car since it was about three years old and are certain that they will have it for many years to come. We thank them for a pleasant afternoon.



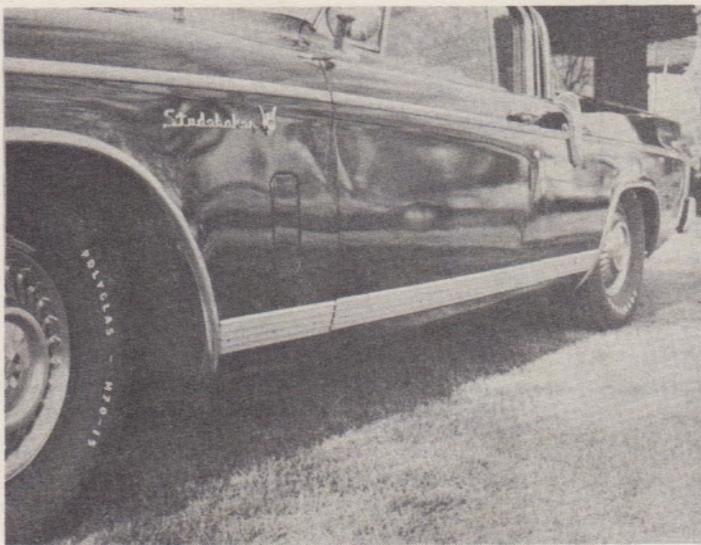
The handsome engine-turned stainless steel dash was well received by auto critics



Door mounted seat belts were a Studebaker option in 1956

With the popularity of the Avanti and Gran Turismo Hawk, most SDC members forgot the impact the Golden Hawk had on the general public when it was introduced. This original enthusiasm lingers on today when you mention the name Studebaker to a non-collector friend and he immediately remembers the Golden Hawk and how they were once the kings of the road.

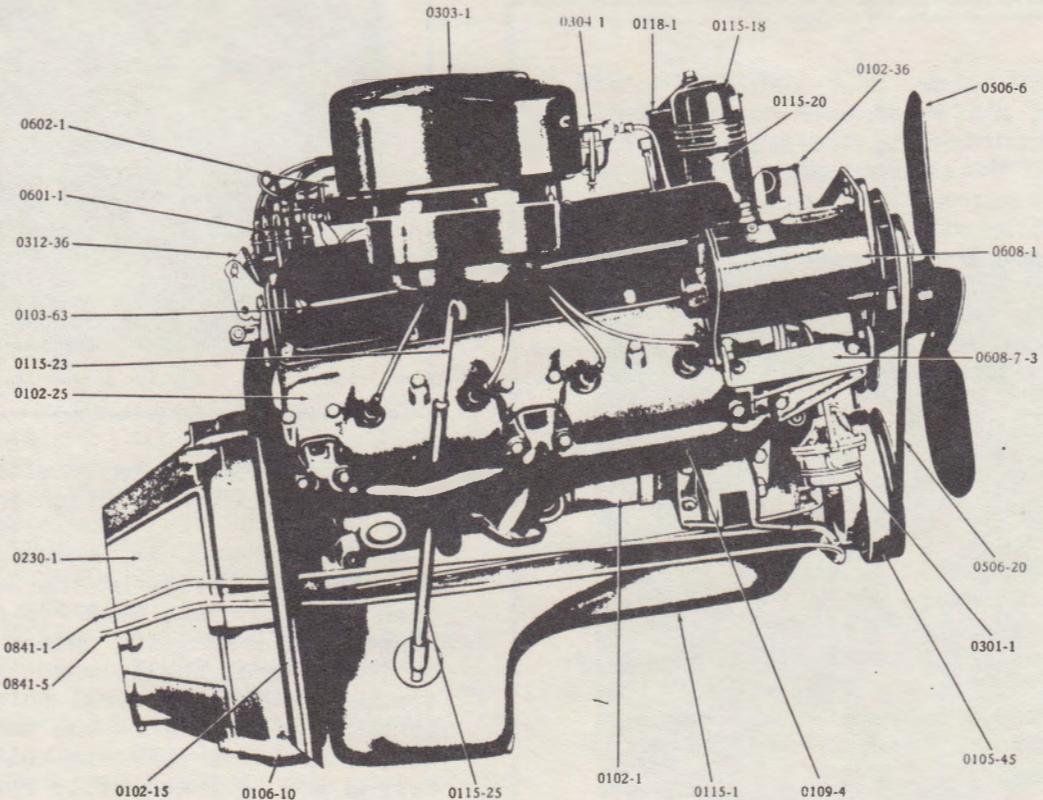
Not universally accepted by all connoisseurs of the automobile, the 1956 Golden Hawk did have some outstanding features that definitely cannot be disputed.



Only the 1956 Golden Hawk had this interesting side trim. A similar, but lower mounted trim was used on the GT Hawk.



Fiberglass fins gave the 1956 Golden Hawk the "modern look". Other 1956 Hawks did not use this fin treatment. The larger fins used on 1957-61 Hawks were made of metal.



1956 Golden Hawk Skypower V8

This basic engine besides being used in Packards and Clippers was also used in the 1955-56 Hudson Hornet and the 1955-56 Nash Ambassador. The Hawk version had more power than those supplied to Hudson and Nash.

SOME FACTS



WHEELBASE	-	120½ inches
OVERALL LENGTH	-	204 inches
HEIGHT	-	56½ inches
WIDTH	-	70½ inches
WEIGHT	-	3,500 pounds

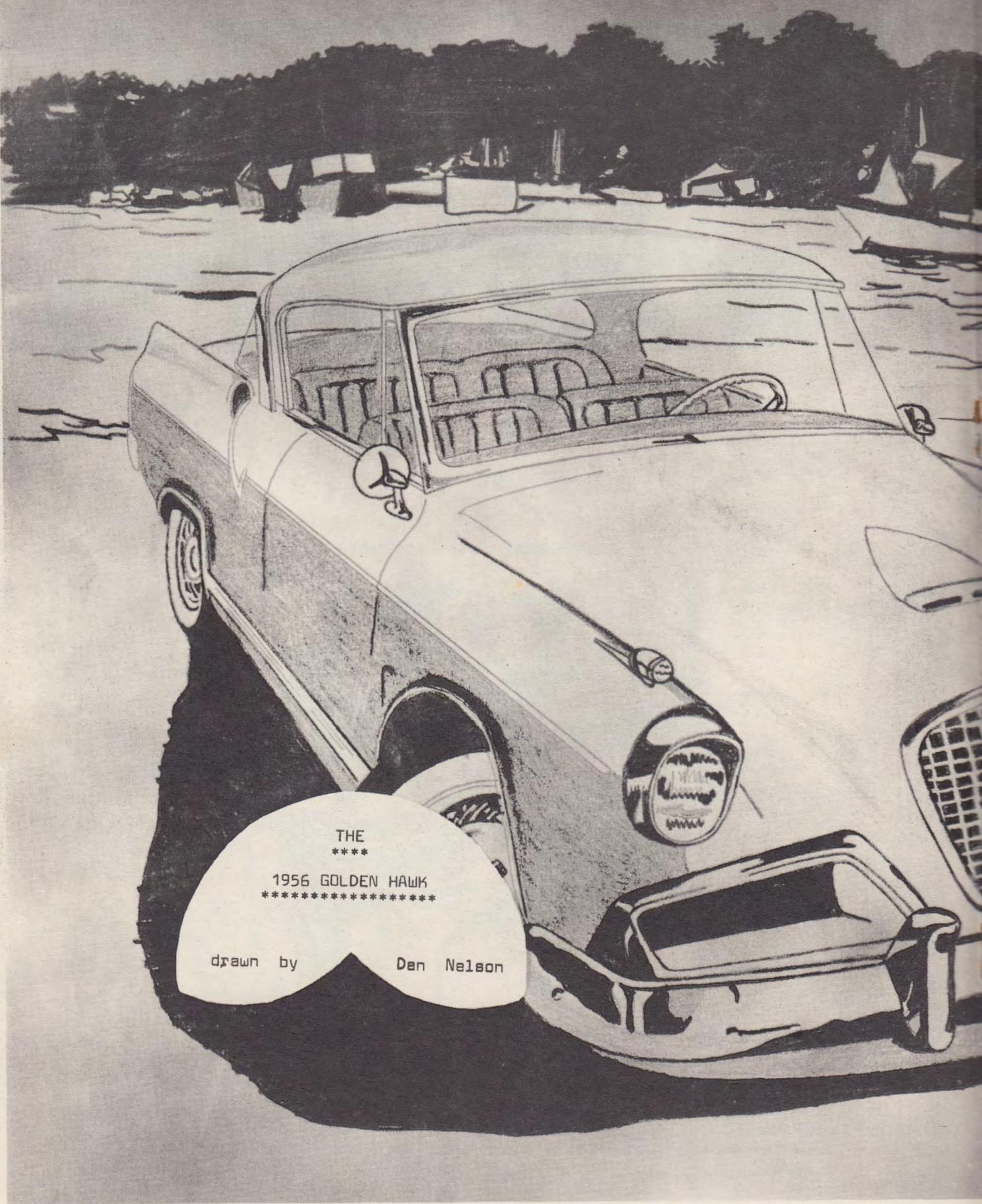
HORSEPOWER	-	275 @ 4600 rpm
DISPLACEMENT	-	352 cubic inches
TORQUE	-	380 lbs-ft @ 2800 rpm
TIRES	-	7.10 X 15

STANDARD REAR	-	3.92 with overdrive
AXLE RATIOS	-	3.07 with Ultramatic

MODEL SYMBOL	-	56 J
BODY SYMBOL	-	K 7
ENGINE PREFIX	-	K with overdrive
	-	S with Ultramatic

PRODUCTION:	U.S.	-	3,779
	EXPORT	-	241
	CANADA	-	51
	TOTAL	-	<hr/> 4,071

BASE PRICE AT FACTORY	-	\$2,800
NUMBER IN SEQUOIA CHAPTER	-	7



THE

1956 GOLDEN HAWK

drawn by

Den Nelson

