

Tech Tip: Check Those Cross-members!!

by Frank Philippi

It's well known that Studebaker's frames in the 1950s were lighter than they should have been. Apart from the flexing evident on certain models, especially 1953 Hardtops, another problem that cropped up was tearing, cracking, whatever you want to call it, where the upper inner control arm mounts to the front cross-member. Studebaker eventually recognized this as a problem and later issued a service bulletin (#358) that describes a field repair, essentially a reinforcing plate to be welded in to the cross-member where the upper control arm is bolted on. Why do I bring this up? Take a look at the following pictures. This is the cross-member on my '56 President and was recently discovered in the process of having other work done. A scary sight, eh? Especially considering I've recently driven this car at 70 mph. While the service bulletin says this is only a problem on high mileage and severe service vehicles, this President is a 65,000 mile car that spent its entire life in the Shenandoah Valley, not on back roads in Mexico. So do yourself a favor—take a close look at that area of the cross-member and look for any signs of cracking. The life you save may be your own!

