

Thunder Words



April 2026, Volume 49 #4
Dedicated to the 55, 56, & 57 Thunderbird
Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club



Prez Says: We had a good turnout at our March meeting, and I hope we can keep that trend going. We decided to gather in Murdock in April for a friendship luncheon and tour Lincoln in May for Thunderbird Appreciation Day. Now is the time to get your T-Bird out of hibernation and ready for driving. Please come to April's meeting in Omaha to help plan future events and outings.

Martin Bierman, President

Next Event
Annual Friendship Lunch
Murdock Bar & Grill
Murdock, Nebraska
April 19, 2026
12:30 PM

2026 Meeting Dates:
Waverly – March – May – July – Sept. – Dec.
19 21 16 17 17
Omaha – April - June - Aug. - Oct.
16 18 20 15
November Friendsgiving - TBD

Next
Business Meeting
April 16, 2026
6:00 PM
Omaha, NE



Daisy

April's significant days:
1 – April Fool's Day
3 – Good Friday
5 – Easter
10 – National Sibling Day
11 – National Pet Day
22 – Earth Day



Sweet Pea



www.Nebraskalandtbirds.org
<https://www.facebook.com/nebraskatbirds/>
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Minutes of the Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club, March 2026



Secretary's Report- President Martin Bierman called the March 19 meeting to order at 6:03 pm at the Trakside Bar and Grill, Waverly, Nebraska. Eleven members were in attendance, including **Jack Sanford, Joel Hutchins, Renea and Scott Steffens, Bob McGowan, Martin and Mary Lou Bierman, Phil Brown, Jeff Brown, Larry Dawes, and Tom Woodman.**

Minutes- There were no meetings in January and February. Treasurer's Report- **Jeff Brown** reported the checking account is balanced. Only two club members have yet to pay their dues. The ENWICC (car council) dues have been paid for this year. One bill was submitted for flowers for Larry Smith's funeral. Our not-for-profit status fee is up to date.

Old Business- **Martin** thanked the club members who participated in Larry Smith's funeral procession, particularly Rob Kinsey and Tom Woodman, who drove from Lincoln for the event. **Tom Woodman** reported on the March Lincoln swap meet.

New Business- **President Martin** asked for ideas for events for the next two months. A friendship lunch in Murdock, Nebraska, on April 18 or 19 was suggested, and **Rob Kinsey** will be asked to arrange this since he had arranged a prior lunch there. A tour of Lincoln, Nebraska, was agreed on for Thunderbird Appreciation Day on May 17, and **Rob Kinsey** had planned a tour last year that was cancelled due to weather. He will be asked to arrange the tour for May 17. May 2 is the Skills and Grilles car show at Gretna High School, and members were asked to consider attending this. September 9-13 is the joint VTCI-CTCI international convention in Flagstaff, Arizona, and members were asked to save the date.

Brag Box- **Phil Brown** made the brag box years ago, and it is still intact.

Martin and Mary Lou Bierman's grandson's armor unit is returning from Poland.

Joel Hutchins' 1957 is running well, and he drove it to the meeting.

Renea Steffen's granddaughter graduated early from high school at age 16.

Larry Dawes has problems with his soft top.

Adjournment- Motion to adjourn made by **Renea** and seconded by **Joel.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Lou Bierman



TECH TALK

By Martin Bierman

Testing Coolant



Coolant is a mix of antifreeze and water. It also has corrosion inhibitors to prevent corrosion and damage to the radiator and engine. With use and age, the corrosion inhibitors can decrease, and acids build up. When this occurs, a radiator flush and change of coolant is indicated. How does one know if the corrosion inhibitors have decreased? When acids build up, the metal ions are stripped off, and a small electrical current occurs through a process known as electrolysis. One can measure this current with a multimeter. Set the multimeter on millivolts DC and place the black probe on a good engine compartment ground; then place the red probe into the radiator fluid, making sure it does not touch metal. A current reading of 400 mV or less is acceptable. Some authors use a value of 300 mV as a cut-off. Values above 3-400 mV indicate a need to flush the system and add fresh coolant. I measured three radiators in my three T-Birds and one in an engine stand. Values ranged from 8 to 61 mV, with 26 and 34 mV readings in between. All the car radiators had their fluid changed in the last year. The engine stand had fluid that was 11 years old, and its reading was 34 mV.

Another function of antifreeze coolant is the depression of the freezing point and elevation of the boiling point to protect the radiator and engine against damage. A 50% mix of ethylene glycol antifreeze and water will protect down to minus 35°F and up to plus 265°F. The concentration of ethylene glycol can be measured with a hydrometer.



Hydrometers come in several forms: a simple tube with balls floating in aspirated antifreeze indicating concentration; hydrometers with other floating devices; or a refractometer (pictured above right), which measures per cent ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, and specific gravity of battery acid. All these will do the job. Coolant test strips (Cooltrak brand), which measure the pH and the concentration of antifreeze, are also available. The pH reading which is a measure of acid content should



be greater than 7-7.5 if acid build up is not present. A final note- always use distilled water when refilling the radiator system. This will avoid calcium and magnesium deposits, which occur with the use of tap water.



Board of Directors Meeting Highlights Video Conference March 20, 2026

Treasurer's Report: John Kledis presented the Year-End Financials for 2025. This report will become the basis for our Yearly Form 990, which is the Federal tax filing. He explained that our balance sheet is strong with over 1,300,000 in Assets. On the Revenue and Expenses report, John explained that the club showed a small "Functional" (Club Operations) loss. This was balanced with our dividends and interest from our Investment Account. Therefore, the club showed a positive net income of over \$35,000. This is significantly better than 2024. John reminded the Board that we needed to continue to increase membership and thus revenue in 2026.

Member Renewals: Garrett Shropshire, through the Office Activity Report, documented Member Renewals. Garrett shared some great news that between January and February of 2026, we have already gained 30 New Members. In addition, we gained 8 members who had previously returned to CTCI (before 2025). We are right in the middle of the renewal period, so it is difficult to know exactly what the trends are. It is also not possible for us to tell how many members we may lose as a result of the discontent. As of 2/28/2026, we have received only 33 dropout notices.

2026 Member Renewal Marketing Plan: Garrett Shropshire, through the Office Activity Report, outlined the ongoing Marketing Plan. He remarked that we will put some effort into continuing marketing to members who did not renew in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Second, we will continue working with chapters willing to share their rosters. Third, we are going to directly market to those Modern Classic – Retro owners who live within a 300 to 400-mile radius of Flagstaff, AZ. Our goal is to encourage these members to "be a member for the day." We continue to work with chapters that have sent the names of all CTCI members in the chapter area who are NOT members of a local chapter. The goal is to persuade all CTCI members who are not part of a chapter to become active members of the local chapter.

Office Activity: The CTCI Activity Report & stats for the Factory Invoices and Merchandise Sales for the whole year of 2025 and year to date for 2026 are included for your review. We have assisted the invoice committee in processing 12 Invoice requests so far in 2026, up from 8 at the same time last year. Merchandise sales for the year to date are at \$ 3,506.10. We are UP in merchandise sales from the same period in 2025. In addition, since we are NOT adding to the inventory, our store balance sheet continues to improve (turning inventory into cash).

Board Appointment: The CTCI Board appointed Pocahontas Cole to fill the open Region 5 Director position.

Joint Convention 2026: The CTCI Board discussed the current progress of the 2026 Joint (TOA) Convention. At this point, only the hotel contract has been finalized. No other details have been agreed. In addition, the schedule, tours, and programs, along with their related pricing, have not yet been determined. The Committee will work over the next few weeks to complete planning and finalize some of these details. It is the committee's hope to have all registration details finalized by April 15.

Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee outlined improved procedures to help the membership gain a clearer understanding of each candidate's background and qualifications to assist the CTCI Board.

Club Liaison / Membership Committee: This committee gave its report to the Board. They outlined the goal of increasing communication and cooperation with each local chapter. Several ideas were provided, including "Test Drive" packages for each club and assistance from CTCI with local club events (such as giveaways and other promotional materials).

The next Board meeting is set for May 15, 2026, at 10:00 AM Central

On Behalf of the Board, **Bob Bly**, President



2026 Calendar of Events

April 03 – Good Friday

April 05 - Easter

April 16 – 6:00 PM – Bus. Mtg. - Coffee Kettle Café - 9905 Sapp Brothers Dr, Omaha, NE

April 19 – 12:30 PM – Friendship Lunch – MMG – Madsen’s Murdock Grill – Murdock, NE (see page 7)

May 2 – Skills & Grilles - 9-11:30 Registration (\$15) – 2:00 PM Trophies – Gretna High School – 11335 S 204th St, Gretna, NE

May 17th – Thunderbird Appreciation Day. Details will be in May’s Newsletter. It will be a Lincoln event.

May 3 – Junkstock – Gas & Gears 9 – 2 PM - Free Registration (junkstock.com) – 1150 River Road Dr, Waterloo, NE

May 23 – 52nd Annual Columbus Car Show 8-4 PM – Registration \$25. (facebook.com/msranebraska)

August 30th – Vintage Wheels at the Fort – 10 – 2 PM – Free Registration – Vintage Vehicles 1900 – 1970 only – 30th & Fort St.

Friendship Lunch

This year’s Friendship Lunch will be held at the MMG, Madsen’s Murdock Grill, in Murdock, NE. April 19, 2026, 12:30 PM. We started this annual event in 2023 and have kept the tradition going. Rob Kinsey reports that they are glad to have us back again this year. Murdock is located just north of Nebraska Highway #1 and west of County Road 310. See the maps below.



We are hoping for good weather. We live in Nebraska, and we know about change! We allow you to drive any vehicle; don’t feel that you must drive your bird.



Early Development of the Classic Thunderbird

A smaller two-seater sports roadster, named the **Vega**, was developed in 1953 at the request of Henry Ford II. The completed one-off generated interest at the time, but had meager power, European looks, and a correspondingly high cost, so it never proceeded with production. The Thunderbird was similar in concept but was more American in style, more luxurious, and less sport-oriented.

Credit for the development of the original Thunderbird is given to **Lewis Crusoe**, a former GM executive lured out of retirement by Henry Ford II; **George Walker**, chief stylist and a Ford vice president; **Frank Hershey**, chief stylist for the Ford Division; **Bill Boyer**, designer for the Body Development Studio, who became the manager of the Thunderbird Studio in the spring of 1955; and **Bill Burnett**, chief engineer. Ford Designer **William P. Boyer** was the lead stylist on the original 1955 two-seater Thunderbird and also contributed to subsequent Thunderbird series, including the 30th Anniversary Edition. Hershey's participation in the creation of the Thunderbird was more administrative than artistic. Crusoe and Walker met in France in October 1951. Walking in the **Grand Palais** in Paris, Crusoe pointed at a sports car and asked Walker, "Why can't we have something like that?" Some versions of the story claim that Walker replied, "Oh, we're working on it..." Although if anything existed at the time beyond casual dream-car sketches by members of the design staff, records of it have never come to light.

Walker promptly telephoned Ford's HQ in Dearborn and told designer Frank Hershey about the conversation with Crusoe. Hershey took the idea and began working on the vehicle. The concept was for a two-passenger open car, with a target weight of 2,525 lb. (1,145 kg), a 252 cu in (4.1 L) **Ford Y-block Interceptor V8** based on the forthcoming overhead-valve Ford engine slated for 1954 model year introduction, and a top speed over 100 mph (161 km/h). Crusoe saw a painted clay model on May 18, 1953, which corresponded closely to the final car; he gave the car the go-ahead in September after comparing it with current European trends. After Henry Ford II returned from the Los Angeles Auto Show (Autorama) in 1953, he approved the final design concept to compete with the then-new Corvette.

The name was not among the thousands proposed, including rejected options such as Apache (the original name of the P-51 Mustang), Falcon (owned by Chrysler at the time), Eagle, Tropicale, Hawaiian, and Thunderbolt. A Ford stylist who had lived in the southwest submitted the Thunderbird name, a reference to the mythological thunderbird, a supernatural bird of great power and strength of the North American indigenous people.

At the time, **Ernest Breech**, then chairman of Ford Motor Company, was a member of the Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, California. According to club lore, he asked for permission to use the name, which was granted.

From its introduction in 1955 to its termination in 2005, production reached over 4.4 million.



Quick Easter Facts

Aside from the entertaining egg hunts, why do people celebrate Easter? People from different cultures and countries have a different take on what Easter is all about. They also have different interpretations of its original meaning and their traditions on how to celebrate it. Here are a few Easter facts from its Pagan and Christian history, along with the practices people have used to celebrate it from then till now.

01 The term 'Easter' came from *Eostre*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility.

02 Some countries call it 'Pascha', which means 'Passover' in Hebrew.

03 Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus three days after his Crucifixion.

04 Passion Week, or more commonly known as Holy Week, happens before Easter.



Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club

President	Martin Bierman	- 402-289-4516
Vice President	Rob Kinsey	- 402-434-9053
Treasurer	Jeff Brown	- 402-572-1995
Secretary	Mary Lou Bierman	- 402-289-4516
CTCI Rep	Martin Bierman	- 402-289-4516
Newsletter	Jack Sanford	- 402-578-3743
Historian	Bob McGowan	- 402-334-2593
Social Media	John La Duke	- 701-330-7908
Sponsor	Lee Sapp Ford	- 402-944-3367

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Member Birthdays

April

Joe Failla – 7

John Krecek – 12

Crystal Swensen – 23

If you want to be recognized,
please send your birthdate to
jesanford@cox.net.

