

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

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

ISSUE NUMBER TWO • JUNE 1990

## The best laid plans . . .

**Our hats are off** to those who manage to put out a newsletter every month. We've only done two issues and already we can see that it's going to be very difficult to write, print and distribute *ThunderEnlightening* every month.

We, quite frankly, bit off more than we can chew. Sooo . . . in the future TE will be put out as often as possible but we're not going to promise that it will be every month. OK?

Issue #1 was sent by 3rd class mail in an attempt to save a few hundred bucks in mailing costs but it seemed to take weeks for people to get them so we are switching to first class mail.

Our intention was and will continue to be to provide a newsletter which would, hopefully, be of value to those who are actively involved in the restoration of a Classic T-Bird. Therefore, this and future issues will be sent to our customers who have ordered from us in the past six months.

Thanks to those who called and wrote with the kind words about TE - we really appreciate it. And, we do promise to do better with our spelling.

## Fuel Filters

If your bird has been sitting for a while with gasoline in the tank, fuel lines, and carburetor you can bet that varnish has formed due to oxidation of the fuel. Modern gasoline seems to be worse in this regard than it was years ago.

The usual scenario is that when fresh gasoline is introduced into the system it will partially dissolve these varnish deposits and the fuel filter will fill solid interrupting fuel flow to the engine. This situation starts out bad but does get progressively better.

It has been our experience that adding a carb cleaning additive to the gasoline - those that advertise to clean out the carburetor - will accelerate the process.

Since you can count on this process happening we suggest that you carry along an extra fuel filter element or two if your are planning to drive further from your home than you care to walk.

One more caution - don't forget that there is, or should be, a screen filter in the carburetor that can and does occasionally get plugged. This filter screen is located directly behind the brass fitting where the fuel line attaches to the carburetor.

## Restorations By Phone

Please remember that one of the services provided by CASCO is **free technical assistance**.

Since we have restoration technicians that work exclusively on Classic T-Birds they have, over the years, acquired a significant amount technical knowledge which we are most happy to share with our parts customers.

Chances are that we have someone who has daily hands-on experience with whatever problem you may be having so don't hesitate to give us a call. We don't promise that we can answer every question that you may have but we do promise to give it our best shot. Our shop number is (614) 622-9700 - hours are 8:30 - 4:30 Monday through Friday.

## Parts Problem

Replacement '57 **horn relays** often are manufactured with the relay assembly mounted backwards in the case. The problem is that when the relay is backwards the moulded plug will not connect.

To fix simply straighten the tabs that hold the relay into the case, take the relay out, turn end for end and replace. Bend back the tabs to secure.

## Bird Values Soar

It has been said that a true economy car is one in which you can drive the car as long as you want and sell it for more than you paid for it. Our classic T-Birds definitely fit this definition.

One may argue the validity of the numbers published in the "Old Cars Price Guide" (published by Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990 - 6 issues/yr - subscription \$14.95/yr) but since these values are based largely on auction results they do, at least, seem to be a good indicator of the changes in value.

The price guide breaks each model into six categories which are:

**1) EXCELLENT:** Restored to current maximum professional standards of quality in every area, or perfect original with components operating and appearing as new. A 95-plus point show car that is not driven.

**2) FINE:** Well-restored, or a combination of superior restoration and excellent original. Also, an *extremely* well-maintained original showing very minimal wear.

**3) VERY GOOD:** Completely operable original or "older restoration" showing wear. Also, a good amateur restoration, all presentable and serviceable inside and out. Plus, combinations of well-done restoration and good operable components or a partially restored car with all parts necessary to com-

plete and/or valuable NOS parts.

**4) GOOD:** A driveable vehicle needing no or only minor work to be functional. Also, a deteriorated restoration or a very poor amateur restoration. All components may need restoration to be "excellent," but the car is mostly useable "as is."

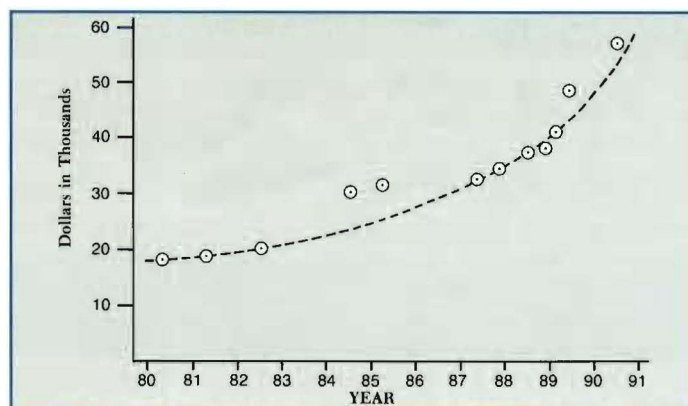
**5) RESTORABLE:** Needs *complete* restoration of body, chassis and interior. May or may not be running, but isn't weathered, wrecked or stripped to the point of being useful only for parts.

**6) PARTS CAR:** May or may not be running but is weathered, wrecked and/or stripped to the point of being useful primarily for parts.

The most recent issue (June 1990) of the price guide lists the T-Bird values as shown below:

CONDITION	1955	1956	1957
1	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$57,000
2	35,000	38,500	39,900
3	25,000	27,500	28,500
4	15,000	16,500	17,100
5	7,500	8,250	8,550
6	1,500	2,000	2,000
Adders: \$1,800 for hardtop 20% for supercharged			

We won't comment on the values shown for condition levels 1 through 4 but we definitely feel that the values for condition 5 and 6 are too low. We'd love to buy 100 condition 6 parts cars with a convertible top for \$2000 each!



The value of classic T-Birds has risen significantly in the past few years. Shown here are date points for a 1957 T-Bird in #1 condition - source Old Car Price Guide.

So how has the value of our Classic T-Birds changed over the years? We've tracked these values for over a decade now and have recorded the results. As shown in the table the '57's have always been listed with the highest value of the 3 years with the '56 close behind and the '55 lower yet. Since we are looking for the trend we have graphed the value for the '57 in number 1 condition.

As one can see, the increase in the last two years has been dramatic! In the period 1980-1988 the value of our Birds has doubled, a compounded increase of 9.4% per year but in the last two years this compound increase has grown to about 23.6% per year.

At this point in time we are in a situation which would, by most peoples standards, be the best of all worlds. Our little T-Birds are universally recognized as a desirable classic, are valuable enough that we can easily justify the expense of maintaining or improving them, and they are not yet so valuable that we should feel afraid to drive and enjoy them.

## Shop Tips

☐ **Unplugging Blocked Oil Passage to Rocker Arm**  
Evan Christian - West Mansfield, Ohio

To unplug an oil passage line to a rocker arm first remove the rocker arms and push rods on the side that is plugged. Find a piece of copper tubing that will fit snugly into the oil passage hole in the head. Have a fitting on the other end of the copper tube with a grease zerk.

Start the engine and pump grease into the grease zerk. The grease will open the passage by forcing the hardened material back through the cam bearings. The engine heat will dissolve the grease and, after you remove the tube, will allow the oil to flow.

\*Note - engine will start on four cylinders.

☐ **Gold Bright Dip Finish**

You can approximate the "Gold bright dip finish" referred to in the concours rules by painting a bright cadmium or zinc plated part with yellow varnish. Yellow varnish should be available at any paint store.



## Restoration Tips

### □ Texturing the Metal Parts of the Dash

The exposed painted metal parts of the dash were originally painted with a textured finish. One of the most often asked questions we get is how do we do this texturing?

The purpose of the texturing is to simulate the grainy look of the vinyl. Since the grain of the 55/56 vinyl is smoother than the '57 so too are the painted surfaces.

If there are any dents or imperfections in the metal be sure to fix these before you start. The texturing will not fill these in.

The best and easiest situation is when the existing texturing is good with no scratches or dents. In this case one simply can clean the surface and repaint or dye. If you choose to use paint remember that the surface should not be glossy and that you will want to add a flattening agent to the paint.

When we have to replace the texture we first repair any problem areas, then prime and paint with lacquer paint. Any color is OK but a color that contrasts with the final color is recommended so you can better see the evenness of the final color coat.

To get the textured look when spraying the lacquer do the following:

1. Don't thin the paint or thin very little
2. Adjust the spray pattern down such that you get approximately a 2" diameter spray pattern with the gun about 10" from the surface.
3. Open the fluid adjustment - as compared to normal spraying.
4. Decrease the air pressure to 15-20 PSI.
5. Spray a test panel on smooth cardboard or metal. Vary the fluid adjustment and/or air pressure until you achieve the desired texture. Use these same settings to texture the metal dash pieces.
6. After the textured lacquer is cured it can then be dyed or painted with color coat.

### □ Installing Door Weatherstrips

Last month's TE mentioned that door weatherstrips require some trimming to fit properly. This has raised some questions as to the procedure we use in our shop to do this trimming.

1) The first and probably most important step is to make sure during the body work phase of your restoration that the doors fit the opening properly with no weatherstrip installed. Also be sure that all cracks in the door are welded solid.

The only exception to this "perfect fit" is that we allow the lower rear corner of the door to be in about 1/8" as compared to the surface of the body in the dogleg area.

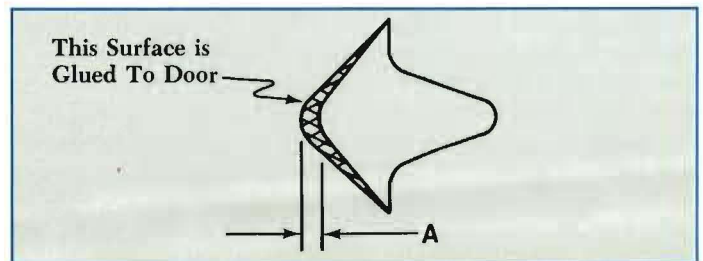
2) Install and adjust the striker plate such that when the door is fully closed (second catch) the door has the alignment you got with the first step.

3) Install the door weatherstrip. Since we have not found a satisfactory way to "temporarily" install the weatherstrip while we check the fit we install it like it

was going to be there forever. We do this knowing full well that we may have to cut at least part of it loose later.

4) Step four is the "dollar bill" test. Close and latch the door as far as possible without putting undue stress on the door. Now close the door with a dollar bill between the body and the weatherstrip. In those areas where the fit is good you will be able to pull out the dollar bill with only slight resistance. Those areas where the dollar bill is held fast will identify those tight areas where it will be necessary to trim. Do this all the way around the door.

Although the tight areas can occur at any point we typically find this to be a problem at the top front and lower front areas.



Cross section of Door Weatherstrip showing area to be removed for proper fit. Material should be removed from the surface that is glued to the door to keep original look.

5) Remove the weatherstrip at those tight areas. We do this with a single edge razor blade.

Trim the back side with your razor blade as shown in the sketch. If you were able to get a full double latch when you shut the door the amount removed (dimension A in the sketch) should be about 1/16" or as thin as you can cut. If you were not able to get a full double latch you will want to remove about 1/8".

6) Glue weatherstrip back on and retest - repeat steps 4 and 5 if necessary.

Involved and tedious work which possibly shouldn't be necessary - no argument. But - given the reality of the basic structural weakness of the T-Bird doors and the door weatherstrips that are available today a necessary process to assure that "concours" fit.

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## Concours Rule Book

The CTCI rule book mentioned in our last issue of TE is now out. It will be sent automatically to all CTCI senior and master judges and is available free from the CTCI office to all CTCI members. CASCO has bought some copies from CTCI and they are now available for \$3.00.

## Readers Questions

**Q. 1)** What is your new CC100 used to overcoat the steering wheel? On my original '57 red T-Bird the steering wheel color appears faded - almost pinkish. What's needed?

**2)** The glove box door won't open - any suggestions?

**A. 1)** Our CC100 consists of 2 parts - a spray plastic prep product that prepares the steering wheel for the vinyl dye and a clear gloss to apply over the vinyl dye.

So to refinish your steering wheel you would need to order both CC115 57 red vinyl dye and CC100.

**2)** If the button above your glove box door won't push in it's quite likely locked. The key should be the same as the trunk.

If you can depress the button you should feel some resistance when the tang (labeled T in the drawing) that holds the glove box door closed is raised.

No resistance indicates that either the tang has come loose from the lock assembly or it is broken. In either case you should be able to reach over the top of the glove box, find and manually raise the latching tang.

As a last resort you can remove the screws labeled P and remove the entire lock assembly.



Detail of the glove box latch assembly looking from the back side - behind dash.

## Unadvertised Specials

- ☆ Shock Absorbers - Front & Rear — Save \$4.00/shock  
Part #s 18124 & 18125 ..... \$16.95 EA
- ☆ Floor Pan Deadner Set — Save \$4.00  
Part # FPDS ..... \$19.95
- ☆ Complete Decal Sets — Save \$2.50-\$4.00  
Part #s CDS55, CDS56, CDS57 ..... \$12.50
- ☆ Clear Plastic — 55 Horn Ring — Save \$4.00  
Part # 13A806AR ..... \$15.95

Above special prices apply to all orders received before 7/15/90 - Normal shipping charges apply.

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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 \$20.00 gift certificate from Classic Auto Supply Co. We reserve the right to edit any submission.

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