

Thunder Words



May 2026, Volume 49 #5
Dedicated to the 55, 56, & 57 Thunderbird
Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club



Prez Says: We had a nice turnout for our April 19 Friendship Lunch in Murdock. The weather was perfect for the drive and the restaurant's service and food were great. The cook came out after The Lunch to look at the cars, and he said that he wanted to come sooner but had 17 lunches to prepare! Members and their cars attending were Vicky and Rob Kinsey with their 1957 blue T-Bird; Tom Woodman with his red 1957 E-bird; Mary Lou and Martin Bierman and a Torch Red 1955; Diane Bessette and Jeff Brown with their 1956 Peacock Blue T-Bird; Jack Sanford and his Code T 1956 T-Bird; Gail, Larry and Neal Dawes. Joel Hutchins brought his blue 1957 T-Bird which he has finished restoring. He also had it at our last club meeting. Barbara and John La Duke brought their Sunset Coral 1956 T-Bird which is always a fan favorite. That car color with the black convertible top is a great combination. May 2 is the Gretna High School Skills and Grilles car show and May 17 is our Thunderbird Appreciation Day tour. I hope all our members can take advantage of these events.

Martin Bierman, President



Next Event
Thunderbird Appreciation Day
Lincoln, Nebraska
84th and HWY US 6
May 17, 2026
11:00 AM

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
May 21, 2026
6:00 PM
Waverly, NE



www.Nebraskalandtbirds.org
<https://www.facebook.com/nebraskatbirds/>
Sponsored by Lee Sapp Ford



Minutes of the Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club, April 2026



Secretary's Report- President Martin Bierman called the April 16 meeting to order at 6:08 pm at the Coffee Kettle Café in Omaha. Twelve members and one guest were in attendance.

Minutes- Rob Kinsey moved for approval of March's meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by **Tom Woodman**. The minutes of March's meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report- Jeff Brown reported on the checking account balance. No bills were submitted. All but one member has paid their dues.

Old Business- none.

New Business- The Friendship Lunch is scheduled for April 19 at 12:30 p.m. at the Murdock Bar and Grill in Murdock, NE. Lunch will be ordered from the menu. Directions to the restaurant will be in the newsletter. Members were encouraged to drive their T-Birds if possible. April 25 Kimmel Orchard and Vineyard have a Show and Shine. May 2 is the Gretna High School Skills and Grilles car show with registration at 9 a.m. This event is sponsored by the Meadowlark Model A Club and proceeds go to the high school skills program. On May 9 Fremont Classic Car Club is hosting a Show and Shine at Lutheran Church, Fremont, NE. May 17 is Thunderbird Appreciation Day and **Rob Kinsey** has arranged a tour of Lincoln's drive-ins and a tour of his model train collection at his home. Directions will be in the newsletter. May 21 is our regular club meeting in Waverly, NE. An e-mail was discussed about voting for Speedway Motors for the Best Automobile Related Museum in the USA Today survey. Hawkeye Classic Thunderbird Club of Iowa president **Bob Young** is asking for ideas for a joint meeting with our club. Several ideas were discussed which included a lunch in Adair, IA.; a tour of some of the White Pole Road which we had done several years ago; a garage tour of an Iowa member.

Brag Box- Tom Woodman discussed insulation of 1955 doors; Martin Bierman reported that his grandson had returned to Fort Riley from Europe. The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m. with motion by **Joel Hutchins** and second by **Jeff Brown**.

Respectfully Submitted, **Mary Lou Bierman**



Marty, Jack, Jr., Mary Lou



Tom Jeff



TECH TALK

By Martin Bierman

“My T-Bird starter turns very slow when hot.”



Question- A 1956 T-Bird owner complains that his 12-volt starter turns very slow when the engine is hot. It is so slow that he is worried it won't start.

Answer- Assuming the battery is fully charged, and the cables are of correct gauge, and the terminals are clean then the starter is the likely cause of the problem. This is called “heat soak” and occurs due to worn field or armature windings or the armature dragging on the bushing. Replacing the starter with a proper rebuilt one should solve the problem.

If one is going to replace the starter consider upgrading to the Powermaster 9002 Powermax Plus high torque starter. This is a starter with modern gear reduction technology and is available for the Y-Block engine. It is very lightweight at less than 12 lbs. and has a high torque for quick starts even in engines with a high compression ratio. It does not use a Bendix drive but has a gear drive which eliminates another source of failure. One can use the solenoid on the firewall, and the starter can be “clocked” to fit neatly against the engine. Price is \$239.99 from Speedway Motors (see their ad below). Summit Racing and Jeg's also have them.

Powermaster 9002 PowerMAX Plus Starter, Ford Y-Block, Natural \$238.99

Mini Starter Size, Bolt-On Mount Type, Natural

- Starters are rated up to 14:1 compression with a 3.7:1 gear reduction
- They are able to produce up to 1.9HP and 170 Ft/Lbs. of cranking torque
- All Powermaster starters come with their dyno-tested proof of performance guarantee
- Features a PP106 Hitachi-style replacement
- Will fit the 1954-1964 Ford Y-Block and works on a **12V system** only



Thunderbird Appreciation Day Is Coming Up: May 17, 2026

Celebrate the Thunderbird on May 17!

The tradition continues. Thunderbird Appreciation Day 2026 will be celebrated around the world on May 17. Perhaps your local club has organized a fun event for this special day. Maybe you would rather take your Thunderbird out on the road for the sheer pleasure of driving it - whether by yourself or with a special passenger. Or possibly, your Thunderbird will be on display for all to admire. Celebrate, appreciate, and demonstrate the legendary Thunderbirds on their special day!

CTCI commemorates Thunderbird Appreciation Day with a membership special for the entire month of May. For new members, the normal initiation fee is waived. Lapsed members can return to good standing with discounted dues. Take advantage of this offer by mail or online. or visit the **Club Store** and look for the Thunderbird Appreciation Day special.

Please share this with all your "car friends" so any Thunderbird enthusiasts can celebrate the day and have the opportunity to join CTCI with the discount.

Please share photos from your Thunderbird Appreciation Day for publishing in Early Bird by sending to: earlybird@ctci.org

P.S. Registration is now open for the 2026 Thunderbirds International Convention to take place Sept. 9-13 in scenic Flagstaff, Arizona. Check the website for the latest information, and in the next Early Bird.



Thunderbird - First generation (1955–1957)

The Ford Thunderbird was introduced in February 1953 as a response to Chevrolet's new sports car, the Corvette, which was publicly unveiled in prototype form just a month before. Under rapid development, the Thunderbird went from idea to prototype in about a year, being unveiled to the public at the Detroit Auto Show on February 20, 1954. It was a two-seat design available with a detachable fiberglass hardtop and a folding fabric top.

Production of the Thunderbird began on September 9 of that year, with the car beginning sales as a 1955 model on October 22, 1954. Though sharing some design characteristics with other Fords of the time such as single circular headlamps and tail lamps, and modest tail fins, the Thunderbird was sleeker in shape and featured a hood scoop and a 150 mph (240 km/h) speedometer not available on other Fords. It used mechanical components from mass-market Ford models.

The Thunderbird's 102.0 in (2,591 mm) wheelbase frame was a shortened version used in other Fords and the standard 292 cu in (4.8 L) Y-block V8 came from Ford's Mercury division. Though inspired by and positioned directly against the Corvette, Ford advertised the Thunderbird at launch as a "personal car of distinction" and put a greater emphasis on the car's comfort and convenience features rather than its inherent sportiness.

The Thunderbird sold exceptionally well in its first year, outselling the Corvette by more than 23-to-one in 1955 with 16,155 Thunderbirds sold against 700 Corvettes.

With the Thunderbird considered a success, few changes were made to the car for the 1956 model year. The most notable change was moving the spare tire to a Continental-style rear bumper to make more storage room in the trunk and a new 12-volt electrical system. The addition of the weight at the rear caused steering issues. Among the few other changes were new paint colors, the addition of standard circular porthole windows in the fiberglass roof to improve rearward visibility (with a delete option), and a 312 cu in (5.1 L) Y-block V8 rated at 215 hp (160 kW) when mated to a three-speed manual transmission or 225 hp (168 kW) when mated to a Ford-O-Matic three-speed automatic transmission; this transmission featured a "low gear", which was accessible manually via the gear selector. When in Drive, it was a two-speed automatic transmission (similar to Chevrolet's Powerglide). Low gear could also be accessed with a wide-open throttle. In 1956, Ford also added its new Lifeguard safety package.

The Thunderbird was revised for 1957 with a reshaped front bumper, a larger grille and tailfins, and larger tail lamps. The instrument panel was heavily restyled with round gauges in a single pod, and the rear of the car was lengthened, allowing the spare tire to be positioned back in the trunk. The 312 cu in (5.1 L) V8 became the Thunderbird's standard engine and was rated at an increased 245 hp (183 kW). Other, more powerful versions of this V8 were available, including one with two four-barrel Holley carburetors (VIN code "E"), and another with a Paxton supercharger rated at 300 hp (224 kW) (VIN code "F"). Though Ford was pleased to see sales of Thunderbird rise to their highest ever 21,380 units for 1957, company executives felt the car could do even better, leading to a substantial redesign of the car for 1958.



Mother's Day USA history

The modern holiday was first celebrated in 1908, when **Anna Jarvis** held the first Mother's Day service of worship at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Andrew's Methodist Church now holds the International Mother's Day Shrine. Her campaign to make Mother's Day a recognized holiday in the United States began in 1905, the year her mother, **Ann Reeves Jarvis**, died. **Ann Jarvis** had been a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both sides of the American Civil War, and created Mother's Day Work Clubs to address public health issues. She and another peace activist and suffragist, **Julia Ward Howe**, had been urging for the creation of a "Mother's Day for Peace" where mothers would ask that their husbands and sons were no longer killed in wars. Forty years before it became an official holiday, **Ward Howe** had made her Mother's Day Proclamation in 1870, which called upon mothers of all nationalities to band together to promote the "amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace." **Anna Jarvis** wanted to honor this and to set aside a day to honor all mothers because she believed a mother is "the person who has done more for you than anyone in the world". In 1908, the U.S. Congress rejected a proposal to make Mother's Day an official holiday, joking that they would also have to proclaim a "Mother-in-law's Day". However, owing to the efforts of **Anna Jarvis**, by 1911 all U.S. states observed the holiday, with some of them officially recognizing Mother's Day as a local holiday (the first being West Virginia, Jarvis' home state, in 1910). In 1914, **Woodrow Wilson** signed a proclamation designating Mother's Day, held on the second Sunday in May, as a national holiday to honor mothers. Although **Jarvis**, who started Mother's Day as a liturgical service, was successful in founding the celebration, she became resentful of the commercialization of the holiday, and it became associated with the phrase "**Hallmark holiday**". By the early 1920s, **Hallmark Cards** and other companies had started selling Mother's Day cards. Jarvis believed that the companies had misinterpreted and exploited the idea of Mother's Day, and that the emphasis of the holiday was on sentiment, not profit. As a result, she organized boycotts of Mother's Day and threatened to issue lawsuits against the companies involved. Jarvis argued that people should appreciate and honor their mothers through handwritten letters expressing their love and gratitude, instead of buying gifts and pre-made cards. Jarvis protested at a candy makers' convention in Philadelphia in 1923, and at a meeting of **American War Mothers** in 1925. By this time, **carnations** had become associated with Mother's Day, and the selling of carnations by the American War Mothers to raise money angered **Jarvis**, who was arrested for disturbing the peace.

Memorial Day

The first national observance of what would become Memorial Day occurred on May 30, 1868. Then known as *Decoration Day*, the holiday was proclaimed by Commander-in-Chief **John A. Logan** of the Grand Army of the Republic – a fraternal organization of veterans – to honor Union soldiers who had died in the **American Civil War**. This national observance followed the example of many local observances which were begun between the end of the Civil War and Logan's declaration. Many cities and people have claimed to be the first to observe it, however, the **National Cemetery Administration**, a division of the **Department of Veterans Affairs**, credits **Mary Ann Williams** of the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus, Georgia with originating the idea of an annual date to decorate the graves of Civil War veterans with flowers.

Official recognition as a holiday spread among the states, beginning with New York in 1873.^[7] By 1890, every union state had adopted it. The world wars turned it into a day of remembrance for all



members of the U.S. military who fought and died in service. In 1968, Congress changed its observance to the last Monday in May, and in 1971 standardized its name as "Memorial Day." Two other days celebrate those who have served or are serving in the U.S. military: **Armed Forces Day**, which is earlier in May, a ceremonial U.S. day of commemoration for honoring those currently serving in the armed forces, and **Veterans Day** on November 11, a legal holiday which honors all those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Origins



The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

A variety of cities and people have claimed origination of Memorial Day. In some such cases, the claims relate to documented events occurring before or after the Civil War. Others may stem from general traditions of decorating soldiers' graves with flowers, rather than specific events leading to the national proclamation Soldiers' graves were decorated in the U.S. before and during the **American Civil War**. Other claims may be less respectable, appearing to some researchers as taking credit without evidence, while erasing better-evidenced events or connections.

Nebraskaland Thunderbird Club

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Member Birthdays
May
 Joe Failla – 7
 John Krecek – 12
 Crystal Swensen – 23

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

