

The Year's **BIGGEST** Step Forward

MOTOR TREND



MAY 1956 25c

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ROAD TESTS: **CHRYSLER**
PONTIAC

Road Test
HOW DOES
VOLKSWAGEN
COMPARE?

ANALYZING
THE GROWING
VOLKSWAGEN
FAMILY





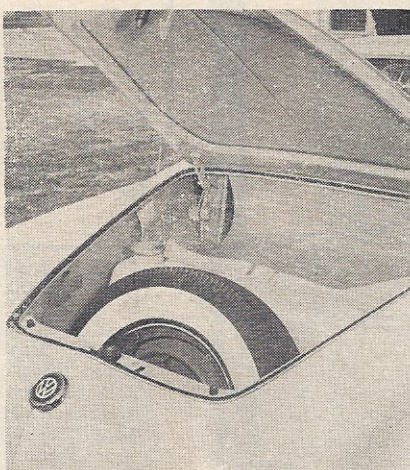
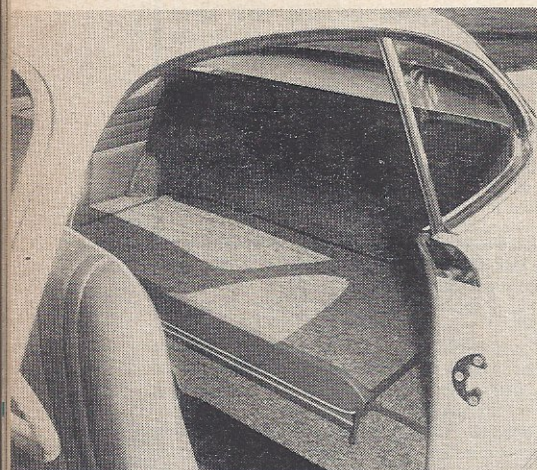
fresh air thru those front end grilles, mixed with heat or not.

First driving impression is that the rear end is less skittish than in the other model, and it's due to a front-end roll bar and wider frame rails. The feeling remains right thru the gears up to top speed (which we didn't measure accurately but which is a very few miles per hour faster). Acceleration is infinitesimally better at the lower end, but it is at an indicated 70 to 80 that one realizes most clearly that he is driving no ordinary VW. On a lonely stretch (usually windy but with only light gusts on test day, as luck would have it) the Ghia's high-speed behavior proved impeccable, and the difference in wind buffeting under severe conditions could easily be inferred. The weight—1740 pounds—and streamlining get the credit. Unfortunately, the curved glass doesn't quite mate with the top and there is some wind whistle.

We found it hard to assess the Ghia. "That much for a *Volkswagen?*" was the reaction of many of us until we saw the car. When that time came—for photos cannot successfully show its utter beauty in motion—we were helpless. Tho produced in hundreds by Karmann (builder of the VW convertible) this is a custom car in every subtle detail of its lines, every deceptively plain interior feature. It should not be judged by the standards of other "small cars," but instead as a personal luxury car (replete with fitted luggage, if you like, for the portion back of the front seats). In this category, of course, it is the lowest-priced model; and while it could never be called a bargain in ordinary terms, just how much should you pay for a small slice of pure visual and driving delight?

Lee Carpenter, VW dealer of Compton, Calif., lent us the Ghia

VW's Gorgeous Ghia

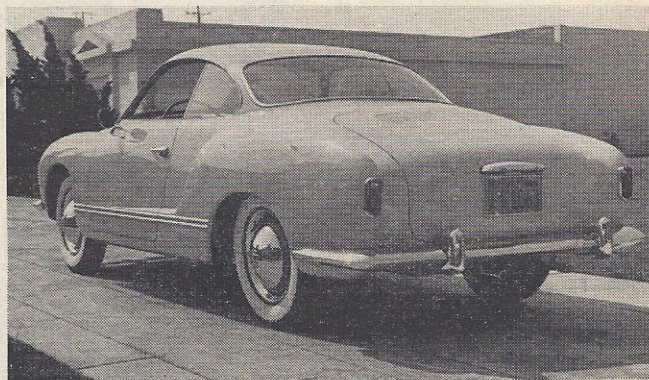


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NO, IT'S NOT THE WAY all Volkswagens are going to look in 1957. No, it's not any different mechanically from the VW sedan whose road test appears in this issue. No, its back seat isn't intended for adults. No, it doesn't cost anywhere near the same. No, it isn't a sports car, and it isn't meant to be one.

If we sound negative, it certainly isn't that we feel like that. It's just that most all the questions we've been repeatedly asked about this most desirable little car have to be answered that way.

You climb in (with ease) and it feels sporty. The seat is low, and adjustable for anyone, as is the passenger's seat. The roof touches your head if you're very tall. There's more of a "hood" in front of you, and visibility is superb all around. Controls are similar, but not identical, to those of the cheaper model. Interior finish is flawless and chastely classic. You can have floor-level



photos by Colin Creitz

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Spotlight on Detroit

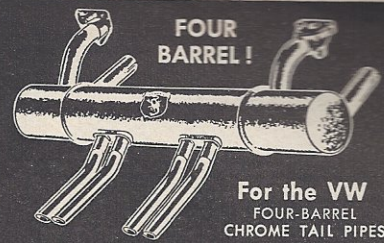
A 1956 FORD SUNLINER CONVERTIBLE with a 225-hp, 4-barrel-carbureted engine, set 18 "International" NASCAR records for open cars. Included in this impressive number were 2 Unlimited National Class standing start records for 5 and 10 miles, 7 Class B Stock Car flying start records from 5 miles to one hour and 9 Unlimited Class records from 5 miles to one hour. Slowest speed was 104.649 and highest was 118.197, breaking the old records by 6 and 10 mph, respectively, for a good, if not quite amazing, jump over the old marks.

THE WHY OF BEING ABLE TO HIT SUCH SPEEDS was made apparent by a demonstration ride around the 5-mile track in a Ford at 100 mph and later in a Continental at slightly over this figure. The asphalt track is 3 lanes wide, has two 1-mile straights, and since it is shaped like a saucer, can be driven "hands-off" at speeds up to 140 mph. Speeds well over this have already been attained on the high speed track, among them runs by an experimental Lincoln Premiere sedan.

A **VEIL OF SECRECY SURROUNDED THIS CAR** so that we weren't able even to poke under the hood. Instead, we had to content ourselves with the spec sheet, which read: supercharged, bored and stroked, special camshaft and crankshaft, modified intake and exhaust manifolds, different rear axle and transmission (possibly a transmission at the rear?), and a "different fuel system" (our guess is fuel injection). On February 26th, it turned 146.599 mph and later unofficially timed just short of 150 mph. In the distance it sounded more like a small plane than a car and went just about as fast.

TO HELP THE PROVING GROUNDS off to a flying start, three 1956 Mercury Montclair and Monterey hardtop coupes also set some new NASCAR records in the Closed Car Class B and Unlimited divisions, with speeds varying from 115.207 to 130.700 mph. Two of the records were in the Unlimited Class for 5-mile and 10-mile standing start, 10 were in the Unlimited Class for 5-mile and 10-mile standing start and 5-mile to 200-mile flying start, and 8 were in Class B for flying start 5 to 200 miles.

IT JUST SO HAPPENED that the Class B and Unlimited Class records set by Mercury in the Closed Car Class were the same, that the Class B and Unlimited Class records set by Ford were the same, that 18 records were set by Ford while 2 more were set by Mercury, and that Ford set their records in the Open Car Class while Mercury set theirs in the Closed Car Class. Just so happened, that is.



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