

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

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

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## T-Bird Trivia

It may be trivia but it's not trivial. Just a few quick facts to help us understand our T-Birds a bit better. Here are some answers to some of the most often asked questions.

- No '55 or '57 T-Birds were supplied from the factory with continental kits. All '56 T-Birds were supplied with continental kits.
- All '55's were 6 volt and were **positive** ground. All '56 and '57 were 12 volt **negative** ground.
- The battery in all T-Birds is installed with the positive terminal forward.
- T-Birds with automatic transmission will start in neutral only **not** in park.
- All Classic T-birds were supplied with Holley carburetors. All '55 and '56's had 4 barrel carbs. The 2 barrel carb was available in '57 only.
- Backup lights will work only when the lights are on.
- Originally the doors and ignition were operated by the same key and the trunk and glove box used the same key.
- The front license plate bracket for '55 and '56 mounts to the lower bolt of the RH (Passenger side) bumperette.
- The glass in a T-Bird was either all clear - including hardtop - or all tinted.
- The flat glass was made by Ford and carried the FoMoCo logo. The curved glass, windshield and hardtop backlite, were supplied by PPG and supported the PPG logo.
- All '55 T-Birds had power seats.
- Deck mounted antennas were an option in '57 only.
- Porthole hardtops were not available in '55.
- A crest emblem was used on each side of the '55 hardtop and a round T-Bird emblem was used on the non-port '57 hardtops. No emblems were used on '56 tops or any porthole top.

## Part Problem

**CASCO Wiper Blades Too Loose?  
Here's How to Fix**

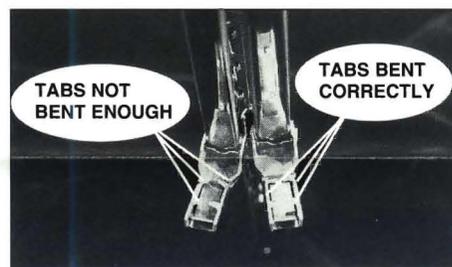


Photo shows the underside of bayonette wiper blade retainers. The four tabs should be bent like the one on the right.

We have found that some of our bayonet style '56 and '57 reproduction wiper blades were incorrectly assembled with the result being that they do not fit securely onto the arm.

The fix is easy and will only take a few minutes. In the above photo you will see that on the underside of the attaching retainer there are 4 tabs that hold the assembly together. It is important that these tabs be bent at a full right angle especially the two that are closest to the blade. On some of the blades we supplied, these tabs are not bent over quite enough to put the proper tension on the retaining part inside.

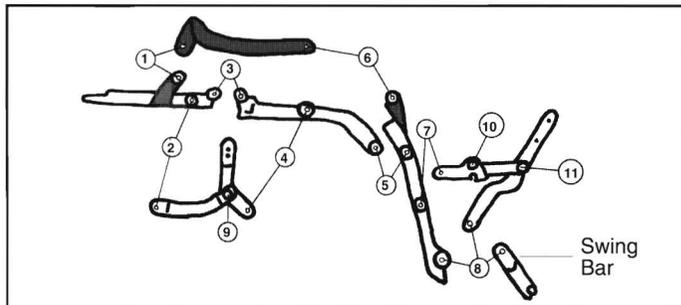
We have found that the easiest way to bend these tabs is to simply push on the 4 tabs with the blade of a slot screwdriver, being very careful not to stab yourself with the screwdriver or scratch or bend the stainless tab.

If you are not comfortable with attempting this adjustment yourself please feel free to return the blades to us to fix them for you.

One final point. Be sure when you install these blades onto the arm that the retaining bump at the end of the arm is fully snapped into the hole in the retaining clip. With our reproduced arms especially close tolerances require a slight pressure to snap the two pieces together securely.

## Restoration Tips

### ❑ Convertible Top Frames - Identifying Pins



Sketch showing RH side of the original convertible framework. Shaded areas indicate the additional link and modifications included with the '56 & '57 tops. Pin numbers refer to the table in the text.

There has, over the years, been some confusion with regard to which convertible top pin goes where, which pin gets which type of retainer, what are the differences between the early and late tops, and how to reassemble the various side pieces.

The sketch above along with the table below should answer a lot of these questions.

The shaded areas in the sketch are to point out the parts that were added to the 1956 & 1957 top frames to help minimize any tendency of the top to sag in the center over the door glass. Tops with these parts are referred to as "late tops".

PIN #	PIN PART #	RETAINER PART #	RETAINER DESCRIPTION
1,2,4,6	354169SCH	352146S	1/8 x 7/8 Roll Pin
7	354169SCH	354263SZ	1/8 x 3/4 Roll Pin
3	357412SCH	72034S	3/32 x 1 Cotter Pin
5	354170SCH	352146S	1/8 x 7/8 Roll Pin
8	354171SCH	72034S	3/32 x 1 Cotter Pin
9	76007SCH	—	Supplied "E" Clip
10	76005SCH	—	Supplied "E" Clip
11	76006SCH	—	Supplied "E" Clip

Originally all of the top frame pins had bright chrome plated heads. Pin #'s 1-8 are made to be removable and all hold steel to aluminum or aluminum to aluminum. These pins are held in place with either a cotter pin or a roll pin.

Pins 9, 10, & 11 hold steel to steel and were actually rivets. These were not made to be removed and will be destroyed in the disassembly process. Replacements for these pins are made to be retained by "E" clips which are always provided with the pins.

The convertible top frame castings and stampings were painted gloss black. The swing bar is painted the same color as the underside of the convertible top covering - black, tan, or blue.

### ❑ Shifter Boot Installation

You can extend the life of your standard shift shifter boot by putting several wraps of tape around the chrome shifter arm before you install the boot. This will hold up the top of the boot such that the "bellows" are extended.

The problem is that when the boot is collapsed it can be pinched between the shifter arm and the shifter housing. By extending the boot this tendency is minimized.

## Calls For Help

### ❑ Rear Main Seals

Since the demise of asbestos usage there has been a problem of obtaining rear main seals that don't leak.

Rebuilders have told us that if and when they are able to purchase a rear main seal set that was manufactured in the pre asbestos ban days that they experience virtually no leakage.

Our experience in our shop has been that the currently available rope seals just don't work as well as they should.

Neoprene (It's not actually neoprene but polyacrylate) seals are available for the 292 crankshafts but after extensive search we're convinced that no such seals exist for the 312 engines.

We have tested many alternatives in both product and technique and so far have not found an alternative that we feel is both effective and reliable. This is a very serious problem that must be solved.

Can you help? If you have found an effective product and/or technique that will solve the rear main leaking problem we'd love to hear from you.

### ❑ Water Pump Baffle

For years there has been a product on the market called a water pump baffle. This is a plate that fits between the water pump and the T-Bird water pump spacer. This baffle's advertised function is to "increase the efficiency of the water pump because it can't possibly work like it should with all that open space behind it."

We at CASCO have always been skeptical about the real value of this item and for years had elected not to sell it. Our thinking has always been that we have confidence in the cooling engineers at Ford and that they wouldn't have allowed the design if it was going to be such a problem.

Further, if the baffle plate does increase water flow, and we have not seen any real data to substantiate this, is this conducive to more effective cooling? Many articles have been written by many technical folks and the general consensus is that more flow equates to better cooling. We really don't wish to open that can of worms.

The bottom line is - does it work? Does the baffle in fact cure an overheating problem or at least cause the engine to run cooler. We don't know. We'd like to hear from you. If you have installed a baffle plate, drop us a line and let us know if it helped or not.

## 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 tip that you'd be willing to share? We'd love to pass it along. Each one used will get you a \$20.00 CASCO gift certificate and the appreciation of T-Bird restorers worldwide.

## Shop Tips

### ❑ Poor Engine Idle - A Not-So-Obvious Cause

If your engine won't idle correctly one possible and not too obvious problem can be that the secondary throttle plates are not closing completely.

We have run across this problem particularly with the Holley 4000 carbs used on '55 and '56's.

It is very easy to knock yourself out "fixing" all of the usual reasons for poor engine idle and completely ignore the secondary throttle plates. These plates must be closed and seated for proper manifold vacuum and good idle.

It's easy to check. We have always been able to identify this as a problem by simply forcing the secondary plates closed with a slight pressure on the external linkage.

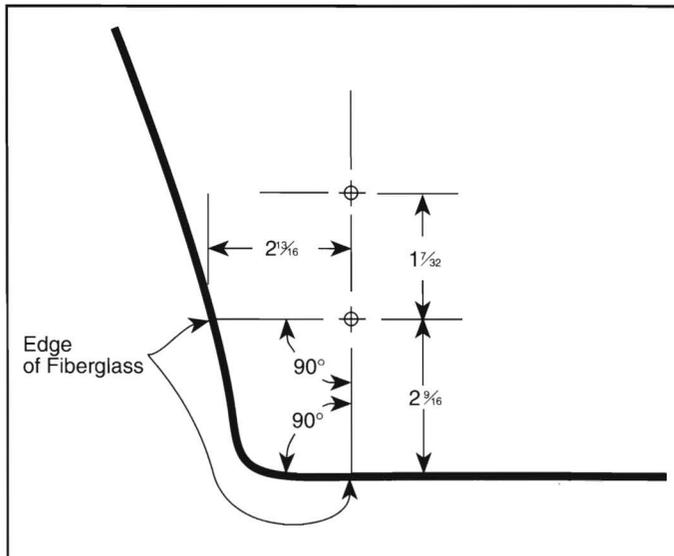
But it can be sneaky. We had one instance for example where the idle was OK until we test drove the vehicle and had the secondaries open normally and then not close properly. We were sure the problem had something to do with a warm engine vs. a cold engine. Wrong!!

Possible causes for the secondary throttle plates not seating would include dirt, stuck or binding linkage, defective secondary throttle diagram, or broken diagram spring.

### ❑ Hardtop - Position of Crest Emblem

If you are installing the crest emblem on the sides of a '55 hardtop that doesn't have the original holes the information on the sketch below will help you locate the correct location to drill.

Note that the measurements are made from the edge of the fiberglass and not from any part of the trim.



Sketch showing the correct position of the '55 T-Bird hardtop emblem. View is looking at the outside left hand side.

## New Reproduction Items From CASCO

We at CASCO are constantly working to provide quality reproduction parts to make your restoration easier, more accurate, and less expensive. Here are some of our newest items that aren't in our 1993 catalog.

Part #	Description	Price Each
We are now able to offer all of the dash knobs. In addition to the right & left air cable assemblies and heater & wiper knobs in our catalog we are now able to supply all of the rest of the knobs. Black plastic with chrome centers just like the originals.		
11661A	Knob & Shaft - Headlamp Control - 55/56	\$19.95
11661B	Knob & Shaft - Headlamp Control - 57	19.95
15056K	Knob & Shaft Only (No Bezel) - Lighter	19.95
15052-6V	Complete Lighter & Socket Assy. - 6 Volt	49.95
15052-12V	Complete Lighter & Socket Assy. - 12 Volt	39.95
18829D	Knob - Radio Control - "D" Shaft	14.95
18829S	Knob - Radio Control - Split Shaft	14.95
K-KEY	Knob & Ignition Key - a 50's hide-a-key	17.50

### Still working on wipers.

17508	Wiper Motor-Vacuum - Rebuilt - Exchange	74.95
17528A	Wiper Blade-Wrist Action - For 55's	29.95

### Engine & mount items.

6054	Retainer - Rear Engine Support	24.95
8501B	Baffle Plate - Water Pump - Stainless	20.50
9430	Exhaust Manifold - LH - for all 55/57	125.00
9520	Fuel Line - Replacement Carb - 57 - Not new but a much improved design	18.75

### Various other items.

14401-56	Wire Assy. - Main Harness - 56	391.25
17314B	Bezel - Turn Indicator - 55/56	12.50
76005SCH	Pin-Short - Rivet Replacement - Chrome	5.00
76006SCH	Pin-Medium - Rivet Replacement - Chrome	5.00
76007SCH	Pin-Long - Rivet Replacement - Chrome	5.00
VR-57	Decal-Voltage Regulator Cover-Yellow-57	1.00



### CTCI

It is our belief that every person who owns a Classic Thunderbird will benefit from membership in the Classic Thunderbird Club International (CTCI).

CTCI is the only national - actually international - organization that is 100% dedicated to representing the owners of Classic T-Birds.

The club publishes a bi-monthly publication "The Early bird" which alone is worth the \$25.00 annual cost of membership.

CTCI is recognized by Ford Motor Co. and it is through the efforts of CTCI that we are still able to get many parts for our little birds from Ford.

CTCI is the parent organization with almost 10,000 members and over 100 local chapters worldwide. If you aren't a member you should do yourself a favor and join.

Membership applications are available from CASCO or you can write to CTCI at P.O. Box 4148, Santa Fe Springs CA 90670-1148.

## Is Your T-Bird Really Locked?

Try this one on your Bird. Lock your door from the outside and then push hard a number of times on the outside door handle button. Many of you will find that by doing this your door lock button will slowly work it's way upward until the door is no longer locked.

All T-Birders should know that it is very easy to overtighten the lock buttons and to do so may allow the situation described above. This is not a problem of inaccurate reproduction parts. Our Birds came from the factory this way.

The problem is that when the lock button is screwed onto the shaft too far it limits the available downward travel of the shaft. The result is that the lock mechanism inside the door latch assembly is not able to engage fully.

The good news is that the fix is simple. Just unscrew the lock button a few turns to allow the shaft a bit more travel.

## Unadvertised Specials

The special prices below apply to all orders received before 12/1/93 - Normal shipping charges apply.

- **Reproduction Ignition Resistor** - Save \$4.00  
Part #12250 . . . . . **\$15.95 each**
- **Shock Absorbers - Heavy Duty Motorcraft** - save \$2.50 each. Part #s 18124 & 18125 . . . . . **\$20.00 each.**  
Buy all four and save even more. Part #18124-5K  
Set of all 4 shocks . . . . . **\$70.00/set**
- **Clear Plastic - '55 Horn Ring** - Save \$4.00  
Part #13A806A . . . . . **\$15.95 each**
- **Spark Plugs - Set of 8** - save \$4.00  
Part #12405K . . . . . **\$10.00/set**
- **Spare Wheel Cover - Steel with Rubber Bead - 56**  
Save \$10.00 Part #1406 . . . . . **\$64.95 each**

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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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