

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

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

**ISSUE NUMBER THIRTEEN • NOVEMBER 2000**

## CASCO NEWS

### CTCI CHICAGO NATIONAL

This summer we attended the CTCI National, which was held in Chicago. The show consisted of 173 beautiful baby birds representing 25 U.S. states and 6 different countries. Activities included a visit to Jerry Capizzi's FoMoCo collection, a very nice welcome party, a tour of the Torrence Avenue Taurus/Sable Plant, Chicago sightseeing tours, a visit to "Tommy Guns Garage," a reproduction of a Chicago speakeasy, swap meet, tech seminars and the awards banquet. The new 2002 T-bird was also present for our viewing pleasure. We set up a table in the vendors' room and had the opportunity to meet new and old friends alike. It was a very busy and fun week.

## NEW FROM CASCO

### CARBURETOR FLOATS

Carburetors which were previously thought not salvageable due to an irreparable float can now be saved. We have a limited supply of carburetor floats for use on any original '55, '56, '57 E-bird or '57 F-bird carburetor. They are available now for \$89.95 under part number 9550A.

### 6 VOLT ALTERNATOR KIT

Now all of you with a 6 volt system in your car can replace your problematic generator with the modern alternator set up. The kit supplies you with everything needed to convert including a rebuilt 6 volt alternator, pulley, bracket, and wiring. Order by part number ALTKIT6V for \$160.00.

### CASCO T-SHIRTS

After numerous requests from customers, we finally have a CASCO T-shirt available. The shirt is short-sleeved, white, and all-cotton. It features our company logo in blue on the left chest and on the back is a gray image of a '56 Thunderbird. Available in small, medium, large and extra-large for \$7.00, XXL for \$9.00, and XXXL for \$10.00.

## CLASSIC T-BIRD VOTED BEST

Car Collector & Yahoo Autos conducted an on-line survey and after tabulating the 30,706 votes the 1955 - 1957 Thunderbird was voted the most popular postwar car. Of course, we knew this all along, didn't we?

Following our Classic T-Birds was the 1961-71 E-Type Jaguar, 1966-67 Pontiac GTO, 1965-66 Mustang, and 1956-62 Corvette in that order. The top prewar car was the 1935-39 Jaguar SS100.

## RESTORATION TIPS

### PAINTING THE BOTTOM HALF OF THE DASH

A tech tip that has worked for me. When painting the bottom half of the dash, I used a dark trunk spatter paint for a base coat, then use a flat black, red, etc. for color. Works for me every time.

Thanks and a \$30.00 gift certificate to Tony Lopinot from St. Louis, MO

### PAINTING UNDER THE DASH

When painting the underside of the dash we suggest that you paint it with white paint. Yes, we know that white is not original but it can only be seen when you are up under the dash working on something. You will be surprised how much easier to see the white makes it.

## ALL '55'S HAD POWER SEATS

In the last issue of ThunderEnlightening under the heading DID YOU KNOW we mistakenly reported that all '55's had power windows. This was wrong. What we meant to say was that all '55's had power seats. Thanks to the many knowledgeable sharp-eyed readers who caught the error and took the time to bring it to our attention.

So to clarify, not all '55's had power windows but they did all have power seats. And that, my friends, is our final answer.

## SHOP TIPS

### HARDTOP STORAGE

To store my hardtop I have built a shelf as shown in the photograph. I have been storing the top this way for 13 years and it has remained in perfect shape. The fender skirts can also be seen in the photo laying on the shelf behind.



The shelf is 1/2" plywood measuring 60" wide and 18" deep. Strips of the plywood cut 2" wide were used on the edges to give it a finished look and to help hold the supports. A piece of quarter round moulding was attached to the front edge of the shelf to keep the hardtop from slipping off onto the floor. The shelf supports are 3/4" x 2 1/2" boards which angle back to the base of the shop wall. The back of the shelf is supported by two 12" metal shelf supports screwed into the studs in the wall.

Thanks and a \$30.00 gift certificate to Glenn James of Sulpher, Louisiana

### RECONDITIONING OLD LICENSE PLATES

Recently, in our shop, we had the opportunity to "restore" a set of old 1957 license plates for a customer. Now that many states are allowing same year plates for our older cars I'm sure we will be doing more & more of these.

First we found spray cans of paint that matched the colors. This was relatively easy since the color consistency seem to leave quite a bit of "wobble room". After we were convinced that we had acceptable paints we stripped the old paint, lightly sandblasted the rusty spots, and worked out the dents with standard body tools.

Now we were ready to paint. We gave the plates a primer coat on each side followed by a couple of coats of the background color. Now for the tricky part - painting the contrasting color on the raised surfaces. We tried a couple of things but what worked best for us was to spray the contrasting color paint onto a flat foam pad, then holding the plate from the back with a couple of magnets, press the plate lightly onto the pad. The raised parts of the plate will contact the paint and presto! the plate is painted. Of course, it wasn't really that easy and it did take a bit of practice to get it right but the results were very good and only very slight touch-up was needed.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM  
ALL THE GANG AT CASCO

Nancy Glenn Kathy Dale John Shaun  
Donald Doug Joe Betsy  
Bill Sue Don Jeff Jim Gene Mike

### VALVE LASH ADJUSTMENT

You can begin with any cylinder but we usually start with #1. Crank the engine over until the exhaust valve just starts to open. Adjust that cylinder's intake valve (we prefer .018" clearance for a cold engine). Crank the engine over again until the intake valve has opened all the way and is about halfway down toward closing. At that point adjust the exhaust valve (again .018" cold). Continue this sequence until all cylinders (valves) have been adjusted. This process ensures that the valve being adjusted is on the base of the camshaft lobe.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### T-BIRD RESTORATION MANUAL

**Q.** Where can I find a Classic Thunderbird restoration manual?

**A.** Sorry, no there is no one manual that covers all aspects of the Classic T-Bird restoration. In addition to the glove box owners manual, there are 3 basic manuals that anyone planning to do work on their T-Bird should own. First, there is the shop manual that covers both T-Birds and passenger cars. Mostly this manual deals with the mechanical aspects of the car. There is a separate manual for each year and the cost is \$29.95 for each.

Then there are the Electrical Manual and the Soft Trim and Sealer Manual. The Electrical Manual shows schematic drawings as well as pictorial drawings of all of the electrical parts of the car. This is great for electrical troubleshooting as well as detailing proper wire routing etc.

The Soft Trim and Sealer Manual shows how the car goes together. It has many exploded drawings and assembly instructions.

The Soft Trim and Electrical manuals cover all three years and sell for \$14.95 each

### OPENING YOUR TRUNK

**Q.** The trunk lock on my T-Bird is not working. How I can get the trunk open to service or replace the lock?

**A.** If your trunk is not stuffed too full of gear you can open the trunk by removing the latch striker. Here's how. Open both doors, flip the seat forward, get the convertible top out of the way, lift the trunk divider curtain (56 & 57) and with a flash light from behind the seat you will be able to see the two bolts that hold the latch mechanism to the body. Sorry, if you have a 55 you will have to break through the trunk divider board. Use a ratchet wrench with a bunch of extensions and a 1/2 inch socket to remove the two bolts that hold the latch to the body. Up will come the lid.

## **REPLACING THE EMERGENCY BRAKE CABLE**

**Q.** The emergency brake cable on my '57 broke right at the brake handle - the ball broke off of the cable end. I already have a replacement cable and am curious if there are any tricks to getting this repair done?

**A.** This thing is a pain to change. First, look at it's present routing so replacement goes back same way. It would be good if you could get the car raised high enough to get under it comfortably. Before you take the old cable out, note how it is routed through the frame, so that you can put the new cable through the same route. Don't overlook removing the metal strap bracket on the firewall that holds the cable in place. The old cable is removed by pulling down from below.

You will probably have to run the nut all the way to the end to get enough slack to attach the new cable at the rear where it pulls the rear brake cable. You will need to take the handle loose from both the dash and firewall, so you can drive the pin out of the handle shaft. Don't try to twist the pin, because it is splined and you will twist it off. Drive it out with a punch. That will allow you to turn the handle and put the ball on the end of the cable in its slot in the end of the cable. Take the opportunity to clean, paint and oil the handle, frame and pulley and polish the chrome handle.

## **REMOVING WINDWING GLASS**

**Q.** I have to remove the wind wing window, to have some re-chroming done. Any suggestions as to the steps in the removal of the windwing? I have heard that the glass needs to be pulled out of the frame that it is in - is this correct?

**A.** To re-plate the wind wing frame you will have to remove the glass. First remove the windwing assembly from the car by removing the two small screws that hold on the bottom hinge. Small ignition wrenches will help here. After the bottom hinge is removed you can remove the wind wing assembly by pushing upward. It may be necessary to loosen the allen tensioning screws in the pillar.

Yes you will have to remove the glass. To remove the glass, lay the assembly on a flat surface with something between that surface and the glass to keep the glass from being scratched. Then place a small block of wood on the top surface of the glass with an edge against the windwing frame. While holding the glass down with one hand tap, with a small hammer, the block of wood lightly and evenly across the edge of the windwing frame to drive the frame off the glass.

If you decide to remove the upper wind wing hinge you will find that it is held to the frame by rivets. Replacing these rivets without special tools can be a problem which is why we offer this service.

## **PREVENTING CONTAMINATION IN GAS TANK**

**Q.** I put a new fuel tank in my '56. BUT!! How do I prevent the new clean tank from getting rusty, silty, etc.? I'd like to protect my investment and avoid the problem in the first place. Any suggestions on how cars can be stored for several months at a time or longer without messing up the fuel tank?

**A.** Assuming you are talking about the inside of the tank your best bet is to put a fuel stabilizer into your tank before you put it into storage. The fuel stabilizer will retard the oxidation process that results in your gasoline turning into varnish. It's the varnish that gums up the tank. Using a fuel stabilizer is particularly important with today's gasoline because it oxidizes significantly more rapidly than it did years ago. Dunno why. Fuel stabilizer is available from CASCO and most auto parts stores.

We also suggest you make sure the tank is full prior to storage because an empty tank can be subject to condensation as air temperatures change. This will rust the tank from the inside

## **ROUTING OF GROUND CABLES AND LOCATION OF STARTER CABLE RETAINERS**

**Q.** I'm trying to figure out where the negative battery cable attaches to the firewall (or frame if that's the case) and also where the 2 retainers (1 small hole, 1 large hole) for the cable running from the solenoid to the starter go on the firewall?

**A.** There is no engine to frame ground cable. The engine is grounded by a strap from rear center of engine to firewall right behind engine.

On a '55 & '56 the battery ground cable attaches to the rear side of the LH cylinder head. It is held to the head with the same bolt that holds the spark plug wire retainer.

On '57 the battery is grounded on the firewall to a stud that is welded on right behind the battery. If your stud is twisted off you can use one of the hood latch mounting studs.

The small hole retainer for the solenoid to starter cable mounts to the firewall just below the starter solenoid and toward the center of the car. The large hole retainer is retained by one of the upper transmission to engine block bolts.

All of this, along with a lot more, is shown in the Electrical Manual.

Visit us at our site on the World Wide Web:  
[www.classictbird.com](http://www.classictbird.com)

## RUST ON CHROME BUMPERS

**Q.** I have some surface rust on my front and rear bumpers, some areas are deeper than others. What do you suggest for removing this rust and keeping it from forming?

**A.** I'm afraid the only good long term solution is to have them re-plated. Many folks don't understand that the actual chrome is very thin and almost transparent. What one sees is the polished nickel underneath. The chrome is, however, very durable and protects the under plating from attack by the elements. Problems occur when one "polishes" the chrome with an abrasive cleaner as these can break through the thin protective chrome layer. Short term you can get your chrome looking pretty good by using an abrasive cleaner but based on the above you can see that it's not a long term solution. Keep your nice chrome looking nice with a good coating of wax but keep away from those products which contain abrasives.

### CASCO NUMBERS

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

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

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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.

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## HOLIDAY SPECIAL FROM CASCO

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### SPECIAL SAVINGS ON SHIPPING

Between November 15 and December 31, 2000  
CASCO will have a flat shipping charge of only  
**\$6.00**

for any shipment in the U.S. via UPS surface  
\*Except: Used Parts, Tires, Brake Drums & Rear Springs

## GREAT NEWS FOR THE TBIRD HOBBY CLASSIC TBIRD VALUES RISE

The December issue of Old Cars Price Guide shows an increase in the value of the little birds.

Values for a number three condition (a very good car, looks perfect from 20 feet) range from \$24,000 for a '55 to \$25,200 for a '57. For a number one condition (restored to current maximum professional standards), values are \$60,000 for '55, \$62,000 for '56, and \$63,000 for '57.

In recent years the value of the little birds have been increasing at a rate of less than 4% per year. The latest report shows that the little birds have increased in value nearly 20% over last year.

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