

ThunderEnlightening^{T.M.}

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

ISSUE NUMBER FIVE • SEPTEMBER 1992

Product News

Tach Cables

We are now able to supply tachometer cables which are the correct length. In the past we were only able to supply a tach cable which was too long for proper fit.

Our '55 tach cable also has the insulated jacket like the original to eliminate the possibility of shorting out the battery.

Wiper Blades & Arms

The generic wiper blades and arms that are available have always been an annoyance because not only were they unattractive but the "mickey mouse" attaching hardware on the blade was so high above the windshield that the blade could actually flop over where the windshield curves and scratch the glass.

The generic blades are not as ugly as the hot pink double blades that are currently popular but they definitely are not an asset to a Classic Bird.

So CASCO has fixed this problem by reproducing the original Trico RB-12-2 blade. These stainless steel blades are correct in all details even to the bumps on the blade and the rubber end tips.

These are now available at \$29.95 each. We took some of these blades to the Tulsa meet and sold them all - they were a big hit!

We are also reproducing the original arms and these will hopefully be available by the time you receive this newsletter. No more Mr. Ugliers.

Seat Foam - Bottom Only

We have found that often one needs a new seat bottom foam only and not the seat back foam.

In the past we were able to supply seat foam in sets only but we are pleased to report that we can now offer the seat bottom foam by itself.

Wintertime Battery Care

If you are like we are here in Ohio you will probably put your "Baby" away for the winter. We all know that we should change the oil before we put it up but often we forget the battery until next spring when we find that it's junk.

Since we don't have heated storage for our cars we remove the batteries and bring them into a heated garage area. If your storage area is heated then just removing one of the battery cables will do.

Once you've cleaned the battery and greased the posts all you need is to fill with drinkable water to 1/8 inch above the cell plates and keep it charged.

As a rule of thumb the water level should be checked and the battery brought to a full charge about every 60 days. We keep track of this by putting a tag or a piece of masking tape on the battery on which we write the date of last check & charge.

Before charging the battery, loosen or remove the caps then trickle-charge at 4 to 6 amps using a small utility home charger for 24 hours.

A worthwhile investment is a small "floating balls" type of hydrometer to keep track of the condition of each of the cells.

Keep in mind that the fluid in a dead battery can freeze and crack the case. This seldom happens with a fully charged battery.

Battery Cautions to Remember

1. Never smoke around a battery. Explosive hydrogen gas is produced when charging.
2. Always wear gloves and goggles when working with batteries to guard against the possibility of acid burns.
3. Always slow charge your battery. Fast charging can cause battery damage.
4. Never add acid to an activated battery - only drinkable (or distilled) water.

Radials Receive Rave Reviews

In the last issue of *ThunderEnlightening* we asked readers to pass along their experiences with radial tires. Many Thanks to all who responded.

The following responses are typical:

“...driving is improved with less tendency to follow grooves in the road... a little more harsh at low speeds and will pick up a pebbly road with feedback to the steering wheel up to about 20 mph ... no clearance problem ... All in all the Bird acts much better overall on the road.”
— Ford Johnson - Seattle, WA

“In general the radials handle better, give a faster steering response and road feel. Increased gas mileage and tire life of 40,000 miles plus are very positive benefits.”
— William Smith - Broken Arrow, OK

“...used radial tires for about 80,000 miles ... the ride is a little harder ... much more responsive for steering, stability, and stopping. Initially, I had some problems with seating, but radial innertubes can be put inside to take care of any leaking around the rims.”
— Ken Pavlicek - LaGrange, IL

“The difference in ride, reduced shake, and handling experienced with these tires is just not believable unless you experience it yourself.”
— Roger Hayes, Pleasanton, CA

And finally: “On one stretch of road, trucks had worn ruts in the surface. As soon as I would hit that area, the T-Bird would (with original tires) grab the ruts and violently pull the car from side to side.

I tried all the basics first - wheel balance, front end alignment, shocks, ... replaced most of the front end parts including rebuilding the power steering control valve ... \$1,800 later when I hit that road ... NO DIFFERENCE.

I (put on) new radials. The car tracked perfectly!!! After all the time and money I put into the front end... the whole problem was the polyester “original” wide whites I was using. I’ve had the radials for a couple of years now. The car tracks perfectly ... on wet roads or sharp turns, the radials feel like the car is glued to the road!!”
— Richard L. Capek - Bethesda, MD

Tire Sizes - Most of the 55 & 56 owners reported using P205/75R15 size and 57 owners P195/75R14 both without clearance problems using original wheels.

Some '57 owners used radials as large as P215 without clearance problems but others reported problems at this size or even at P205. So apparently there is some variation in wheel size and/or offset.

Radials — Another Opinion

“The early “Birds” were designed in a time period when the 670/15 size was the most popular size ... By the '57 model year, the 750/14 became the most popular

size ... including a major trend to wider cross section tires on wider rims and smaller outside diameter. The unique features of the early birds were laid out in 1952 and provided cavity space for tires of 670/15 size with a small extra space big enough to use the 750/14.

The basic concept of radial tires depends on a wide rim to carry tires of wider cross section and smaller outer diameter in contrast to narrow rims, narrow tires and larger diameters previously used. The 750/14 may be replaced with a radial size 205/75R/14. No radial closely duplicates the 670/15 size, but the “may be” on the 750/14 is not recommended by this writer.

However, there is a lot more to selection of tires than a convenient tire retailer’s energetic effort to turn a buck. For one with the pride of ownership of an Early Bird and the money to pay for a set of radials, I firmly advise against pursuing the radial purchase idea. There are just too many complications that could result in damage to both the Bird and radial tires plus safety aspects of driver and passenger. What can the Early Bird owner who needs tires do? Answer: Select from the offerings of CASCO, Coker or several other suppliers to the niche market for tires suitable for antique vehicles.”
— Mark Andrews - Mt. Gilead, NC

Mr. Andrews has had a technical career with GM, Goodyear, Goodrich, and as an outside contractor specializing in early radial tire design activities.

Radials — Conclusion and Caution

So there you are dear reader. It’s your call - We would recommend that if you decide to use radials that you should remember that the little T-Bird suspension and wheels were not designed for radial tires and that due to the better contact with the road there will be additional stresses placed on the suspension and steering components - particularly in hard cornering situations.

Also remember that the Classic T-Birds maintain that Classic look with the wide whitesidewall tires and the “skinney” profile ratio. Nuff said.

Space Saver Spare

Readers report that Ford and others used a space saver spare in the early 70’s that will bolt up to the Classic Bird.

Using a mini wheel will give you a bit more trunk space but we suspect that you might be better off with a bit less luggage.

If you do decide to use one remember that these are for emergency use only at low speeds. Remember too that because of the smaller size your T-Bird will be a “low rider” on that corner.

We don’t recommend them.

Tech Tips

Safe Storage

When storing or parking your 'Bird in a place you're less than comfortable with, take the coil wire from the top of the distributor cap and exchange it with one of the spark plug wires in the top of the cap. Everything looks normal to the thief, yet the car can't be hot-wired, jump-started, or push-started even if it's a stick shift.

Just removing the coil wire won't do the trick because it's obvious to the thief, and also some carry an extra wire around "just in case".

— Tony Lipinot - St. Louis, MO

Binding Vacuum Advance

I experienced sluggish acceleration performance after I put in a NOS ignition advance diaphragm. Also had difficulty getting consistent correct timing (6 BTDC).

The problem turned out to be rotation of half the diaphragm assembly where the pieces are joined together. This caused binding at the diaphragm rod where it attached to the breaker plate. This binding did not allow the ignition to retard completely or to advance properly causing both inconsistent timing at the idle and insufficient advance when running at higher speeds.

The solution was to turn the diaphragm so there was no binding at the breaker plate. I marked the two halves of the diaphragm so I can check from time to time to make sure there is no rotation.

— Hewson Lawrence - Prescott, AZ

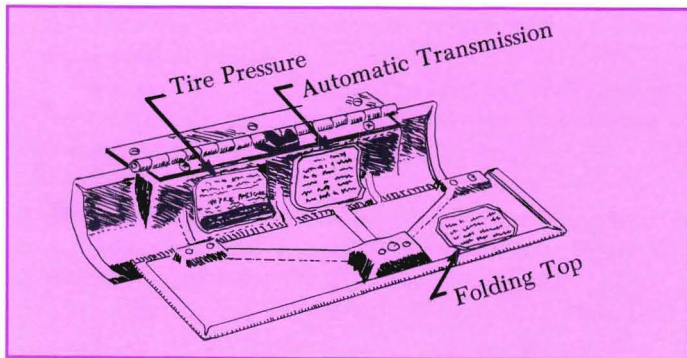
Holding Up Lifters

Holding up the lifters in your engine to replace your camshaft can be done with snap type clothes pins but for a more positive hold use plastic wire ties.

— Clayton Lester - Plainwell, NY

More On The Position of Decals (From Issue #4)

In issue #4 of *ThunderEnlightening* we talked about where to put the various decals. Some of you took us to task because we were not specific enough on those decals listed simply as glove box door. Sorry. The sketch below should clarify the positions.



Drawing of glove box door showing recommended position of decals. Source: *Soft Trim and Sealer Manual*.

CTCI Shows

1992 CTCI NATIONAL - Tulsa OK

We were fortunate to be able to attend the CTCI national meet in Tulsa. A great time with wonderful people.

We enjoyed reunions with old friends, meeting new friends, Bingo, a 50's DJ party, a fashion show, a technical session, judges meetings, the CTCI general membership meeting, a tour of the Ford glass plant, outstanding outdoor performance of the musical "Oklahoma", door prizes, Tulsa museums, great restaurants, a live Indian War Dance, the awards banquet, and of course the Concours.

The Tulsa Chapter reports that there were 200 Classic T-Birds in the show and that about one third of them were trailered. As you would expect the T-Birds were beautiful.

The folks from the Tulsa Club were most congenial hosts and had obviously worked long and hard to assure a good time for us all.

Future CTCI Events

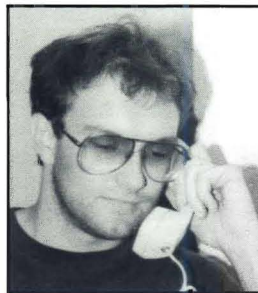
1993 Regionals - Long Island, NY; Canton, OH; Yakima, WA; Atlanta, GA; Kansas City, MO; and Irvine, CA.

1994 CTCI National - Dearborn, Michigan

Don't forget - for free information about the Classic Thunderbird Club International (CTCI) just let us know with your next order.

Meet Mark Fitzgerald

Many of you have taken advantage of our free (but not toll-free) Technical Service line. One of our Restoration Specialists that you have likely talked with is



Mark Fitzgerald.

At 30 years of age Mark is far from old but he has 11 years of full time experience in disassembly, repair, researching, detailing, reassembly and testing 1955 - 1957 T-Birds.

Mark is truly one of the most knowledgeable T-Bird restoration technicians anywhere and he is more than willing to share his knowledge. When he doesn't know the answer to your question he won't hesitate to say so but he will usually add "but I'll find out."

Mark is single, and when he's not working on T-Birds he is usually enjoying his hobbies of hunting and fishing.

CASCO Questionnaire

Thanks to all of you who took the time to answer our questionnaire that we sent with our *ThunderEnlightening Issue #4*. The response was terrific and we learned a lot which we hope will make us a better T-Bird parts supplier.

We found that we are doing a good job in many areas and that some changes were in order in others. We started immediately to implement the most asked for changes. Our new Nationwide (and Canada) toll-free order line (800) 374-0914 is a direct result of your comments. When our customers speak we listen - this was the #1 change requested.

For technical support we have retained (614) 622-9700 and (614) 622-8561. Our Fax line is still (614) 622-5151.

On Saturday February 1st the drawing of the questionnaires received was done to determine our winners. The gift certificate winners were:

Grand Prize - \$250.00 - Al Jerek - Waynesburg, PA
1st Place - 100.00 - Ed Grund - Bedford, NY
2nd Place - 50.00 - Wagner Robinson - Tacoma, WA
3rd Places - 20.00 - Johnny Barnes - Round Rock, TX
20.00 - Bert Cone - Metairie, LA
20.00 - Ray Haught - Suffield, OH
20.00 - Henry Luschen - Humble, TX
20.00 - John Walsh - Jamestown, RI

Congratulations to all of the winners and many thanks to all of you that took the time to fill out our questionnaire.

Unadvertised Special A Winter Project Special

Brake lines often rust from the inside out. If your T-Bird has its original brake lines, a good winter project would be to replace them with new.

We will help by making our Brake Line Kits an even better bargain.

Complete Set of Brake Lines

This Kit Contains All Seven of the Custom Formed Steel Brake Lines Needed for Your T-Bird.

SAVINGS TO \$39.65

BLK5P	Steel Brake Lines-55-With Power Brakes	\$100.00
BLK5S	Steel Brake Lines-55-With Std. Brakes	\$100.00
BLK6P	Steel Brake Lines-56-With Power Brakes	\$100.00
BLK6S	Steel Brake Lines-56-With Std. Brakes	\$100.00
BLK7P	Steel Brake Lines-57-With Power Brakes	\$100.00
BLK7S	Steel Brake Lines-57-With Std. Brakes	\$100.00

Same Kit as above but made with Stainless Steel Tubing

SAVINGS TO \$59.51

BLK5PS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-55-W/Powr Brakes	\$150.00
BLK5SS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-55-W/Std. Brakes	\$150.00
BLK6PS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-56-W/Powr Brakes	\$150.00
BLK6SS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-56-W/Std. Brakes	\$150.00
BLK7PS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-57-W/Powr Brakes	\$150.00
BLK7SS	Stnls Steel Brk Lines-57-W/Std. Brakes	\$150.00

These Sale Prices will be good through 12/31/92

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

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