



Hello,

Thank you for your interest in the Bay Area Thunderbird Owners Club. If your Thunderbird is a recent acquisition for you, congratulations. If it has been in the family for many years and you are now wishing to become active and enjoy the many pleasures of "T-Birding", welcome.

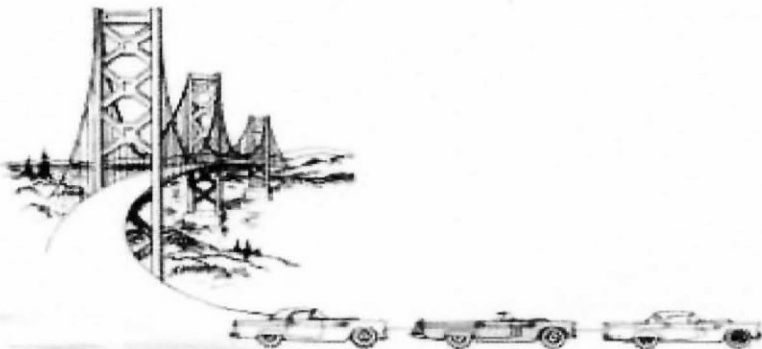
BATOC is America's original Thunderbird club dating back to 1958. We currently have about 75 active members throughout the Bay Area and Northern California. Our official purpose is, of course, the preservation of this classic, milestone car. But, as a club we also believe that our cars are meant to be used and enjoyed and to that end, our monthly meetings and monthly outings are designed to be fun, family outings with our cars and our good friends.

We are also here to share our knowledge and experience with fellow members and to help each other enjoy our cars to their fullest. Many of our members have restored their cars from the ground up and are eager to offer advice and help at anytime.

If I can answer any questions for you or provide you with any further information, please feel free to call me at anytime at (415) 269-0055. You may also email me at davehome@sbcglobal.net. Once again, thank you for joining BATOC and I look forward to seeing you at our meetings and outings.

Sincerely,

Dave Adams
President



The Beginning

While no cars had been produced during World War II, the late 1940's saw a huge rush in production as the American car companies tried to fill the postwar demand for vehicles. One of the most popular types of vehicle was the sports car. American soldiers in Europe during the war had seen Italian, German, French, and English sports cars and had brought some of these vehicles home with them. At the same time, interest in motorsports increased and car racing gained popularity.

Given these influences and the burgeoning American economy it was no surprise that the introduction of the 1955 Thunderbird was a huge success, easily filling a market niche. As Motor Trend's Detroit editor, Don McDonald wrote "Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the new Ford Thunderbird is the clever wedding of sports car functionalism with American standards of comfort". The TBird roadster, introduced at the Detroit Auto Show in 1954, was a two door roadster with a focus on modern comforts, conveniences and all weather protection, as well as power, performance and handling. In short, it was the essence of personal luxury.

The flight of the Ford Thunderbird has taken several twists and turns during its first 42 year existence while maintaining its path in the forefront of American automobile legends. Oct. 22 was the date of public introduction of the original two-seater in 1954. Eleven generations of Thunderbird have produced treasured collectors' items in a variety of models, including the design which in 1989 earned Thunderbird its third award as Motor Trend's "Car of the Year."

More than 5,000 names were considered for the new Ford project in 1954. A young Ford car stylist, Alden "Gib" Giberson, won a \$95 suit and an extra pair of pants from Saks Fifth Avenue for suggesting the name Thunderbird.

Thunderbird enjoys a storied history whose iconoclastic entry onto the scene in 1954 single-handedly erected the personal luxury-car segment in the United States. The Thunderbird two-seater was instantly popular with overtones of a high performance sports car, yet it had a strong appeal to luxury-minded buyers seeking refinements such as roll-up windows, a selection of power extras, and steel bodywork as opposed to fiberglass.

Production of the car designed by William P. Boyer (under the direction of Franklin Q. Hershey) began Sept. 9, 1954, at Ford's Dearborn (Mich.) Assembly Plant and generated immediate excitement. Customer demand for Thunderbird resulted in its October public introduction which was nearly a full month ahead of schedule. Public orders totaled more than 3,500 within the first 10-day selling period, while planned volume for the model year was only 10,000 units. Ford sold a first year total of 16,155 Thunderbirds.

1955



The 1955 model had a removable hardtop with a 102 inch wheelbase chassis that was 175.3 inches overall, with a width of 72 inches and a height of 52 inches. Curb weight was 2833 pounds. The engine was a Mercury 292 cubic inch V-8, exclusive to the Thunderbird line, which had 198 horsepower with the automatic and 193 horsepower with the manual transmission. The first Thunderbird came off the Dearborn assembly line October 22, 1954 and had at least 4,000 orders waiting on the first day of production. Over 16,000 units of the 1955 Thunderbird were ultimately sold.

The car sold for a base price of \$2,695 with the convertible selling for \$2,765 and was available in five colors: Thunderbird Blue, Raven Black, Snowshoe White, Goldenrod Yellow, and Torch Red. All cars had vinyl upholstery matching the exterior paint color.

The 1956 Thunderbird was very similar to the 1955 model with some notable exceptions. Portholes were now being offered as an option with the hardtop, a move designed to increase driver visibility, but that went on to become one of the more distinctive features of the Thunderbird. Other design changes included the relocation of the spare tire from the trunk to the exterior of the car right above the newly extended bumper.

The 1956, rarest of Classic Thunderbirds with a production total of 15,631, incorporated Ford's new safety concepts. Standard equipment included energy-absorbing passenger-side instrument panel padding, a concave safety steering wheel, safety door latches and a shatter-resistant mirror. Seatbelts were optional.

Last-minute improvements, including the addition of the optional 312 CID V-8 engine, gave the second edition of the Thunderbird better handling and increased performance to also improve Thunderbird's sports car feel.

The 1956 Thunderbird also saw an increase in price with the hardtop now selling for \$2,944 and the convertible selling for \$3,019. With options however, the price jumped all the way to \$3,800.

1957

The 1957 Thunderbird included a restyled front grille, rear deck and new bumpers. It was the first to have a fully padded dash surface. New features included a Volumatic Radio System which automatically increased the radio volume as the car's speed increased.

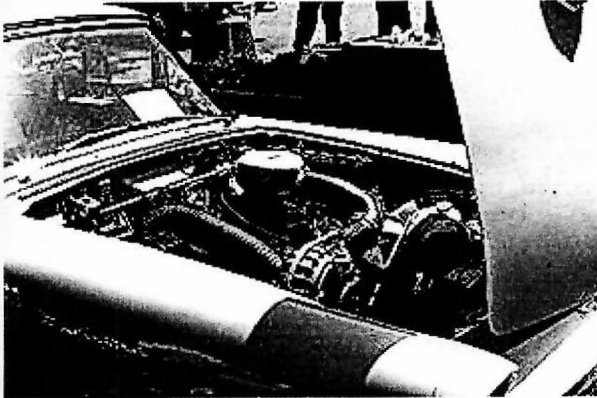
There was also the Dial-O-Matic power seat which provided a memory setting. When the ignition shut off, the seat returned to the rear position, allowing for easier entry to and exit from the car, and the seat then returned to its pre-set position when the ignition was started. The rear deck was restyled once more with the spare tire returning to the trunk which had a new wheel well. This allowed the tire to be stored in a new vertical position that left adequate trunk space for travel and leisure activity equipment, correcting a complaint from the earlier model.



The 1957 T'Birds had a selection of four engines. The "C" series was the base-issue Thunderbird. It had a 292 cubic inch displacement (CID) engine with a 2 barrel carburetor, and was rated at 212 horsepower. It was available only with the 3-speed manual transmission and typically had few options. There were approximately 3,300 of these produced.

The "D" series was most common with approximately 16,423 produced out of the total 1957 Thunderbird production of 21,380. This series had a 312 cid motor with 4 barrel carburetor which produced 245 horsepower. It's 0-60 mph times were in the 10-second range and it had a top speed of about 115 mph. It was available with a 3 speed/overdrive manual, or a Fordomatic transmission.

The "E" series had Ford's "High Performance Special" engine. It was rated at 270 horsepower through the combination of a "hotter" cam and two 4-barrel carburetors. Also in this series was Ford's "Racing" version which produced 285 horsepower. All together there were 1,499 "E" series produced. They were available with 3 speed transmission with or without overdrive, or an automatic transmission.



The "F" series Thunderbird has a 312 cid motor with special heads, cam, distributor and 4-barrel carburetor. Additionally there is a Paxton-McCulloch VR57 supercharger which "force feeds" the carburetor with up to 6 psi of compressed air. Although the McCulloch rated this setup at 360 horsepower, Ford indicated a rating of 300 horsepower.

Speculation is that a well set-up motor would produce in the 325-340 horsepower range. Its 0-60 mph times were measured in the 6-second range with a top speed of 125-130 mph.

Only between 208-211 were produced. The first 14 of these were supercharged D-Birds, called "D-F 'Birds" (they had the "D" data plate designation rather than the "F"). They were produced in January 1957 to qualify the supercharged Thunderbird as a production car for NASCAR competition.

The F-Bird was available with any of Ford's transmissions and the complete list of accessory options. The supercharger was a rather expensive option for the times at \$500.

While kept in production for an extra three months, the 1957 Thunderbird was the last of the classic two-seaters. The last one rolled off the assembly line Dec. 13, 1957, bringing an end to an era.

Sources:

1. [The Ford Motor Company webpage](#) (content referenced is no longer online)
2. Excerpt from Ford Motor Company press kit, 1994 After 40 Years, Thunderbird Continues to be History in the Making.
3. The ABC's of Birds, by Darrell Mountjoy, Reprinted from the EarlyBird, Nov-Dec 1986
4. Reprinted in the EarlyBird from the Hoosier Bird News, Nov. 1992
5. Thunderbird: An Odyssey in Automotive Design, by William P. Boyer. Taylor Publishing Company, Dallas, Texas. 1968
6. The Personal Luxury Thunderbird Story, by Richard M. Langworth. Motorbooks International, Osceola, Wisconsin. 1980

Resources

B.A.T.O.C Website:

www.Batoc.org

B.A.T.O.C. Facebook Page:

Bay Area Thunderbird Owners Club

General Mechanics

Adams Classic Autos
880 Howe Rd # E Martinez, CA.
(925) 957-0170
www.adamsautoclassics.com

C & J Automotive
1996 Alvarado St.
San Leandro, Ca.
510-352-4773
[www.sanleandroautorep
airservice.com](http://www.sanleandroautorep
airservice.com)

Body & Paint

Lafayette Auto Body
3291 Mt Diablo Blvd,
Lafayette, CA
(925) 283-3421
www.lafautobody.com

Don's Body Shop
2944 Grove Way,
Castro Valley, CA
(510) 581-2611
[www.donsbodyshopcastr
ovalley.com](http://www.donsbodyshopcastr
ovalley.com)

Upholstery

Armand's Upholstery
2660 N Main St,
Walnut Creek, CA
(925) 934-4373
No Web Site

Jason Zaso
15173 Crosby St.
San Leandro, Ca.
510-305-1907
No Web Site

Complete Restoration

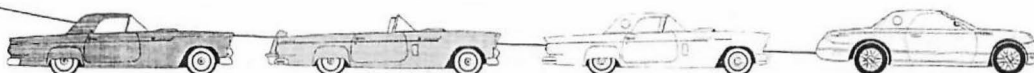
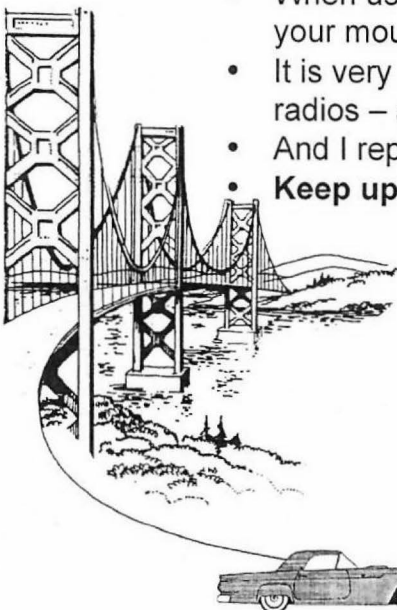
Gil's Classic Ford Center
5200 Gordon Valley Rd,
Fairfield, CA 94534
(707) 425-0116
No Web Site



Caravanning Tips

Keep up with the group and always stay in a tight group – particularly through towns, traffic and lights. Try not to allow enough space for other cars to get in and split up the group.

- When pulling out of driveways, parking lots, etc. signal the car behind you that it is safe to pull without stopping. This eliminates the need for each car to pull up, stop, look and then proceed. This is a major step in keeping the group together.
- If we loose the back of the group, we will slow down and /or stop if it can be done safely to allow you to catch up. So, please do catch up as quickly as possible.
- Lane changes should ideally happen from the rear of the group. If you are bringing up the rear and know that we must change lanes up the road a bit, move over and allow space for the person in front of you to move over in front of you, etc. on up the line. So always pay attention to the car **BEHIND** you.
- Avoid cruising in the slow lane of the freeway. Unless there are only two lanes, cruise in the second lane to avoid the merging of traffic from on and off ramps.
- **VERY IMPORTANT** – do not go through the fast track lane of bridges. Many people do not have Fast Track for their birds. Stay in a line with the group and go through the toll lanes – your Fast Track will still work. If you are paying cash have your cash ready and your window rolled down.
- If you need to stop for any reason, please call or radio the leader of the caravan. We will then stop at the next appropriate spot. Don't be shy here...if you need to pee, just say so.
- Caravanning etiquette is: Little Birds followed by Retro Birds followed by X-Brand.
- When using Walkie-Talkies hold the radio at least 6" inches away from your mouth and speak normally – do not yell.
- It is very important that the rear car and the lead car have walkie talkie radios – along with a few in the middle so that messages can be relayed.
- And I repeat
- **Keep up with the group and stay close to the car in front of you.**



BATOC BUCKS PROGRAM

BATOC Bucks are handed out to members according to participation in club activities.

Don't set them aside and forget about them. **BATOC Bucks** are as good as cash and should be redeemed. Their value is 1:10 meaning 10 bucks are worth \$1.00.

The bucks are distributed as follows:

Attending a meeting.....	10 per family
Attending an outing.....	15 per family
Driving your TBird to a meeting or outing.....	10 per car
Wearing your badge or jacket.....	2 per person
Bringing a raffle prize to the meeting.....	15 per prize
Hosting an event/outing.....	100 per event

Bring in 160 bucks and you've earned a free meal at the meeting.

Also, they are redeemable for items of apparel ie: T-shirts, jackets, hats, etc.

You're missing out if you don't redeem your bucks so don't stash them away and forget about them. Keep them handy and bring them in.



The 1955 - 1956 - 1957

Thunderbird

... the most exciting American sports car

There's an International Club for owners and admirers of these superb automobiles. We would like to tell you about it! . . .

Phone Toll Free 1.800.488.2709 for more information

*It's called the **Classic Thunderbird Club International**, and you will find members throughout the United States and all over the world.*

Why a Thunderbird Club?

Classic Thunderbird Club International (CTCI) was formed to band together owners and admirers of the 1955-57 Ford Thunderbird — to serve as a medium of exchange of ideas, technical information, and sources for parts. Lasting friendships have been formed through local chapters, Regional Conventions and International Conventions. Moreover, CTCI is recognized and sanctioned by the Ford Motor Company, which extends cooperation and support.



What Membership Means

Whether your Classic Thunderbird serves as everyday transportation, a relaxing hobby or both, you will find valuable help in your restoration and maintenance problems in the TECH TIPS printed in the club publication, the **EarlyBird**. This informative, illustrated periodical is distributed every two months and contains a variety of interesting features. Articles about historical data, members and their cars, news of chapter events and activities, are all profusely illustrated with photos. In addition, the **EarlyBird** offers an advertising service to those wishing to buy, sell, or swap parts or cars. You can review the contents of the current issue on our web site: www.ctci.org.

Tours, meets, road rallies, picnics and other outings designed to encourage group participation are regularly conducted by the various chapter groups. Check our web site www.ctci.org for a chapter near you. You are cordially invited to attend any of these friendly chapter meetings or events. CTCI members may also participate in Concours d'Elegance competition at CTCI conventions.

Standard or Premium Packet

Every new member receives a Standard New Member Packet upon payment of the initiation fee and dues. This includes a striking windshield decal, the latest edition of the **EarlyBird**, a membership roster with our club By-Laws, 3"x5" CTCI logo dash plaque and other general information. The optional Premium Packet includes the above plus a beautiful metal CTCI grille emblem. Many items such as service and transmission manuals, decals, handbooks and numerous self help items are available and sold to CTCI members only. See our Member Store at www.ctci.org.



SCAN ME!

**OUR OBJECTIVE:
EVERY CLASSIC T-BIRD OWNER IS A CTCI MEMBER**