



ARIZONA BIRD CHATTER

VOLUME 55 NUMBER 03 — March, 2026 [CTCI-2025/2026 Gold Medallion](#)

March

This months Featured Tbird

This months featured T-Bird is owned by Karl and Dulcie Martin of Peoria, AZ who are entering their 3rd year with the ACTC. They are nearing the finish-line with the restoration of their acquired 1957 T-Bird.

I purchased the 1957 TBird from a local Glendale AZ car builder in Feb. 2023, it was ironically located near 35 Ave & Thunderbird Rd. His plans were to make it a retromod by putting a coyote engine and new frame then run it through Barrett Jackson as he has with many of his builds. Somewhere along the line, he had a change of heart and listed the car in Facebook (FB)-merchandise.

The 1957 Thunderbird has always been my wife's favorite car although she had never driven one. I had recently finished a 53' Willy's wagon retromod and while surfing FB merchandise I came across this "basket case" 57 and my wife agreed we should purchase it immediately no matter its shape. So of course, I paid more than I should have (don't we always?). I was told it was an Arizona car that was unfortunately parked under a tree for over 30 years and had little rust and what rust it had was repaired. My wife and I were excited to get it home and she was excited for me to start working on it. My intentions were to also do a light retromod by upgrading the engine/transmission to modern era.

After doing inventory on all the parts I just couldn't get myself to cut or modify the car from its original beauty. Why not return it to its original luster, it's only money that you can't take with you. Of course, once I started digging into the car, I found more rust and an excessive amounts of Bondo on the drivers' door. After much contemplation I decided to find a master metal guy (*ApexMetalRestoration*), to replace the badly repaired floorboards and work the damaged door to the point where no body filler was needed. The paint shop only used skim coat prior to the paint. While the body was being worked, I had the frame powder coated and replaced all the lines, gas tank, and braking systems. The motor was completely rebuilt at Kelley's machine shop. The biggest challenge of this project was time. As we all know, we are at the mercy of the specialist, if and when they can get to your project. So there has been a waiting list that sometimes does not align with your timetable. I also found most of what I thought was salvageable and as it turned out, much was beyond repair. So, locating or matching parts have been an adventure and have been a frequent parts buyer from several different TB parts suppliers.

In the meantime, I found the Thunderbird community extremely helpful online. If I have a question or problem, I can usually post a picture and get an answer within minutes. I have always used my tinkering in the garage as therapy.

This may be the first time I will have to go to a therapist because of my tinkering in the garage LoL. Seriously, this has been an enjoyable experience and my first time trying to restore something so beautiful to its original state or near its original state. I did change the interior by wife's request (demand) to two tone red/white. I have most of everything I need to finish except enough time. It has been a slow but satisfying process. I enjoy going to the ACTC meetings because it is great to meet so many like-minded people. I hope to drive this soon to one of the future gatherings. *Karl & Dulcie*





From the President's Desk

"Inside looking through the Porthole"

by: Douglas Shearer

Fellow ACTC T-Birders,

Well the new year is just flying by, it's March already, and spring is in the air although you wouldn't know it since the weather recently has been so warm almost summer like. Well I'll take that over cold and snow any-time.

I've heard that the Glendale Car show went very well and everyone from our club who attended had a great time, as well as all the cars on display. Perhaps this will be an annual event that we can all participate in going forward. Thanks Jim R. for keeping us informed prior to the event. Good job.

I was informed recently that we gained ten new members. They are Alan & Shelly Thurston who live in Phoenix and Robert Mock who also resides in Phoenix, Dan Garvey from Surprise, Larry & Ruth Mead whom reside in Surprise, Troy & Rita Homewood from Phoenix and Robert & Cathie Faerber from Scottsdale. Great news to hear. Hopefully we will get more new members as the year progresses but, what a good month.

As far as events go, we met for lunch at the American Legion on February 15th and then proceeded to drive to the home of Alan and Mary Travis who's private collection of high end automobiles and motorcycles from 1882 - 1915 is nothing short of fascinating.

Alan gave a 90 minuet dissertation on his collection and the story behind each vehicle and races he's won all over the world. What an experience to listen to him and his wife talk about their adventures and how he personally works on these vehicles with tools from that period of time is just amazing. Thanks to Doug White for coordinating this event and to Bob for coordinating the luncheon. Excellent job to the both of you.

We also have the Clarksdale show coming up on the 14th that should really be fun. I know Chuck has been working tirelessly in coordinating this effort and the turnout from what I've heard is well over ten people. Excellent job Chuck. In April we have our picnic at the Musselmann's homestead with guest speaker John Boelts Farm Bureau that was coordinated by Walt Bonnaeu. That will be interesting to hear about "Farm to Table" as it pertains to Arizona produce and to have a nice pot luck lunch and visit with our members.

As I've stated before and will continue to state, we need volunteers to help form committees to organize events. Anyone interested can call either myself or Bob. I also request that a member or members volunteer to set up a nominating committee for next years election of board members. I will remind those in attendance at further meetings this year as well.

With that said, I offer you this thought:

If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise or disgrace, because you know what you are.

—Mother Theresa—



What's in that T-Bird Trunk For Sale?

- ⇒ 1957 Colonial-white Tbird, D-Code in nice condition **\$39,000.00 or OBO.** Located in Peoria, AZ
Contact: Mike Wood Ph# (602)-568-8140



- ⇒ 1957 Ford Thunderbird, D Code, Starmist Blue. 312 V8, FoMoCo 3 speed automatic transmission, A/C, power steering & (front disc) brakes, electronic ignition, electric fuel pump, secondary electric fan. Very Good Condition, everything works, runs great. Asking \$59,999.

Contact Bob Michele @ (602)-768-5710



- ⇒ 1956 Thunderbird project car, complete with some new parts, engine needs to be rebuilt. \$7,500. Peoria, AZ. Call Mike Wood Ph: 602-568-8140





What's in that Tbird Trunk For Sale?

Continued from Page-02



⇒ **1956/57 Thunderbird, black canvas soft-top**, clear back window, with all hardware included (Swing arm). Ready to install. Asking \$2950.

Contact: Allen Mccutchen Ph #: 602-684-0737





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Email: reliableautoparts.com



Also See Back Page



⇒ Offering several Vintage Memorabilia items that are “**All about Thunderbird**”. Below is a sampling of this extensive +30 year collection as depicted, plus many other items. If you are interested in seeing the collection and to purchased one or more of these collectables, they are being offered for sale by:

Contact:

Rich Bialy— Txt or call at (480)-231-0879



Your For Sale Advertisement of T-Bird related products or cars can be placed here and is free to active ACTC members.



Tech Facts

Retro-TBirds, 2002-2005 Computer Modules Issues & Solutions

Unlike the 55-57" baby T-Birds that predate computer/Micro Processor controlled functionality, The Retro-Birds have 3 computer modules if you count the ABS brake controller. This article will focus on the two most often associated with failures.

The 2002-2005 Ford Thunderbird's **Rear Electronic Module (REM)** is a known weak point over time that controls:

- Critical lighting, power windows and convertible top failures,
- Power, and fuel functions, (Code P1237)
- Massive Battery Drain

The **Front Electronic Module (FEM)** is the more sophisticated computer module and is also known as another weak point within the Retro-Tbirds of all years. This module controls:

- No power to the gauge cluster backlighting,
- Headlights not turning on (may sometimes flicker on),
- Dome lights failing to operate,
- Power steering stiff with fault code C1925,
- Convertible top not working,
- Driver side window malfunctioning and Horn not working.

Failures related to either module are often caused by internal components degradation due to heat and contamination, moisture and vibration, all leading to electrical failures. Understanding that Retro-birds are nearing that 25 year vintage classification and that time is particularly harsh on electronic components. Knowing that these computer micro-controllers are semiconductor devices that are designed to last some 10-12 years of trouble free automotive use. This is not to say that such modules cannot last much long. It is highly dependent on use, environment and power sources.

The good news is that in that last 5 plus years there are sources where a replacement modules can be purchased. Therefore, you have three ways to procure a new module, as follows:

- 1.) Buy a new FEM or REM, not many around and very expensive.
- 2.) Buy a rebuilt FEM or REM, a few companies providing, Moderately expensive.
- 3.) Buy a used but, tested/warrantied FEM or REM from a used parts vendor who specializing in Retro-Tbirds.

Fortunately within our ACTC Ad sponsors we have a leading supplier of FEM's and REM's for 2002-2005 Retro-Tbirds (Reliable Auto Parts), while offering a limited warranty to ensure -

Continued on top of Page-05>>>

Historical Facts

Ford's Thunderbird an After Market Wonder for the T-Bird.

By Walt Bonneau

In late 1956 a company in Burbank, CA with a corporate name of "Birdnest" thought they had a brilliant concept by allowing personal luxury sport minded T-Bird purchasers to justify their two seat-er by installing a nicely done rumble seat especially accommodating with the larger trunk of the 1957 T-Bird. Installed for only \$289.00 (\$1,800.00, in todays money or 7% of the price of the car.).



The Original Advertisement issued late 1956

The company only offered Colonial white but money speaks and as seen in the picture below:



Continued on top of Page-05>>>



Continued from Page-04<< (**Tech Facts**)

your Tbird operates as it should. So where are these modules located in your car and what do they look like?

- **The REM** is located in the trunk, usually hidden behind a panel or lining, below the convertible top and accessible from behind the rear inside deck.

Note: Ford has discontinued the OEM electronic modules for these vehicles.

- **The FEM** is located behind the passenger-side kick panel in the front footwell area and secured to the side wall and firewall via tape and fasteners.



FEM

Note: Expect to pay anywhere between \$400.00 to \$1,200.00 per module

Note: Replacing these modules requires a moderate level of technical knowledge .

Note: Do not throw-away the broken module, there are companies that can rebuild most of them.



REM

Continued from Page-04<< (**Historical Facts**)

The concept of installing an after market ‘Rumble Seat’ was not approved by Ford Motor Company who by this time considered rumble seats to be somewhat convenient but quite dangerous. The seat came with no seat belts nor padded truck lid frontal passenger opening. An accident of any speed over 25 mph would likely have substantial injuries to the Birdnest passengers. Even with favorable reviews by owners who added the T-Bird rumble seat, less than 150 such installations actually occurred. The introduction of the 1958 T-Bird with a back seat obsoleted the product before it really took root. If you needed an extra seat you would buy the new 58”. It is believed that less than 100 such T-birds exist today. And they are considered rare and collectable. A bit more detail about installing a rumble seat; it was necessary to add a continental spare tire kit to accommodate the spare which no longer had a place in the truck. This completely defeated Ford’s reason for increasing the 57’s trunk size. Having the continental spare added plus 200-250 lbs. of passenger all behind the rear axle changed the handling dynamics of the T-bird, Not in a good way. On curvy roads the rear of the car would want to travel out from the front of the car’s directed steering, also known as oversteer. Also take notice that the entire T-Bird Ford marketing plan was a personal sport luxury vehicle not as the Birdnest offered, “Family Car”.



Classic Thunderbird Movie/TV & Other Trivia

1. What University Safety Study funded by Ford motivated Ford to add multiple safety features in the 1956 and 1957 T-Bird and the studies name?
2. What features did Ford offer in this optional safety option package, name three of the 7 safety features
3. What percentage of 1957 T-Birds were ordered with this safety package?

Answer on Page-15>>>





March

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
Jennifer Kiley	03/01
Richard Bialy	03/04
Sylvia Mock	03/06
Robyn Dodd	03/08
Julia Strabala	03/10
Cosette Ingram	03/10
Mary George	03/16
Chuck Thompson	03/18
Larry Braasch	03/25
Don Henderson	03/26
Joe Arredondo	03/30
Russ Hanson	03/31

NEW! TO THE MONTH'S TOPIC SECTION:

Based on the initial feedback from the 2026 Newsletter Survey. It was determined that the Flower and Gemstone topics were not of much interest any longer per the member readership. Therefore, the following Ford/T-Bird month's related events will be covered for 2026/2027 Newsletter starting this issue.

Thundering into Battle: The '57 Ford 'Battlebirds' Contributor: John Gunnell, Gunner's Garage

In the **March of 1957**, auto racing buffs were treated to a battle royal when Thunderbirds and Corvettes went head to head in straight-line racing and sports-car competition. Ford was poised to pull out all the stops when it decided to create four special Thunderbird racers that became known as the "Battlebirds."

Many car magazines of that era were filled with stories highlighting the T-Bird as a success and the Corvette as a failure. Needless to say, Ford was poised to pull out all the stops on the racing front.

Ford decided to create four special Thunderbird racers that became known as the Battlebirds. They were prepared by Peter DePaolo Engineering, a Long Beach, CA firm named after its owner. This was the same DePaolo who had raced at Indy Motor Speedway, as well as on classic board tracks in the 1920's. All four cars started out as '57 Thunderbirds in Colonial White with the doors, hood, trunk fenders. Sheet metal wizards Dwight "Whitey" Clayton and Dick Troutman -



<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
Dave and Silva Mock	03/06
Sandy and Stuart Roos	03/06
Denis Frank and Mary Lee Winer	03/12
Tom and Yvonne Wagner	03/29

Welcome to Our Newest ACTC Members!

Larry and Ruth Mead	Surprise, AZ
Dan Garvey	Surprise, AZ
Alan and Shelly Thruston	Phoenix, AZ
Robert Mock	Phoenix, AZ
Troy and Rita Homewood	Phoenix, AZ
Robert and Cathie Faerber	Scottsdale, AZ



ACA Museum is part of Ross Myer's "3-Dog Garage in Boyertown, PA. The above picture is one of two fully dressed "Battlebirds" of the four remaining.

used hand formed albase. Starting with the C-code V-8 (292 CiD), the body was given faired-in headrests, body lightened and streamlined. Each Battlebird was unique and all four cars had different degrees of mods from moderate to wild. One had a turbo-charged 312 V8 Cid reacting 200 mph.

As Thunderbirds and Corvettes went head to head in competition. This year, Chevrolet and Ford were running remarkably close in showroom sales. It appeared that Dearborn might have a chance to unseat Flint (GM) America's No. 1 automaker. In addition, after four years, Chevy's Corvette seemed to be "on the ropes" and Ford was eating this up. By the close of 1957, Ford had un-throne GM by out selling GM by a small margin. Interesting, how once again the Thunderbird really mattered. *Continued on page-7>>>*



West Wind Resorts 4th Annual Car Show

Located in Yuma, AZ and was held on January 18th, 2026 under beautiful Skies There were +60 very nice cars competing for five awards. Known as one of Yuma Counties best car shows with trained judges.

Pleased to say that Walt & Lynne Bonneau's 57' Flame Red T-Bird took the top honor of People's Choice Award for the second straight year representing the ACTC.



The Glendale Arts and Culture Fest with Car Show Event

Taking place in Glendale, AZ on January 31st, 2026, the ACTC was represented by 4 of our club's classic Thunderbirds. The event was plenty of fun with excellent weather to accompany the various activities. Members Jim Rodgers and Russ Hanson each walked away with an award given to their 57" T-Birds, as listed below. Hat's off to both Jim, Russ and Margie for making those ACTC T-Birds shine:



Awards given to ACTC Car entries, Congrats to:

⇒ [Russ and Margie Hanson for Best Interior](#)

⇒ [Jim Rodgers for Best Thunderbird](#)

Continued from page-6 (The Months Topic)

The late Gil Baumgartner, the authenticity chairman of the Classic Thunderbird Club International (CTCI) in 1995, noted that the Peter DePaolo team was selected by Ford Motor Co. to conduct an all-out assault on the Daytona Beach Speed Week Trials in February 1957. Throughout automobile history it rings true that when Ford choses to compete on the race track them have won over and over again. 1957 was no different, when the Battlebird's came on the scene, Ford once again came across the victory lane in championship style.



February, 2026 Club Luncheon & Private Car Museum

On Sunday the 15th of February the membership in attendance at over 39 had a very nice luncheon at the America Foreign Legion Post 107 at 11:30-12:15pm. This was followed by a short 15-20 minute car tour over to the private Car and Motorcycle Racing Collection/Museum with 10 Tbirds and 37 members. What a great experience, as the owners (Alan and Mary Travis), provided us with a 90 min presentation that was captivating, as Alan navigated through the technology, mechanics, challenges, period culture and the human element/history of these cars and motorcycles. It was just fascinating on so many levels. The museum/restoration area is so well kept and organized. We also learned of his racing experiences which, were quite rewarding as he took a 1913 Bugatti across the finish line first, hitting 70 mph on occasions (See Blue car on top left and bottom left). Thanks, hats off to Bob Michele in making this event happen.



HIGHLIGHTED SPECIAL EVENTS

The Following events listed on this page are Moderately Near-term Events. Also See Page-11 for more events.

February 28th, 2026: Tri Unit Car - Show

22034 N. 83rd Ave Peoria, AZ

Contact: Craig Weston @ (623)-512-6315



See Flyer for further Information

Tri-Unit CAR SHOW!
Classic Cars and Motorcycles

Thank you to our sponsors
 CMA Chariot Warriors for Christ
 Snap on Tools Steve McDonald
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THE SHOW WILL BE HELD AT
 The LDS Church
 22034 N. 83rd Ave
 Peoria, AZ
 February 28 2026

Vehicle entries opens at 7 am
 Open to Public 8 AM

Questions?
 Contact
 Craig Weston
 623-512-6315

Other text on flyer: Troop 126, PACK 126, 2126, Cars and Motorcycles, Trophies and Auctions, Music, Food and Drinks, \$25/show contestant Free to Public, Cub Scout Pinewood Derby Racing Bring your own Pinewood Derby Car to Race!

Saturday March 14th, 2026 — Clarksdale, AZ Car Show

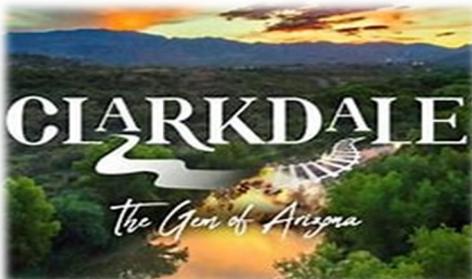
9:00AM-2:00PM

An ACTC's Planned Tour/Event to attend:

Registration starts early January, 2026 (MAYBE CLOSED DUE TO ABUNDENT PARCIPATION)

Estimated Cost: \$25.00, There are still a few spots open but register, ASAP!

Located 100 miles NW from Central Phoenix near Cottonwood.



PLEASE NOTE !

All dates and events listed above are tentative



ACTC Year-2026 MEETING/EVENT SCHEDULE

Next Official ACTC Board Meeting to be held on Friday February 27th, 11:00am-1:00pm

Location is Scottsdale, check for Board member specific meeting location and agenda information.

Sunday March 8th, 2026 ACTC Meeting

American Legion Post # 107 located at N. Cave Creek RD, Phoenix, AZ

Arrive 8:30am-9:00AM

Meeting starts at 9:05AM, Full Breakfast will be served price is \$18.00 per person

The ACTC Annual Picnic/Meeting Saturday. April 11th. The picnic will be hosted by Jack & Nikki Musselmann's at their home in Chandler, AZ. *The picnic will feature a "potluck" lunch; An item provided by each person/couple in attendance. A special guest speaker Mr. John Boelts (President of the AZ Farm Bureau), will talk about Farm to Table issues . (Final details will be sent out In a special ACTC email to the membership, shortly).*



Last ACTC Meeting before the Summer Break: (Also National Thunderbird Day)

Sunday, May 17th to be held at the American Legion #107 on N. Cave Creek Rd, Phoenix

— Details to follow in the April Newsletter but a car tour is in the works..

In Memory of Sondra (Sandy) Trasente a long time ACTC member has passed away on 2/11/26. A celebration of life is scheduled for February 28th from 2pm to 5pm at:

4026 W. Mohawk Lane Glendale, AZ 85308



REMINDER FOR ALL ACTC/CTCI MEMBERS:

⇒ **Your ACTC 2026 Dues—Deadline was January 23rd, 2026 (See last months Chatter Newsletter for the Renew Application form or online at aztbirdclub@gmail.com). Contact Judy Thompson for more details.**

Note: The Membership directory for 2026 has now been published. Please ask Judy or Chuck Thompson for a copy if, you have not already received one.

We all want to **Thank Judy Thompson** for organizing and pulling together the 2026 ACTC Members Directory. This is a time consuming and dynamic set of tasks in order to make this directory as correct and up to date as possible. She did a fine job and many will use this book to stay in touch.

It's Official! CTCI and VTCI both agreed to hold the next Annual Conference as a Joint Event in September, 2026 in Flagstaff, AZ (More information to be issued in April, 2026). Volunteers from the ACTC will be needed! VTC and ACTC are still working out details.



PLEASE NOTE !

All dates and events listed above are tentative

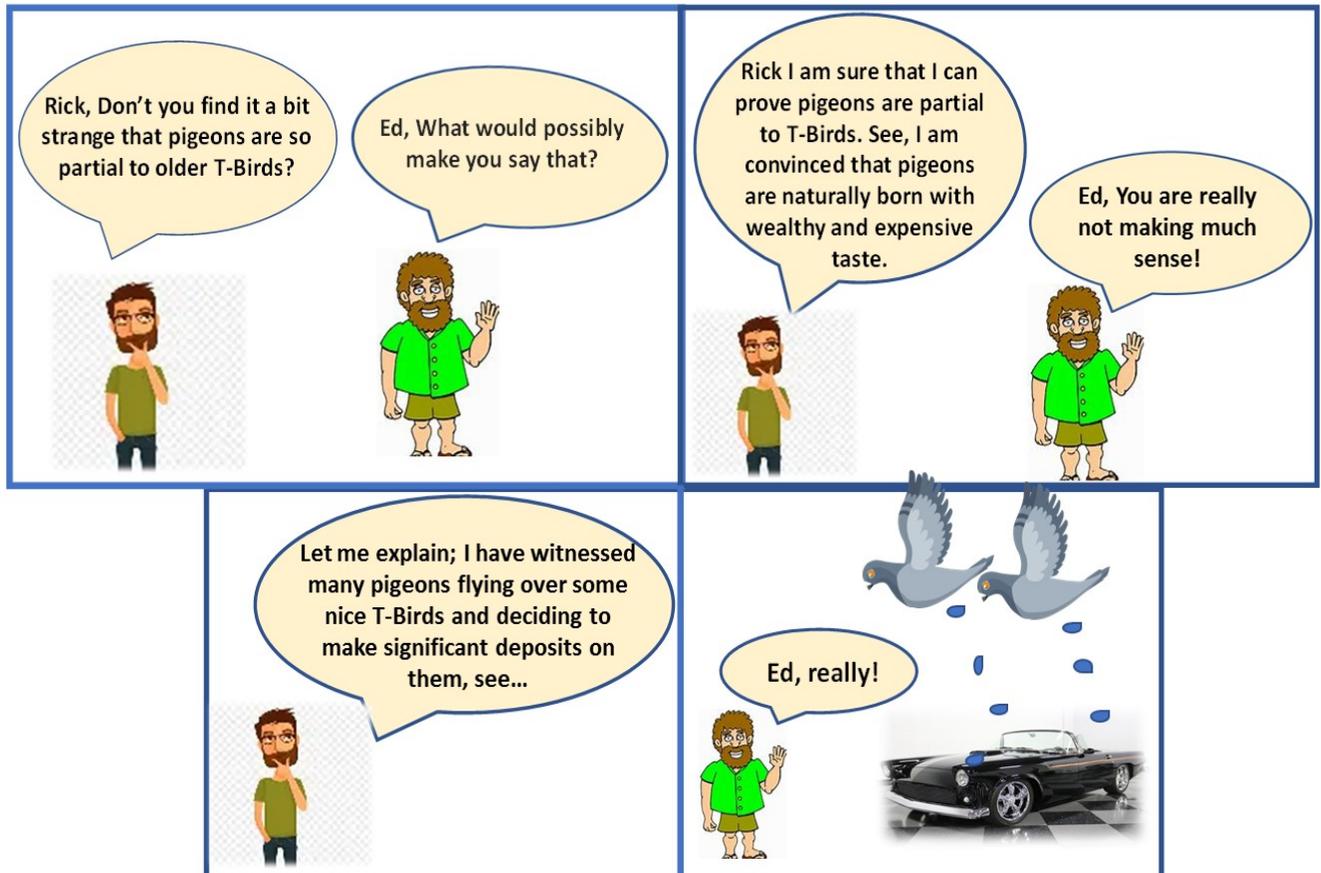


Other ACTC Information to Know

ACTC Apparel Still Available for Sale

Reserve a T-Shirt now... (Remaining ACTC T-shirts will only be offered until March 15th, 2026!)

The new **ACTC women's (SOLD-OUT) and men's T-shirts** went on sale over 35-weeks ago. Sales have been good with 90% of the these shirts now sold. If you want to purchase a Men's T-shirt made of 90 to 100% Soft-Cotton (Silk- screened, not iron-on stickers), you might want to reserve/purchase a T-Shirt soon by contacting (Lynne or Walt Bonneau), there are only 15 shirts available. The price is now set at \$20.00 ea. for all of the T-shirts . There will not be a new order placed for at least one-year. Sample T-Shirt pictures are provided below: *(See Page-13 for Walt's contact information).*



The Arizona Classic Thunderbird Club (ACTC)

Founded as Chapter #35 of the CTCL on October 11, 1970 and Arizona Incorporated on November 30th, 1971. Originally established with six charter members but has continued to grow with over 100 plus members with 68 Classic and Retro Thunderbirds in 2025. We are part of Southwest Region # 06 of CTCL.

The ACTC has membership from all over the State of Arizona and participates in various classic car show events throughout the State. Our Club Emblem is the State of Arizona with the Thunderbird.



Our President's Goal in 2026; To continue the growth of the club and it's membership while working toward establishing more ways for the membership to enjoy being part to the ACTC environment.

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Other News, Events & Misc.



Request for Newsletter Submissions:

Contact Walt Bonneau: waltbonneau@gmail.com

All ACTC and CTCL members **may submit a request** to have an **Event, Topic Request, Club Suggestions or Misc.** (Thunderbird Related) contribution for publication consideration in the ACTC Newsletter.



Note: All submissions are due by no later than the 16th of each previous month to meet the publication deadline for the following month.



Special Note: We want to extend our thanks to our sister Tbird Clubs who the ACTC shares Newsletters with, as follows: Sacramento, CA (SCTC), Palm Springs, CA (PSCTC), Smokey Mtn Classic Tbird Club, Knoxville, TN., Big "D" Little Bird Dallas, TX. And Hawkeye Classic Tbird Club Des Moines, IA. And the VTCL Phoenix Chapter. More to come...



Movie/TV Series Trivia Answers:

- 1) Cornell University's 1954/55 Aeronautical Laboratory "Lifeguard".
- 2) Features: **Padded dash, visors and door panels, crash proof door locks, concave steering wheel and seatbelts.**
- 3) **Less than 10%**

Added Note: In 1954, Ford Motor Company deepened its engagement with Cornell University's Aeronautical Laboratory, utilizing pioneering research on car safety to develop the "Lifeguard" design for 1956 models. Studies by Cornell showed that being ejected from a car increased fatality risks five-fold, prompting Ford to introduce safety features like seat belts, padded dashboards and stronger door latches.

New Membership Request;

Contact Judy Thompson

New Advertisers Welcomed;

Contact Walt Bonneau

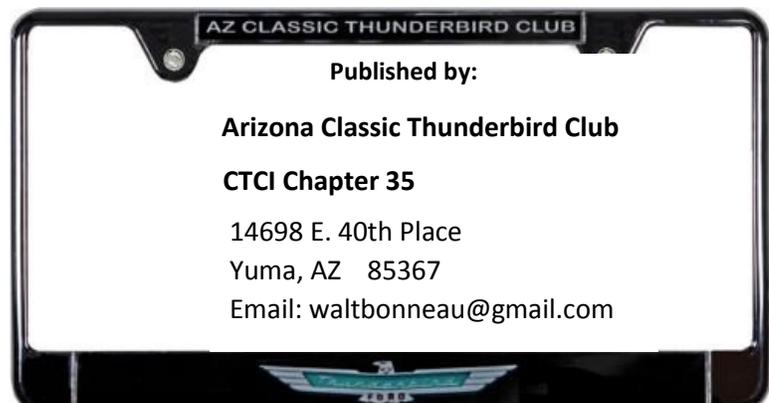
Remember All meetings are:



NO SMOKING



Arizona Bird Chatter



AZ CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD CLUB

Published by:

Arizona Classic Thunderbird Club

CTCL Chapter 35

14698 E. 40th Place

Yuma, AZ 85367

Email: waltbonneau@gmail.com





Our ACTC Advertisers and WE Appreciate Your Support

Note: Newsletter-2026 Advertisement Renewal is due by January, 31st.

We would like to continue to acknowledge our eight ACTC Newsletter supporters/advertisers for the 2025/2026 year. **Let's continue to show them our member support in return!** If you purchase a service or product from them be sure to let them know you are with the ACTC.

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See the Back Page for Retro T-Bird Parts

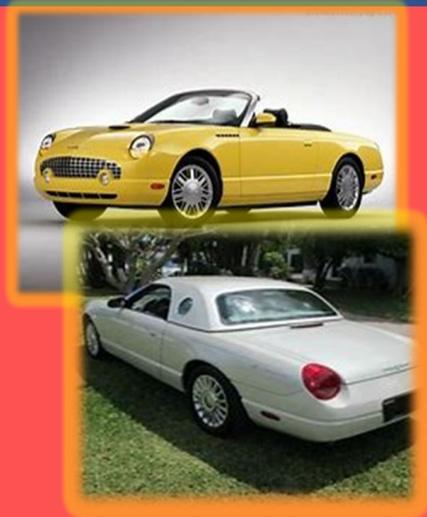






Reliable Auto Parts

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We ship through-out the USA

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Web Site: reliableautoparts.com



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