

# ThunderEnlightening<sup>T.M.</sup>

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.

*Thunderbird Specialists*

**CASCO**  
SINCE 1969

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

ISSUE NUMBER TWELVE • NOVEMBER 1999

## CASCO NEWS

**CASCO NAMES NEW PRESIDENT.** After thirty years at the helm your editor is stepping down as President and will be enjoying retirement life. I've been working at a least one job since I was 13 and now 49 years later at age 62 I feel it's time to kick back and spend more time with my cars, playing golf, fishing, working in my shop, and whatever else seems important at the moment.

CASCO has always been a family business and it is with considerable pride that I announce that our board has named my son Jim our new president. I would not feel good about leaving CASCO if I were not confident that Jim and his wife Betsy will do an excellent job of maintaining the quality and customer service levels that I have always strived for.

Jim started working at CASCO at about age 15 after school and during the summers until he left Coshocton to attend Ohio State University. Even while attending OSU getting his degree in mechanical engineering he worked for us during the summer. After graduation from OSU Jim worked as a manufacturing engineer for Resinoid Engineering, a manufacturer of injection molded hi-tech plastics, for two years before returning to CASCO.

Jim re-joined us as manufacturing engineer and was later promoted to vice President – Technical Operations. For the past few years Jim has been responsible for all aspects of our in-house manufacturing operations, our Restoration Division, new product design, certifying outside vendors who manufacture products for us, and licensing liaison with Ford Motor Company.

Jim is a CTCI master judge and a car hobbyist. I am confident that CASCO will be in good hands.

## NEW FROM CASCO

### GENUINE FORD RESTORER SIGN



Just the thing for your den, office, or garage. Royal blue screen printed onto a white background on a 6"x9" aluminum plate with two holes for hanging. Printed on both sides. **GFR...\$9.95**

### CLASSIC T-BIRD RUG



On the wall or on the floor this beautiful Classic T-Bird rug will look great in your home or office. The 1956 Thunderbird area rug is done in aqua, white, brown, tan & black. Machine woven of stain-resistant 2-ply heatset polypropylene

resulting in a luxurious finish.

Overall size is 3' 3" x 4' 8". **RUG56...\$69.95**

### FREE CLASSIC T-BIRD CLASSIFIEDS

Now you can advertise your Classic T-Bird on the internet without charge. As a service to T-Birders, CASCO has made space on its web page for individuals (sorry no businesses) to advertise their 55, 56, and 57 Thunderbirds for sale. Also available - Classic T-Birds wanted. Check [www.classictbird.com](http://www.classictbird.com) for details.

### DRIVE SHAFT PART NUMBERS

Now you can apply professional looking part numbers to your drive shaft with ease. CASCO now has available the 1" high yellow stencil part numbers as a vinyl transfer. Durable, crisp edges, easy to install, & correct style. With instructions. **DS55** All '55s; **DS56FS** '56 with F/M or S/T; **DS56OD** '56 with O/D; **DS57FS** '57 with F/M or S/T; **DS57OD** '57 with O/D Price is \$9.95 each plus Shipping/Handling.

## SHOP TIPS

### FIXING A SAGGING REAR END

If it seems that the rear of your T-Bird is lower than it should be then you may be a candidate for new springs. Take a look underneath – if your springs are flat or have a reverse arch then it's time to replace or re-arch them. Of the two alternatives most restorers will tell you that replacing them with new is the way to go.

We suggest that you resist the temptation to replace the shocks with air shocks or the overload shocks with the helper springs because although these may restore your original ride height they will do nothing to restore the original ride characteristics.

We also suggest that you avoid the temptation to replace just one side, even if your T-Bird is sagging on only one side. If one side is weak the other can't be far behind. Always replace or re-arch as pairs.

So no matter if you decide to replace or re-arch the springs they are going to have to be removed. Here are some tips that will hopefully make the job go a bit more smoothly.

Before you actually start to unbolt things you will find it helpful if you have given a liberal soaking with a good penetrating oil each day for a few days to all the nuts that will be removed. This will include the U-bolt nuts, forward spring bolt nuts, lower shock nuts, and rear shackle nuts.

Also, before you start the job you will want to purchase the necessary parts that you will need. At the very least you will need new forward spring bolts (#5780) and you may want to take this opportunity to replace the 4 rear spring center insulators (#5741), the 8 shackle bushings (#5781A) and if you are going to re-arch the springs you will need a new front bushing (#5781 A or B). These are the items in our Rear Spring Instillation Kit (#RSIK55 or RSIK567) on page 18 of our catalog. Other parts you may wish to consider are the metal center retainers, complete shackle assemblies, anti-squeak pads, spring clamps and liners.

Finally, the moments of truth have arrived and you are ready to get started.

1. Jack up the rear of the car and place blocks or jack stands under the frame just forward of the rear spring perch.
2. Remove the nut at the bottom of the shock absorber.
3. Remove the rear wheels.
4. Remove the 4 U-bolt retaining nuts. If they are particularly stubborn, heat on the nuts may be required. Check the U-bolt threads for rust or other

damage and replace if necessary.

5. Lift the rear end off the springs by a couple of inches and support on blocks.
6. Remove the rear shackle nuts and the outer strap.
7. Slide the rear of the spring off the shackle and lower to the ground.
8. Now that you have done the easy part of the job you are ready to tackle the front retaining bolt. Sometimes, no problem, just remove the nut and slide out the bolt. Sometimes, but not very often. By far the more usual case is that the stubborn thing is rusted into place. It will help to understand that the bolt is not just through a couple of holes in the frame. Welded into the frame is a steel tube through which the bolt passes. It is here, and/or the bushing in the eye of the spring, where the bolt gets rusted stuck. You can try penetrating oils but our experience is that this doesn't do the trick.

First you can try turning the head of the bolt to break it loose. Next try turning the head while hitting the other end with as big a hammer as you can find. One problem here is that you cannot get a straight shot onto the end of the bolt. Helpful here is a 1" diameter steel rod about a foot long. If still no luck breaking it loose then we suggest cutting the bolt on each side of the spring between the bushing and the hanger and then using a drift and your trusty hammer to get the rest of the bolt out of the frame. Hopefully, by now you have the bolt out because the next step involves applying heat to break down the rust.

In the words of our shop manager Glenn "It takes a lot of heat and a big hammer." But before you get out the torch you need to take steps to prevent fires and to protect the brake line on the driver's side and the carpet on both sides. We find that a sheet metal shield placed between the heat source and these areas will protect them. Even with the heat shields in place, however, extreme caution is warranted.

As a last resort you can cut out the sleeve in the frame and weld in a new one. Fortunately we seldom need to resort to this drastic measure.

9. Position the new or re-arched spring in place and install a well-lubricated new bolt through the frame, new front bushing, and the hanger. Install the lock washer and nut.
10. Install the new shackle bushings in the rear eye of the spring and shackle, install the shackle and outer plate, and secure with the shackle nuts.
11. Position the rear end housing on the spring. Be

careful to install the insulator and retainer in the proper order and that the housing is properly located on the positioning pin head. Failure to align properly here will cause the car to crab.

12. Reassemble the U-bolts over the housing and through the lower shock mounting plate. Don't forget to install the insulator and retainer between the spring and the shock plate. Install and torque the nuts to 33 - 48 ft.lbs. Do not over tighten.
13. Reassemble or replace, if necessary, the rear shock absorber.

Repeat for the other side, double check that all nuts are tight, reinstall the wheels & tires, remove the blocks or jack stands from under the frame, and you should be back on the level again.

### **HOOD RELEASE ASSY. & RELEASE WIRE**

If it seems to take more pulling force on the hood release handle than it should to open the hood, check to see if the force is significantly less with the hood open. If it still pulls hard you probably need to lubricate the hold down ends. If it pulls easily you need to check that the hold down studs align properly with the latch assemblies and that the studs are well lubricated. White grease or door striker lube works well.

Also, while you have the hood open, check to see that the hood release wire is bent 90 degrees after it passes through the retainer clamp. This is how it was done at the factory and the bend helps the retainer clamp by not relying on the setscrew only.

Your hood release cable should work forever without failing but sometimes they do break. If this happens to you, one way to get the hood open is to put the car up on a hoist, put a long bar on the hood release arm (where the cable used to be attached), and using the engine as a fulcrum push the hood release arm rearward.

A hood release safety pull can be easily fabricated by wrapping a wire around the hood release arm and feeding it back into the cockpit through the same grommet that is used for the regular hood release wire. With this, if the regular hood release wire breaks you can easily find and pull your safety wire.

While in the process of writing this article your editor happened across a wonderful little tool that is designed to easily open your hood if the release cable breaks. This tool was designed by Virginia T-Birder Richard Garrett. We were so impressed that we have made arrangements to make this tool available to our customers. Priced at only \$8.95 (CASCO Part # TL-9) this is a tool that every T-Birder should carry in his or her trunk. Just in case...

### **REMOVING THE T-BIRD HORN RING**

If the time comes that you need to remove the horn ring to replace the horn wire or to remove the steering wheel here's how to do it.

First, remove one terminal of the battery to keep the horn from blowing during the removal process.

'55 – From the back side of the steering wheel you will see two small screws, one on each side about 3" out from the center. Remove these screws and the horn ring is off.

'56 & '57 - Grasp the horn ring in the center and push the ring down against the steering wheel while turning it counterclockwise. The ring should turn only a small fraction of a turn before it is disengaged from the steering wheel hub.

### **SHOP TIP FROM T-BIRDER ONLINE**

**REMOVING THE NYLON SLEEVES FROM DOOR POSTS.** "I recently encountered a set of doorposts that got chromed with the windwing tensioning sleeves still in there. I found that a quick way to remove stuck sleeves was to insert a tap of approx 1/4 inch dia and screw it into sleeve. The tap will bottom out and then pull the sleeve up and out with no damage to anything." Pudge

Visit our web site at [www.classictbird.com](http://www.classictbird.com)

### **CAR CARE TIP**

#### **PROTECTING THE REAR DECK WHEN INSTALLING YOUR HARD TOP**

When reinstalling the hard top on your Thunderbird the rear hold down pins can pose a severe hazard to your paint job. To avoid some serious scratches and dents, cut two pieces of 12" x 12" by 1/8" tempered Masonite. Next apply self stick carpet squares to each piece of Masonite. Before setting the top on the car, place the Masonite squares carpet side down over the pin holes and place the top on the car as usual. Now carefully slide out the squares while checking for pin to hole alignment and allow the pins to engage the holes. Now you are free to finish clamping the top down and be on your way.

Thanks and a \$30.00 gift certificate to Norman Brinkmeyer, San Antonio Texas

### **DID YOU KNOW...**

All Classic T-Birds had an adjustable steering column, none had leather seats and some were assembled in Mexico. All 55's had power windows, all 56's had the seat embossment and only 57's had 14" wheels.

## SPECIAL OFFER FOR '55 OWNERS

Six volt owners – here's a special deal just for you. We were able to purchase, at close out prices, the entire inventory of 6 volt Permachargers from the now defunct Antique Automotive Accessories. We bought them right and we are passing the savings on to you.



The Permacharger's pulsating technology not only maintains your battery at full charge but it also actually de-sulfates the tiny crystals formed on your battery plates during periods of discharge.

The permacharger normally sells for \$49.95 but we are able save you \$30.00 and make these available for only \$19.95 plus shipping. Our part number is BAT-UP-6PP

### CASCO NUMBERS

**Orders:** (740) 622-8561 or (800) 374-0914

**Fax:** (740) 622-5151 or (800) 513-5806

**Technical Help:** (740) 622-9700

**E-Mail:** sales@classictbird.com

**Web address:** www.classictbird.com

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795 High Street, Coshocton, Ohio 43812

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This publication is prepared and published by Classic Auto Supply Co. Inc. for the owners of 1955, 1956, & 1957 Ford Thunderbird automobiles. It is provided without cost to its current active customers.

Readers are encouraged to submit shop tips and articles for publication. Each submission printed will earn for its author the gratitude of Classic T-Bird owners around the world and a \$30.00 gift certificate from Classic Auto Supply Co. We reserve the right to edit any submission.

Permission to reprint articles from *ThunderEnlightening* in any noncommercial Classic Thunderbird publication (such as club newsletters) is granted providing that *ThunderEnlightening* and Classic Auto Supply Co. (CASCO) are given credit.

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## HOLIDAY SPECIAL FROM CASCO

SPECIAL SAVINGS ON SHIPPING for all orders shipped between November 15 and December 31, 1999. For these 6 weeks CASCO will charge only \$6.00 for all shipments made by standard UPS surface within the United States. Shipping special does not apply to wheels, brake drums, rear springs, tires, or used parts.

## SPECIAL CALL FOR SHOP TIPS

Do you have a shop tip that you would like to share with other T-Birders? We want to dedicate a future issue of *ThunderEnlightening* to those slick ideas that make working in our shops more fun or make the tasks easier. Think about your shop and we are sure you will come up with something. Send it along and if we use it you will be getting one of our \$30.00 gift certificates too!

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ALL THE GANG AT CASCO

Bruce Nancy Glenn Jim  
Val Joe Don Betsy Shawn  
Mike Greg Ron  
Sandy Sue Donald Gene

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