

Primer on 1957 thru 1962 RPO 684 and 687 Brake Options

Dave Gray, Carlisle, PA

This article is meant to highlight some of the parts used in these two RPO's as well as some of the differences that occurred in the six year period from 57 thru 62.

Although the Big Brake option was officially offered in 1957, some of the 684 parts were tested and used by Zora Duntov and Chevrolet engineers on 1956 models at Sebring and other race venues up until the time that they were available on the 1957 Corvettes.

Of the (51) 1957 Corvettes built with the 684 option, it is believed that all had the wide 5.5 inch wheels, due to the fit interference with the early finned drums. The early finned drum would not clear the standard 5 inch wheel. It is also probable that almost all of the cars were RPO 579E Cold Air box equipped cars.

The brake backing plates had an eccentric upper adjustment that would allow the shoes to be centered inside the drum after the initial adjustment. This would ensure complete contact between the shoes and the drum surface. The fine air intake screen on the rear of the backing plates tended to plug up with dirt and rubber, so the screen was replaced with a coarser screen in 1959. The backing plates were equipped with eight metal covers from the factory and these covers were to be removed and replaced with the air scoops for competition. The scoops were attached with the same hardware that was used to hold the factory covers. The four air scoops were shipped from the factory in the trunk of the car and were contained in a burlap bag with installation instructions.

RPO 684

was offered from 1957 thru 1959

and consisted of the following items:

- Front shoes bonded 2.5" wide Cerametalix
- Rear shoes bonded 2" wide Cerametalix
- Heavier front sway bar
- Heavy duty shocks
- Modified shock mounts
- Firmer 5 leaf rear springs
- Fast steering adapter
- Longer rebound straps

Air ducting from the front to the rear of the car in 57-58 was used to provide air to the rear scoops. This air was routed through the tubing into the rocker panels and fed into the rear brake scoops. The rear metal brake scoops were redesigned for 1959 to clear the added traction bars. Front air intake scoops, sometimes referred to as "Elephant ears" were used from 57 thru 62. These were made from a heavy canvas like material. These were made in several colors and thicknesses throughout the six year period.

RPO 687

was offered from 1960 thru 1962

and consisted of the following items:

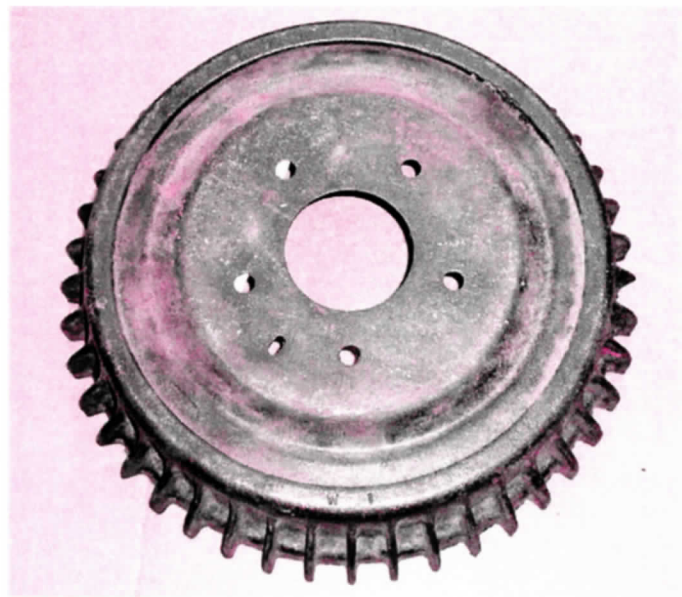
- Riveted metallic linings replaced the Cerametalix bonded lining.
- Cooling fans were added inside the drums for additional cooling.
- Rear lining was changed to 1 3/4" from the 2" shoes previously used.
- Front lining width remained 2".

With the 13/16" front sway bar and the addition of the rear sway bar in 1960, the heavy springs and shocks were not used. The RPO cars now rode more like a standard corvette.

In 1962 heavier shocks, with standard shock mounts were used. Bonded lining was again used with segmented brake shoes. The 1959 thru 1962 Corvettes used the wider steel mesh air intake on the backing plates.



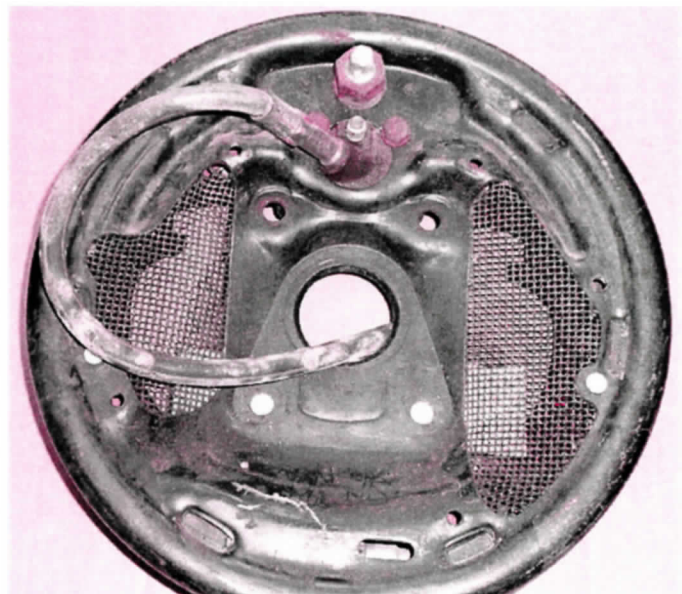
Cooling Fan for 60 to 62 RPO 687



Finned Brake Drum with Revised Shorter Cooling Fins



Front Air Intake Duct from RPO 687



Backing Plate Showing Later Coarse Screen and Centering Adjuster on the Top

Late 1958 thru 1962 used a set of fiberglass rectangular air intake ducts, mounted on both sides of the radiator to direct air to the front air intake scoops.

It is very difficult to determine the exact changeover dates of some of these parts. Due to the fact that much was learned by racing, some of the changes were implemented in the middle of model years and some cars have been seen with mixed parts.

Since these cars were built to be raced, many times parts were changed, broken or modified to suit their needs; many different configurations can be seen. If you have any questions/comments/corrections, please e-mail me at Gray63@comcast.net.