



Thunderbird news

NOVEMBER 2010 VOLUME 12, #11

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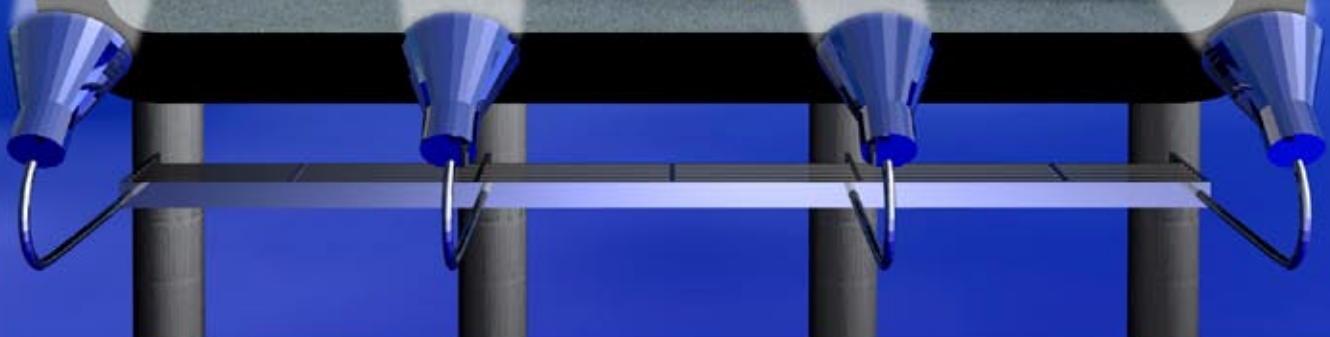
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See more on page 7



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Thunderbird
news

EDITOR'S REPORT



MORE NEWS ABOUT THE MILLE MIGLIA

As of today, I have no sponsor for the Mille Miglia. If there is not a change in the sponsorship I won't be going to the race

FLORIDA VINTAGE CAR RALLY

There will be a vintage car rally on March 26th Rally will have a cocktail party on the 25th at the Sofitel Hotel, will depart from the Hotel on the 26th early in the morning and will finish with another cocktail at 6.00 pm approximately
More information will follow

MEMBERSHIP

It is time again, please send your check for \$35.00 for the 2011 year, don't forget to fill all the registration

See you next month

Felipe Cos

CTCI DRIVE

Have you joined the CTCI yet?

We need to have all the members of our club enrolled in the CTCI. Remember that we are a CTCI branch. Please fill out the application and mail it directly.

What about driving our cars to Virginia Convention in June, 2011?

Anyone interested?

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS FOR NOVEMBER

LACRAMIDARA ORLANIS 19th
GABRIEL BALDOMERO 20th
GABRIEL BECERRA 25th

If your name is missing, it is because you did not give it to us. Please send it now so we can congratulate you.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Our next monthly meeting will be on **November 10th at my home [4000 Monserrate St. Coral Gables at 7.00 p.m.**
Please call her for reservation 786 554-5200 Felipe Cos
Cost is \$13.00 p/p/ for the dinner.

CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD CLUB OF SOUTH FLORIDA CTCI CHAPTER #114 OCTOBER 2010 VOLUME 12 No.10

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Past Presidents:

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This Newsletter may have some misspellings and mistakes, but it is written with my heart. I could write it without errors in Spanish, but only a handful of you would be able to read it.
Please help me to make it even better.

Felipe Cos Founder & Editor
George Bishopric - Proofing
Photos by Felipe Cos

INTERNET PAGE

Have you seen our internet page? We need to update it. Does anyone know how to do it?

If you can update it call me.

Our page is as follow: **THUNDERBIRDCLUB.US**

You may have your own individual email, mine is as follow: **FCOS@THUNDERBIRDCLUB.US** If you want your own just send a note to me. Please follow the previous format in doing so. It is free, no charge. This is another advantage of your club. Any ideas for the page?

This page doesn't cost the club a penny for yearly subscriptions, I'm doing it through my business company web.

Please call **Felipe** at (305) 661-5170

THUNDERBIRD INFORMATION SUPER HIGHWAY:

Take note that we have changed our web page name, it is now **WWW.THUNDERBIRDCLUB.US** to get there don't look at it with a search engine, look at it only with www.Thunderbirdclub.us

Our Club's web page: _____ www.thunderbirdclub.us
 2005 Thunderbird: _____ www.fordautomobiles.com
 Ford racing: _____ www.fordacing.com
 Speedvision: _____ www.speedvision.com
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NUMBERS TO KEEP

The following are contact numbers and e-mail address you need to have on file:

- AAAC Ft Lauderdale region-President Ted Plush 954-491-5765
- VMCCA Sun Coast Chapter. President David Bobbitt 305- 661-1340 bobbitt@comcast.net
- Model A Club: Tom Zannis 305-281-9192
- Car show promoter: Russ Gagliano 954-560-5412 merkivr@msn.com
- AAAC Miami Region President Greg Paiewonsky 305-724-7639
- Car show promoter: Gerry Perez. 786 344-4228 email gerrycarshow@bellsouth.com
- Magig Mustang Club, Frank Alonso 305 775-3307, fadatec@aol.com
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Second Friday, Hollywood Beach Boardwalk Cruise Night 7 to 10 PM 954 779-1420

Every Friday from 4:00 to 7:00 pm at 8th St. & 30th Ave in front of Home Depot in Miami.

Every Sunday Crabby Jack's

Every Friday night a Cruise night reunion at Towers Shop in Davie (595 & University) This is one of the biggest cruise nights in South Florida. (from 5:00 pm to 10:00)

First Saturday of every month, BETSY (old Fuddruckers) from 6:00 pm to 10:00

First Saturday steak & Shake in Sawgrass Mills mall 6:00 to 9:30

Saturday of every month Steak-N-Shake, Sample Rd. and U.S. 1 behind Wal Mart. Coconut Creek. 8:00 to 12:00.

Second Saturday of every month the Dania Beach Cruise Night. Free admission 6:00 to 10:00 for information 954 924-3626

Second Saturday Car meet at Shorty's 2401 N.W. 87th Ave Jack 305 409-2614

Second Saturday from 5:00 to 9:00 in Homestead at Krome Ave

Third Saturday Denny's Restaurant Bird Rd, between 86th & 87th Ave

Third Saturday Roadhouse Restaurant Sunset Dr. & S.W. 117th Ave

Every Saturday a car show from 6.00 to 11.00 pm at K-Mart in 49th and 14th Ave Hialeah. Only cars 20 yrs or older, No charge

First Sunday of every month: Downtown Hollywood car show, 10:00 to 3:00. Dave 954 926-3377

Every Sunday at Crabby Jacks, 7001 Federal Hwy, 2 miles North of Yamato, Boca Raton. 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Also night cruise at Coral Way & 97th Ave, 5:30 to 8:00 305 553-2228

Third and fifth Saturday of the month from 3:00 to 7:30 at Wall's Ice Cream in 8075 S.W. 67th Ave

Third Saturday of the month, cruise-in at Miami Springs Circle 7:00 to 10:00 P.M.

Third Saturday; at Gotrocks Restaurant, Hillsborough and Wine Rd. in Coconut Creek from 6 to 9


Third Saturday at Dairy Queen Tamarac Square North of McNab Rd. 6:00 to 9:00

Third Saturday OC's Raw at 18415 S. Dixie Hwy 6:00 to 10:00

Also Miami Wings. 19145 S. Dixie Hwy. 5 to 10 Info. Gerry 305 786-344-4228

Second Tuesday at World Ford 15551 South Dixie Hwy 7:00 to 10:00 pm Ford cars only Francisco Mederos 786 229-7361

Third Saturday at the Cove in 10730 NW 25th St Miami. Gerry 786-344-4228



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FUTURE EVENTS

DEC 11TH HOLIDAY PARTY AT DAISY'S HOME 305-613-6775

JAN. 24TH MEET AT FELIPES HOME FOR PREPARATION OF CAR SHOW

JAN 30TH OUR TROPICAL PARK CAR SHOW

FEB. 12-19, 2011 HEMMINGS MOTOR NEWS CRUISE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

MARCH 30TH VINTAGE CAR RALLY

JUNE 15-19TH 2011 CTCI REGIONAL CONVENTION RICHMOND VIRGINIA

AUGUST 24-28TH 2011 CTCI REGIONAL CONVENTION OMAHA NEBRASKA

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Thunderbird
NEWS

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NOVEMBER 2010 VOLUME 12, #11

NEW CAR NEWS 1963 Ford Thunderbird "Italian" Concept Car

I BET YOU THAT IF FORD SELL THIS CAR AS A 2011 MODEL THEY WILL SELL THOUSANDS.

IT IS THE 1963 THUNDERBIRD CONCEPT CAR THAT IS IN EXHIBITION IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN LAS VEGAS.

LOOK THAT THE LOWER PART OF THE CAR IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE ONE MANUFACTURED IN 1963, THE ROOF IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

I HOPE THEY COULD SELL IT AS IT IS SHOWN IN THE PHOTOS



1963 Ford Thunderbird "Italian" Concept Car
own as part of Ford's Custom Caravan and exhibited at the 1964 New York World's Fair. The Italian was featured in Ford's 1962-63 "Custom Car Caravan" and appeared in Autoramas throughout the United States such as Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami and more. The Italian was featured in 14+ magazines in 1963 and 1964 such as "Motor Trend", "Hot Rod", "Car Life", "Motorcade", "Speed and Custom" and others. The Italian also appeared in the 1964 New York World's Fair's "Cavalcade of Custom Cars" and was prominently featured in a special World's Fair publication. After appearing in the World's Fair, records from Ford's Jacques Passino's files indicate the Italian was destined for a fate typical of most Ford concept cars -- The crusher. However, in September 1964, the Italian was sold or presented to actor Dale Robertson of TV's "Tales of Wells Fargo", "Wagon Train" and other shows. Around 1986, noted Ford collector Don Chambers purchased the car with the idea of adding it to the auto museum he planned for his retirement. Thunderbird restorer Tom Maruska purchased it in January 2006 and completely restored the Italian to factory and documented original specifications. Recently "Legendary Ford" magazine featured the Italian over five issues culminating with the Italian appearing on the cover of the November/December 2007 issue.

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**Thunderbird
NEWS**

Thors' Triumph

On Sunday 26 September Bridget (Hagood) and Frank (Jones, correction to club roster) Took Thor, their 1957 Peacock Blue Thunderbird, to the Pompano CITI Centre Classic Car Show in Pompano Beach. It was a great show with a lot of fantastic rides on display. None of the entries arrived on trailers so they were true boulevard cruisers. The weather was hot but otherwise perfect. Great sounds were provided by Crusin South Florida and a few participants braved the heat to cut a rug, or pavement at the court yard venue. Frank and Bridget met another South Florida Thunderbird member who made sure we were in the flock.

Russ Gagliano was the host and presided over the awards ceremony. First award presented was the theme car award which was garnered by Thor. During the presentation of Best Twenty Five Cars Thor collected another trophy.

So the end of the week was capped with a great show and meeting a lot of fellow Gear Heads. Frank and Bridget look forward to attending the next South Florida Thunderbird Club meeting and getting to know all of our fellow members.



FRANK & BRIDGET HAGOOD



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REVIEWS:

First Drive: 2011 Ford F150 (V-8s)

September 27, 2010

By Don Sherman

When pump prices soar and the economy dives, full-sized pickup truck sales plummet. With jobs and mortgages in jeopardy, who needs an expensive gas guzzler's fat monthly payments? This calamity and the bankruptcy experienced by two out of Detroit's (formerly) Big Three would normally send truck engineers straight to early retirement. Ford, however, never got that memo. A thorough overall for the 2011 F-150 pickups kept right on truckin'. In the teeth of troubled times, the class leader kept its head high and prospects bright for the post apocalypse.

So, while Chrysler and GM are barely back on their 4x4 feet and Nissan and Toyota are still decoding their big-pickup game plan, Ford is rolling out the most new the F-150 has ever seen in its 62-year history: 4 engines, one transmission, significant chassis upgrades, and an instrument cluster that bares this truck's soul. To show serious intent, the F-150s even have new ignition keys that combine lock and remote-control functions in one convenient unit.

We'll focus on the V-8 half of the story in this report because tradition dies hard and most customers will gravitate towards the satisfying thump and steady pull only eight cylinders can deliver. (See an accompanying F-150 Web Driven for V-6 engine details.)

The smart part of Ford's comprehensive F-150 powertrain upgrade is that the Mustang shares two out of the four engines and a version of the new 6-speed automatic transmission.

The workhorse engine which will likely power more F-150s than its three teammates put together is a 5.0-liter V-8 that provides an astute balance of initial cost, power, torque, and fuel efficiency. (Regrettably, Ford has not yet divulged EPA ratings, so the most we can currently report about mileage is 'up to 20-percent better' than the retired 4.6-liter V-8 provided. Plan on roughly 19 mpg combined.)

The 5.0 liter not only brings an illustrious past Mustang reputation to the party, it also bristles with forward-looking technology: aluminum block and head construction, a dual-overhead-cam valvetrain with variable intake and exhaust valve timing, and four valves per cylinder. The forged-steel crankshaft is well supported by the deep-skirt block, 6-bolt main-bearing caps, and a deep-sump oil pan. The entire top of the engine, including the tuned-length single-mode intake manifold and the cylinder head covers, is injection-molded, nylon-reinforced plastic to save weight and cost. A water-to-oil heat exchanger, an eight-quart lubrication capacity, and piston cooling jets are provided for longevity. Oil change intervals are an [impressive](#) 10,000 miles in normal service.

The 5.0-liter's 10.5:1 compression ratio and its valve timing differ from the Mustang to plump up the low end of the [torque](#) curve. Peak outputs are 380 lb-ft of torque at 4250 rpm and a husky 360 hp at 5550 rpm. That merits a maximum tow rating of 10,000 pounds.

Test drives near Fort Worth, Texas, demonstrated this V-8s mettle. It had no difficulty trumping the 4.8-liter base V-8 fitted to Chevy and GMC pickups provided for reference. Throttle response is enthusiastic and the run up to 6000 rpm is accompanied by the throaty growl that becomes hard edged but never strident as the revs climb. While the Mustang version will rev to 7500 rpm, the truck 5.0-liter is all done by 6000 rpm. Thanks to the 6-speed multi-mode automatic, this engine is capable of [powerful towing](#), quiet commuting, and 20+ highway mpg.

The Big Kahuna in the F-150 lineup is a 6.2-liter [V-8](#) intended for mega towing assignments. The extra piston displacement moves the torque curve over the 400 hurdle with 434 lb-ft at 4500 rpm and the maximum tow rating to a class-leading 11,300 pounds.

While the 6.2 is a member in good standing of Ford's modular V-8 family, it's the least sophisticated engine offered in the F-150. The deep-skirt block is cast iron and the valvetrain is an SOHC configuration with intake and exhaust timing variable but locked in synch. There are but two valves per cylinder; twin spark plugs per hole help eliminate misfiring. Fuel economy in



the mid- to high-teens is within reach with low twenties possible on the highway. Already in service powering the remarkable F-150 SVT Raptor, this engine will surely be a favorite for heavy haulers and owners who never hesitate to move any house requiring a new address. While the 6.2 doesn't feel nearly as eager as the 5.0, it does show mid-range strength and a stirring howl on the way to its 5500 rpm power peak where it delivers a class-leading 411 horsepower.

The unsung hero behind these engines is a new 6-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission fitted to each and every 2011 F-150. (Our sincere condolences to stick shift fans.) Labeled 6R80, this box offers a 6.0:1 ratio spread between first and sixth, two overdrive ratios, and four distinct operating modes: regular automatic operation, a tow-haul program, driver-controlled manual shifting, or what Ford calls Progressive Range Select. An M slot in the shift gate offers command over upshifts with each gear held until a +/- switch on the lever is tapped. Toggling that switch with the lever in D allows blocking out upper gear ratios to avoid unwanted automatic shifts while towing heavy loads on aggressive grades. When this choice is activated, the current gear and available gears are displayed at the right side of an LCD window built into the central instrument cluster. Shifts are well orchestrated and free of shock and vibration.

While other brands offer comparable automatics, the F-150 is the only full-sized pickup with six speeds standard. Two tactical errors: only a few of the F-150 tachometers are marked with a redline and trucks equipped with column shifts have the all-important +/- switch hidden behind the steering wheel rim.

Damper calibrations new for 2011 accommodate changes in powertrain mass. While all-around ride quality is good, the F-150s still don't top [Ram](#) pickups equipped with well located coil-sprung rear axles. Also, there's some quiver in the Fords' chassis over severely racked pavement. Brake calibrations have been adjusted to key response more to pedal pressure versus pedal travel.

One of the nicest upgrades this year is the addition of a 4.2-inch LCD screen positioned between the speedometer and the tachometer. While a similar display in the Ram may have prompted this move, Ford used the opportunity to do an excellent job of providing more information than most drivers will ever need. A square switch on the steering wheel is programmed to intuitively cruise through six menus. In gauge mode, the permanent transmission temperature dial is supplemented by a digital readout in degrees F. The trip computer provides time, mileage, and fuel consumption information for two distinct journeys. The [fuel economy](#) choice gives you detailed histories of consumption and instantaneous mpg info. The settings option allows you to disable such irritating features as automatic door locking. In information, you can read the oil life remaining, various warning messages, and the number of hours the engine has been running. The truck applications menu provides watch over differential and transfer case settings, roll and pitch angles, and electric trailer brake programming. The only down side is that the alphanumeric display for time, compass heading, and outside temperature located at the top of the center-dash stack now cries out for an upgrade.

A slew of new engines and supporting improvements are just what Ford needs to flush reluctant full-sized pickup truck owners out of hiding. While the competition dithers, the F-150 offers the tantalizing prospect of gains in both performance and fuel economy. That combo is sure to stretch [Ford's](#) lead over arch-rival Chevy and increase the F-150's market share, now at 39-percent and rising. So saddle up truck fans and hitch your hauler to the US economy. We need to yank business out of the ditch and back into the productivity lane.



T-bird never intended to be hi-perf car

I found the article on 1957 Thunderbirds in the Aug. 5, 2010 issue of *Old Cars Weekly* to be very interesting. I own two Birds, a 1957 that I purchased as a Christmas present for my wife in 1973 and a '56 I obtained from the original owner in 1985.

The '57 is a very nice Autumn Gold (yellow) with a black interior, equipped with everything except air conditioning. I paid the princely sum of \$3,100 for the car when I purchased it in November 1973. The car is in basically unrestored, well-maintained condition.

My 1956 is a non-porthole top car that was purchased new for the original owner, a family friend, as a present for her 21st birthday.

The '56 is not an original car. The original owner was an attractive blond who was an aspiring model/dancer in her youth (men followed her around like dogs in heat). One of the many husbands she had was a fellow named Paul Schiefer, who was very well known in the performance-car industry until his death in the late 1960s. Paul could not leave things alone, so he had the 'Bird re-powered with a special '68 Ford 302 and a C-4 transmission. He then added a Paxton blower and painted the car burgundy.

Paul raced the car on the drag strips of Southern California and while doing so, he turned a deaf ear to his wife's pleas to get her "tennis car" back. As Paul's health started to fail, he had the Paxton blower removed, detuned the engine, had the car painted Colonial White and gave it back to his wife. I purchased the car when it became a problem for Patty to use the car as daily transportation.

Some of the comments I found to be interesting in the article(s) about the T-birds was the mention of high performance in regards to Thunderbirds. T-birds were generally never intended to be high-performance cars; I don't believe that Ford ever set out to compete with the Corvettes or any other sports car of the period. The T-bird was designed to be a "personal luxury car" from the beginning. Sports/performance cars generally do not have power windows/seats, automatic transmissions, etc.

Many years ago, I became acquainted with Alex Tremulis. Alex started his design career with Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg in 1933 at the tender age of 19

years old. One of Alex's ideas was the placement of the external exhaust pipes on supercharged ACD cars. For this, he became known as "The Plumber" within the auto design world. Alex worked for many automobile manufacturers: Austin/Bantam, General Motors, Chrysler, Tucker and Ford Motor Co., to name just a few. Alex died in 1991 after living in Ventura, Calif., for many years.

From time to time, Alex would attend the meetings held by the Early Ford V-8 and/or Thunderbird clubs near Ventura. On several occasions, he would talk about his involvement with the redesign of the T-Birds while he was with Ford's design department. Alex told us many times that, prior to the '55 T-Bird being released for general production and sale, the engineering department found that the car had a very serious design flaw. At what he described as "curb weight," the car had 1,300 lbs. on the rear wheels, but in excess of 105 mph, the rear weight changed to 1,500 lbs. of lift. Alex claimed that a couple of cars flipped end-over-end during testing while another car flipped at a Daytona speed trial.

Engineering wanted to delay the sale of cars until the problem could be rectified. The "front office" sent down a directive to release the cars for sale as the weight distribution problem would be dealt with during production. The sales people at Ford announced late in the production of the '55's that, due to public concern about a lack of storage in the trunk, the spare tire was being relocated to an external "continental" mounting. According to Alex, the whole purpose of the spare was to counter-balance the car and provide more weight on the rear.

Alex and his team of designers redesigned the T-birds, which resulted in the longer trunk and the redesign of the "fins." (Alex would actually come unglued when the "fins" were referred to as such.) The redesign was really one of the first uses of an "air dam;" the design kept air on the trunk and, along with the slight "bustle" (outward/inward curvature of the trunk), actually increased downward pressure on the rear wheels.

According to Alex, Ford had no intention of stopping the production of the small 'Birds. The car was very profitable; however, Ford had received many requests for the same car only with a rear seat. The '58 two-seater was born

and promptly outsold all of the previous three years of sales. The writing was on the wall, and production of the 1957-'58 "small 'Birds" was stopped in late '57.

Through the years, I have found that the vast majority of the "Tri-five" T-birds were purchased by or for women. Generally speaking, I think men found them to be very difficult to enter and uncomfortable once you did get in the car. My mother-in-law purchased a new pink '57 T-bird, which I drove on many occasions. I very quickly found that the best way to access a small T-bird was to "think like a woman," i.e., sit down on the seat while keeping your knees together like you are wearing a mini-skirt, then pivot around onto the seat while slightly bending your legs at the knees.

We purchased the car in 1964 when my mother-in-law purchased a new Buick Rivera (she wanted a back seat for her grand kids to ride in). Within a few short months, we found the car to be very poor for hauling groceries and kids, so we sold the 'Bird. The man I sold the car to in Santa Barbara still has it.

William Steed, Ventura, Calif.

Stop the music at car shows

I agree with Mike Nicoletta's letter about music at car shows. I am 46 years old and always found the music played at car shows annoying to various degrees.

There is nothing worse, though, than loud '50s music and a DJ attempting to entertain the crowd. I would rather look in silence and have the opportunity to actually converse with someone without the distraction of background music. My wife and son both echo my feelings to the point that they have quit going to local car shows, and I attend far fewer than I did in my younger years.

Before saying it's an age issue, my dad, who was a teen in mid to late 1950s, also disliked the music so much that he quit attending shows several years before his death. Perhaps it's not so much the musical content, but the volume and the accompaniment of obnoxious DJ's that is the problem. Maybe it's a combination. Younger people definitely don't like the content and older people definitely don't like the volume. Either way, I believe shows would make for a much more enjoyable experience without background music or a DJ.

Joe Parton, Carrier Mills, Ill.

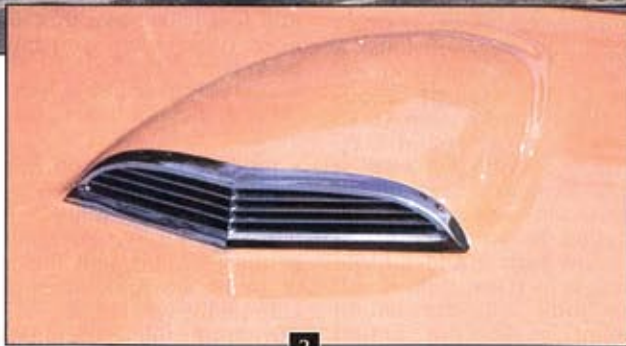


Ford's most fabulous T-Bird

by Bob Stevens



The legendary F 'Bird of 1957... flying high on supercharged wings



Photos by the author

1. The last year of the two-seater Thunderbird was, by most accounts, its most stylish, and its hottest in terms of performance. The '57 T-Bird adopted a mildly refined front end design. The 'Bird's grille was still of

the checkerboard variety, but its bumper was all new and the parking lamps were relocated. 2. Bright trim work accents the low-rising hood scoop. The hood scoop was needed so the hood would clear the air cleaner.

Many consider it the best looking Thunderbird of all-time; others point to its exhilarating performance; and still others are enchanted with its extraordinary collectibility. But they all agree on one thing: The supercharged 1957 F 'Bird is one of the most memorable models produced in Ford's illustrious 94-year history. It's also the most valuable, except for a few selected Shelby Mustang models and even fewer purebred race cars.

It was the final year for Ford's first-generation Thunderbird, the two-seater personal sporty car that took the industry by storm in 1955 when it answered the challenge of the Corvette fielded by arch-rival Chevrolet two years earlier. But the Thunderbird offered much more than the Corvette, including a

healthy list of power accessories, a boulevard ride, comfort and convenience options galore, and a full palette of nifty fifties colors, including fashionable turquoise, red, bright blue, and even pink. With all this going for it, plus handsome sports car looks, the 1957 Thunderbird sold quite well, with its 21,380 sales setting a model-year record for the three-year-old sportster.

The first-year '55 T-Bird had also sold well, racking up 16,155 units, and the '56 model was almost as strong, producing 15,631 sales. But the final-year '57 edition topped them both, and measurably, but it should be noted that the '57 model year was longer than most, as the all-new four-seater '58 version took a little longer to get ready than anticipated.

The new larger T-Bird, while disappointing the purists who preferred the sportier two-place version, was a smashing suc-





3

3. Close-up shows the McCulloch supercharger that boosts horsepower to 300 at 4,800 rpm. It worked in tandem with a single Holley four-barrel carburetor, a special unit.

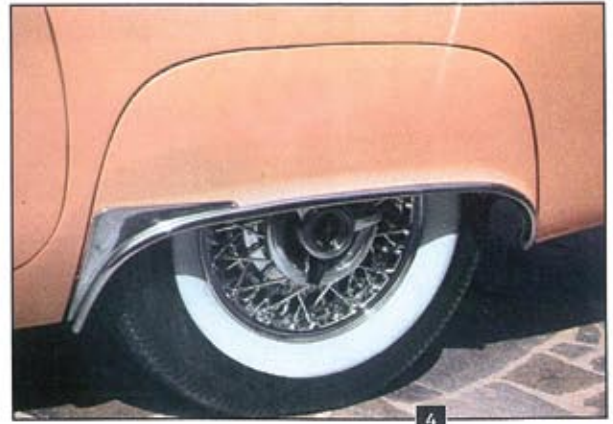
4. Skirts, called "rear fender shields" by

Ford, were a nice complement to the body's basic sculpture.

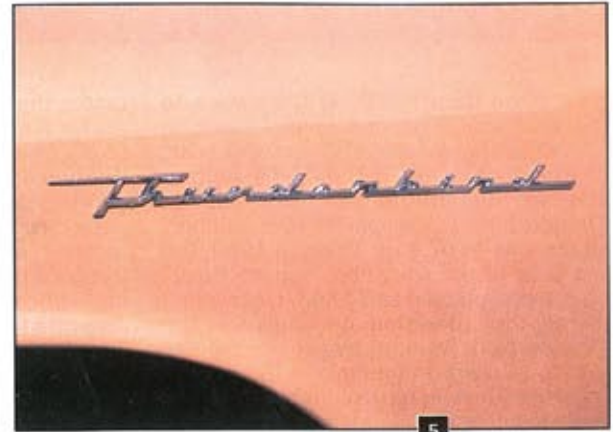
5. Thunderbird script dresses up the front fenders. In its final year as a two-seater, the Thunderbird's production hit 21,380, by far its

best for the three-year run.

6. From the rear, the restyled '57 Thunderbird grew sharply canted fins, which made it identifiable at great distances. The fins were quite large for such a small car.



4



5

6





7. The removable hardtop had a pair of port-hole windows, one to each side. It did little for visibility, but it certainly was appreciated from a styling standpoint.

8. Dual exhaust was featured, with pipes exiting through the bumper ends, one per side. The fins were quite dramatic, even for 1957, the height of the fin fad.

9. Doors were elegantly trimmed and featured a rather stylish armrest. At the lower front of the panel is the power window control, with one button for each side window.

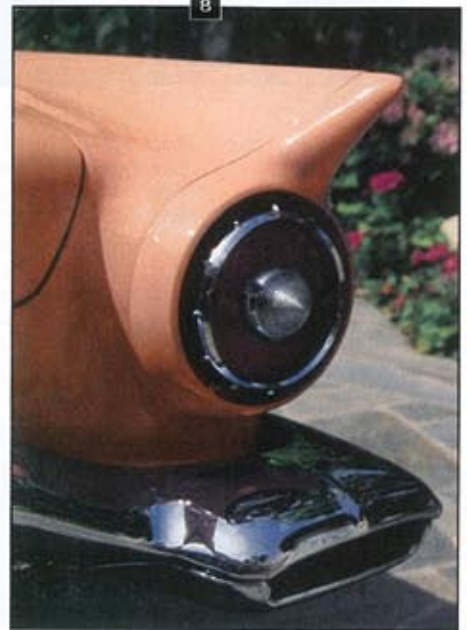
cess, more than justifying the switch to the four-seater design. Sales rose to 37,892 in the shortened '58 model year, nearly double the '57 model's output, and in the full-length '59 season, Thunderbird sales soared even higher, all the way to 67,456. Then, in 1960, the last year of the so-called "square Bird," production peaked at 92,843, clearly justifying the decision to convert the Thunderbird from a two-seater sporty car to a larger four-place boulevard cruiser with even more comfort and convenience features, and an even longer list of options.

But it's the original concept that still excites the senses more than any other. Some later model Thunderbirds may even be worth more on today's collector market, but the two-seaters are the ones to covet for those who appreciate sporty styling, performance, and a smaller, more nimble package. Besides, Ford deserved the accolades, and all the profit it could muster, just for being bold and innovative enough to field a two-place automobile with limited market application, and doing it successfully. Overall, first-generation Thunderbird production amounted to 53,166 for all three model years. It took the Corvette nine years to

match that performance.

The Thunderbird was conceived exclusively as a two-seater, inspired by Ford Division's top exec, Lewis D. Crusoe. Shortly after taking control of the company bearing his name, Henry Ford II began reorganizing and redirecting the troubled concern, which his grandfather had allowed to drift into disarray. Assuming the reins on Sept. 21, 1945, "Hank the deuce" brought in a whole new cast of characters and sprinkled them throughout the company, an infusion of badly needed fresh blood. Lewis D. Crusoe, a fast-rising executive stolen from General Motors, was named general manager of the Ford Division in 1949. He'd launched his automotive career in 1913 as a shop clerk for Fisher Body.

Crusoe enjoyed attending new car shows and keeping a finger on the pulse of the fast-changing new car market. Trends in automotive design and concept intrigued him, and he found himself fascinated by the wave of two-seater design executions modeled at the Paris Auto Salons of the early '50s, both in production and prototype form. Such a car would do much to improve the public image of Ford, he reasoned, while offering a truly different concept in motoring



fashions to a car-happy nation that was captivated by the latest in innovation. And there was also the business side of things ... he wanted desperately to unseat number one Chevrolet, and an exciting two-seater open car would generate considerable publicity, draw attention to the regular Ford line, and deliver a number of conquest sales from non-Ford owners who couldn't find such a model in their favorite make's lineup. He was right on all counts!

Ford personnel closely studied and evaluated a number of foreign two-seaters, identifying the good and bad in each model, especially how various features appealed to the American market. Meanwhile, General Motors, Crusoe's old employer and now number one competitor, was rumored to be working on a two-place sports car with a fiberglass body. Other competitive efforts underway, at least at the conceptual or drawing board stage, included Hudson's Italia, Kaiser's Darrin and Nash's Healey, all two-seater sports cars. The time for Ford was fast approaching, especially once GM introduced its Corvette in mid-'53.

Early renderings by George W. Walker, an independent stylist who had been



1957 Ford Thunderbird Paint Colors



Flame Red V



Gunmetal Gray N/H



Starmist Blue F



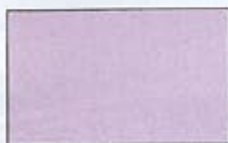
Colonial White E



Thunderbird Bronze Q



Willow Green J



Dusk Rose X



Azure Blue (midyear) L



Torch Red (midyear) R



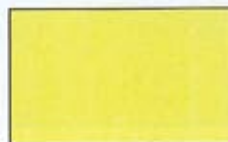
Inca Gold Y



Coral Sand Z



Raven Black A



Sun Gold (midyear) G



Seaspray Green
(midyear) N

instrumental in the execution of the all-new 1949 Ford, were reviewed closely. But Crusoe wanted a design that bore a close family resemblance to the full-size Ford. In fact, he wanted to use many body components from the regular models, and drivetrains that were standard-size Ford from the engine on back. Another designer, Damon Woods, who had his own shop, also contributed to the T-Bird's development, as did Bob Maguire, head of the Ford design team. But it was George Walker who would be credited with the bulk of the design work on the Thunderbird. He would become a permanent member of the Ford executive family in May of 1955, when he was appointed vice president of design for the Dearborn-based corporation.

The cleanly and crisply styled Thunderbird was a dream car come true. Even some design tricks necessitated by basic engineering specs proved aesthetically rewarding. For instance, the V-8 mill was a bit bulky for the compact engine bay, so a hood scoop was needed to provide ample clearance. The scoop also proved a popular design feature with customers. Form does, indeed, follow function.

Since it adopted many design features and components off the regular Ford parts shelf, the Thunderbird was not nearly as expensive to develop as other similar models. Aiding in this regard was the product planning team created by Crusoe shortly after he joined Ford. The new team expedited the entire product development process, from the initial design to the clay models to the finished product.

The Thunderbird generated more excitement within the hallowed halls of Ford's executive offices than any car developed by Ford before or since, according to some accounts. Executives

were frequently stealing peeks at the new model, and even Henry Ford II and his two brothers, Benson and William, were regular visitors to the development labs and styling studios. Nothing like a two-passenger sporty car to quicken the heartbeat and get the blood flowing!

The new Thunderbird was an unqualified success. Given the limited market appeal of a two-seater sporty car, its impact was sudden and dramatic. By its third season, it had garnered a reputation unequalled by anything else on the market, foreign or domestic. America was in love with its little T-Bird. This love affair would be chronicled in newspapers and magazines, magnified on the silver screen and TV tube, and immortalized in song. Who could dislike the little Thunderbird with its provocative styling and sporty nature? Other than the competition, that is!

In its final year as a two-seater, the Thunderbird had its greatest hour as an automobile. The initial design was refined immensely, assuming proportions and details akin to the full-sized Fairlane of 1957, from its massive bumpers and hooded front fenders to its canted rear fender fins and large oval taillights. It was, as Crusoe had insisted from the beginning, recognizable as a Ford product at a distance. The resemblance to the full-sized Ford was remarkable, especially given the vast differences in size and specs for the two models.

The '57 Thunderbird was also bigger and heavier than the earlier versions, discounting the continental kit plastered onto the '56 model. It grew from 3,038 pounds to 3,145 pounds from 1956 to '57, and was an inch and a half wider. In length, it grew to 181.4 inches over the 175.3-inch overall length of the '55 edition (the '56 model, with its continental spare tire kit tacked onto the rear end,

measured 185.2 inches). Switching from 15-inch wheels and tires to 14-inchers, lowered the beast a bit. So it was, truly, in keeping with the spirit of the times ... "longer, lower and wider."

Ford's engine lineup for its 1957 Thunderbird started with the four-barrel, 212-hp 292-cid V-8, but it was available only with a manual three-speed with floorshift. If the optional Ford-O-Matic transmission was ordered, or the manual with overdrive, the buyer automatically moved up to the 312-cid V-8 rated at 245 hp with a single four-barrel carb. Then came two versions of a dual-quad 312 Thunderbird Special V-8 that offered 270 hp in standard trim or 285 hp in racing trim. But, there was still one final step up the performance ladder for T-Bird buyers in 1957, and it answered the question, when is one carburetor better than two?

When it's supercharged, of course!

Holley had acquired rights to Lucas fuel injection by 1957, and some Ford observers expected the really hot iron from Ford that year to sport fuel injection, countering the promotional efforts of Ford's top rival, Chevrolet. Chevy's new Rochester fuel injection system and its fabled one horsepower per cubic inch of displacement were drawing a lot of attention. Ford elected, however, to go with supercharging. By strapping a McCulloch supercharger on its 312 V-8 with single four-barrel carb, the horsepower scooted to 300 at 4,800 rpm.

The supercharged "F" Bird — so named because the engine code F was used on all supercharged '57 Thunderbird engines — is about the rarest 'Bird of all, as only some 215 were made, including 15 for NASCAR homologation. (The famous "E" Bird is the dual-quad engine rated at 270 or 285 hp.)

The Thunderbird was just the right





10

10. The porthole is even more attractive from the interior.

11. Flanking the 140-mph speedometer are a fuel gauge and 5,000-rpm tachometer to the left, and a temperature gauge and clock on the right. Turn signal indicators were at the top of the instrument housing, while at the bottom were the red warning lights for oil pressure (left) and generator.

kind of car for the enthusiasts who worked for auto journals of the day. Ken Fermoye, writing in *Motor Life*, decreed: "The T-Bird is no sports car, and Ford has never made that claim. In general, the Thunderbird still falls somewhere between a true sports car and a standard passenger car."

Noting that the body, sans continental kit, was some five inches longer than in 1956, Fermoye said the new specs gave the car a lower look. He also approved of the new styling, which the T-Bird shared with the regular Ford. And as far as that continental kit went, he applauded the relocation of the spare wheel and tire inside ... "Dearborn had heard plenty about that continental mount!"

Fermoye's main criticisms of the new 'Bird were its steering, which he described as "very slow," and its performance, which he said was disappointing. The latter, which resulted from a 0-to-60 mph time of 11.5 seconds, was achieved with a single four-barrel 312 V-8 and automatic. Basically, though, the Thunderbird lived up to its billing.

That same assessment came from the noted journalist Karl Ludvigsen. In his review, published in *Sports Cars Illustrated*, Ludvigsen said that Ford's "personal car" was improved measurably for 1957. Among the refinements, he noted, were a larger trunk with inside-mounted spare, revised attachments for the removable hardtop, larger brakes, new convertible top mechanism that made operation easier, more comfortable seats, relocation of the fuel filler neck from the back to the right side, larger capacity gas tank (up from 17 to 20 gallons), new rear axle with straddle-mounted pinion, and shocks with new valving for a better ride. He also liked the presence of the five-grand tach, but disliked its awkward location.

He didn't like the car's overall handling, including the steering, which virtually requires power assist yet is still a compromise with more than four turns of



11

12. Given to his famous father, Mel Blanc, by Warner Bros. in 1989, the turquoise and white '58 Edsel Citation two-door hardtop is a "keeper" for Noel. The car recently had its red, orange and yellow "flames" removed from the front fenders.



12



Also distinguishing this particular Thunderbird is its celebrity owner, Noel Blanc, the voice of numerous Warner Bros. cartoon characters.

the wheel from lock to lock. Also, once the "car is lost, the only way out is an ejection seat." Ludvigsen did, however, like the newly arriving "Corvette Chaser" engines, the pair of dual-quad powerplants. And, he said, it was probable that Ford would hit its target of 20,000 sales for the '57 T-Bird, which the manufacturer did, and with room to spare.

In one of its "expert tests," *Speed Age* had race car driver Bob Veith, who a year earlier had finished seventh in the Indy 500 and received rookie of the year honors, test a '57 Thunderbird against a '57 Corvette and Studebaker Golden Hawk. He basically liked all three cars.

In the Thunderbird, Veith liked the increase in luggage space, the availability of two auxiliary hardtops (one with portholes and one without), the padded dash, good forward vision, comfortable seat, excellent handling, quick and positive power steering, decent acceleration, etc. He disliked the huge, passenger-car style bumpers, the lack of oil pressure and ammeter gauges, limited legroom, difficult seat adjustment, the need for an adjustable steering column, excessive brake fade, etc.

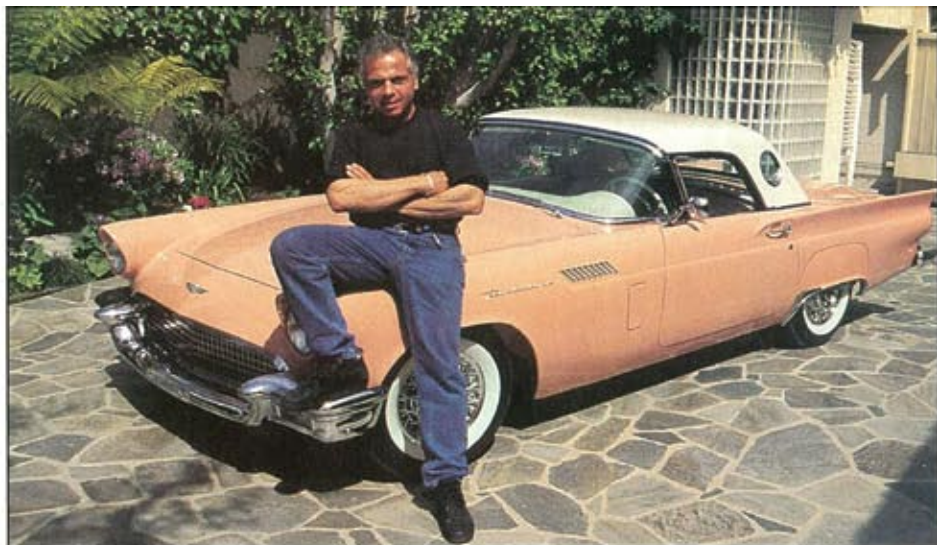
Essentially, Veith gave the T-Bird more than a passing grade. "Its soft and comfortable ride, plus its sports-car handling and good looks, are qualities that appeal to any red-blooded motorist. And, the power is always there when you need it."

The pundits weren't the only ones who liked the Thunderbird. The public adored it. One life-long admirer is Noel Blanc, the Hollywood celebrity who is the voice of such cartoon heroes as Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Elmer Fudd, Road Runner, Sylvester, and the irrepressible Bugs Bunny. Noel Blanc, who was profiled in the May '97 issue of *Cars & Parts*, has owned a number of 1955-57 Thunderbirds over the years, but the featured example is the only supercharged 'Bird he's ever owned.

The car is beautifully restored and, aside from latter model wire wheels, essentially stock. It has the porthole hardtop and loads of equipment, including power steering, power brakes, power windows, T&C radio, etc. The most impressive feature, though, is that 300-hp supercharged engine. And this one runs with authority!

When new, the featured Thunderbird retailed for about \$4,401, which was a super chunk of change back in 1957. For that same money, one could have purchased a new Ford Sunliner convertible and had enough left over to buy a Ford Custom sedan as a grocery getter for the wife. So the average new Thunderbird owner was not only an enthusiast, but an affluent one.

He still is, because the 40-year-old Thunderbirds are premium collectibles today, especially the E and F models. The



SPECIFICATIONS 1957 THUNDERBIRD

GENERAL DATA

Body style: 2-dr. convertible
 Passenger capacity: 2
 Base price: \$3,408
 Price as equipped: \$4,401
 Options: 300-hp supercharged engine, \$340; Ford-O-Matic, \$212; power steering, \$69; power brakes, \$38; whitewalls, \$34; power windows, \$70; auxiliary hardtop, n/c; Town & Country radio, \$100; heater/defroster, \$85; rear fender shields, \$45; non-stock wire wheels, n/c.

BASIC SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase: 102"
 Length: 181.4"
 Width: 72.8"
 Height: 51.8" w/soft top;
 51.6" w/hardtop
 Weight: 3,145 lbs.
 Front/rear tread: 56"
 Ground clearance: 5.3"

ENGINE

Type: OHV V-8
 Displacement: 312 cu. in.
 HP @ RPM: 300 @ 4,800
 Torque @ RPM: 336 lbs.-ft. @ 3,400
 Compression ratio: 8:1
 Bore x stroke: 3.8 x 3.4"

Induction system: 1 Holley 4-bbl. carb with McCulloch supercharger
 Ignition system: 12 volt
 Fuel: Premium leaded
 Exhaust: Dual
 Valve configuration: Overhead
 Main bearings: 5

TRANSMISSION

Type: 3-spd. manual
 Ratios:
 1st - 2.49
 2nd - 1.59
 3rd - 1.00
 Reverse - 3.15

DIFFERENTIAL

Type: Semi-floating hypoid
 Ratio: 3.89

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent A-arms w/coil springs, ball joints, shock absorbers
 Rear: 5-leaf springs, shock absorbers

FRAME

Type: Box section side rails with X-member

STEERING

Type: Worm and roller, manual
 Ratio: 23:1
 Turning circle: 36'
 Turns, lock to lock: 3.5

BRAKES

Type: 4-wheel, hydraulic, drum
 Effective swept area: 176 sq. in.

TIRES

Size: 7.50 x 14 blackwall
 Type: Bias 4-ply

CAPACITIES

Cooling system: 20 qts.
 Gasoline tank: 20 gals.
 Engine oil: 5 qts.
 Transmission: manual 3-spd., 3 pts.; manual 3-spd. w/overdrive, 4.5 pts.; automatic, 10.25 qts.
 Rear axle: 4.5 pts.

CALCULATED DATA

HP/CID: .96
 LBS/HP: 10.5
 LBS/CID: 10.0

PERFORMANCE*

Acceleration:
 0-30 3.9 sec.
 0-45 7.4 sec.
 0-60 10.4-11.6 sec.
 Standing 1/4 mile:**
 117 mph @ 13.10 sec.

*Source: *Motor Trend*, January 1957 test of a non-supercharged '57 Thunderbird w/245-hp 312-cid V-8

**Recorded dragstrip times for a supercharged '57 Thunderbird.

supercharged F 'Birds are, of course, the most exotic of the flock.

Noel Blanc's collection, which includes several Ferraris, a '57 fuel-injected Corvette, and a '58 Edsel hardtop, also is home to a few customs, including a pair of lead sled '49 Mercs and a '37 Ford hot rod.

The 1957 Thunderbird not only provided excitement for car guys like Noel Blanc, who drove them when new, but also helped put Ford over the top for the first time in many years. That was the year Ford overtook Chevrolet for the number one spot in passenger car production, with model year output of


1,674,343, zooming past Chevrolet's 1,552,747 count by more than 120,000 units. It was a red letter year for Ford, and an appropriate climax to the career of the two-seater Thunderbird.

The T-Bird would live on, and achieve even greater commercial success, but it would be the legendary 1955-57 models that would find a soft spot in the hearts of car collectors the world over.

As Noel Blanc's favorite canary, Tweety Bird, might say, "Unfair! I thought I saw a pudgy tat, and he was driving a supercharged '57 T-Bird." Sylvester should be so lucky ... and so quick!



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