

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

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

**ISSUE NUMBER FIFTEEN • NOVEMBER 2002**

## CASCO NEWS

### CASCO INVESTS IN THE FUTURE

In our continuing effort to offer you quality reproductions CASCO has invested in the purchase of an abrasive water jet machining center. This computer driven machine cuts many types of materials from tool steel to rubber. Next time you order replacement glass be sure to check out the superior part to part consistency and fine edges. This machine also helps us bring metal parts to the hobby that were previously too complicated to afford the stamping tooling. One example is our new concours coil bracket.

### 2002 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The New Jersey Open Road Thunderbird Club hosted a wonderful convention this summer. Participants were kept very busy with clinics, historical tours, tours of New York City, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Atlantic City, and of course the concours show and awards banquet. If you aren't a CTCI member or haven't attended a convention, don't miss out on one of the regionals next summer in your part of the country.

### THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD MAILING LIST

If you think you might be interested in upgrading or sharing your Thunderbird knowledge you should consider joining the Classic Thunderbird mailing list on the internet. This is a forum for discussing Ford Thunderbirds with an emphasis on preservation, restoration, history, cars and parts availability, repair, performance, and general camaraderie. If you love Thunderbirds, this is the place for you. Once you are registered you will be able to converse with T-Birders around the world. Got a question? Just ask and the chances are someone will respond with the answer for you. And it's free! Go to [www.tbird.org](http://www.tbird.org) and then to mailing lists to register. From there you will find lots of links to other great T-Bird sites such as the CTCI site and, of course, the CASCO site.

## NEW FROM CASCO

### SOFT TOP FRONT TACK STRIP CHANNEL REPAIR

Because so many asked for a replacement tack strip retainer, CASCO has manufactured a great replacement kit for your rusty or rusted off tack strip retainer fingers. CNC machined from galvanized material and pre-formed, it includes all stainless steel pop rivets for a secure installation. Simply trim off the old rusty fingers, slip in the replacement assembly and set the rivets. You may order by part number 51340A. Price is \$34.95 plus shipping and handling.

### WIPER NUT

Previously unavailable, CASCO has reproduced the wiper pivot shaft nut, 356094S, available for \$12.90 each.

### HEAT TUBE FOR 1955 THUNDERBIRD CHOKE CONTROL IN INTAKE

Previously unavailable except for NOS, CASCO now offers the heat sink choke tube for the 1955 choke assemblies. This reproduction uses stainless steel and a heavy gauge air circulating spring. This tube, part number 9890A, sells for \$24.95 plus shipping and handling.

### 1956 & 1957 REPRODUCTION COIL STRAP

When Ford recently obsoleted the replacement coil strap they offered for '56-'57, CASCO got to work to bring you the best reproduction available. Like the original, this reproduction has two holes in the strap and no slots where the mounting bolts are installed. Available by part number 12043 for \$29.95 plus shipping and handling.

CASCO is working constantly to develop new reproductions and innovative additions to your Classic Thunderbird. We are committed to the hobby and welcome your comments and suggestions regarding new ideas or products.

## SHOP TIPS

### INSTALLING DOOR GLASS

Many folks seem to have difficulty adjusting the fit and clearance of the glass in the front window channel. I just reworked both of mine and learned quite a bit.

#1 Take your time

#2 Both sides should be the same, but they're probably not.

#3 You must align the door with the car body then align the chromed POT METAL door window channel pillar. With the door closed the pillar should be evenly spaced and parallel to the chrome windshield surround.

Before alignment you must verify that the pillar is straight. If it is bent, curved, or warped the glass will bind or break or just not go up and down. The only way I know of checking the pillar for straightness is to remove it from the door and put a straight edge on it. Almost every one of them bends with age and usage. (Don't shut the door by pushing on the glass) Straightening the pillars is magic since pot metal will snap and it is not weldable. Replacements are available but expensive.

Before reinstalling the straightened pillar (or replacement pillar), replace the U-shaped chrome edged cat whisker assembly that goes into the pillar. They are riveted in place, and are virtually impossible to replace once the pillar is installed in the door, unless you have a trained, pet monkey that is left-handed. With the pillar installed and aligned, put the assembled glass back into the door. IT WILL FIT. Take your time, play with it, call it names, it will fit.

Hold the glass assembly into the forward channel and slide it up and down by hand. The glass should rub on the base of the U shaped cat whisker assembly and the stainless or chrome window surround should not touch the chrome trim of the U shaped cat whisker assembly. Both of my windows would not fit, as the window surround just gouged the pillar whisker assembly.

After a shot of bourbon, an hour of soul searching, and several more readings in the old Ford shop manual, I got out my hacksaw. I marked both window surrounds, removed the glass assemblies from the doors and very slowly and carefully cut off almost 3/8" on one and 1/4" on the other of the window surround metal, making sure that the hacksaw blade did not touch the glass as it cut thru the metal. *Editor's Note: We have also heard of people using a cut-off wheel in a Dremil tool to trim the window stainless.*

Now the glass goes up and down smoothly, it looks good and after reassembling and adjusting the rear guide and stops, IT WORKS. Hope this is of some help.

*Stuart Corenblum, Miami, FL*

### FINDING TOP DEAD CENTER

The shadetree way to find top dead center is to put your finger really tight on the sparkplug hole. When you feel a lot of pressure you will know that is the compression stroke up to TDC. Watch the hole with a flashlight and have someone slowly turn the crankshaft. When the piston is at the very top of its stroke it will hesitate slightly before heading downward. That is TDC. You will need a 13/16" socket to turn the crank clockwise.

*Hank Luschen, Humble, TX*

The problem with the above method is that you can easily be off 4 or 5 degrees. Remember there are 360 degrees around the pulley and the specification is only 3 to 6 degrees before TDC. The most accurate method is to install a piston stop in the spark plug hole that is very solid. Bring the engine up toward TDC by hand until it stops against the stop. Mark the pulley. Turn the engine in the opposite direction until it again comes up to TDC and stops. Mark the pulley again. A fairly exact TDC mark is exactly half way between the two marks. You can then use a pair of dividers to keep dividing up the circumference until you get it down to degrees (start with 1/4 of the pulley).

*Joe Albert, Scappoose, OR*

### BRIGHTEN UP THOSE TAIL LIGHTS

Over the years we have seen tail lamp reflectors that had paint or heavy overspray inside the taillight housing. This should be removed with steel wool, but a lot of owners don't do it. The result is dull tail lights.

These reflectors can be painted with a chrome paint but better yet is a trick we learned from the Classic GMC Motorhome folks. Remove the lens and line the reflector surface with mirror finish aluminum foil or chrome tape. This product is sold in virtually all automotive stores and comes in a roll about 2" wide with adhesive on the back. Don't worry about wrinkles. The wrinkled surface seems to make it even better.

After hearing of this tip, T-Birder Dave Tulowitzky reported:

"Believe me it does work well. I did one, then put the lens back on. I could definitely tell a difference (maybe 50%). Now I have both of them finished and will compare them with other T-Birds Saturday when we have our club outing. I did the parking lights also, and it helped them. I think this tip is the next best thing to the mechanical brake light switch."

*We are sending our thanks and a \$30 gift certificate to each of our TE contributors: Stuart Corenblum, Hank Luschen, Joe Albert, Dave Tulowitzky, & Bill Wells.*

## THOUGHTS ON BUYING PARTS FOR YOUR CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD

The parts sometimes seem quite expensive and you can have more in a T-Bird than you could sell it for. The sum of the independent parts is worth more than the completed assembly. But most modern day Lincolns or Cadillacs bought new will depreciate more in two years than what you put into a restoration (excluding frame-off concours restorations). Some cars depreciate more in *one year* than typical restoration expenses. But once your restoration is done, the depreciation is negligible if any.

You will get more value from your car when it is all done than you do with some private golf club memberships, some yacht clubs, etc. Hey, you could chase a little white ball around some green grass for 1/2 a day and drop a couple hundred bucks and not think anything about it, not to mention initiation fees and monthly spending minimums. My cars are my golf and boat club substitutes and it keeps me home, or if not home, accounted for by the bride - in the garage or out cruising. But not all parts are expensive. Sure, they are more than a comparable classic mustang part (not all parts are, I have one of those too) but they are a lot cheaper than parts "outside of the warranty coverage" on a new vehicle. Especially if you get into electronic black boxes, auto temperature controlled air conditioning systems, air suspension parts, etc.

Yep, it only hurts once a month during the restoration process - when you pay your bill! But when it is all said and done, you will be the king of the road!

*Bill Wells, Bloomfield Hills, MI*

## Y-BLOCK ASSEMBLY ERRORS

John Mummert, owner of John Mummert Y Block in El Cajon, CA, has put together a list of Y-Block assembly errors that every T-Birder considering engine work should have. Not doing the rebuild yourself? Get a copy and give it to your rebuilders. It's FREE and you can download it from John's website <http://www.ford-y-block.com>.

John has also allowed us to make these tips available to our customers. If you are not on the internet and would like a copy of this two page report, just ask for it when you place your next order or send us a SASE (self addressed stamped envelope) and we will be happy to mail you a copy.

Looking for a gift for a fellow T-birder?  
How about a CASCO Gift Certificate?  
Great for club Christmas parties too!  
Call us today at 1-800-374-0914

## WALT'S WORDS

### REMOVING HEADS

Difficulty in removing Y Block engine heads is not an uncommon problem. I've been there many times. There is a flange at the forward end of the head at the level of which the head meets the block. Underneath this flange is a machined gap for positioning a pry-bar between the head and the block. Apply a pry-bar or a big screwdriver and pry upward. The head should pry off as you can apply tons of force with this method. You may have to remove the generator. If the pry bar doesn't work, you must resort to severe measures. First, reinstall all the head bolts, but only down to about 1/8" of the head. Pick a cylinder which still has good valves and spray some Barryman B-12 into the cylinder (gasoline will work) and reinstall the spark plug. Now energize the ignition and crank the engine over. Be sure the transmission is out of gear. Ignition of the small charge of fuel should lift the head up. Sounds dangerous and very well may be, but I have done this many times successfully. It doesn't even make much of a pop. Always keep a fire extinguisher handy when working on your car.

*Walt Nuckels*

### HANDLING PROBLEMS

When checking for free slack in the steering linkage, if equipped with power steering, you should expect to have 1/8" of what appears to be free slack in the control valve when the engine is not running. This slack will not be evident when the engine is running as the control valve and steering ram cylinder take over. The most likely cause for a car to drive with poor handling is the toe-in to be severely out of spec, either toed in or out too much. Toe in with radial tires should be at 0". Toe in with biased tires should be about 1/8" to 3/16". I would say that radial tires are the single best improvement I ever made on my Thunderbirds. Another common handling problem on T Birds is caused by loose U-bolts on the rear axle where the axle tube is secured to the leaf springs. This is probably the problem when the car darts in one direction upon acceleration and then heads in the opposite direction when braking hard. These U-bolts must be very tight; don't depend on an impact wrench because there is so much rubber in this assembly that the rubber absorbs the energy and the nuts don't get tight. I use a 3 foot cheater bar and take them up to about 75ft. lbs. evenly. You may break out in a sweat.

*Walt Nuckels*

*Walt Knuckels had a depth of T-Bird knowledge that seemed to be without bound. In the year before his death Walt shared his knowledge with the T-Bird world through his many posts to the Classic Thunderbird List. We thank Walt's family for permitting us to share his knowledge. CASCO has made a contribution to the American Cancer Society in Walt's name.*

## CASCO 2002 CATALOG COVER ART

We have some extra copies of the photo featured on the front of our 2002 catalog. If you are interested in receiving one we would be happy to mail one to you for a \$5.00 mailing fee. They are printed on the same stock as our catalog cover and measure approximately 8 1/2" x 8 1/2". This photograph



was provided to us by the Colorado Classic Thunderbird Club for use on our catalog cover.

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

## CASCO's MONTHLY SPECIALS

Did you know that CASCO offers specials every month? They are listed on page 72 of our 2002 catalog as well as on our website, [www.classictbird.com](http://www.classictbird.com). Be sure to check out these specials the next time you are preparing to place an order.

## HOLIDAY SPECIAL FROM CASCO

SPECIAL SAVINGS ON SHIPPING on all orders shipped between November 22 and December 31, 2002. During that time period CASCO will charge a maximum shipping & handling of **\$9.95** for all shipments made by standard UPS surface within the continental United States. This special excludes any items which are normally billed at actual shipping costs. This is our holiday gift to you.

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ALL THE GANG AT CASCO

*Nancy Glenn Arny Richard Shawn  
Donald Joe Dan Jeff Brad Betsy  
Brii Sue Don Mike Jim Eric*

## CASCO NUMBERS

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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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