56J ONLY

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Packard Fan Blade Primer

By Brent Hagen

Five different fan blades were manufactured for different Packard Engines. Three are most commonly found on 56J engines.

1540160p This early 56J fan blade is listed by part number in the" Preliminary Chassis Parts Catalog, Oct 1956"
Notes: 4 curved blades, 4 rivet, 14 gauge steel construction.

1540160p

Studebaker Service Bulletin 316, July 1956 titled "Fan blade assembly-cracks and breakage 56J models" This Service bulletin lists a replacement fan blade:

FAN BLADE ASSEMBLY -
CRACKS AND BREAKAGE -
56J MODELS

Please record this article on the Service Bulletin Reference page at the end of the Cooling System section of your 1956 Passenger Car Shop Manual.

Some fan breakage has been experienced on the 56J models because of cracks developing at the rivets. A new fan, constructed of heavier metal (15 gauge instead of 14) and with blades held to the hub by 8 rivets instead of 4, has been released. The new Fan Blade Assembly, Part No. 1542138-P entered production effective with Serial No. 6033140.

If unusual fan vibration or noise is encountered on the 56J models check the condition of the fan blades. If there is any evidence of cracks extending from the rivets, replace the assembly. The Parts Depot will stock only the la-

1542138p Replacement for 1540160p
Notes: 4 curved blades, 8 rivet, 15 gauge steel construction

1542138p

455050 Stock 1955-56 Packard V8
Notes: 4 straight blades, 4 rivet 14 gauge steel construction. Of interest is the location of the rivets on the corners, not the recessed areas, like on Studebaker blades. Since many 56J replacement engines were sourced from Packard done cars it is not unusual to come across these fan blades on 56Js.

455050

465574 Used on 1955-56 Packards with air conditioning for heavy duty service This is a rare fan blade you rarely come across and is mostly seen on Caribbean models..
Notes: 6 blades

465574

The odd ball is the one used on the 1955-56 Nash and Hudson with the Special "8" Packard engine. This fan blade looks similar to the one used on Packards that has straight blades. Since AMC used a different size water pump hub than Studebaker/Packard, this blade will not work on a 56J or Packard engine water pump.

I believe it is imperative for 56J owners to strip the paint off their fan blades and look for signs of cracking around the rivets, especially if they have the early style 56J fan blade. I have personally run across this on used fan blades. I also am aware of a few 56J owners who have put a blade through their hood and damaged radiators/ fan shrouds.

The Tachometer Sending Clamp

From Frank Ambrogio And Artificial Intelligence

Last February, I received a message from Dean Sumpter who needed the two extension clamps, Part #537365, that hold the distributor cap to the tachometer sending unit. He owns a 1961 Hawk.

This subject has come up many times in the past, and I was never sure if anyone ever found a vendor who had them.

NOTE: the clamp for the 56J is Part # 1541385)

I've been impressed with Google's Artificial Intelligence (AI) program, Gemini, and decided to give that a try. Dealing with AI is like having a conversion with a human. It is informative and fun. I can't print the complete answers, but here is how our (AI & I) dialog went.

I - What is Studebaker part number 537365?
AI - *Studebaker part number 537365 refers to a steering tie rod end adjusting sleeve, used in various Studebaker vehicles and other applications. It is a component of the steering system*

I - According to my parts catalog, 537365 should be a clamp that is used to hold the distributor cap and the tachometer sending unit together.
AI - *Based on information from automotive parts retailers and specialists, Studebaker part number 537365 is consistently identified as a steering tie rod end adjusting sleeve.*

I - The catalog still lists 537365 as a clamp used on 1961 Studebaker Hawk models. Two are required.
AI - *While general aftermarket databases often misidentify Studebaker part number 537365 as a steering component, specialty Studebaker documentation confirms your catalog is correct:*

- ***Part Description:*** *It is a clamp specifically used to secure the tachometer sending unit to the distributor on 1956–1961 Studebaker Hawks.*
- ***Application:*** *On 1961 Hawk models, the tachometer is a mechanical-to-electrical Stewart Warner style where the sending unit is sandwiched between the distributor body and the distributor cap.*

I - Is there a place on the web that lists all the Studebaker suppliers?
AI - *Yes, a central online resource that lists many Studebaker parts vendors is the Studebaker Vendors Web Site, found at studebakervendors.com.*
(NOTE: Just the answer I was hoping for)

I - Thank you, great job. I'm giving you an A+.
AI - *I'll take that A+ and park it right in the garage next to the Hawk! ???*

I'm glad we could clear up the "tie rod vs. distributor clamp" confusion—it's a classic example of why those old factory parts catalogs are worth their weight in gold.

If you run into any more "mystery parts" while working on your Studebaker, you know where to find me. Good luck getting that tachometer sending unit buttoned up!

Getting back to Dean's dilemma, he replied: *Thanks for getting back to me. I tried our bigger vendors a few months back with no luck. I'm going to try them all again as well as the two individuals you mentioned. Also thanks for the info that 1956 GH used Autolite instead of Delco.*

My Hawk only has 75k original miles, so I'd like to stay original if possible.

Thanks for the info and super fast response. - Dean

I don't know if Dean was able to find that pair of clamps, but hopefully he did. So, AI, like humans, is not perfect,.but with a little bit of nagging, did come up with the answer I wanted. Next I'm going to ask AI if anyone owes me money! *You know who you are!*

ELECTRICAL-INSTRUMENTS AND SWITCHES		
Speedometer	Make Trip odometer (yes, no)	Stewart -Warner No
Charge indicator-type		Electric
Temperature indicator-type		Electric
Oil pressure indicator-type		Hydrostatic
Fuel indicator-type		Electric
Ignition Switch	Identify positions In order and circuits controlled ~	Center-off Turn to Right - All Circuits On Turn to Extreme Right - All Circuits Off except Ignition and Starter Solenoid Turn to Left - Gas Gage, Temperature Indicator and Accessories
	Provision for illumination Location Theft protection type	None Instrument Board - Right of Steering Wheel -----
Main lighting switch	Identify positions and lights controlled	Toggle Type - Down for Parking and Tail Lights; Up for Head and Tail Lights
Other light switches	Locations and lamps controlled	Instrument Light Switch - Toggle Type.
Other switches	Locations and devices controlled	Climatizer and Defroster - Separate Switches - Toggle Type on Instrument Board Right of Steering Wheel Windshield Wiper Switch Toggle Type on Instrument Board Right of Steering 'W11eel
Windshield wiper	Make Type Vacuum booster provision Washer provision	Auto-Lite and Bosch Electric No Yes
Horn	Type Number used Amp draw (each)	Vibrator 2 10 Amp at 14 Volts

Electrical System - Generators And Alternators

From Various Sources On The Web

What is the difference between ampere and volt gauges?

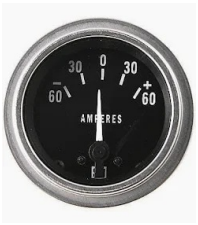
Ampere (amp) gauges measure the rate of electrical current flowing into or out of a battery, indicating charging or discharging, while volt gauges measure the electrical potential/pressure in the system to show battery health and alternator output.

Voltmeters are generally preferred for monitoring overall system voltage, whereas ammeters track, in real-time, how much current is being used or supplied.

Key Differences:

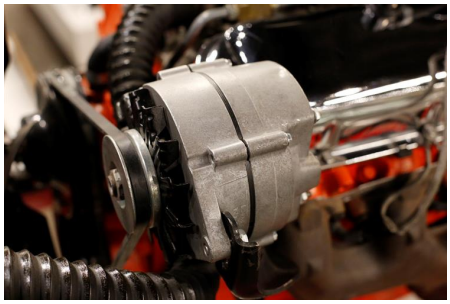
- Amp Gauges (Ammeters): Measure electrical flow/current (Amps). They show if the system is charging (positive) or discharging (negative). They are wired in series, making them more complex and sometimes less safe to install.
- Volt Gauges (Voltmeters): Measure electrical pressure/potential (Volts). They indicate the health of the battery and charging system (e.g., 12.6V is typical for a healthy car battery at rest, ~14V while running). They are easy to install, as they connect directly to the power source.
- Usage in Vehicles:
- Voltmeter: Preferred for daily operation to monitor battery and alternator health.
- Ammeter: Useful for high-level diagnostics to see exactly how much current accessories are drawing.

Generator



Ammeter

Voltmeter



Alternator

In short, a volt gauge (Voltmeter) tells you if you have enough pressure to start, while an amp gauge (Ammeter) tells you if your accessories are currently draining or charging the battery.

Why did car manufacturers switch from generators to alternators?

Car manufacturers switched from generators to alternators starting in the early 1960s to meet increasing electrical demands from accessories, such as improved lighting and heating. Alternators were superior because they provided higher power output at low RPMs (idle), were more reliable, lighter, and more efficient.

Key reasons for the switch included:

- Higher Output at Idle: Generators produced little power at low speeds, which couldn't keep up with modern electrical loads. Alternators provide efficient charging even when the car is idling.
- Greater Reliability & Reduced Maintenance: Generators used a commutator with brushes that wore out quickly and needed regular maintenance. Alternators used solid-state diodes to convert AC to DC, making them much more reliable.
- Improved Efficiency & Weight: Alternators are lighter, smaller, and more effective at converting mechanical energy from the engine into electricity.
- Lower RPM Operation: Generators required higher engine speeds to charge effectively, whereas alternators charge effectively at lower RPMs.
- No "Polarization": Unlike generators, which sometimes required a "polarizing" process when installed or reconnected, alternators operate immediately without such steps.

The switch became standard in the 1960s as cars became more reliant on electrical systems.

How to convert Generator to Alternator in older cars?

Converting a generator to an alternator in an older car involves replacing the belt-driven generator and its external voltage regulator with a more efficient alternator, typically one with a built-in regulator. This upgrade provides higher electrical output at idle, better reliability, and reduces the maintenance required by older DC generators.

Step-by-Step Conversion Process

The conversion generally requires mechanical mounting adjustments followed by critical wiring changes to bypass the original external regulator.

1. **Safety First: Disconnect the battery** before starting any work to prevent electrical shorts or damage.
2. **Remove Old Components**: Unbolt the original generator and the external voltage regulator. You may need to remove peripheral parts, such as a fan shroud, to gain access.
3. **Mount the Alternator**: Install new brackets specifically designed for the alternator to ensure it is perfectly aligned with the engine pulleys.
4. I**nstall the Belt**: Place the belt over the new pulley. Adjust for approximately ½" to 1.5" of belt deflection; do not overtighten, as this can damage bearings.

5. **Connect Wiring:**
   1. **Main Output**: Run a heavy-gauge (10 AWG or larger) wire from the alternator's output stud (often marked B+) to the positive battery terminal or the starter solenoid.
   2. **Exciter/Indicator Wire**: Connect the wire originally used for the dashboard "idiot light" to the alternator's exciter terminal.
   3. **Bypass Regulator**: Since modern alternators have internal regulators, you must **join the battery and armature wires** at the old regulator's location to complete the circuit.

6 **Final Test**: Reconnect the battery and start the engine. Check the voltage at the battery; it should read between 13.8V and 14.5V when charging.

Key Benefits of the Switch

- **Efficiency at Idle**: Alternators generate useful power even when the engine is idling, whereas generators often rely on the battery until higher speeds are reached.
- **High Amperage**: Upgrading allows the use of modern accessories like powerful sound systems or auxiliary lighting that a standard generator cannot handle.
- **Automatic Regulation**: Unlike old generators that might require manual adjustment for seasonal use, alternators automatically regulate output voltage to protect the battery.

56J Handling Characteristics

From The Owners Who Drive Them

Note: We've read the reports, but what is it like in the real world? I asked all the registered owners, with Email addresses, to describe how their 56J handled on the road. Their responses follow:

Tom Snyder - Frank, does the handling include braking characteristics?.Two reasons I switched to Disk brakes over the Bendix power brakes was because my wife kept trying to put her foot through the floor to help stop (I really am not a fast driver!) and second the power unit constantly would lock up when trying to then start moving again. I understand, what was the poppet valve, was a perennial weak link.

When we bought our 56J in January 1970, It had no power steering, just manual. After acquiring the title and original order paperwork, I found it was ordered with Power steering. I managed to find one at the South Bend meet that summer. Here are my observations and summery: Anyone who bought a 56J without power steering never drove it after the first attempt or died trying after attempting to turn the first corner, had a death wish, or was planning to just appreciate the beauty of the car from the porch seat. It steered like a 40 ton tank. You had to stand on the steering wheel, even with the 18 inch wheel, if car was standing still. We still love this car as well as the 59 Silver Hawk we got married in.

Neal Miller - Had its first road trip of 2026 today. Went with nearly no hitches,

Thank you, Jesus!!

Neal's 56J 6032757

John Kwiatkowski - My 56J performs well. It still has the original Packard engine and has been rebuilt twice (second time was to fix first time - 2 pistons broke). The replacement pistons were special order forged pistons and all 8 were done. It is not a show car (although is draws many admirers).

With respect to the handling, it does well in normal driving conditions. On winding and twisty roads, I prefer my 2007 Jaguar. When it comes to "spirited" driving I have had the car up to 95 mph and the handling was good.

Jaime Cardillo - To answer your questions, I drive the Hawk at least twice a month and average about 1,200 miles a year. The 56J is in great shape, not perfect, but very presentable. The suspension is stock to the vehicle and she has bias ply tires. She handles great under most conditions. I do not drive her in snowy conditions. She has a rebuilt numbers matching Packard 352 motor.

Jaime's 56J 6031949

Tom Gibilisco - It's been in storage, but I drove our Dad's 56J fairly regularly for ten or so years after I got my license. Drove it fast on occasion, not to the point of losing control or where handling felt unsafe (stock suspension, no power steering/brakes, Packard 352, Ultramatic, bias ply tires). It handled pretty well I thought. I've driven far worse handling

vehicles. It felt stable at high speed. But it did feel nose-heavy. Jimmy Reece's July 1956 Speed Age comparison test handling impressions are consistent with my experience.

Here's an interesting proposition - because the 352 is wider than the 289, it was mounted farther forward, affecting weight distribution (59% front, 56J, versus, for example, the Packard Hawk's 55.7% on the front wheels). Excerpt from Curbside Classic article commenting on May 1958 Hot Rod Packard Hawk review:

"It is commonly said that the Packard V8 made the '56 Golden Hawk excessively front heavy. It took a bit of digging to get to the bottom of that, as weight difference of these two engines is actually quite small, between 15 and 45 lbs, depending on the source. But the supercharger added a not insignificant additional amount of weight, with the result being probably equal. Yet the '56 Golden Hawk is shown with a front weight ratio of 59% in one source, and HR shows this Packard Hawk with 55.7% on the front wheels. From what I've been able to find, it appears the Packard engine had to sit a bit more forward than the Studebaker, due to its greater width."

Ken Durkee - I'm afraid I'm not much help as of yet, because I can only tell you what I've done on other (non '56J) Hawks, and what I'm doing to my 374-powered '56J as I'm assembling it. I'm installing an after-market rear sway bar, a Studebaker International Heavy-Duty Avanti 1" front sway bar, Avanti front sway bar mounting brackets, Avanti quick-steering arms (my car has power steering), an Avanti 3.73 TT rear end with the traction bars, Turner Brakes, 6" wide wheels, Gabriel gas shocks, and of course, radial tires. I have done these upgrades to other Hawks, with very positive results. Oh-- and moving the battery to the trunk just above the RR tire.

I have driven several '56J's over the years, and never felt their handling was any different from other V8 Hawks. Better than most '50's-vintage cars, but certainly improvements can be made at a reasonable cost, as I've explained above.

Joseph Birkel - Last time I drove the Golden Hawk was 1980 Yikes, I can't be that old! My daily driver was a 1966 Buick Skylark Gran Sport 4 speed (still own). Not exactly a slow auto. The Hawk was bone stock except it had a floor shifter. Although those 10 years difference was gigantic in braking and handling but, remember the Hawk to be fun to drive. Both have power steering and brakes. Never drove a '57/58 so could not comment on difference. Think to much is/was made of engine weight. Really don't think the Hawk was meant to be a Jag 120/150. Thanks for all your hard work for 56J's.

Steve Cole - My car has the 352 Packard motor and it drives pretty good, I've had it up to 90 miles an hr but on straight highway conditions. In Australia we do have a lot of winding kind of roads so I certainly wouldn't drive it at high speed. My suspension is as original sway bar and shocks in the front with disc brakes. you do need to be alert on winding roads, but driving around town its great. My car is fitted with the turbo 400 gearbox which is far superior to the twin ultramatic, radial Tyres. The Hawk certainly doesn't handle like a modern car but for its age it holds its own. I do have power steering but except for the transmission everything is original suspension wise. I know the 352 is supposed to be front heavy, but I don't find that at all. I do about 2000 kilometers (1250 miles) a year and everywhere I go it turns heads.

Verne Holoubek - Never show it but it would do well if I did. This car was 38th one built. Appears to be a very well done frame off restoration. With this owner for 30 years. Always stored in heated quarters. Drive Very few..unless there is a distant show it is driven only to exercise the engine. The suspension was reworked with new parts spec to original, so it has the flaws of older vehicles. Radial improves the control. This Hawk is fast…as you want to go. Transmission is three speed with overdrive market and a floor shifter. But it drives best in a straight line. Powered by Original Packard engine with single four barrel carburetor. Never pushed the car to limits. The car does not handle well at high speed. I chose to keep the original and not modify anything. It's a piece of art to me.

Verne's 56J 6030038

Ed Capozzi - Interesting topic. As my 56J isn't on the road yet, and the last time I drove it on the road was 40+ years ago, the only relevant info I can offer is this memory. (I had been driving a Sky Hawk before purchasing the Golden Hawk)… I remember getting stuck less times in the GH than the Sky. Reason being, as both were standard shift, I would generally leave the GH in second or even high gear and rely on all that Packard torque to get me through without spinning the rear wheels. Neither car had TT. I remember in the Sky Hawk, I'd usually need to shift down to first from a dead stop to avoid bogging or even stalling the smaller Stude engine. I vividly remember all this because the snow plow trucks used where I lived were relentless. Get out of their way. OR ELSE! Scary for a young guy! Although the Packard engine has more horsepower than the Stude anyway, I would ALWAYS choose, on cars of equal weights and wheelbases, torque over horsepower

Tom Clarke - I will take the time to respond to your email, as things are a bit quiet.
*) My 56J restoration concluded in 2003, and my car has been driven significantly since then. However as I have gotten older it's annual mileage has decreased to about 1,000 miles per year, as I get my cars out (5 Studebakers) from April to/thru October, weather permitting, on a rotation basis, for one or two weeks in a row. My SDC Yellowstone Chapter holds most of their meetings in Billings, a 300 miles round trip, and I have driven my 56J to Chapter meetings multiple times over the years. In 2006 I drove my 56J from my home in Montana to the SDC International meet in Omaha, and back. It handled very well, just like a normal modern car,(except for the wind noise, and operated without any mechanical issues on that trip.

*) While I did replace the rear springs as part of the restoration, I did not replace the front coils, but did put in new shocks, front and back, 20 years ago. My sway bars are original.

*) I run radial tires and have from day one. When I had the car judged at the 2003 International meet, I lost points because of the radial tires. I also lost points because I used yellow bulbs in the turn signals, and because both of those items were "safety" upgrades, in my opinion, I vowed never to have my cars judged at an SDC event ever again.

*) My 56J does not have power steering, but I do not find the steering to be anything but normal for a car of the 50's.

*) I have never felt unsafe driving my 56J, but have declined to drive it on gravel roads. Day, night, traffic density or weather have never been an issue with it. Thanks largely to the electric windshield wipers.

*) My 56J has it's original 352CID Packard engine, and T85 manual 3 speed transmission. The engine was overhauled before I bought the car, and has performed beautifully for my entire ownership period.

*) Montana had a "reasonable and prudent" daytime speed limit when I first bought my 56J. But they adopted a numerical limit of 70mph on primary 2 lane highways, and 80mph on Interstate highways since. I have driven my 56J at 75 some, but mostly my top speed is 70mph. The car handles like a modern car at those speeds.

I know there are those out there who believe the Packard engine is too heavy, and adversely affects the handling of the 56J, but I disagree with the perception.

Croft Carlsen - Mine is not a show car and I try to get her out at least once a week in the good weather and whenever I can in the winter. That's provided, no rain, ice or snow. Driven Between 500 & 1000 a year, and the suspension is stock but refurbished. I went to Radial as I have some play in my stealing box and the bias tires tended to wander considerably. Much better with the radials, she handles nicely but I only go "Sunday" driving. I never take her out in the rain or snow and always stick to the pavement.

Personally I have never taken her much over 80 MPH. However, many years ago when the car was relatively new and I was a young lad, my father was driving with my mother on the freeway. I was in the back seat behind him looking over his shoulder and could see the speedo. We were on a rather long straight stretch and being somewhat of a "Scandinavian Cowboy" he slowly increased the speed. This was so mother wouldn't notice, and took her up to just under 120 MPH. At that speed the car became very light and started drifting slightly from side to side. Dad took his foot off the accelerator at that point and to my knowledge never again attempted to see how fast she'd go. I think it scared him.

Ron Johnson - Slowing down a bit here with olde man back/leg issues but still driving, racing a V8-60 midget, riding a flock of old motorcycles, and flying vintage open cockpit aeroplanes. Why?? because I still can!!

- First South Bend Road Oiler -53 Commander coupe-62-63
- 58 Silver Hawk-63-86, "299 w/ R3 cam", T86 w/OD- daily driver until N Ill consumed the frame--trans busted many times along with 3 axles (magnaflux and correctly install your axles/hubs).
- 56 J-K7, 72- present, SKYPOWER 352, T85 w/OD (MUCH stronger) -regular driver and likely >100,000 miles worth--full resto in 2014, no power steering.
- 57 H-K7, 2023- present, blown Sweepstakes 289, T85 w/ OD. Driving/"handling" for 63 years:

The Silver Hawk handled as one would expect for the day--no power steering--not needed--no squawks as I likely did not know any better.

The mighty ceramic green/white 56 Golden Hawk feels a bit nose heavier than the blown 57 even though the weight of the 352 vs. the blown 289 are not far apart, I suspect this is mainly due to the 352 being "longer" and is positioned further forward and therefore "feels" heavier. Replacing the heavy-duty front springs with std improved the stance of the car (remains of traction bars likely indicate it was drag-raced way back in the day when the HD springs were fitted).

No power steering is noticeably hard to turn the wheel (especially when just starting) even though it sports a 55 President wheel (~1 inch larger) as the original disintegrated.

The 57 is considerably easier to turn the wheel and I read somewhere to have "faster" steering gearing than the 56 which would normally add to the effort. Steering is noticeably easier with radials than bias tires. The bias tires were "all over the road" compared to radials and the handling is also much better since I installed a rear stabilizer from a President and also "upgraded" the front stabilizer to that off a 58. The steering effort with radials is much easier. After driving this crate for 54 years I can safely say the overall steering effort and handling is noticeably improved with these changes and highly recommended if you plan to drive the beast. And the olde machine will still haul "A".

BTW, the 299 along with another 289 and a bunch of Hawk sheet metal and misc are available if you live near Ill.--Phone--815-397-3601.

Nick Nichols - I've had my 56J for 24 years. I do drive it at least once every couple of months, In the early years of ownership I drove it more. I'll try to answer your questions succinctly.

1. It is not a show car, but was restored before my ownership and is still in good condition. I'm not afraid to drive it anywhere. I drive it a couple of hundred miles yearly.
2. No improvements to suspension.
3. Always had bias ply tires.
4. It has always handled just fine for me. I only drive it the speed limit and never race it or push it. I am a "normal" driver.
5. Never felt unsafe driving it in any situation.
6. It has the stock 352 Packard engine.
7. I've had it at 65 on the freeway and it handled perfectly.

Jerry Barber - I may be the perfect person to answer your request.

My father bought in 1956 Studebaker Golden Hawk with Packard engine and standard shift. He made no suspension modification or any other modification on the car. He owed at the time, a quarter mile dirt stock car track with an eighth mile dirt track in the middle, *Springfield Springs Speedway, Springfield, Ohio*. I was a senior in high school in 1956. On the 8th mile, we raced what we called quarter midgets which were basically a go kart with a body cover on the front half. I owned one and raced it during my years in high school. While I was a senior, my father allowed me to drive the 1956 Golden Hawk pace car at the start of many races. So I did experience how the car handled on the racetrack

Additionally, I would often drag race on the street in 1956. Nothing beat me. But in 57, the new Chevrolet could beat me. While I was a freshman at Ohio State, I was speeding just outside of Columbus and was clocked at 110 mph and had to pay a big fine. I found the car to handle very well and I did not find the weight of the Packard engine created any problem. Glad to answer any questions.

My dad's Golden Hawk did not have power steering best I can remember.
Our quarter milel track had two straightaway's and two slightly banked curves.
So full throttle coming out of a curve and brake just as you get to the next curve and slide a little sideways around the curve, then back on full throttle as you were exiting.
I don't know how many miles per hour I was going, but it was almost as fast as the stock cars.
I always felt the car handled great.

Larry Michael - Frank, In response to your request in the last newsletter, I wanted to share some thoughts on the handling characteristics of the '56J. By way of background, I've owned my 56J for 60 years now-hard to believe I bought it at age 16-and over that time I've also owned and driven more than a dozen other Hawks ranging from 1956 through 1964. With that experience in mind, I'll touch on several of the points you raised.

My 56J is primarily a show car, with a restoration that has evolved continuously over the decades. I still drive it 1,000-2,000 miles a year, and I'd rate its condition as a solid number 2. It continues to do well at local shows and typically places first or second at SDC nationals. The car still runs its original Packard 352, but I retired the Ultramatic (two of them) years ago in favor of a Tremec 5 speed. I also converted it to the dual 4 barrel setup using two Carter WCFBs.

As for handling, switching to radial tires many years ago made a noticeable improvement. But the single biggest upgrade-by a wide margin-was replacing the front springs and installing a heavy duty front sway bar. That combination dramatically reduced body roll and made the car far more confident in curves. Other worthwhile improvements included front disc brakes with a dual master cylinder, new rear leaf springs, and adjustable rear air shocks.

I would still rate the 56J's handling as average compared to other cars of its era. And in my experience, it falls a notch below the later Hawks, especially the '63-'64 GTs. Although the suspension components remained largely unchanged from '56 through '64, the later cars simply feel tighter and more composed. Countless conversations with other Hawk owners over the years have reinforced that same conclusion.

I've never felt unsafe driving the 56J-except once, when I pushed past 110 mph. At that speed, the volume of air entering the grille caused the rear of the hood near the cowl to lift visibly. That was enough for me to back off and save the real top end testing for the dyno. As you published in *56J Only* Issue 083, February 2016, the computer readout confirmed a top speed of 144 mph. Handling wasn't the issue there; my bigger concern was whether the tie down straps would hold! I warned the dyno operator ahead of time that I expected to exceed 120 mph, but he didn't believe me. He was stunned when the car blew past the dyno's 120 mph rating-fortunately without incident. One of my favorite 56J memories is looking down at the speedometer showing 144 mph and then seeing the computer verify it exactly. In summary, I've never had real handling problems with the 56J, but my '64 GT Hawk does handle noticeably better.

If I were to rank the most effective handling upgrades I've made to the 56J, my top five would be:
1. Heavy duty front sway bar and springs
2. Front disc brakes
3. Tremec 5 speed
4. Air adjustable heavy duty rear shocks
5. Radial tires

Curtis French - This is an issue about which there has been so much horse manure. As some have pointed out, the Packard V8 is only about 50 lbs heavier than a Studebaker V8. Add a supercharger to the Studebaker V8 and the weights are very similar.

The 56 GH is somewhat nose heavy, but really not out of line with many other cars, including some in the mid-50s but also most any sixties muscle car.

According to Hot Rod Magazine, the 56 GH had 59% of its weight on the front wheels. The 56 Ford had 58.5% of its weight on the front wheels. The 56 Plymouth had 57% of its weight on the front.

A 66 Olds Toronado had 62% of its weight on the front. Of course, it was front wheel drive, and this is not an atypical weight distribution for front wheel drive.

So - not really so incredibly nose heavy.

And what are the consequences of being nose heavy? Well, generally, adding weight to the front will increase understeer, all else being equal. I.e., the front will tend to plow more. Actually, most production cars have understeer at the limit, because going straight when you want to turn is generally safer than terminal oversteer, which is when you spin out and go who knows where. (Early Corvairs, for example.)

But you can achieve neutral handling even with a nose heavy car, by adjusting spring rates, sway bar sizes, and tire sizes. Perhaps more importantly, weight at the extreme ends of a car will adversely affect quick changes of direction. Better to have the weight of the car nearer to the center. Or less weight up front or out back.

None of this is to say that a 56 Golden Hawk is a great handling car. The frame isn't rigid enough, and the suspension is too soft. Why Studebaker didn't put heavy duty suspension in every Golden Hawk I don't know, but suspect it was a matter of not wanting the car to ride too firmly. And they really weren't trying to build an actual sports car anyway. But there was nothing especially dangerous about the Golden Hawk's handling. Its cornering limits were low, but entirely predictable. And it is very stable in a straight line, even at high speed (over 100 mph). My parents owned a 56 Golden Hawk for a couple of years back in the day, and I've owned one myself for over 20 years now. Never had any untoward issues.

As for the road test reviews, much of what they say is nonsense. Remember that at this time, they revered light European sports cars and a supposedly ideal 50-50 weight distribution. Also, Americans had traditionally put big motors in big cars, medium sized motors in medium sized cars, and little motors in little cars. The 56 Golden Hawk turned that upside down, alarming some automotive writers (and Packard engineers), who had come of age in the thirties. But pretty soon, everyone was doing it. Only two years after the 56J, Ford, Chevy and Plymouth all had engines roughly the same cubic inches, and nearly the same weight , as the Packard engines in the 56 Golden Hawks. And only a few years after that, you could get a mid-sized car with 100 cubic inches more than our underappreciated Golden Hawks had.

One of the dumbest things I've read in some of these old tests is how the "light" rear end could come around easily. Well, the rear of the 56 GH is no lighter than a less nose heavy car. And its nose heaviness makes it a basic understeerer, not an oversteerer. Then they say to add several back seat passengers to make it a more neutral handler. No, adding more weight does not make the car handle better. Makes it handle worse.

Finally, when the Packard V8 became unavailable for 57, Studebaker gamely tried to make ifs 289 V8 competitive by bolting a supercharger to it. Then they had to come up with a reason why this was an improvement, not a regression. So - it's a more balanced package and handles better. And all of a sudden all the automotive journalists and historians were talking about how bad the 56 Golden Hawk was. Couldn't keep clutches in it (hey, it was only a 352), it was a slug, it was an evil handler. Blah, blah, blah.

Anyway, there's my two cents.

Frank Ambrogio - *My turn!* When I drove my first 56J, I wasn't happy with its handling, although I loved the power steering and automatic transmission. Despite it going through a restoration, I still drove it regularly. It was especially bad on roads that had a seam between the lanes. When the tires hit that seam, the car couldn't decide which lane it wanted. Once the restoration was completed, I switched to radial tires, and the difference was monumental. The car handled great from then on. I did add heavy duty springs later, and I liked the slightly higher stance of the car. However, I did not notice any significant difference in its handling.

I put radial tires on my second 56J a few days after I bought it. The car lacked power steering, and was fine at driving speed, but it took some effort driving it with the manual transmission at slow speeds. The radials made turning the wheel harder to do at a slower speed, like in parking lots such as car cruises, and shows. Once I added power steering, it became the perfect 56J. Manual transmission, Jet Streak engine, and power steering, I was living the dream. I did add the heavy duty springs on this car also but again, didn't really notice any difference in handling. Once I had some service done on this car, and the mechanic took it for a test drive to make sure the repair was OK. When I picked up the car, he said, "that feels and runs like a new car."

Unless I was laid up after a surgery, or on vacation, I drove each car every weekend for a minimum of 20 miles, and put between 1100 and 1500 miles a year on each one. The fastest I drove in either car was on the Interstate at about 75-85 MPH, and both handled well. But I didn't like driving at those speeds, especially with all those *crazies* to contend with. There are no mountains here in Florida, roughly 91% of the state is flat and I never drove on gravel roads. We get some heavy downpours in Florida, but even that did not affect the car's handling.

My favorite speed range was 35-45 MPH on surface roads, basically a Sunday drive. It got the best gas mileage in that speed range, and I enjoyed short conversations with other drivers, while stopped at a signal light. There is a short winding stretch of road about a mile long with a speed limit of 25 MPH. Going any faster than that in the 56J felt like it was too fast, though not dangerous. My Chevy Equinox manages that same stretch easily at 30-35 MPH. NOTE: *If you are a cop, do not read the previous sentence*

For me **and my "J"**, power steering is a must. Not just for a 56J, but for any car, and radial tires are also the right choice. I would love to have A/C, but it just was not worth the cost and trouble, for two cars. I think the four best advancements for all modern cars are, alternators, fuel injection, electronic ignition, and disc brakes. I did the electric ignition swap, but it really wasn't necessary, and, none of the others were worth doing for **my 56J driving situation**.

Conclusion:

So, what have we learned about the 56J's handling? I guess, nothing more than we knew for the past 70 years. Some owners think the handling benefits from suspension upgrades, others feel it is just fine with replacing worn parts. Different driving environments and a car's equipment have a direct bearing on how the car maneuvers on the road. I still think the handling myth is way overstated.

Personally, I think Studebaker fostered this bad handling idea because they didn't have anything new to say about the 1957 Golden Hawk. All it did was equal the horsepower of the 1956 GH, while losing 63 cubic inches in the process. All this while *every competitor's* 1957 offerings featured higher horsepower and cubic inch ratings than their 1956 models. In the mid/late 1950s, those items brought many customers into the showroom. Studebaker went from the 1956 leader to the1957 also ran. The Avanti and "R" engines couldn't save it.

Looking at all the comments, I noticed that not a single person said their car was dangerous. It's good to hear from actual drivers. Far too much ink has been expended on what might be a *possible condition*, but apparently, a *non problem*. Thanks to everyone who provided their input. I'd love to put this subject to bed, but I know it will pop up again.

Progress Reports

Stories By Owners Who Are Getting It Done

Jaimie Cardillo

Here is my 56J story. - I purchased the Golden Hawk in September of 2010. It had its first refresh shortly after I purchased her. It needed several thousand dollars of work (primarily repairing a cracked frame) to where it was restored to stock specifications with exception of a transmission cooler and a tachometer.

I drove the vehicle trouble free for seven years with the exception of a tune up. I made several 150 mile round trips during that period including driving from Portland, ME to central Massachusetts in less than three hours in the pouring rain and a round trip to Center Harbor, NH.

During the time I lived in Massachusetts, I reached my top speed of 85 miles per hour traveling to an event I was co-hosting as President of Ocean Bay SDC chapter without any issues. The vacuum gauge was at idle at that time.

In 2018, my wife and I moved to South Carolina. The Golden Hawk ran fine until 2020 when things started to go wrong. The power steering reservoir started to fail. Fortunately, A friend is a welder and solved that problem.

I replaced the radial tires in 2023 with Diamondback bias ply tires. There is definitely a different driving experience between the two. Thankfully, I can still drive the 56J at highway speeds with no issues.

In October of 2023, the Ultra-matic transmission gave out. This is when the second refresh started. In addition to putting in a new transmission (700R4), I had the Packard 352 re-built. During that time, I had the cylinder head replaced (thanks, Brent) with a NOS cylinder head.

Last year, I replaced the non-stock tachometer with a refurbished stock tachometer. It was the first time in fifteen years all the gauges worked.

I took her out for her 70th birthday on 2/14/26. She handled 70 mph speeds and in-town driving with no issues. She does not smoke or leak. The only thing I need to address is the hood (minor).

I recently purchased a 1949 Oldsmobile 88. I love them both but they handle much differently.

Bryan & Molly Sandberg

03-31-26 - This is Bryan reporting on Serial number 6800275. Today, the car was scraped, for your records thanks On the flip side, 6800190 car is almost done thanks for the help

04-25-26 - My husband, Bryan, spoke with you regarding the progress of our 1956 Studebaker Golden Hawk in a previous email. I am sending a few details about the restoration, photos (sending in separate email) and some of the obstacles we encountered.

Restoration start: February 2025 to present
Some of the obstacles:
1. One of the obstacles was finding a reputable engine builder. Bryan was able to find Jack Vines in Spokane, WA who rebuilt our engine with up to date parts. We added a PCV valve and two valve cover breathers in place of the draft tube.

2. Bryan had to fabricate a reach rod as he was unable to locate any replacement parts.

3. We ran into difficulties finding a replacement headliner. Bryan took the headliner from both our car and the donor car and sent them to a company called REM Auto Inc to create a new headliner. If any 56J owners need a new headliner they can contact REM Auto Inc as they have the pattern. https://www.remautoinc.com/products.php

There were many more obstacles we encountered but Bryan was able to research and resolve those. If anyone has questions, reach out to him to see if he can help.

We are near completion of our car with just a few items left - interior, rear window, exhaust/tail pipe system and final shine. We should be completed and ready for cruising within just a few weeks.

We would like to give a huge thanks to Brent Hagen of Portland, OR for all his advice and information throughout the restoration. Also Brent was a huge part of ensuring our ability to use mostly NOS parts on our car.

If you have any questions or need any additional photos, we have so many throughout the restoration, just reach out to Bryan.

Frank Hunter

Frank, this is Frank from Pennsylvania. The guy who is redoing my car is getting close to painting. I have finally narrowed down my options to a two tone- white and gold. I believe your car was painted those colors? I was hoping you can give me some direction on painting? What actual colors did you use? Were they solid colors or metallic? Do you have any pictures? The white is probably not too much of an issue but the gold is.

I actually prefer a medium type gold color and not a gold/gold color that is too dark if you know what I mean. Any help would be greatly appreciated. After almost 50 years I am finally going full speed! The guy who has the car now has had it a little over a year and did ten times more work than the other two guys put together in 6 years! And I lost quite a bit of money. So, I will wait to hear back from you.

The Resurrection Of 6030610 (Part 13)

From Ed Capozzi

January 17, 2022

NOTE: Ed bought this 1956 Golden Hawk in 1968 and sold it in 1979.

He bought it back in 2021, from that buyer's son and is now working on this reclamation project. It sat outdoors for over 30 long years in Massachusetts.

Ed has agreed to provide a running account of his progress. Hopefully, his reports will inspire others to get busy on their own project.

01-30-26 - Haven't done anything due to the winter weather. Part 13 will appear in the October issue.
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Mail Bonding

Letters from our readers (Edited as required)

Bill Ladroga January-30, 2026

Hello Frank:

Birthday 88 is creeping up in a few weeks and I look back with appreciation for everything that you've done for me and the 56J marque. Thanks for keeping me on the *56J Only* mailing list. I only wish I knew where my 6031654 was!

Just a note and my opinion. I watch the various postings of cars on FaceBook. I've been discouraged with some of the obviously AI modified Studebaker photos and misinformation about various Studebaker years and models that gets posted.

I'm glad to see Bill Jacksmelt of the Studebaker Station Wagon Owners & Fans site posting accurate photos and information.

Or do I have OCD??? All the best to you and Anita.

Kirk Cordill April 02,2026

Hi Frank, Got this, thanks for sending all the info and attachments. Great stuff and really appreciate it. We do have some exciting news. We have just been accepted into the 2026 Mille Miglia with the car. So, the Studebaker will be heading to Italy to square off with Europe's finest. Wish us luck!

Don Shelton May 23, 2026

I consider my 56J to be a condition 2. I bought it from a friend who owned it for 32 years. I went with him when he bought ir from a dealer in St. Louis. The car has been driven very little each year. It has been maintained by a professional mechanic over the yrear. I sold four cars for him, but bought the Hawk. It received a freah paint job three years ago, and new chrome when I bought it.

I attend car show two or three time a year, and it received a first place trophy last year at a major show. Speedometer shows 86958 miles. It has good oil pressure and no need to add oil between oil changes.

Want Ads (*Vrooms To Go)*

New Since The Last Issue

For Sale - About 40 years ago, I bought a Studebaker Golden Hawk standard shift with Packard engine because the body was in perfect condition with original paint and the interior was excellent. It has about 80,000 miles. It has been stored the whole time in my garage. I used to drive it a little now and then but I have not driven it for three years. I would like to sell it, but I have no idea what to ask.

Any suggestions what I should ask and you know anyone who might want to buy it. It is in my garage here in Greenville, South Carolina.
Jerry Barber 864 640 0904 cell

New Item: I am now making the Mylar headliner roof rail trim for the 1956 Golden Hawk and the skylark. These have not been available since 1968 when they stopped production. These are not exact but are a very good replacement in almost identical Mylar.
Ernie Loga Loga Enterprises logaenter@gmail.com
715-829-3357 www.studebakervendors.com/loga

Here We *Grow* Again

If you move, please remember me when you send your change of address information.

Gains

746 Kirk Cordill SN-6033343
Oak Brook IL Prev Ron Bomberger

747 Brett Harris SN 6800151
NSW Australia Prev Stave Cole

Losses

604 Mark James - Sold car in 2025
617 Terry Welch - Sold to John Kimmel in 2025
629 Jim Ober - No contact since 2022
648 Jim Knox - No contact since 2022
725 Michael Wood - No contact since 2022
727 Glen McPherson - No contact since 2022
728 Ron Paulson - Sold car in 2025 or 2026
733 Ray Green - No contact since 2022

(If Present):
* = New, Not previously registered or reported.
** = Previously reported, but never registered.

The *"J"* Account

1956 Golden Hawks Registered/Reported/Scrapped

178	Registered Owners
222	Cars Registered (includes parts cars)
430	✶Cars Reported But Not Registered by Owner
652	**Total Cars Registered plus Reported**
57	Additional Cars Reported as Scrapped

✶ Includes cars previously registered but dropped afterwards, due to 4 year non response by the owner.

Administrative "Assistance"

Special notes and recurring items.

✓**EMAIL CLUTTER**: **I easily get 100s of messages, most of which are useless and interfere with the more important items. Please do not send forwarded mail to me. I just can't read it all. This includes anything not 56J related, especially jokes, E*cards, political and religious messages. Believe me, if you send it, I'll also get it from 10 others. Far too much aggravation for me!!!**

✓**Studebaker Drivers Club (SDC):** Although we are not officially connected with SDC, they have always been in our corner. I am a life member and would urge every 56J owner to join. It is a great organization and at least two of its Presidents have owned a 56J at one time or another.

✓**Phone Calls,** We *don't* answer the phone anymore due to the number of scams and crank calls. I prefer email, but if you *must* call, **leave a message, and I'll pick up**.

✓**56JONLY Message Forum** Started by Doug Button, for owners and fans to exchange information. Click on *56JONLY Message Forum* on our home page, www.1956GoldenHawk.com.

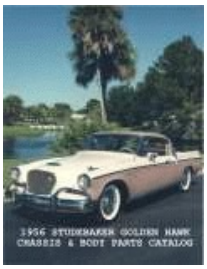
✓**56J ONLY, Electronic Version** of the newsletter is in color, and undamaged in transit. If you would like to receive it electronically, ***and save me a buck and a half***, let me know and send me your Email address. I will send you a notice when the latest version is posted on the website. You can read it, download it, and/or print it at your leisure. If you can't view it on the website, let me know, I'll send it as an attachment. Anyone with an Email address on file with me, will automatically receive the newsletter notice electronically. **Let me know if you prefer to receive it by mail**. This costs me about $300 each., but the mangling, ripping, and stains are free.

✓**The Four Year Rule** * If I haven't heard from or about you during the past four years, I will send a registration form to you with your newsletter, or by Email. You must respond or you will be dropped from the Register. Since we don't charge dues, this is the only way I can be sure you are receiving the newsletter and/or still own a 56J.

56J Club Items

All Proceeds Help Maintain the Register
Items can be ordered on*line through our web site

1956 Studebaker Golden Hawk Parts Catalog.
Patterned after the 1956 Studebaker parts catalogs. A full 295 pages. Including torque specifications, part numbers, illustrations, alphabetical and numerical index, utility items, accessory codes, and a list of service bulletins $35.00 Includes free domestic shipping. (add $30.00 foreign S/H).



$35.00

$20.00

Complete Package Flash Drive. 1956 GH Restorers Guide Video plus 1956 GH Parts Catalog, 1956 GH Authenticity Guide (New version), 1956 Owners Manual, 1956 Accessories Catalog, Borg Warner Overdrive Manual, 1955*58 Chassis Parts Manual, 1953*58 Body Parts Manual, 1956*57 Shop Manual, 1958 Shop Manual Supplement, *56J Only* Newsletter back issues, 1956 GH Production Orders. $20.00

Decals*Tags*

Oil Filler Cap, blue/buff	$ 3.00
Oil Bath, yellow/black	$ 4.00
Generator Field Terminal Tag, red	$ 1.50

Club Rosters (send Email or SASE, **owners only**)

Most Items Are Available On*line at the 56J Store
Make Checks Payable to Frank Ambrogio.

In this Issue

- **Brent Hagen** provides a primer on the different fans used on the Packard V8 engine.
- **Artificial Intelligence** weighs in on part # 537365 clamp, which holds the distributor cap to the tachometer sender.
- **Electrical-instruments and Switches** chart is presented here.
- **Alternator & Generator** are compared showing how they differ.
- **Owners** give accounts of their driving a 1956 Golden Hawk, and its handling characteristics.
- **Ernie Loga** is producing the silver mylar strip that runs along the bottom of the headliner, above the side windows..
- **Ed Capozz**i continues the restoration of Serial # 6030610 and provides a few more updates (No Update).
- **Kirk Cordill** will be racing his 1956 Studebaker Golden Hawk at Italy's Mille Miglia June 19-13, 2026.

- **NOTES:**
- **Renewal time** If we haven't corresponded in four years, you'll receive a renewal notice either by mail with this issue, or by email if I have your address. You must respond or you will be dropped from the mailing list.
- **Do not forward email** (jokes, politics, environment, religion, etc.), to me that is unrelated to our purpose. I just can't keep up!!! All you accomplish is to provide my email address to others, including spammers who send more junk!
- **56JONLY Message Forum** Started by Doug Button, for owners and fans to exchange information. Click on *56JONLY Message Forum* on our home page at www.1956GoldenHawk.com.
- Visit www.StudebakerVendors.com for vendors who offer Studebaker parts, information, help.

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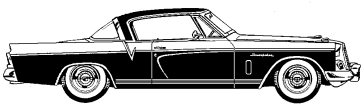

For the Type "J" Personality