

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

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

ISSUE NUMBER SEVEN • OCTOBER 1994



## CASCO TURNS 25

25th anniversaries are special and we at CASCO are very proud that we have reached that very special milestone.

Sue and I started serving Classic Thunderbird owners in 1969 by offering, with CTCI's permission and blessing, reprints of the back issues of its publication THE EARLY BIRD for 25 cents per issue.

Our thinking at the time was that we could provide a service to CTCI members since the 1963 - 1968 back issues were not available. We might even make a buck or two to offset the restoration costs of our '57 T-Bird.

As we got into the restoration we soon found that we needed quality reproduction parts which were not available. This need for accurate quality parts led us to start having them reproduced and offering them to others who were restoring their Birds.

One thing lead to another and it seemed like no time at all until we started our own manufacturing facility and then our own restoration shop. All of which was dedicated to and still specializes in our wonderful Classic Thunderbirds.

The Classic Thunderbird hobby has grown over the years and CASCO has grown with it. We like to think that we have played a part in the growth of the hobby.

We've celebrated this special 25th anniversary year by donating a \$1000 gift certificate to TARTC the sponsoring club for this years CTCI international convention in Dearborn. And we are concluding it by offering free UPS surface shipping for all orders of \$50.00 or more for the months of November and December.

25th anniversary? Are we proud of that? You bet we are. Damn proud!!

## PARTS PROBLEM

We are learning that some of the reproduced hardtop and soft top weatherstripping available today is staining the paint on the deck behind the seat on some T-Birds

Neither we nor our suppliers know why this is happening or how to eliminate the problem. It seems to affect some cars and not others and it seems to be happening with all of the various suppliers of this weatherstripping.

Some folks seem to think that this has always been a problem even when the T-Birds were new but we don't agree. We've seen plenty of unrestored cars where the paint on the rear deck is significantly damaged by the abrasive action of dust and dirt being trapped between the weatherstrip and the paint but not the staining to the extent that some folks are experiencing today.

This has become such a widespread problem that instructions to judges at CTCI concours over the past few years have included the admonition to ignore these stains when judging the paint.

We have added to our product line a die-cut clear heavy duty vinyl paint protector that fits between the rear deck and the top weatherstrip. This plastic product is designed to protect the paint on the rear deck from both the abrasive *and* staining effects of the top weatherstripping. Part number for this product is RDPC price \$22.95.

## CTCI



At least once a year we like to encourage all T-Bird owners to become members of the Classic Thunderbird Club International aka CTCI. The club publishes a bi-monthly publication "The Early Bird" which alone is worth the \$25.00 Annual Cost of membership.

CTCI is the parent organization with almost 10,000 members and over 100 chapters. It is the only international organization that is 100% dedicated to representing the owners of Classic T-Birds.

Membership applications are available from us. Just ask.

| INTERIOR COLOR          | DATA PLATE CODE | SEAT PANELS | SEAT BOLSTERS | SEAT PIPING | SEAT BACK CARDBOARD | CARPETING | FLOOR COVERING | KICK PANELS      | KICK PANEL RETAINERS | DOOR PANELS | WINDLACE | QUARTER PANEL CARDBOARDS | DROP CURTAIN | ARM REST COVERS | GARNISH MOULDINGS | DOOR PANEL RETAINERS                      | TONNEAU COVER | DASH COVERING | SAFETY PAD - IF USED | PAINTED SPEAKER GRILLE | PAINTED LOWER DASH | STEERING WHEEL | VISORS |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------|
| <b>1955</b>             |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   |   |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| Black & White           | XA or A         | W           | B             | W           | B                   | B         | B              | W                | W                    | W           | B        | W                        | B            | B               | B                 |   |               | B             |                      | B                      | B                  | B              |        |
| Red & White             | XB or B         | W           | R             | W           | R                   | R         | R              | W                | W                    | W           | R        | W                        | R            | R               | R                 |   |               | R             |                      | R                      | R                  | R              |        |
| Turquoise & White       | XC or C         | W           | TQ            | W           | TQ                  | TQ        | DG             | W                | W                    | W           | TQ       | W                        | DG           | TQ              | DG                |   |               | DG            |                      | DG                     | TQ                 | TQ             |        |
| Black & Yellow          | XD or D         | Y           | B             | B           | B                   | B         | B              | Y                | Y                    | Y           | B        | B                        | B            | B               | B                 |   |               | B             |                      | B                      | B                  | B              |        |
| <b>1956</b>             |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   |   |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| Black & White           | XA              | W           | B             | B           | B                   | B         | B              | W                | W                    | W           | B        | B                        | B            | B               | B                 |   |               | B             | B                    | B                      | B                  | B              | W      |
| Red & White             | XB              | W           | R             | R           | R                   | R         | R              | W                | W                    | W           | R        | R                        | R            | R               | R                 |   |               | R             | R                    | R                      | R                  | R              | W      |
| Peacock & White         | XC              | W           | P             | P           | P                   | P         | P              | W                | W                    | W           | P        | P                        | P            | P               | P                 |   |               | P             | P                    | P                      | P                  | P              | W      |
| Buckskin & White        | XD              | W           | T             | T           | T                   | T         | T              | W                | W                    | W           | T        | T                        | T            | T               | T                 |   |               | T             | T                    | T                      | T                  | T              | W      |
| Sage & White            | XF              | W           | SG            | SG          | SG                  | SG        | SG             | W                | W                    | W           | SG       | SG                       | SG           | SG              | SG                |   |               | SG            | SG                   | SG                     | SG                 | SG             | W      |
| <b>1957</b>             |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   |   |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| Black & White           | XA              | W           | B             | B           | B                   | B         | B              | CW               | CW                   | CW          | CW       | B                        | B            | B               | B                 | CW  | B             |               | B                    | B                      | B                  | B              | CW     |
| Red                     | XH              | R           | R             | R           | R                   | R         | R              | R                | R                    | R           | R        | R                        | R            | R               | R                 | R   | R             |               | R                    | R                      | R                  | R              | R      |
| Bronze                  | XJ              | BZ          | BZ            | BZ          | BZ                  | BZ        | BZ             | BZ               | BZ                   | BZ          | BZ       | BZ                       | BZ           | BZ              | BZ                | BZ  | BZ            |               | BZ                   | BZ                     | BZ                 | BZ             | BZ     |
| White                   | XK              | CW          | CW            | CW          | CW                  | B         | CW             | CW               | CW                   | CW          | CW       | CW                       | CW           | CW              | CW                | CW  | CW            |               | CW                   | CW                     | CW                 | CW             | CW     |
| Two Tone Blue           | XL              | SB          | DB            | DB          | DB                  | DB        | DB             | SB               | SB                   | SB          | SB       | DB                       | DB           | DB              | DB                | DB  | DB            |               | DB                   | DB                     | DB                 | DB             | DB     |
| Two Tone Green          | XM              | WG          | CG            | CG          | CG                  | CG        | CG             | WG               | WG                   | WG          | WG       | CG                       | CG           | CG              | CG                | WG  | CG            |               | CG                   | CG                     | CG                 | CG             | CG     |
| <b>KEY:</b>             |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   |   |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| 1955                    |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | 1956             |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | 1957                                      |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| BLANK = NOT USED        |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | BLANK = NOT USED |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | BLANK = NOT USED                          |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| B = BLACK               |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | B = BLACK        |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | B = BLACK                                 |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| W = WHITE               |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | W = WHITE        |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | CW = COLONIAL WHITE                       |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| R = RED                 |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | P = PEACOCK BLUE |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | R = RED                                   |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| TQ = TURQUOISE          |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | T = BUCKSKIN TAN |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | BZ = BRONZE                               |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| DG = SPECIAL DEEP GREEN |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                | SG = SAGE GREEN  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | SB = STARMIST BLUE (LIGHT)                |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
| Y = YELLOW              |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | DB = DRESDEN BLUE (DARK)                  |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
|                         |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | CG = CUMBERLAND GREEN (DARK)              |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
|                         |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | WG = WILLOW GREEN (LIGHT)                 |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |
|                         |                 |             |               |             |                     |           |                |                  |                      |             |          |                          |              |                 |                   | NOTE: LATE '57'S MAY HAVE TRIM DEVIATIONS |               |               |                      |                        |                    |                |        |

## ORIGINAL COCKPIT COLORS

Many restorers are not sure about the correct colors. This table should answer most of their questions.

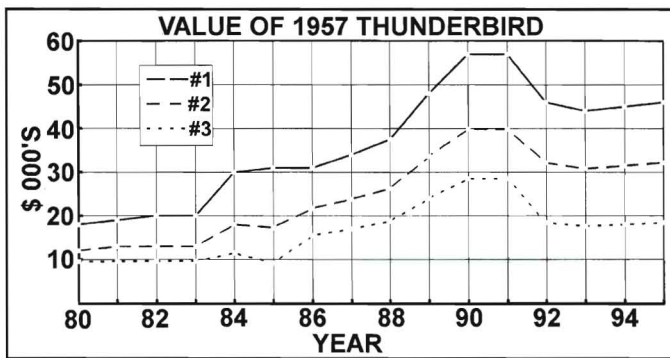
### UPHOLSTERY FACTS

We get a lot of questions about upholstery. Here are some facts which answer most of them.

- All upholstery materials were vinyl - not leather.
- Carpet was loop pile. The sewn in heel pad was smaller in '55 than it was in '56 & '57.
- The grain of the vinyl was the same for '55 & '56 and smoother than that used in '57.
- All of the exposed painted surfaces of the dash had a simulated vinyl grain pattern to match the vinyl. Painted surfaces were not glossy.
- All '56's but only early '57's had an embossment in the center of the seat back.
- Seat frames are different for each year and power is different from manual.
- '57 dash was covered by a moulded foam and vinyl. We know of no way to replace just the foam. An optional padded half-dash was offered in '56 and was applied over the standard dash vinyl.
- Door & kick panels were made from the same material. All were heat seamed - '55 had ribs - '56 had ribs with a simulated stitching - '57 had moulded in T-Bird emblems.

- The metal armrest spacer at the front is gloss body color except '55 black & yellow in which case it is gloss black.
- The vinyl floor covering behind the seat was small just covering the hump area in '55 and '56's without tonneau covers. '56's with tonneau covers & all '57's had a full width cover.
- Windlace was cloth covered in '55 & '56 - vinyl covered in '57.
- Tonneau covers were available in '56 & '57 only and were not completely removable. They were attached to the rear deck similar to the drop curtain. Birds with a tonneau cover did not have a drop curtain.
- Hardtop headliners were white-white in '55 & '56 and bone-white in '57. All '55's were 5 bow - all '57's were 4 bow - all porthole tops were 4 bow.
- '55 convertible tops were black canvas with a sewn-in back window - '56 & '57 tops has a straight zipper over the back window. Colors available in '56 & '57 were black canvas & white vinyl with a tan underside. Also available in '57 was blue canvas & tan canvas.





Graph showing the value of a 1957 T-Bird in #1, #2, & #3 conditions. We feel the drop from the 1990 high is merely a price correction. Values for '56's are approximately 2 1/2% below '57 and '55's approximately 6 1/2% below '57. Source for data points Old Cars Price Guide.

## VALUE OF T-BIRDS - UPDATE

In ThunderEnlightening issue #2 (June 1990) we reported that according to the Old Cars Price Guide Bird values were soaring.

At that time the Old Cars Price Guide was reporting that a '57 in #1 condition was valued at \$57,000 plus an additional \$1800 if it had a hardtop. The rate of increase was exceeding 25% per year.

Classic T-bird today are selling for prices below these levels. Have our T-Birds lost favor in the eyes of the buying public? Absolutely not!

USA TODAY readers picked the 1955 - 1957 T-Birds to be among the most desirable to own. Dean Kruse of Kruse International listed the 1957 T-Bird in his top 10 most desirable collector cars to buy in 1993.

So what's the deal. Here's what we believe. Three years ago the market for essentially all collectable cars seemed to be increasing at almost a geometric rate. At the auctions there was almost a feeding frenzy atmosphere as the buyers clamored to "invest" in Classic and Muscle cars.

Collectable cars were, we feel now, overpriced and the inevitable price correction has taken place. This price correction has not only affected our Classic T-Birds but essentially all collectable cars.

The #1 condition '57 T-Bird today is listed in the Old Cars Price Guide (October 1994) as having a value of \$46,000 plus the same \$1800 for a hardtop. The graph of T-Bird values shows how the value dropped from the previous high of \$57,000 down to a low of \$44,000.

There were those pessimists who predicted that the value would continue to drop but we believe they will continue to climb but at a slower rate.

As long as the Classic T-Bird is listed in every experts list of "What's hot" it seems obvious to us that such a car can only continue to appreciate.

Somehow too we can't help but feel that the world of Classic T-Birds will be better with people owning these cars because they really love them and not simply because they are good additions to their investment portfolio.

## TRIM YOUR ANTENNA FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

Satisfactory radio reception with your stock radio can not be obtained if the antenna is not delivering the signal properly. The antenna should be properly trimmed in order to pick up the signal. This should be done as follows: Extend the antenna to its maximum length. Tune in the weakest station between 12 and 16 on the dial and reduce the volume until the station can barely be heard.

Turn the antenna trimmer in either direction until a peak volume is obtained. The antenna trimmer is a threaded slot drive stud which is located at the right rear of the radio adjacent to the antenna wire jack for all three years.

Note: The signal seeking radio mechanism will not operate properly if the antenna is out of adjustment.

Source: Ford Product Service Letter Item 1355 November 11, 1955. From the book *Product Service Letters* a complete set of product service letters pertaining to the Classic Thunderbird. CASCO part #PSL \$11.95

## NO GASKET UNDER DISTRIBUTOR

It has recently come to our attention that some rebuilt Y-Block distributors are being supplied with a gasket to be used between the base of the distributor housing and the block surface.

Restorers should know that there is *no gasket* used between the distributor and the block and that significant damage to the distributor can occur if one is used.

The problem occurs when a gasket is used because the distributor housing is raised slightly and the distributor shaft doesn't. The distributor shaft is held in place by the drive gear meshing with the camshaft gear.

The result of the constant downward force on the shaft is that the bushing wears at the top. We have seen a '57 distributor where there has been so much bushing wear that the weights have contacted and worn into the housing.

Some folks seem to think that without a gasket they might get an oil leak. One might possibly get away with a very thin gasket but our recommendation is to use none. If everything else is OK it won't leak.

## QUESTIONS? SHOP TIPS?

Do you have a question you'd like to see answered in "TE"? Drop us a line and ask. If we can answer the question and if it's of sufficient general interest we'll include it in some future issue.

Have a good T-Bird oriented shop or restoration tip that you'd be willing to share? We'd love to pass it along. Each one used will get you a \$20.00 gift certificate from us as well as the appreciation of T-Bird restorers worldwide.



## CALLS FOR HELP

In our last issue we asked our readers to help by sharing their experiences with regard to the aftermarket water pump baffle. All but one of the folks who responded said that they found no difference in cooling when installing the baffle.

The one gentleman who got an immediate fix to his cooling problem has not had a reoccurrence of overheating for 25 years.

Because of almost overwhelming data against the baffle's effectiveness CASCO decided to drop the product from our line. We are convinced, however, that using it will not hurt so if you find one and want to try it do so with our blessing.

## CASCO'S 25th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

### FREE UPS SHIPPING

Casco will ship free any order\* of \$50.00 or more by UPS surface to any point in the 48 states during the months of November and December 1994.

\*Except wheels, tires and used parts

## RESTORATION TIPS

### □ Engine Overheating Fix

BARNES THUNDERBIRD SHOP - Houston Texas  
Rust scale and dirt collect in the bottom of the water jackets and rarely gets cleaned out. Each new or rebuilt engine I get from anyone gets the heads and freeze plugs removed, the block is then inverted and the jackets cleaned by using a rod, coat hanger wire, and air pressure to loosen and remove this accumulation.

It's a surprise what and how much will be removed. I believe that this is the #1 thing to do to keep engines running cool.

### □ Proper Installation Of Hood Release Cable

CASCO RESTORATIONS - Originally, the hood release wire, after it passed through the retaining clamp received bend of approximately 45°.

This little bend could save a lot of grief because without it you are relying on the small set screw alone to secure the hood release cable.

### □ Dying '57 Dashes

CASCO RESTORATIONS - We recommend that when dying a '57 dash that after cleaning it well that one apply a plastic prep, dye with white, and then apply the final color.

The plastic prep enhances the adhesion and the white dye masks the supplied dark blue color.

## ThunderEnlightening™

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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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