

# Thunder Words



May 2025 ~ Volume 48, #5  
Dedicated to the 55, 56, & 57 Thunderbird  
Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club  
Chapter 65, Classic Thunderbird Club International



**PREZ SAYS:** Check out **Jack's** photos of our birds on Murdock's main street! Everyone had a good time. Our group even included three ladies! The more the merrier! Our Murdock Bar & Grill hosts were great, and so was their varied food selection. They set up an area just for us and asked if they could photograph the Birds and use it to promote their business. We said "Of course"! More than one member suggested we revisit Murdock soon. It's centrally located for Omaha and Lincoln members (23 miles from **Jack's** home and 24 miles from ours), and the scenery was excellent. As we were leaving, a young man of 8 said his favorite car was the Thunderbird. He had lots of models but had never seen ones so up close. His dad took a couple of pictures of him with the cars. He was excited to get in one and have his picture taken behind the wheel, which made us all feel good!

Check out the rest of the 2025 schedule elsewhere in the Newsletter and let us know of other tours or activities of interest. See you in Lincoln in May. **Rob Kinsey, President**

T-Bird Appreciation Day  
May 18, 11:00 am  
Lincoln, NE (see page 7)

May Dates:  
11 – Mother's Day  
26 – Memorial Day

Next meeting May 15, 2025.  
6 pm – Coffee Kettle Cafe  
Omaha, NE



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## April Meeting Minutes

**President Rob Kinsey** opened the meeting at 6:10 pm. **Jack Sanford, Marty and Mary Lou Bierman, Joel Hutchins, Phil Brown, Jeff Hofman, and Rob and Vicki Kinsey** were present.

### Secretary's Report:

A motion by **Joel Hutchins** to accept the March meeting minutes, as scribed in the March newsletter, was seconded by **Marty Bierman**. The motion passed.

**Rob Kinsey** noted the secretary's position is open and would appreciate it if those interested could contact him. **John Moore** is selling his T-Bird as his wife wants a Mercedes. He will not be able to attend meetings regularly. **Vicki Kinsey** offered to take minutes for this meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** No report as **Jeff Brown** was absent.

### Old Business:

1. CTCI: **Marty** indicated no further updates at this time. **Rob** thanked **Marty** for bringing the 2025 Car Council books for distribution. Some books are still available.
2. Fellowship Luncheon is 11:30 am Saturday, April 19th at Madson's Bar and Grill. See **Jack's** map.
3. The May Event is Sunday, May 18th, T-Bird Appreciation Day. The Tour starts at 11 a.m. from the Country Inn and Suites (off N 27th and I-80 exit) and ends with a Pioneer Park cruise and lunch at Lee's Chicken. See **Jack's** map on page 8.
4. June Event: Possibilities include the Wahoo Car Show (which has been cancelled), the Sonic Tour, and others. **Marty** will check further regarding the June event (a Sonic cruise has been planned; see page 8).
5. July Event: **Marty Bierman** will host a tech session at Elkhorn's new restaurant/bar. Details will follow.
6. Holiday Dinner will be 11-22-25 at Firethorn in Lincoln with **Jim Lantz** and **Jeff Hoffman** making the arrangements. Details will be forthcoming in future newsletters.

### New Business:

Additional events for August, September, and October were discussed. Possibilities included the Loess Hills (Council Bluffs, IA) and a scenic/wine tour. **Jack** will research these, and any suggestions are appreciated.

The next meeting will be May 15th at 6 p.m. at Coffee Kettle Cafe in Omaha. Rob will not be able to attend, so Marty will preside.

### BRAG BOX:

- \***Jeff Hoffman** took out the '57 T-Bird twice, and **Jim's** lifeguard friend took it to the prom.
- \***Jack Sanford** and son **Jack Jr.** moved the A/C evaporator, fixed the radio, exhaust, clock, changed oil, and the T-Bird was ready for the season.
- \***Joel Hutchins'** Bird is ready to go.

Respectfully submitted by one-time substitute secretary, **Vicki Kinsey**.



## BIRD TECH TALK

By Martin Bierman



### Vacuum Leaks- “Smoke’em If You Got’em”

Vacuum leaks can introduce more air into the engine and alter the air-fuel ratio, resulting in symptoms of rough idle, hesitation, poor acceleration, high or erratic idle, and stalling. Sometimes the vacuum leak can be heard as a whistle or sucking noise. Some traditional ways of locating a vacuum leak on the engine are spraying starter fluid, brake cleaner, or propane over potential leak areas and listening for improvement in engine rpm or idle. These methods are messy and not suitable for evaluating vacuum lines for leaks.

My Ford Expedition developed a rough idle years ago, and the mechanic found a vacuum leak in a vacuum line with a smoke machine. Using a smoke machine is easy and harmless to the engine. A variety of smoke machines are on the market at various costs. Autoline makes the one pictured below and costs \$70 on Amazon. A typical machine uses a form of oil (baby oil in one brand), which is heated in a pot usually by a connection to the car battery. The smoke is introduced into the engine or line by very low air pressure from an air compressor source or by an air pump in the machine. Once the smoke is introduced into the engine or vacuum line, a leak is indicated by smoke leaving the leak site.

This technique would be very useful in the Classic T-Bird. One would first cover the carburetor and exhaust pipe openings with rubber gloves. To find an intake gasket leak or a carburetor base gasket leak, the smoke line would be connected to the vacuum port of the carburetor. To find a vacuum advance canister membrane leak, connect the smoke tube to the line leading to the canister. Vacuum hoses to the wiper and the heater valve in the heater box could be checked by connecting the smoke tube to a vacuum line feeding these areas; do the same for the intake manifold water valve vacuum line or brake booster line. Exhaust leaks can also be easily found.

So, the next time a vacuum or exhaust leak occurs and can't be found, get a smoke machine and “smoke ‘em”.



# CTCI NEWS

## 2025 CTCI/VTCI All Thunderbird Convention

**Dear CTCI Member,**

**Here is important new information regarding the hotel headquarters for the 2025 Convention.**

**The booking code for the group discount with the host hotel has changed. The new booking code to receive the group discount is 92R**

**Also, there is a new link to make reservations online. <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/all-thunderbird-club-2/>**

**Why is this change happening?**

**Due to our efforts to obtain more convention rooms at the Embassy Suites, all NEW convention reservations must now be made at \$179 plus taxes/night. However.....**

**While the new attendee reservations at the Embassy Suites are for \$179 plus taxes/night, the attendees will only pay, when they check out, \$159 plus taxes for each night of their stay. The difference is being picked up by a benefactor.**

**Important Reminder Information at Checkout: The All-Thunderbird Group notes at the Hotel Reservation Desk will include that the group will be paying \$20++/night over the original room rate of \$159 plus tax. However, when guests check out, their bill will show them paying only \$159++/night at checkout.**

**Embassy Suites  
2401 Bass Pro Dr,  
Grapevine, TX 76051  
972-724-2600, Option 1 for new reservations**

**Many CTCI members don't monitor their emails or even have one. Please tell your Thunderbird friends and acquaintances about this important new information.**

**Hope to see you there!**



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<https://www.facebook.com/nebraskatbirds/>

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### 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



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/all-thunderbird-club-2025/>  
 Cutoff Date: August 12, 2025.

### Tentative Schedule

Tuesday Sept 9 <sup>th</sup>	Convention Set up "Bird Bath" DIY
Wednesday Sept 10 <sup>th</sup>	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, MECUM Auctions
	Dinner On Own
Thursday Sept 11 <sup>th</sup>	8AM-5PM Convention Check-In Embassy and "Bird Bath" DIY
	9AM VTCI BOD/Gen 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
	5:00PM Featured Speaker – Steve Legel – "The Greying of the Classic Car Hobby"
	Dinner On Own
Friday Sept 12 <sup>th</sup>	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 <sup>th</sup>	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 <sup>th</sup>	Bon Voyage



## Member News

**Ten members attended the Fellowship Luncheon in Murdock, NE, on April 19, 2025. Six classic Birds were driven to the event. Rob and Vicki Kinsey, Marty and Mary Lou Bierman, John and Barb La Duke, Crystal and Jerry Swensen, Tom Woodman, and Jack Sanford attended. The weather was perfect, the food was great, the fellowship was evident, and the roads were smooth.**



You know our man, Al Rogers, for his cover photography and his centerspread stories in each issue of *Old Cars*, but most people don't know that, automotively speaking, there's even more to Al beyond his camera and pen.

Starting in the 1970s, Al served in many roles as a manager at Ford Motor Co. He oversaw several aspects of the manufacturing of many different Ford Motor Co. vehicles, including the last Thunderbird, which began production for the 2002 model year. In our conversations, production of this 10th-generation T-Bird comes up often, and he finally offered to share in *Old Cars* some insight into his part in building the '02 Thunderbirds for this Mustang and T-Bird issue.

"I was a manufacturing manager," he said. "I was in various departments over that two-year period of preparing for the manufacturing and then production of the last Thunderbird: body, paint, pre-delivery and quality control. I helped create processes within the departments to produce the T-Bird, and the feasibility to make it operational, because we had to adapt it into a pre-existing system within the paint and body departments at Wixom Assembly Plant." It was the first time the Thunderbird had been built at Wixom since the 1970s, even though the first T-Birds had been built there.

At that time, Wixom was also building the Lincoln Town Car, Continental and LS. Al said the manufacturing process started in the body shop with the floor pan of each car, upon which the bodies were welded together on a buck by hand and robotics. From there, the Thunderbird and Lincoln bodies traveled down a half-mile tunnel on a conveyor to the paint shop where they'd be prepped for paint, painted, polished, and then go to the trim department.

"The LS and T-Bird were built together, because the T-Bird was basically on the LS platform, so LS and T-Bird would go to their trim department on the second level and the Town Car and Continental would go onto an elevator and get lowered to the main floor and enter their trim department."

The 2002-2005 Thunderbird and LS were built on the Jaguar platform, and ultimately, that connection killed them, Al says.

"The Thunderbird was a ray of hope for Ford Motor Co. and for Wixom, at the time. Between the Thunderbird and the LS, that was the future. The LS was produced with the thought of being able to sell it in over 20 different countries. It was definitely built for global sales. We built right- and left-hand LSes for sale in China, Taiwan, Japan. Then along came Premier Automotive Group and that was its demise. The cars that the LS was designed to compete against was now part of Ford Motor Co. The Premier Automotive Group would have been Jaguar, Volvo, Aston Martin and Land Rover — they were already established automobiles within the market."

Interestingly, Al said Bob Tasca, Sr., the famous dealer who raced Fords, was a highly respected consultant to Ford at this time, and went through Ford assembly plants to rate their performance and products. He said Tasca had two suggestions for the 2002 T-Bird: bigger wheels tires, and more performance. The additional rubber never came to be, but for 2003, the Thunderbird's horsepower rose to 280 hp from 252 in 2002 — was that Tasca's influence?

Al also noted that the 2002 T-Bird's retro emblems were treated special.

"They were highly coveted and protected because they were very desirable — that gave that car its identity," Al said. "Ford was very protective of these emblems. They were in a secured area; it was highly unusual. The only other time I recall something like that was when we had the Diamond Jubilee Continentals. Those cars' parts were in a secured area, as well."

Out of his pride for the work they did at Wixom, and for the Thunderbird, Al bought a new 2003 Thunderbird. He also helped many build other Ford vehicles, which he also bought. Hopefully he'll share those memories in a future issue.

— Angelo Van Bogart  
Editor, *Old Cars*  
avanbogart@aimmedia.com



## 2025 Calendar of Events

**May 3 – SHOW AND SHINE CARS & PLANTS - 8 – 12 PM - Join us for a unique event experience!  
Keystone Plaza 7811 Military Avenue Omaha, NE PROMOTING THE GARDEN CLUB OF OMAHA'S  
ANNUAL PLANT SALE**

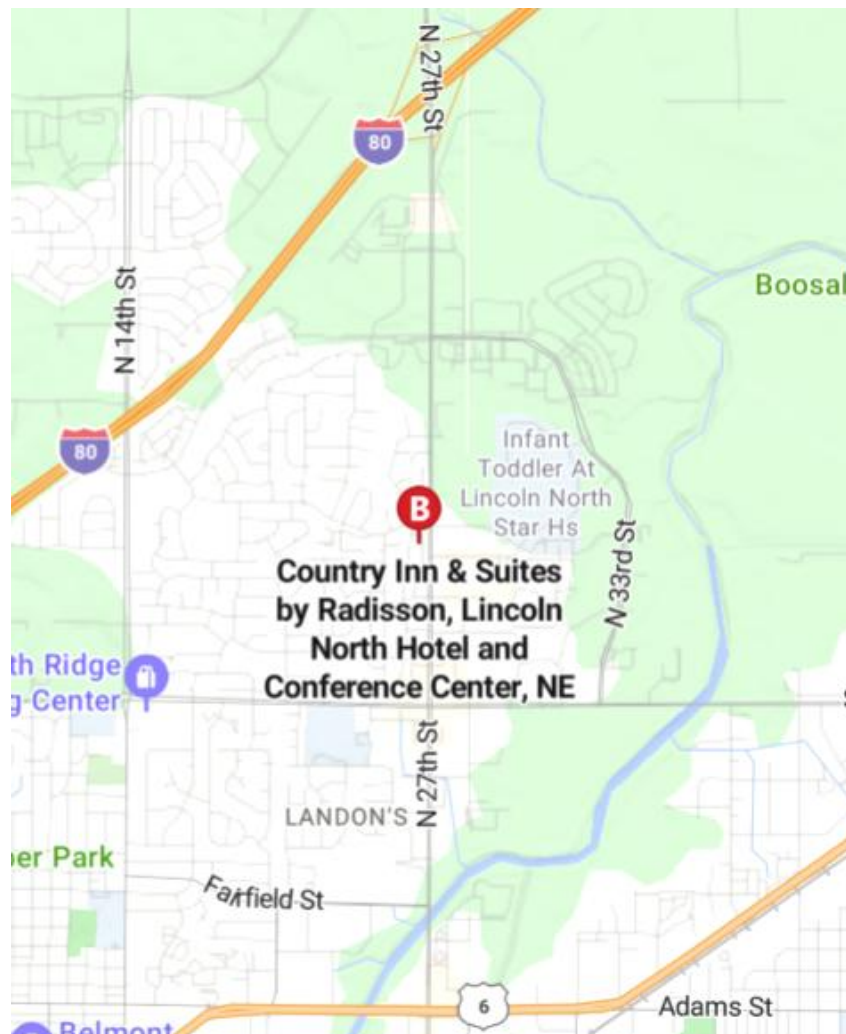
**May 10 – Skills & Grills Car Show – 9-11:30 am registration – Class Trophies 2 pm – Gretna High School**

**May 15 - Business meeting - 6:00 PM – Coffee Kettle Café, 9005 Sapp Bros. Drive, Omaha, NE**

**May 18 – Thunderbird Appreciation Day – Meet at 11 am, Country Inn & Suites – 5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln**

**June 22 – Sonic Tour – Meet 1:30 PM – Discount Tire Parking lot, 18520 West Wright St., Omaha**

**November 22 – Friendsgiving Dinner – save the date**



[Tour maps and narrative will be available on the 18<sup>th</sup>.](#)

[Please RSVP to Jack at 402-578-3743 or \[jesanford@cox.net\]\(mailto:jesanford@cox.net\).](#)





SHOW AND SHINE  
**CARS & PLANTS**

Join us for a unique event experience!  
May 3, 2025 8:30 -1:00 or whenever  
Keystone Plaza  
7811 Military Avenue  
Omaha, NE



PROMOTING THE GARDEN CLUB OF  
OMAHA'S ANNUAL PLANT SALE  
7803 MILITARY AVE  
SATURDAY 8AM-12PM



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Member Birthday

**May**

Steve Fullerton - 2

Sara Stekly – 5

Larry Smith – 25

Mary Krecek - 31

If you want to be recognized, please send your birthdate to [jesanford@cox.net](mailto:jesanford@cox.net).

- **May 1:** International Workers' Day
- **May 5:** Cinco de Mayo
- **May 8:** World Red Cross Day
- **May 18:** Mother's Day
- **May 12:** International Nurses Day
- **May 15:** International Day of Families
- **May 20:** World Bee Day
- **May 31:** World No Tobacco Day

Make sure you check your tire pressure regularly. As temperatures change, so does your tire air pressure.

The Member News

feature needs your help. Send your story to Jack at [jesanford@cox.net](mailto:jesanford@cox.net).

*Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club*

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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](mailto:jesanford@cox.net)

