

Thunder Words



March 2025 ~ Volume 48, #3
Dedicated to the 55, 56, & 57 Thunderbird
Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club
Chapter 65, Classic Thunderbird Club International



Pres Says: A 29 NF 40 Diehard Heavy-Duty battery for the '57, was found at Star City Auto, 3101 Cornhusker Hwy, 402-466-8686. The cost was \$160 cash. I read some time ago the Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club was organized by members of the Tangier Shriners in Omaha. I contacted a current Tangier Shriner who shared additional history which I will bring to the March meeting. The ENWICC book of events will be available for distribution at our March meeting. Jack will have extra copies for those who want one. Here's

hoping my bird starts. Please attend our next business meeting on March 20th, 6 PM, at the Coffee Kettle in Omaha. **Rob Kinsey, President**

No meeting in February.
No minutes to review.

Next meeting March 20.
Coffee Kettle Café - Omaha.



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BIRD TECH TALK

By Martin Bierman



After purchasing a classic T-Bird (or any classic car for that matter) one eventually considers the question of its restoration. How does one start such a monumental project? How does one maintain motivation once the project is started? We all have known the car owner who says “I’m going to restore that car” but it sits for months or years untouched.

One Bite at a Time

The restoration of any car can be daunting. The key is like that old adage “how do you eat an elephant?” The answer: “one bite at a time”. I like to break the restoration down by subassemblies. Pick one subassembly, e.g. the exhaust manifolds, and restore that and then proceed with another subassembly. Completing one subassembly gives you positive reinforcement and the desire to keep going.

Make a List

Make a list of what you want to achieve in a given time period. Be honest and don’t just list “restore the car.” The list should include the parts to be restored, the tools needed for the job, a realistic budget for the job and a timetable to complete it. As each job is completed it is crossed off the list and this process gives you positive reinforcement. One’s motivation is preserved as the list starts decreasing.

Organize

I like to organize all my tools and parts needed for a project and lay those out in the order they will be used thereby avoiding wasting time finding specific tools or parts. I also study manuals and diagrams in preparation for the project. Space needs to be made to work on the project in an effective manner. There is nothing more frustrating than starting a project without adequate space to work in and not having the correct tools for the job. This applies to disassembly as well as reassembly of parts.

Send Them Out

Another technique to keep the restoration moving is to remove all the parts that will need special restoration techniques and send them out at the start of the project. This includes all chrome work, all stainless restoration work, parts to be powder coated and all electrical restorations such as clocks and radios. I like to remove all the under-hood black parts and chassis black parts and send them to the stripper and then for powder coating. The engine can be sent to the machine shop for any machine work as soon as it is removed. Some of these services can take weeks or even months to complete, so sending them out early ensures I will have them when the reassembly begins.



Budget

No one has an unrestricted budget for a car restoration. Be realistic in your budget assessment, and if funds are short, proceed when they become available. Be aware that unexpected costs will likely appear, such as the rust in the rocker panel that you did not expect or the cracked engine block that is a surprise.

Approaching a restoration with these principles will help keep your motivation up and keep the project moving to completion.



CTCI NEWS

Save the Date

Joint Thunderbird Convention
 CTCI - Grapevine, Texas 2025 - VTCI
 September 9-13, 2025
 Hosted by
 Classic Thunderbird Club International
 &
 Vintage Thunderbird Club International




Joint Thunderbird Convention
 Stronger Together '55-'05 in '25

 CTCI - Grapevine, Texas 2025 - VTCI

Inaugural, Joint International Thunderbird Club Event: Where Thunderbird enthusiasts from around the world are invited to this first-ever joint Thunderbird Club event hosted by VTCI and CTCI

Hotel Information
 Embassy Suites Rate: \$159 per night
 2401 Bass Pro Drive, North Grapevine, Texas 76051 (972) 724-2600, Option 1
 Reservation Link: All Thunderbird Club – 2025 Convention event; Group Code: C. 90E;
 Weblink: <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/>
 Cutoff Date: August 12, 2021

Tentative Schedule

Tuesday Sept 9 th	Convention Set up *Bird Bath* DIY
Wednesday Sept 10 th	10AM Convention Check-In Begins - Embassy "Bird Bath" DIY
	1PM Depart For AT&T Stadium ...includes Motor Coach and AT&T admission
	5PM Featured Speaker - INVITED Guest John Kraman, MECLUM Auctions
	Dinner On Own
Thursday Sept 11 th	8AM-5PM Convention Check-In Embassy and "Bird Bath" DIY
	9AM VTCI BOD/Gov Membership/VTCI Judge Training
	9AM CTCI Judge Training
	1PM (Attendee Choice) Depart For Thunderbird Driving Tour to Texas Motor Speedway
	1PM (Attendee Choice) Depart For George Bush Library ...includes Motor Coach and admission
	5:30PM Featured Speaker – Steve Legel – "The Greying of the Classic Car Hobby"
	Dinner On Own
Friday Sept 12 th	8AM Separate VTCI and CTCI Owners and Operators Meetings
	9AM VTCI and CTCI Separate Concours Judging - All Classes - Embassy Suites Parking Lot
	10AM Depart for Dallas Arboretum-incl Motor Coach/admission- for car owners not involved with Concours Judging-lunch on own at the Terrace Cafe
	12PM Combined VTCI/CTCI Concours Judges Lunch
	6PM The All Thunderbird Party with Cash Bar, Recognition Awards and Entertainment
Saturday Sept 13 th	7AM Swap Meet-Hotel Parking Lot
	10AM On Your own Grapevine Historic District Shopping - Free Shuttle from Hotel
	10AM Thunderbird Driving Tour: Sam Pack's Private Automobile Collection; Lunch
	1PM Tour concludes with stop at Minter's Thunderbird Restoration facility for VIP Tour
	5:30PM Cocktail Hour/6:30PM Award Banquet ...Plated Entrée w/ cash bar please mark preference below
	Chicken, Salmon, or Steak, (Includes Salad, Dessert or Dietary meal plus Coffee/Tea). All Gluten Free - -
Sunday Sept 14 th	Bon Voyage



Grapevine Texas

While Texas is known for its wide-open Western spaces, big modern cities and famous small towns, the suburban city of Grapevine has carved out a historic niche from the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolises that will surprise and gladden the hearts of Old West fans. The city has invested a great deal in its vibrant, walkable downtown, with its restaurants, shops and nighttime entertainment as well as its ever-popular Grapevine Vintage Railroad.

grapevinechamber.org



Grapevine Vintage Railroad
 Starting Seasonal Vintage Railroad



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Member News

A few days ago, Jack called and wanted me to write a short note about the thunderbird I had acquired some time ago. Being a fool, I said I would, and he told me I had plenty of time to write what I wanted but to get it done. He also asked me to explain how I ended up in Gordon, Nebraska. I'll explain that first.

My path to Gordon was much like the cars, fixing things and getting them more time to be productive is not unlike what can go on in Medicine. Medical School, (UNMC at 42nd and Dewey), was tough but there was never a day that I did not want to be there. They had a program that required every student to spend four weeks in a rural town with a physician as your preceptor. I chose Gordon, NE, as it had the required doctor on the volunteer staff and had at least two doctors. I like the town, the people in town and the doctors seemed to get along well. Judy was in town for three of the four weeks. She rode the bus to Gordon. We returned to Omaha, and I finished my senior year. Graduated in 1970, applied, and was accepted to UNMC for the three-year family practice residency program, and did not look anywhere else to practice. In 1973 we loaded a U-Haul truck and drove to Gordon. Judy's family helped us load the truck in Omaha, and my dad and brother, Mark, drove out to help unload the truck. That weekend was Memorial Day, and I got to work it, my first of many weekends to come.

I have always wanted a thunderbird since they were first introduced. It was 1955. We lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, and I was hoeing a square block of Iris that Mr. Daft had raised. I was not old enough to drive yet, but I had a decent bicycle that I rode to work every day. Bud Howard, a 20-year-old guy, drove up to my workplace. The car was a bright red Thunderbird. It had a three-speed transmission. I don't remember if it had the over-drive option. Bud drove off after he told me I could have a ride when I was not working, and my clothes were cleaner. The ride never happened, but it did not stop my lust for a Thunderbird.

Gary Matson is a friend of mine and has been since kindergarten. He started medical school a year before me, finished two years, and decided it was not for him. He and his wife traveled to Montana, and he earned a master's degree in biology and zoology. Gary's dad was a physician in Lincoln, and he had a 1957 Thunderbird, coral in color and automatic transmission. Gary drove it the night we graduated from high school to a barn party north of town. Some of the people may have had some fermented beverages that evening but not me, I asked Gary for the keys to his dad's car, the coral thunderbird, he gave them to me, and my girlfriend and I went for a ride. We took the car back unharmed, handed the keys to Gary, and went home. The ride did not satisfy



me regarding the Thunderbird, and I wanted one, but the time or the finances never became aligned until after Judy, my wife of 57 years, died on April 1, 2022.



'49 MG TC

My dad was why my brothers, and I were interested in motor vehicles. He bought a 70 Jaguar E-Type in 1972. He put 80,000 miles on it. My father died in 1992, and I bought



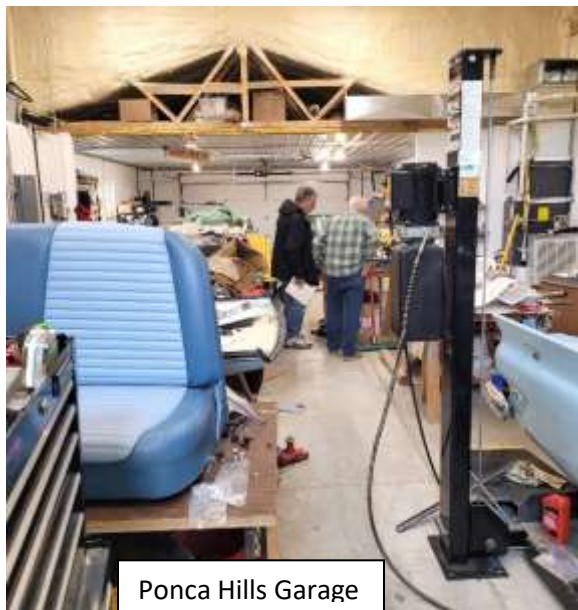
'72 GT & '70 Jaguar E

the car from the estate. This was not my first project car; I purchased a 1949 MG TC in 1973. I started to restore it in 1975, and to my surprise, the whole inside of the body was wood, the kind that rots when it gets wet. As I took it apart, I put the nails, screws, nuts, and bolts into small containers in the hope that someday they would be back together. By 1985, the car was back together, and I drove it in the 1986 parade. A 1972 MGB GT was my next purchase, and my wife encouraged me to buy it. We had just returned from Painted Post, N. Y., after driving the '49 MG TC to attend the MG show celebrating the 50th anniversary of Sports Car racing in the United States. After that trip, Judy wanted a lockable car with a top. The '72 GT was the ticket. We were visiting my brother, Mark, in Lincoln when I spotted a '72 MGB GT driving down the road. We followed, trying to get the driver's attention, but he either did not notice or ignored us. He stopped at McDonalds, and we did, too. We exchanged names and drove to Gordon, 400 miles to the west. I called several days later, and the result was we drove to Lincoln later that week, and I drove home in the Harvest Gold '72 MGB. It was soon in pieces on the floor of the garage. I bought a wire feed welder and taught myself how to weld well enough that 35 years later, it still is together.

My next purchase was a 1965 Mustang. We spotted this car with a for-sale sign in the window on our way to South Sioux City to visit Judy's mother. I took down the number. The vehicle was gone on our way home. I didn't call until I was back in Gordon. The car only had 13,000 miles. In talking to the owner's father, the low miles resulted from the owner thinking it would be more valuable with low miles. I thought the car would replace the Thunderbird, which I could never afford. For several years, my wife, Judy, had told me she didn't care if I bought a Thunderbird, but I would have to get rid of one of my other cars first.

Not thinking we would ever move from Gordon; I had built a 30 X 50-foot building near a garage I had purchased. It was not insulated or heated. I had told Judy that if we needed to move at any time, let me know, and I would start looking, not thinking that it would come to pass. But as we aged, we became more dependent on medical care. Our kids were both in Omaha, so we moved in that direction. I thought I needed a place for my cars as I enjoyed working on them, and if I did not want to, they could sit for a bit without harm. We found a place in Ponca Hills, north of I-680, and purchased it. We moved at the end of March 2000. Because of declining health for both of us, we moved to assisted living on January 20, 2020.

After Judy's death, I sold the house to Donnie and his wife. I was talking to them one day about nothing much, and Donnie's wife asked if I knew anyone who might like to buy a Thunderbird. I asked about the year, color, condition, rust, and running status. All answers were "I don't know" or "I can call." It turns out the car was in decent shape for the shape it was in. A man named Whitey Mathews bought the vehicle from



Ponca Hills Garage

McFayden's Ford in 1957, reportedly the last new Thunderbird McFayden's had. The car had a radio, three-speed transmission, soft and hard top, and power steering. Tony Mueller's dad bought the car from Whitey at some point, and when Tony's dad died, the car was put in his mom's name. I purchased the car from Tony Mueller on August 8, 2022. I later learned that the vehicle was originally equipped with an automatic transmission. At some point Whitey wanted a 3-speed transmission with over-drive, he had that installed, and the engine was bored to .060 over. I'm told he also had a cam, not radical, put in. An air conditioner unit was also added. I drove the T-Bird from Tony's to the Ponca Storage place and drove it around the

facility several times. I left the car in storage for safekeeping until I had a place built to keep and work on it. At that time, I put a new battery and a fuel pump in it. Then I built the building and moved all my cars and other stuff into the new garage.

The car had a York air conditioner with an under-dash unit when I bought it. The fan worked, but not the evaporator; it wouldn't charge. So, I went to the friendly computer, found the unit for the Thunderbird, and ordered one, thinking I would be done with the installation within two months, and we could drive it to Montana in June or July of 2023.



I started to find places that might work on the car and places to order parts. The alterations, new parts, and or modifications I have done or had done include: 1. New radiator, 2. new water pump, 3. new fuel pump, 4. new weather stripping hard and soft top, 5. new windshield, 6. new dash, 7. new stainless steel exhaust system, 8. new shocks, 9. new front suspension, 10. new power steering hoses, 11. new ball joints, 12. New U joints, 13. new wiring for the entire car, 14. seat belts, 15. Front end alignment, 16. mill heads, new valves, valve springs, 17. gasket set, 18. over-drive work, 19. five new tires, 20. aux. Electric fuel pump, 21. new brakes, drums, and brake lines.

Mark, my brother, Nate, my Grandson, and I did most of the fixing on the car until December, when Mark returned to Colorado to be on the ski patrol, and Nate went to school in Lincoln. Also, I have a chronic, progressive, debilitating neurological condition, Parkinson's Disease, that was diagnosed in 2007, and I don't get around as well as I did 5 years ago or even 2 years ago. I had DBS (deep brain stimulus) placed in my head in 2000, and it has helped a great deal.



Mark & Joel inspecting Tom's T-Bird.

This Summer, my sister and I plan on driving the T-Bird to Montana to visit Gary and his wife. I plan on them taking the car for a ride, as I was able to do with his father's Thunderbird back in June of 1959. This dream was to take place in 2023. It will now be 2025 that it gets driven there. Better late than never, as the saying goes!



Thanks for taking the time to read this. If you have any questions, let me know.

Joel Hutchins

Fun Facts

It's estimated that about two billion cars will be on the planet in 2040. There were only about 500 million in 1986.

You may be surprised to learn that the first electric cars were invented in the late 1800s and that by the early 1900s, about one-third of the cars on the road were electric.





Please use the attached form to submit your dues. The dues are still a low of \$15 per year, probably the best deal in town. Established in 1975, the **Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club** is dedicated to preserving and enjoying one of the greatest cars ever created: the **Ford Thunderbird**.

Advantages of club membership include:

- Regular driving events and monthly meetings every third Thursday
- Social functions such as picnics, shows, and the annual Christmas/Friendsgiving party
- Members with restoration and repair experience
- Assistance with parts acquisition and location
- CTCI master judge to assist with authenticity issues
- Monthly newsletter with a calendar of events and tech articles
- Club participation in car shows and parades

2025 Membership dues - \$15.00

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Numbers:
 Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

Email(s) _____

Please send this form and check for membership dues payable to Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club care of **Jeff Brown**, Treasurer, 7225 South 103 Street, LaVista, NE 68128



2025 Calendar of Events

March 2 – 51st Annual Rocky Mountain Manginelli Swap Meet – Sandhills Global Event Center - Lincoln (same location, new name – 4100 North 84th Street)

March 20 – Business Meeting – 6:00 PM – Coffee Kettle Café, 9905 Sapp Bros. Dr. Omaha, NE

FOR SALE

Dave Freeburg's family is selling Dave's 1957 Thunderbird. Dave's health issues are prompting this action.

My parents were active members of the Thunderbird Club in Omaha. My Dad's health has turned, and we are looking to sell his 1957 Ford Thunderbird. It has a 312-engine, automatic transmission, power steering, and brakes. It is Star Mist Blue with a black interior. It has a new battery, runs well, and is a presentable car. It has a hard top with portholes.

(402) 216-8579. I am a local in Omaha and could show the car.

Mari Anne Hartmann



Member Birthday
March
 Roger Keepers Jr. - 17
 Sandy Gough – 19
 Cathy McGowan - 24
 Bob Young – 24
 Diane Young - 28
 If you want to be recognized,
 please send your birthdate to
jesanford@cox.net.

St. Patrick’s Day March 17, 2025.
 Don’t forget to wear your Green



First day of Spring
 March 20, 2025



The **Member Profile**
 feature needs your help.
 Send your story to Jack at
jesanford@cox.net.

Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club

President	Rob Kinsey	402-434-9053
Vice President	Martin Bierman	402-289-4516
Treasurer	Jeff Brown	402-572-1995
Secretary	Quentin Moeller	303-204-1761
CTCI Rep	Martin Bierman	402-289-4516
Newsletter	Jack Sanford	402-392-1350
Historian	Robert McGowan	402-334-2593
Social Media	John La Duke	701-330-7908
Sponsor	Lee Sapp Ford	402-342-6767

“ThunderWords” is the official publication of the Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club, Chapter 65 of Classic Thunderbird Club International. Annual dues are \$15, payable to Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club care of Jeff Brown, Treasurer, 7225 S 103rd ST, LaVista, NE 68128.



Nebraskaland Club Logos. 2X3 ½ inch patch can be sewn or glued on with fabric glue. Look great on shirts, caps, and jackets. Contact Jack at 402-392-1350 – jesanford@cox.net

